

# Fargo makes farming look good



## Looking up

By KEVIN HALL

**M**ANY farms have grain bins or barns to clean. Our farm has "the pit" — a deep cistern that collects water and mud while we wash potatoes.

The pit is typically pretty maintenance-free. We just fire up the pump in the bottom and wash it out. Unfortunately, our pit pump had succumbed to rust and age. In January, Dad decided we needed to take a week and replace it.

After a week of being cold, wet and muddy, and smelling as if I came out of somewhere cold, wet and muddy, I was ready for a weekend in Fargo.

I had decided I was in the market for a couch and an MP3 player. I figured that at some point in the near future, I'd return to more pleasant duties, and I intended to be rockin' out when I did.

My other important errand was — well, my girlfriend told me I had to get a haircut.

In Fargo, the stylist and I exchanged a few stories. Near the end of the trim, we talked about career paths. She asked why I decided to farm.

I said, "I love it, but like anything

else there are good days and frustrating days (I thought: like all of last week). Generally it's challenging and fun."

### An annoying comment

To that, she replied, "Well, at least you get a break in the wintertime; that helps."

That was annoying, but I let it go. She obviously didn't understand much about farming.

With a freshly cropped top, I picked up my girlfriend, and we began a search for the perfect couch. At one furniture store, the saleslady asked me what I did for a living.

"Oh, I farm," I said as I reclined into a leather sofa.

"You definitely need to get your legs up at night then. It's important for your circulation, and you need to relax at the end of the day," she said confidently.

Unsure of how to respond, I uttered, "Yeah, I guess that makes sense."

"Well, farming is hard work. You guys put in long hours. At least you get a break in the winter," she stated with an aura of expertise.

I remained composed, but stunned. I thought, "It's winter, and I just spent the last week 15 feet in the ground in a concrete dungeon of rust and mud. I'm not saying I work harder than anyone, but why does everyone think we spend



the winter on a beach throwing back Bahama Mamas?"

My mood didn't improve at the next store where I picked out an MP3 player.

"Would you like our extended warranty for \$25?" the cashier asked me. "It covers everything, no questions asked; all you have to do is bring it back to the store."

"The MP3 player only costs \$50," I said.

"Yes, but this is a three-year war-

ranty, and all you have to do is bring it to us and we'll take care of it, no questions asked."

"No, thank you." Now, I was annoyed.

"Are you sure, sir? I used to work in tech support, and I saw a lot of these come back with problems."

"Are you saying this will probably break down on me?" I combatively responded. I think farming really teaches you to passionately hate an unreliable machine, no matter what it is. Who in their right mind would buy something that the sales person espoused would break down?

I sighed and handed the MP3 player back to her. "Forget it, then. If the stupid thing is just going to break down, I don't want it."

During my drive back to Hoople, I wondered if Fargo had changed so much in the year or so since I had attended college there. Had working on the farm changed me?

I wasn't sure. But I was ready to go back to work.

*Hall farms at Hoople, N.D., with his family. He has since bought an MP3 player without an extended warranty from another store.*

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