

CLOSE CALL

By Mike Harris

If you never lived out in the country, much on your own, you probably will not relate to this story. Living with no cop on the corner, no fire house down the block, is something city dwellers cannot comprehend. I married a city girl, prepared to live in the city. However, "Man thinks and God winks."

Without belaboring the how and why, I married this city girl, whose only experience with raw nature was "Prospect Park" in the heart of the borough of Brooklyn in New York City.

I owned a farm. I had tried to sell, ten acres on a back dirt road, no electricity, and vandalized during the war, for whatever was not available to whoever needed whatever, 2x4's, plumbing fixtures, electric wire. The farm had a gasoline powered generator – that too was missing. My brother and I went to this abandoned, vandalized, farm, and proceeded to make it a possible habitat for a New York City girl.

My brother and I were always supportive of one another. Upon my marriage and his discharge, when he heard of my intention he first said, "You are nuts! Do not even think about it, tell my sister-in-law to forget it." My answer was, "You tell her, I already told her and she insists." I will give him credit, he tried, but did not prevail. At this point he rolled up his sleeves and said he would help me with this crazy project. After seeing the farm my new partner asked, "Can this be made livable?" "Sure," I replied. "Can YOU make it livable?" And my brag, "Yes!" So we left the city. I will give my partner credit, she never complained, and helped in any she could. We had many good years on the farm.

Living rural means being self-sufficient. In rebuilding the farm we planned for the future, a new well with an inexhaustible water supply, no farm can exist without water, we petitioned the utility "Atlantic City Electric Co." and they extended the electric line to the farm. We were the end of the line. Now these improvements needed backup, a gasoline engine next to the new well would assure a supply of water if city electric should fail. Livestock could not do without water! The next backup purchase, a ten k.w. war surplus generator with the installation of a double-throw switch. If city electric fails there is a backup.

1957 hurricane Hazel hits Atlantic City. Rural electricity to the outlying areas is out! There is a run on generators, mine is already in place, the poultry farm has expanded to over seven thousand laying hens, no disruption on the Harris farm, the stock has water and lights. A disruption of routine could have thrown the hens into molt. No eggs, bankruptcy!

Farmers from as far away as ten miles lined up for water. My well ran four days, twenty four non-stop hours, filling vessels with life-saving water.

A real close call!