

# They beat the odds

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the hard way - by trial and error. I'm not a book person. I may make a mistake once but I try not to make the same mistake again," replies Glenn.

Glenn also did not get much encouragement from his friends and neighbors. People just told him, "You can't do that around here." Even after seeing the success the Elbel's have had, most farmers in this locality will tell anyone that they would never try produce farming.

One of the complications with any type of farming in Western Pennsylvania is the hilly (actually mountainous) terrain. This is especially significant when you are laying irrigation pipe up one side of a hill and down the other.

Glenn has recently chosen to take the route of midwestern farmers for some of his acreage, and has purchased an Ag Rain-Water Reel (see photo), or "His Toy" as Dorothy has named it. This piece of equipment includes 1200 feet of plastic pipe which can be unrolled in a field, used for irrigation, rolled up, and moved to another field. It also includes a turbine which allows regulation of the water pressure. This will be a real time-saver for Glenn, but he cautions that you really can not justify the cost unless you can grow several acres of vegetables.

Irrigation is used more often for frost control on this farm than for water purposes. There are three ponds on the Elbel farm and four irrigation pumps. "You must have a spare pump. It is possible for



Many products can be found in the large walk-in cooler near the Elbel home. Ready for retail sale at Farmer's Markets, trucks parked in nearby towns, or direct from the farm are... beans... and zucchini... and squash.

three to break down in one night and you would lose all of your crops unless you have at least one working pump."

Glenn has learned the hard way that one hour of sleep too long may result in one-half of your profit being lost. The Elbel's now have frost sensor devices in their fields which are connected to the telephone lines. When the temperature drops to a preset level an

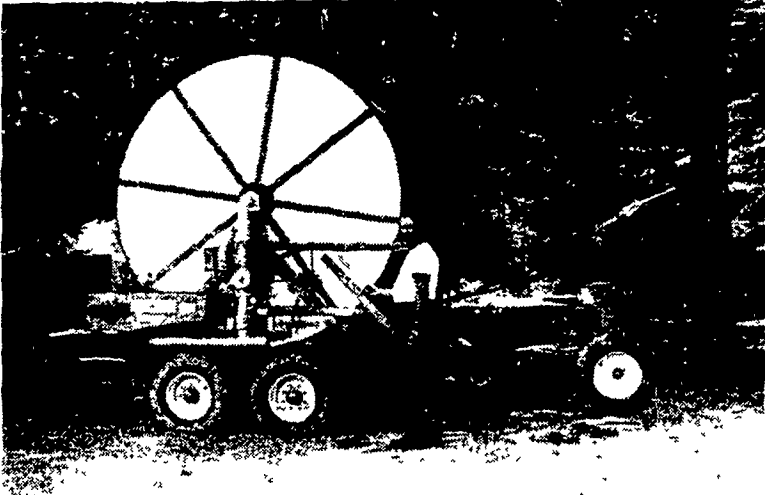
alarm is sounded in their home. "You are still often out checking before it goes off but this is a back-up system," says Glenn.

Pennsylvania's hills create a unique situation in that three-fourths of a mile from the Elbel home, on the acreage they rent, three valleys come together. There has been as much as 20° difference in temperature from this valley to the house!

The location of the Elbel farm has also contributed to its success. Dorothy and Glenn readily admit they have little real competition in selling their farm products.

The primary method of selling is at five Farmer's Markets held in four towns within a 40 mile radius of the farm. They also park a truck filled with produce in Punxsutawney and one in Indiana, too.

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Glenn Elbel proudly shows his Ag Rain-Water Reel. It holds 1200 feet of plastic pipe which can easily be moved from field to field for irrigation purposes.

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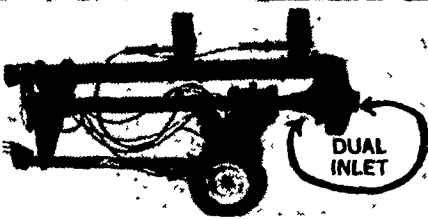
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