

-Portrait of farm wives-

# Adjusting to farm life was tough

By MAGGIE HANNAH  
Herald staff writer

While there are a whole group of people around who believe that city women have no trouble adjusting to rural living a R.R.1, Georgetown farmer's wife says they are all wrong.

Mary Lou Olah is working on a degree from the University of Guelph with a sociology major and has done a considerable amount of research on the problems city women encounter in trying to become a part of the rural community.

Her own experiences are added to her research since she was raised in Boston, Massachusetts, specialized in intensive care and cancer treatment nursing in the United States and became a part-time farmer's wife eight years ago when she and her

husband, George, bought a farm on Trafalgar Road opposite the Silvercreek service station.

**RURAL WOMEN**

"It seemed to me when I looked at the research that a lot of women were sold on an 1 1/2 acre estate and wound up on a 50 acre working farm," Mrs. Olah says. "If they don't see themselves as rural women or want to be recognized

as farmers' wives they're going to have a bad go of it."

"If they learn to do some chores and are willing to laugh at their mistakes they'll be accepted in four or five years."

It isn't just a matter of difference in lifestyles, she says, it's a difference in philosophy all down the line. Women whose background is old Ontario and who are involved in the church will at least be accepted while those of immigrant background will have a very tough time integrating.

Women who drive their children to sports events, clubs and similar off-the-farm entertainments won't be well accepted in the farm community but they will make new friends and find a reference group through these activities.

Mrs. Olah says she and her husband didn't fit well into either the old or the new rural community. They weren't out to impress anyone with all the great things they had either in their home or on their farm. Their machinery is second hand and requires a lot of pampering and babying to keep it running but it gets the job done.

"We own 14 acres but we farm almost 200 acres," she says. George will dicker with anyone who has a bit of land they aren't using and that's what we farm. It would be nice if it were all in one place but we weren't prepared to sell our souls to a bank to buy that sort of farm. Our equipment may be old but it's ours. Like, we have a tractor that's three companies before Massey-Ferguson so I don't know how old it is. It may be rotten and cranky and fussy but it's ours. According to the experts at the University of Guelph the way we farm is suicide."

**WAS HARMLESS**

"When he came back the officer wanted to know why I hadn't just opened the door and asked him what he wanted," she recalls. "I knew that if he didn't understand then there was no way I could explain it to him. Now that I've gotten used to the country and I've come to realize that most of the people I meet are harmless I could do what the officer suggested but it's taken time to accept that."

**LOGICAL IDEA**

When the front legs appeared the logical idea seemed to be to grab hold and pull so she did and the calf arrived quite safely. She cleared the membranes from the mouth and nose but it still seemed to be having trouble breathing. Memories of maternity ward training suggested the infant might be full of mucus as human infants so often are and the remedy would be to hoist it by the heels and let it drain. She unfortunately forgot that an 80-pound calf and an eight-pound human are a slightly different proposition when it comes to lifting them.

**OLD FARM RESIDENTS**

Older farm residents are the greatest resource Halton Hills has in Mrs. Olah's opinion. She refers to herself as being the typical city girl who sought solutions to all her problems in a book. A typical example would be her efforts to find a way of making butter with the cream from the cow they were milking. She tried shaking the cream in a jar and using her hand mixer but both methods proved too slow. The books suggested various types of churns but each had some fault that made it impractical for her purposes. Finally she happened to ask an older neighbour what she did with her cream and explained the problems she was having making butter. The woman's solution was to "throw it in the blender." So simple so practical. And it takes about two minutes. But you don't find it in a book.



Mary Lou Olah with daughters Elizabeth, 14, , Jenny, 8, and Margaret, 11.

**OPEN ARMS**

Part time farmers traditionally have a terrible reputation in the farm community, Mrs. Olah says, since they tended to drive down prices, however the farm community accepted her husband almost with open arms. He was raised on a 50 acre truck farm in Virginia so many of the traditions and customs he encountered were familiar and he could thus fit right in. In fact, some members of the community

like many men who work away from the farm her husband felt that since she was at home she could look after the cattle and she got so sick of chasing them off the road that at one point she even strung fence to keep them in.

"The men at the garage

floor which are used for storage."

"I don't do as much baking as farmer's wives used to do either," she says. "They used to have pie and cake and fruit preserves for desert all the time. I don't think it's necessary so I have only one kind of desert. It doesn't hurt them to settle for fruit and ice cream once in a while if I don't get any baking done. Women used to cater to their men a lot more. My husband's the easiest man to feed. He even likes casseroles and a lot of farm men won't touch them."

**FREZES VEGETABLES**

Although she says she isn't much of a gardener Mrs. Buchanan says she freezes a lot of vegetables and makes pickles and relishes and jams.

"It's got to the point where I wonder if preserving is worth it," she says. "If you bought a case of canned goods on sale it would almost be cheaper than preserving it yourself by the time you consider all the work and energy costs involved."

**COUNTRY WIVES**

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OTTAWA - A federal contract worth \$71,387 has been awarded to DRG Stationery Co. of Georgetown to provide the supply and services department with note books, the department of supply and services announced Monday.

It was one of 138 unclassified contracts worth \$10,000 or more that were awarded by the department to Canadian companies during the week ended July 20. Total value of the contracts amounted to \$13,716,433.

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