

Part-time Farmer Tells One Family's Experiences During 10 Years

Rewards and Heartbreaks Are High, Lows of Tale

By ILA S. GRANT
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So you want to live in the country? Okay. Draw up a chair.

Buying a farm sometimes is like falling in love. You think with your heart, not your head. You like to listen to a chorus of frogs on summer evenings, and the wind in the poplars in winter. You enjoy a crimson sunset most if the foreground of the picture is a sweep of fields in which cows graze placidly, with wooded foothills and majestic mountains beyond. You like the smell of fresh-plowed earth in springtime and the fragrance of new-mown hay in summer and early fall. You crave the old-fashioned comfort in winter of a full jelly cupboard and root cellar — a cheerful fireside and a window seat where you can watch the snow pile up on the fence-posts.

Obey Your Heart's Desire
This is your heart talking. You don't like people who ask about the cost of transportation to your work in the city, problems of water supply and storage, and the depth of the soil. Such people worry because in the country no big white truck would call each week to haul off the garbage. They fret because they couldn't hope to keep the weeds pulled on a 40-acre tract, when they can't even manage to mow the lawn on a 50-foot lot. They are afraid that if a fire should break out, their lovely country home might burn to the ground before the fire department could come to the rescue. These people are confirmed city-dwellers. Don't listen to them. They're smart.

A long time ago, as they say in fairy tales, this pen-pusher-turned-farmer moved to the country, along with hard-working husband, sometimes known as "the Chief," and the then-small-boy, sometimes known as "the Young Man." The pen-pusher (the first part, you know) is sometimes known as "the Sagebrusher."

Ten years and a few heartbreaks later, we're still enjoying crimson sunsets and frog choruses. There was no fresh-turned earth this spring, because nobody had time to plow. There'll be very little new-mown hay this fall. And if the jelly cupboard and the root cellar are full, it will be because we came into unexpected riches and stocked up at the supermarket on the way home. But we're still thinking with our hearts. We like living in the country. I said it, and I'm glad.

If you're determined to live in the country, listen to your heart. If you have some misgivings and visions of extra income from the land, listen to the voice of experience.

Try Football Field For Size
Many families interested in living in the country want to produce some of the family food supply. This can be done by raising animals and a garden.

Experts say that one-half to one acre may provide space for these pursuits. Before you decide on the size of the garden, take a walk around a good-sized football field. Pretend that it's planted with Boston lettuce, string beans, golden Bantam corn and Harvard beets. (They aren't really "Harvard" beets until they've been cooked and prepared in the delicious sweet-sour sauce. That means they've been to college. Only way they're fit to eat.)

Picture yourself pulling the weeds and "setting" the water. You'll probably scale your garden down to about 16 square feet. That is, 16 square feet the first year. Eight the second year. After that, you'll pick up the vegetables at the corner grocery. But you'll be missing a lot of fun, believe me.

Somewhere, there were several summers when we found time to raise huge gardens. The rows were wide enough apart so that the Chief could cultivate between them with the garden tractor. This left the weeding between the plants to be done by hand. The Chief, who had farming experience as a boy in the Middle West, was of the "bend down, sister" school. Bent double like a hairpin, he would straddle the rows and move along at amazing speed, weeding with both hands.

I did my weeding sitting down, or kneeling, inching along at snail's pace. But with a woman's respect for hand work, I claimed I did a more thorough job. Of

course, the Chief covered several rows while I was doing one.

Pea Shelling With Winger—Ooh!

We didn't keep track of the cost of the seeds, sprays, hot-caps and other things we bought for gardening. Neither did we inventory the value of the produce. But in those several summers the freezer was full of home-grown whole-kernel corn, French cut green beans and tender baby peas.

Shelling the peas was the worst job of all. One time we tried to run them through the wringer of the washing machine, but the venture wasn't successful. The theory was that the wringer would pop the pods and run them on through to the laundry tray, leaving the peas to fall in a bucket that we propped in the washer tub. Instead, the peas were mashed, and there were green stains on the wringer rolls for some time.

One summer we traded several sacks of corn to a fisherman friend who brought home from the coast more Chinook salmon than his family could use. There were lots of fish dinners, with corn-on-the-cob on the side, that winter.

Another summer, the Young Man made spending money by selling carrots to friends. We had pigs that year, and they ate the carrot tops and surplus garden truck.

Shuddery Job, This Butchering

If you're going to raise some of your own meat, you'll think of rabbits. If you're not careful, you'll think of soft, thick fur and innocent brown or pink eyes. Put a few rabbits — someone else's — before you build the hutch. Besides, mother rabbits often eat their young. The rabbits also consume quantities of compressed food pellets, and they need salt licks and adequate water. And the pens need cleaning every day. Have you ever butchered an Easter bunny? Neither have I.

Large livestock is the best bet. Steer beef is the best eating. Steers also have soulful eyes and engaging ways. Take it easy. Don't get too well acquainted with them.

Maybe you'd like to have a few chickens? These creatures are pure temperamental. They need a house with concrete floor, comfortable roosts and laying boxes and a balanced diet. They are inclined to harbor lice. And they perform best under lights. What you investigate the cost of a modern poultry house — plus the outlay for breeding stock or baby chicks — you may decide on a Cadillac convertible instead.

We loved our chickens. They were some of our favorite people. But friends kept giving us banties, and they refused to get along with the rest of the flock. They flew over the fence and dug up the garden. And the roosters always fought. Our Plymouth Rock rooster spent many a night in a juniper tree, because a smart-alec banty cock made him flee for his life.

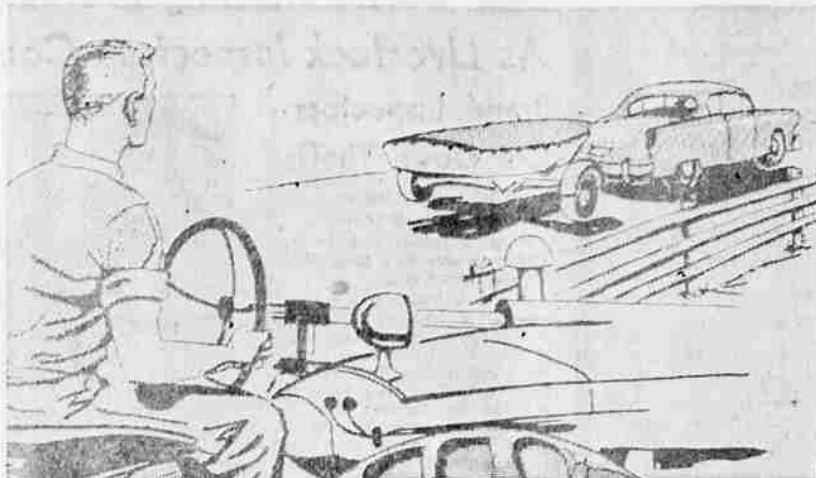
The Plymouth Rock rooster ended up in the stewing kettle. I can't say I've been fond of chicken and dumplings since.

Plan to Lose, Experts Advise
Of course you'll want a milk cow. There's nothing like fresh, rich milk and cream and country butter. Nothing, that is, except a hole in the head.

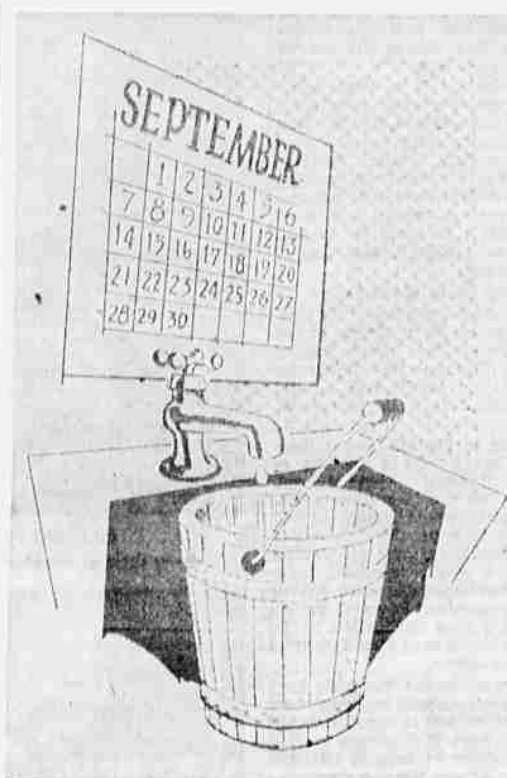
Cows have a way of reproducing their kind. Part of the progeny will be female. You may end up with a herd. When we went out of the dairy business, we had four milk cows and several calves. We still have a cream separator, a milk pail or two and several cream cans. We also have a churn. It might come in handy for mixing powdered milk with water.

It was fun, though, taking the cream can to the creamery and collecting the check. That way, I got ice cream wholesale.

Life in the country is loaded with risks. Weather conditions and markets often change with little warning. Crop and livestock diseases may cut deeply into expected returns. "Be prepared to ac-



WHO, ME? JEALOUS? — "All work and no play makes jack" isn't always true on the part-time farm. Sometimes it's all work and no pay. Rewards often are esthetic, not mercenary.



OLD OAKEN BUCKET — Even in well-plumbed farm homes, the water supply, after irrigation season, is touch-and-go. Cisterns invariably run dry at inopportune times.

cept some losses," say the experts. "Plan your management and financial programs accordingly." In other words, don't expect any profit. That way, you won't be disappointed.

Then there's the matter of transportation. If the round-trip to job, school and church is four miles, you can figure on six dollars a

month, \$72 a year. For ten miles, \$15 and \$180. For 20 miles, \$30 and \$360. That's a lot of money. Maybe you'd rather have a trip to Las Vegas.

Work While Friends Fish
And consider the domestic water problem. If you have a cistern, fed by an irrigation ditch, you're set in summer. In winter, prepare

to rent or borrow a tank truck, or pay to have water hauled from town. The bigger the family, the more water is required for baths, laundry and the like. Livestock must have water in winter as well as in summer. Our cistern always runs dry while I'm cooking the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. Don't ask me why. It just happens that way.

When we moved to the farm, we had visions of making it help "pay for itself." This is a common pitfall. It can be done, of course. But something has to suffer. You will find yourself working around the clock, if you succeed. Maybe it won't bother you to look up from your farm chores to the road beyond, and see friends from the city heading to a lake for the weekend, pulling a boat on a trailer.

One summer we went in big for recreation. We bought a badminton set, a pingpong table for the patio, a croquet set and horse-shoes. This year, we haven't even marked the badminton court. The pingpong table is stored in the garage. The croquet set and horse-shoes are in the storeroom. We watch television.

Last year, we concentrated on beautifying the yard. We bought garden furniture and a power mower, planted a couple of patches of new lawn and set out flowers. Most of our flowers were annuals. We planted several shrubs. Of the small plants, the only perennials to survive the winter were a few hollyhocks and a columbine. It just happened that the columbine was planted at the end of the step that leads from the patio to the back hall of the house. That was the one spot where the puppy wanted to curl up and sleep. So he dug himself a nice big hole. The columbine was a casualty.

Home, Sweet Mortgage, Home
Our main interest is our rambling farm-style house, complete with picture windows, electric dishwasher, mortgage and a leak

in the roof. We have stacks of asphalt tile to finish the floor in the den. We have stacks of wallboard, to finish the attic guest room. We haven't any time, and we haven't any money. But we have lots of plans.

The guest room will be done in brown, turquoise and yellow. We'll use a wallpaper in a quaint snowflake pattern, in brown. The settee in the dormer window alcove will have a turquoise corduroy cover. I'll make a bedspread and curtains from old sheets, dyed yellow. The room has its own chimney, and we'll look for a perfect little antique stove.

Some day, maybe there'll be a wall of used brick, with a fireplace, at the end of the living room. And another bathroom, off the Young Man's room. And the back porch could be converted into a summer dining room, with no trouble at all.

In remodeling, we goofed now and then. We put the fireplace in the den, and we haven't used it as much as we planned. The closets could be a little larger. The bathroom is too big, but that's where we'll put a new automatic washing machine, eventually.

Gloom Lighting Has Charm
We're happy with our knotty-pine living room floor, the roominess of our made-over house, and our light fixtures converted from old hanging lamps. We aren't a bit sensitive when Friend Electrician whips out a flashlight, in order to read something we show him in the paper. We think that an old house, like old silver, has more charm. We're still glad we have an acreage. There's plenty of room for the Chief's logging trucks. They're out in back, and don't obstruct the view. There's plenty of room for the birds. I have learned to recognize the songs and plumage of more kinds than I had ever known. And we wouldn't trade our view of the mountains for all the rice in China.

In all fairness, perhaps I should say that we aren't typical of all families who want to live in the country. To us, the land baron's pride of ownership is more important than money in the bank.

'Gray Bullets' Baffle Hunters

By VIRGIL RUPP
Bulletin Staff Writer

"The gray bullet..." No, it's not a comic strip. It's the name given the mourning dove by hunters who have fired a box of shells at the bobbing, weaving little speedsters and have still to make their first hit.

Earliest of Central Oregon's bird hunts (Sept. 1 this year), the dove season is cherished by hunters who want revenge, by hunters (novices) who think it will be a snap.

When the work piles up and the pasture gets dry, we do what we can — then relax with a cup of coffee. There'll always be another day.

by gourmets who can shoot straight and fast or have friends that can, and by manufacturers of shotgun ammunition. The last is an obvious choice.

Central Oregon's dove hunting is generally excellent. Flights of the gray-blue bird with the soft song are already moving into the juniper forests and high desert country east of Bend.

Preferred hunting grounds are freshly harvested grain fields and water holes. Best of all is when the two are adjacent, for then a couple of hunters can keep the birds swinging back and forth until limits are taken or the ammunition is expended.

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