

Each generation delights in events of a county fair



Farmer's Daughter
By ANNA ZIEGLER

THE Henderson County Fair always made July a busy month for my family.

The morning of general projects day was a mad scramble as my sister and I rushed to put together garden entries, make floral arrangements and load everything for the trip to Stronghurst.

Armed with string and tape, Mom took charge of attaching the right tags to the right projects. Dad usually escaped the frenzy for the bank's farmer appreciation breakfast, which was conveniently scheduled for the same morning.

To this day, I have never made it to that breakfast. My brother and sister maybe had a few things to finish putting together on fair morning, but I was the queen of last-minute projects.

One-hour film development was the saving grace of my photography project on multiple occasions. I can remember pulling basting out of sewing projects on

the way to the fair more often than I care to admit.

Under my bed at home, a box of fair ribbons sits collecting dust. I now realize the true value wasn't in the blue ribbons or even the premium money, but in the learning experience of completing the projects.

As I heard a cattle judge say once, "Steers are the tools we use to shape these young people." The hard work and responsibility of preparing a steer for the show ring matters more in the long run than who won showmanship and who took grand champion.

That's good news for those of us who tended to fall short of the purple ribbons more often than not. I managed to win some purple ribbons over the years, but I'm pretty sure I learned just as much from the projects that received red ratings.

A family affair

Whether it's getting up before the sun rises to wash pigs with your cousins or playing mud volleyball with your siblings, the fair gives families a chance to work and play together.

As a kid, if my parents didn't want to

stay late for the big demolition derby or the rodeo, I knew I could probably get a ride home with Grandma and Grandpa. My grandparents' first date was at the Henderson County Fair back in 1954, and I don't think they've missed one since.

From the little kids in the bucket calf show to the quilts and baked goods made by elderly ladies, the county fair brings multiple generations together.

Last year, a 4-year-old from the north end of the county earned a little premium money in the open show. In fact, her soybean entry beat her dad's because she cleaned her beans and picked out all the splits. After watching her older siblings and cousins exhibit, she just couldn't wait to be old enough for 4-H.

I didn't start quite that young, but the county fair was always a big part of my summer.

Unfortunately I'm not going to make it to the fair this year. So if you get the chance, drink a lemonade shake-up for me and enjoy your county fair.

Ziegler grew up on a family farm near LaHarpe and is a recent graduate of the University of Illinois.

Out with the clutter

IF you have papers scattered in your office or spare parts littering the floor of your shop, you may need a lesson on getting rid of clutter.

A new "Dealing With Clutter" Web site could help you get organized.

"If you're keeping every bill, receipt and financial statement because you're afraid to toss anything; if you can never find anything once you put it away; or if you want less clutter but can't figure out how to get started, you need to visit this Web site," says Jane Scherer, University of Illinois Extension urban programs specialist and director of Web programming.

Even though the site is not specific toward agriculture, there are some helpful tips in any clutter situation. If you're still having trouble deciding whether or not to part with certain items, use these emergency clutter questions.

1. How long has it been since I used this?
2. Do I like it?
3. Does it work properly? Is it broken?
4. Do I have more than one kind of this thing? How many do I need?
5. If I keep this, what will I get rid of to make room for it?
6. Can I locate this information somewhere else if I need it?

Source: University of Illinois

■ Find the site at www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/clutter/dealing.html.

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