

PAM IN PORTLAND
by Pamela Fry

The sub-title to this particular column should be "A Quiet Day in the Country." It is a reply to all those friends who - every so often look at me sideways and say, "But Pamela, don't you find living in the country ... uh ... a bit boring?" Now before I begin a description of this particular day, I should say it's not exactly typical. There are other days when I find time to do lots of pleasant things: play bridge, visit and be visited by friends - even a bit of bird-watching. Also, I did not come to Portland to "retire". I am indeed very un-retired - mainly because I have a portable trade. Set me down anywhere, and as long as I have my typewriter with me and there's a bit of desk space, I'll go to work. Anyway, back to this particular day, which occurred about three weeks ago. I got up a bit later than I intended. Bad, because I was expecting a lot of action. Decided to skip my exercises. Very bad. But I must, at least, wash my hair. So a quick breakfast, and then I took the telephone into the bathroom - it has a conveniently long extension. Sure enough, it rang just as I was getting into the shower. Diane Haskins wanted to drop over to discuss a project we were involved in. Twenty minutes? Fine. Leapt into the shower, washed hair, dried myself, got dressed. Wham Bam thank you Pam. Diane arrived with some lovely fresh asparagus. She was as busy as I was, so we had a brief discussion and off she went.

I was still trying to get my hair dry when the Bayview Marina called. My parcel from Toronto had arrived. Hair hopeless, so I put on a rain hat to conceal it, even though (for once!) it wasn't raining. I was almost out of the door when I remembered I had three books overdue at the library. Oh well, I'd drop them off before I went to the Marina. The library is - literally - at my back door, so I took my usual short-cut across the grounds of the Community Hall. Except I forgot (guess what?) that it had been raining heavily the previous day. I was up to my ankles in mud and water before I realized my mistake. Joyce, from the library window, watched me leaping - un-gazelle-like - over all the deepest puddles. I'm afraid she laughed. Rush back (by the road!) to the apartment, changed my shoes and then off to the Marina. Took my little shopping cart with me, so I could pick up a few things on my way back. Just as well I had it with me - the parcel weighed a ton. Home at last, I was beginning to need lunch rather badly.

Just as I put the water on for my beautiful asparagus Fred James appeared at my door. He was planning to move the outdoor tap - the one for the garden hose - to a more convenient place. Under my kitchen window, in fact. Would I mind clearing out my under-the-sink cupboard, so he could get at the pipes? No problem, said I, turning off the water for the asparagus.

Burrowing into the cupboard I was immediately involved in unexpected spring cleaning. Why had I found it necessary to buy two or even three - of so many things? But here, at least, was that old toothbrush I'd been needing to clean my silver.

As I worked, I started brooding about the size of the manuscript. Obviously a big job, and for some time I'd been frustrated by a shortage of work-space. What to do? Suddenly I was hit by an inspiration. Why not a door? Couldn't a door go right on top of my too-small desk?

Had just put on the water again for the asparagus when Fred came back. While he took measurements under the sink, I asked about the door. Was there an old one hanging around in the James' workshop? Quite possible, he said. Cooperative as always, he went to measure the space around my desk. Then he left, and I went back to cooking the asparagus. The phone rang. It was my friends in Westport, wanting me to come for supper. Love to but can't, I explained. Was having one of those days!

Finally, I sat down to eat my lunch. The asparagus was perfect. I had almost finished it when Fred returned. A miracle! He'd already found a door! "From the old bank," he told me. (Forgot to ask him if he meant the original Gallagher Bank. What fun if it were!)

Gulping down the last bit of asparagus, I hurriedly cleared my desk. The door fitted perfectly. Now all my reference books could sit at the back, in easy reach, while still leaving me plenty of work-space. Wonderful.

A bit more tidying and re-organizing, and I was ready to settle down. The next eight hours were spent in a major attack on the manuscript - it had to be back in Toronto within four days. (I did take a short supper-break.) Around ten-thirty, slightly cross-eyed from concentration, I climbed into bed. To relax, I read another book. Naturally. A nice soothing murder mystery. So much for boredom in the country!

I will admit, however, that when I first moved here I was looking forward - never to boredom - but to leisure. Lots of lovely time to myself. No distractions. After these many years I would finally sort my papers; get all my photos into frames or albums; re-do certain neglected chairs; learn how to dry flowers and other exciting, crafty things. Well, so far I have got through one box of papers. Letters, mostly. Reading them took ages. It was such fun. For example, a friend writing from England in the Fifties reported on a brief exchange she had had in a grocery store. "I notice one brand of margarine costs four pennies more than the other," she said to the girl behind the counter. "What's the difference?" "One's cheaper. One's more expensive." (!!)

Besides reading those letters I have also cleaned and gilded one semi-antique chair. Washed my curtains. Other pieces of furniture continue to gaze at me

reproachfully. And three shelves, plus two kitchen cupboards, are still jammed with papers and Unidentified Objects. Afterall, I remind myself, you've only been here a year. And you did break an ankle. True. Except most of my Portland friends are just as busy as I am. Often, they seem to get twice as much done, and in a remarkable relaxed manner. In spite of those occasional crises, when someone says, "There's so much to do this week I am going/have gone mad..." Yet, no matter what the pressures, there always seems to be time for those nice, cosy chats in the local stores, the bank, the post-office It is my considered opinion that people in the country accomplish as much, if not more, than people in the city. And in a much happier fashion. As for me, I am still learning the rhythms of country life. Maybe, by next year

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Lorraine's
Market Garden
of Lyndhurst

Strawberries	Tomatoes	Beets
Peas	Cucumbers	Peppers
Spinach	Cabbage	Radishes
New Potatoes	Beans	Garlic
Broccoli	Corn	
Cauliflowers	Spanish Onions	

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