



# Life on the farm

*Judging from the number of people who sent us thoughts about living on a farm, we can say that the family farm has a lot to do with forming the North Carolina character. And in many places across the state, the family farm is alive and well and growing the same character. Even those of you who admitted to endless hard work and scarce luxuries agreed that living on a farm builds strong wills, strong backs and a true understanding of nature.*

*It's fun, too. Seven of us kids grew up in farm country, and I remember the good times that came after feeding the animals, weeding the gardens, cleaning the barn, mowing, raking, and picking the corn, squash, cherries and strawberries.*

—Michael E.C. Gery



[www.carolinacountry.com](http://www.carolinacountry.com)

Thanks to everyone who sent in stories. You can see more stories on our Web site. Next month we'll publish your memories of the first meal you ever made. [Deadline was May 15.] See the remaining themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series on page 18.

## Close to home

My dad has a small farm in Ashe County (pictured above) that I grew up on. We had a few milk cows, some chickens and a hog. I liked to gather the eggs and feed the hog. I didn't always get to the house with the eggs. Sometimes I could fall or drop some eggs and break them. I was a little afraid of the cows. My dad would stack the hay and my brother and I would carry the shocks on hay poles.

After I got married I moved about two miles away. My husband has a bigger farm and we grow tobacco and raise cattle. I am still afraid of the cows. I love being outside working in our garden, the tobacco or putting up hay. We can get very busy at times through the summer. Living on a farm is hard work, but I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Mary Ellis  
Lansing, Blue Ridge EMC

## Catching something for supper

I was born Oct. 12, 1956. My daddy was 50 years old at the time. Behind our house was an old house where we would take off tobacco and eat boiled peanuts. Daddy had chickens which he raised from bitties.

One day we were in the old house tending tobacco and a chicken got out of the fence. Daddy said throw something at it. I threw a tobacco stick at it. Back then and still now, my favorite food was chicken pastry. By accident, I killed the chicken. Mama dressed the chicken that night, and we had chicken pastry.

Daddy left me on April 20, 1993, after suffering from Alzheimer's and being bed-ridden for one and a half years. This is a tribute to my daddy, Berry Mitchell.

Doris Burroughs  
Mount Olive, Tri-County EMC



### A farmer since day one

Trey is a very happy little farm boy. He loves tractors, cows, hay, tobacco and helping with all repairs and chores associated with the farm. As you can tell, he is crazy about John Deeres and has numerous play tractors and equipment. Just look at the smile on his face and you can see that little Trey enjoys being in the tobacco field with the adults.

A common day for Trey is going with DD (grandfather) to the fields and actually harvesting the leaves like the men. Once the trailers are loaded with the tobacco leaves, he instructs the tractor driver how to go get it to the barn.

When he was less than a year old he began going with his father and DD to feed the cows. We had an orphan female calf born this past winter that Trey named Sophia. He could hardly wait to get home from preschool to feed her the bottle. He and Sophia have become good buddies.

It is so amazing to us that this little 3-year-old knows so much about farming. He and his DD spend many hours on the floor with the little tractors playing farming.

*Lynwood Clayton  
Rougemont, Piedmont EMC*

### The family that farms together

One of the best things that I remember about living on a farm was having family and friends working together and helping one another. If someone had corn to put up, all the relatives would come together to husk corn. We worked all afternoon. Then we had supper together and later sang or played games or visited. Helping each other was fun.

My first butchering experience was at Grandma's with all the aunts and girl cousins. Butchering 50 old hens on an assembly line was fun and easy. We laughed and visited as we worked. We young girls learned by watching and helping where we could.

My grandfather, father and uncles shared the work of plowing, disking, planting and harvesting. They always tried to finish the wheat harvest by July 4. Then we would all celebrate with homemade ice cream and fireworks. These close times of togetherness taught us responsibility and cooperation and a sense of belonging.

*Eileen Penner  
Harmony, EnergyUnited*

### Real neighbors

Although I didn't grow up or live on a farm, I would like to share this story about Carteret County farmers with you and your readers.

Poor, hungry and living in a shack near some tobacco farmers is how we grew up in Carteret County. One of the farmers also had a small vegetable field for his personal use. With a quarter or dollar in hand, we pulled a small wagon to the vegetable farmer's home and asked him if we could buy some vegetables. He scratched his head, looked at my brothers and me, saw the wagon and then told us to get as many cabbage heads and string beans as we wanted.

The next year those tobacco fields near the house turned into vegetable fields. We ate a lot of potatoes, corn, cabbage and string beans, and sometimes we didn't pay the farmers for what we took.

Many years later, I went back to those farmers and confessed, apologized, asked for their forgiveness and told them I wanted to pay for the vegetables. They talked among themselves, looked at me, and then smiled. One of them stood up and said, "Linda, have you ever wondered why we planted vegetables near your home and not tobacco? We knew about your family's situation, and we wanted to make sure you children got your bellies full."

*Linda Thompson  
Havelock, Carteret-Craven Electric*



### Earning his keep

I was the last of seven children to be born on a small farm in Wake County in 1940. My father's belief was that every living thing on the farm had to work to justify its existence or it did not belong. If a cat would not chase a mouse, it had to go. If a dog would not run a rabbit or tree a squirrel, it had to go.

For my seventh birthday, my father bought a goat. In his blacksmith shop he made a two-wheel cart and harness for the goat. I was then given the responsibility to do errands around the neighborhood and go to the local country store and back. As time passed and I got older, my interest in the transportation changed and the goat and cart sat idle. My dad could not bear the thought of the goat not earning his keep, so back to the blacksmith shop he went to make a special harness for the goat to pull a garden push plow. From that day forward until his death, the goat's chore was to pull this plow while my dad plowed the one-acre garden we had every year.

*Rommy Campbell  
Littleton, Halifax EMC*



### Learning early

There is no greater pleasure than raising a child on a farm. In today's fast-paced society, children have missed out on the joys of simple living—playing games outside like kick the can, catching fireflies in mayonnaise jars and watching for the barn swallows to know spring has arrived.

I am so fortunate to raise my daughter on the same farm where her great-grandfather toiled 60 years ago, where her grandfather grew a bumper tomato crop and her father learned the lessons of hard work.

My little one enjoys the baby calves that start arriving in March, and helping her grandmother hoe in the garden. I caught this picture of my daughter just after she and Mamaw were starting a new row of corn. As you can tell, she is learning to pick out her own clothes and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

*Julie Farthing  
Banner Elk, Blue Ridge EMC*

### Getting dirty

Getting dirty on the farm is what I remember most, and what fun it was! After a rain shower, my sister and I would always go outside and shake a small umbrella tree in our front yard. The water came down like a shower. Going barefoot and splashing in the mud puddles was fun. No one noticed how dirty our feet got living on a farm.

We liked to join Daddy in the fields, riding the tractor as he plowed the garden. After a few hours, Daddy would stop, break open a watermelon, and we'd eat it while sitting under the shade of a leafy oak tree. Now our faces were almost as dirty as our feet.

Our next task was to pick blackberries. We'd eat one and put one in the bucket until our tummies and the buckets were full. Now our hands were dirty, too. When we returned with the berries, Momma had a big tub of water, warmed by the sun, ready for us to clean off the dirt from our day on the farm.

We went to bed early because on the farm we always got up early, ready for another day of getting dirty again.

*Shirley Lawrence Frank  
Lexington, EnergyUnited*

### Hollerin' for Grandmother

Where I grew up was nothing more than a wide place in the road. We were dairy farmers and lived near my dad's parents. My mother and grandmother were "stay at home wives." They did the child rearing and most of the rest.

It was a known fact to us children that if you wanted to go to Grandmother's house you had to complete two very crucial tasks: You had to convince Mom that Grandmother wanted to see us very badly, and that Grandmother would meet us at the field gate. After a phone call, you completed the first task. Now for the fun part. We would leave our house and climb the hill from the backyard. We would cross the cow pasture and come to our "hollerin spot." From here we could see Grandmother's house. We hollered in unison to let Grandmother know we were there. She would come from the house, her apron strings in the wind, and walk the quarter mile up the dirt drive and meet us. As we passed the milk barn back to the house we would tell her of our adventure, Grandmother "oohing" and "aahing" as if we were world travelers.

*Paul Senter  
Elkin, Surry-Yadkin EMC*

## Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

#### August 2005 What I Learned From My Kids

Sometimes children can teach grown-ups a thing or two.

*Deadline: June 15*

#### September 2005 Celebrity Look-alikes

Photos of people who are dead-ringers for someone famous. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

*Deadline: July 15*

#### October 2005 My Favorite Photo

North Carolina people, places, things. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

*Deadline: August 15*

#### November 2005 It's the Thought That Counts

The dumbest gift you ever received.

*Deadline: Sept. 15*

#### December 2005 Holiday Mishaps

Those holiday plans that just didn't work out as you hoped they would.

*Deadline: Oct. 15*

#### The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616  
Or by e-mail: [carolina.country@ncemcs.com](mailto:carolina.country@ncemcs.com).  
Or through the Web: [www.carolinacountry.com](http://www.carolinacountry.com)