

# LIFE on the farm

By DIETER KRIEG

"Hey, Marv, I need some help with this one!"

Staggering towards me with an armful of rocks — his eyes scanning the ground for more — Marvin meandered to the flatbed wagon and dropped the stones.

"That one must be pregnant," he said, as he approached with a sheepish grin on his face.

"Must be," I said laughingly, "let's get it out of here before it produces a whole lot of little ones for us to pick up next year"

Grabbing it by each end, Marvin and I lifted the heavy rock and carefully deposited it on to the wagon which was almost full. We had picked thousands of stones — sometimes spending entire afternoons at this task which some people say requires "a strong back and a weak mind."

Most Pennsylvania farmers aren't fortunate enough to not have to remove wagon-loads of stones from their fields each year. You can pick a field clean this year and next year there'll be more.

Marvin, our hired man on Dad's York County farm, said it well when he joked that rocks get pregnant and reproduce. Sometimes it's hard to believe how many rocks appear from year to year. As every farmer knows, rocks are removed from fields to that machinery can be operated safely and

interference from them is reduced to a minimum

It's a tough job — one that's not only hard on a man's back and legs, but also on his enthusiasm. It's the kind of chore that's extremely boring when you're by yourself, but bearable if there's company.

Our calloused hands stood up to the constant lifting, pulling and pushing. Rocks ground soil into our palms in a "mortar and pestle" fashion. We used our arm, back and leg muscles and usually we could tell by the end of the day — or at least by the following morning — that we had labored considerably.

Normally one of us would lift and carry a rock by himself if it didn't weigh over about 150 pounds. A few weighed much more than that, requiring two or three to carry it, and if that wasn't enough we resorted to tractor power.

Nobody looks forward to an afternoon of rock picking, but there were some nice things about it: It gave a fellow the chance to exercise his muscles, and if the weather was nice you could get a neat tan.

What made it amusing was when Marvin came up with some funny comment like a rock being pregnant ... and then I could ask him if he was responsible.

"Heck no," he'd say, "what do you think I am?"



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