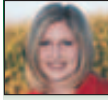


# The next generation inherits dirty jobs



**My Generation**  
By HOLLY SPANGLER

**W**HAT Matt doing in there?" questioned our 3-year-old, Nathan, as he peered down a dark hole on the truck scales, looking for his teenage cousin.

It's a fair bet that Matt was asking himself that very question at that very moment. Covered in mud, soaked to the bone, he was crawling around in the shallow pit beneath the truck scales, shoveling mud into buckets — sometimes shuffling on his knees and lifting shovelfuls of mud over inconveniently placed I-beams. Then he man-handled the buckets over to the hole where my husband (his uncle) hoisted them out and dumped them into the waiting tractor's loader bucket.

In the rain. Working in a space about 3 feet tall.

Four loader buckets later, Matt emerged from the pit, a sad sight to behold. Even Nathan, who idolizes Matt and loves mud, wasn't quite sure what to make of him.

"Why Matt all muddy? Why Matt all

muddy?" he kept asking.

The truth was that Matt had gotten one of the cruddiest jobs on the farm. Cleaning out the scale and grain leg pits is a dirty job worthy of Mike Rowe, on par with any number of dirty, hot, stinky and all-around dreadful farm chores.

And in the circle of life for unpleasant farm jobs, Nathan was simply getting a glimpse of his future. John figured that it had been 10 years since he'd last cleaned out the scale pit. Now it was Matt's turn. Give it another 10 years and Nathan will be a strapping teenager himself — likely a muddy, stooped-over one, bearing a shovel.

Stacking hay in the tops of barns, walking beans, painting barn roofs, chopping weeds. We all do the jobs and pay our dues and then, with any degree of luck, we pass them on to the next generation. Which in this instance was our hard-working nephew and part-time farm employee, Matt.

### Sharing the wealth

I think it's fair to mention that in many cases, our dads simply wait for the day when we'll be able to take over these dreadful little tasks. This also explains why we tend to do these jobs as teenagers or 20-somethings. Or wives. I



**HOLE IN ONE:** Our nephew, Matt Spangler, catches a glimpse of daylight before returning belowground.

very clearly recall scrubbing maggots and dead hide from a calf that had the misfortune of being born in the middle of July to a cow whose mothering instincts didn't include washing him off. (And this is why we don't calve in the summer or own this cow anymore, but I digress.)

Nonetheless, the stuff has to get done.

If a farm is a hierarchy of management, then so are its jobs a hierarchy of enjoyment. On the bottom end: cleaning pits. On the top end: running the shiny four-wheel-drive tractor. To get to the top, you've got to go through the bottom.

Cruddy jobs, much as we despise them, teach perseverance and help develop a work ethic. If you can paint an entire barn roof by hand or toss bales from dawn 'til far beyond dusk, there's not a lot you can't do.

And just think of the empathy you develop for the next poor kid who has to do the job.

**Editor's note:** Want more My Generation? Check out Holly Spangler's blog at [www.PrairieFarmer.com](http://www.PrairieFarmer.com).

■ Want to share your story about farm chores? E-mail [hspangler@farmprogress.com](mailto:hspangler@farmprogress.com).



**SPOTLESS:** Note the lack of mud on Grandpa; he gave up this job a long time ago.

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