

Thank God, at Heart, I'm a Country Boy

By Michael Marsh
President & CEO
National Council of Ag Employers



Marsh

Being raised in a small town on the high plains of eastern Wyoming, I have always felt close kinship to my friends and neighbors who worked the soil, planted seed and prayed Mother Nature would provide conditions allowing harvest of a bumper crop at a good price. I admired their hard work and determination because it's not easy work and, if the rain doesn't come and the grasshoppers or hail do, there's not much to pay the bills that grew the crop.

In fact, (don't tell OSHA), but one of my very first on farm experiences was as a three-year-old atop an open cab Massey Harris combine harvesting Homer Stroud's wheat. I don't recall the cab even having a shade or an umbrella above my head, but I remember being fascinated watching jackrabbits bound away as we mowed along. I also recall scooping up a handful of that freshly harvested wheat and crunching it between my teeth.

There were so many terrific things about growing up not near a city that I can't count them all. There were probably things I missed out on I'm sure but the environs of my spot in rural America was,

in my mind, the greatest place to be.

You could be sure that every day would lead to a new adventure. Whether it was riding my bike with my buddies out to the creek to fish all day and then cursing the puncture weeds that had flattened my tires when it was time to ride home, or playing basketball at the neighbor's house until we couldn't see the rim or mom yelling out the door that it was time for dinner. For a tiny woman, her voice could sure carry.

But, it was also a place, driven by the

agricultural heritage that surrounded it, where you learned life lessons. You learned that a person's word was their bond and that values really mean something. I could earn an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. You understood that you pitched in if your neighbor needed a hand setting water or mending a fence, because they'd be there for you if your car broke down and you needed a ride. Neighbors were, neighborly.

In that small town, I also discovered that if my friends and I were out getting into mischief on a long summer day, my parents always knew about it before I got home so it was always best to toe a tight line.

I moved away from my small town after college but the experiences and lessons I learned stick with me. Now I find myself living in one of the most interesting cities on earth advocating on behalf of some of those same people and lots of others now too, who taught me those life lessons.

It gives me great satisfaction, at the direction of the dedicated NCAE

board of directors, to push back against regulatory challenges and seek solutions that work for agricultural employers. It gives me hope that with the help of committed colleagues we can keep the Congress from coming up with new laws that eat away at farmers' and ranchers' profitability. It gives me energy to wake up each morning knowing the battles we fight in Washington, D.C., can help to assure that this generation of agriculturalists leaves a stronger legacy to the next.

We will have concluded our NCAE annual meeting by the time this article is published, and I will be anxious to share with you in the next article what transpired there. We have a full slate of gangbuster speakers scheduled to address our membership and I hope to have met some of you at the meeting. If you're not yet a member, please consider joining us as one for our next. You'll be in the company of good neighbors.

You know you can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy. Thank God, at heart, I'm a country boy.

Guest Worker Program Finds Increased Use

By Tom Karst
The Packer

As produce growers scramble to find legal help, positions certified under the Department of Labor's H-2A agricultural guest worker program

two years.

And, with questions about immigration enforcement and reform efforts under the Trump administration, the trend will continue, said Jon DeVaney, vice-chairman of the National Council of Agricultural Employers and executive director of the Washington State Tree Fruit

Association.

DeVaney said Jan. 16 there is a lot of discussion about what might be included in a Capitol Hill spending bill necessary to avoid a government shutdown January. Some of the possibilities include a fix for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and possibly other elements

relating to immigration reform and enforcement.

"What I'm hearing it is really uncertain what may be included, and there is a strong desire to include a DACA fix and limited funding for