

## June Hilbert – High Heels to Gumboots

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

A head of broccoli. That sounds like the beginning of a healthy supper. In one case, a head of broccoli also became the beginning of a healthy courtship and a happy marriage. This marriage entailed the bride's transformation from city girl to farm wife. The woman who experienced the transformation is now a rural Kansas author. It's today's Kansas Profile.

June Hilbert is a farm wife and the author of a new book which describes her experiences. She grew up in Burlingame and was exposed to farm life through her grandparents. But after studying at Emporia State and Kansas State, June became a full-fledged city girl in Topeka. She got a job at Capitol Federal downtown and enjoyed the urban lifestyle of the capital city.

In 1982, she took up competitive running and joined the local runner's club. While volunteering to help with a local athletic event, she met the event chairman: A former farmboy and Kansas Department of Agriculture staff person named Bill Hilbert. Bill asked her to lunch and then to dinner.

That's where the head of broccoli came in. After their first date, Bill didn't send flowers – that would be too boring. Instead, our creative farmboy showed up at her desk with a bouquet consisting of a head of broccoli – bigger than a dinner plate. It made an impression.

The two fell in love and ultimately were married. Bill had a cattle operation near Valley Falls and June joined him there but continued to work in Topeka. They later moved to their current farm near the rural community of Meriden, population 807 people. Now, that's rural.

When the two were wed, June began the transition from city girl to farm wife. It was a bit of culture shock. Country living, big farm equipment, and recalcitrant cattle were all a change from her everyday life in the city.

June continued to work at Capitol Federal. During lunch and breaks at work, she regaled her coworkers with tales of her (mis)adventures on the farm. Her coworkers greatly enjoyed her stories and would say: "You should write a book." Eventually, she decided to do just that.

With help from a neighbor and published authors Max and Carol Yoho, June joined a writer's group and began the process of authoring a book about her experiences. In August 2013, the book was published. It is titled "From High Heels to Gumboots – One Cow Pie at a Time."

The book describes the hilarious misadventures which farm women can experience. Unfailingly, it seemed these incidents would happen at a time when Bill had a professional obligation elsewhere and June had been left in charge. Suddenly the city girl was faced with perplexing situations such as how to find and catch a missing steer or how to help a cow in labor. It was a new world.

I don't think there is an operator's manual for farm wife living. Maybe this book is the closest thing to it. It is written with June's wry humor. For example, at calving time she describes herself as a Certified Bovine Midwife Assistant. She writes, "First calf heifers do not read *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. They do not attend baby

showers...They do not attend pre-natal classes." Assisting those heifers can be a major job on the farm.

June also coined terms such as St. Barb, the Patron Saint of Barbed Wire Fences; Pasture Pyrotechnics; and the Mars and Venus of the Laundry Room.

June's chronicle of trials, joys and triumphs on the farm make for a very interesting and enjoyable book. For more information or to order, go to amazon.com or to [www.highheelstogumboots.com](http://www.highheelstogumboots.com).

A head of broccoli. It's not just a healthy supper, it became the beginning of a romance for June and Bill Hilbert which would take her on a journey - from high heels to gumboots. We salute June Hilbert and farm women everywhere for making a difference with their contributions to family and farm. We appreciate this wonderful book which describes June's transformation. We might say that this journey in her life has helped her get a head.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.