

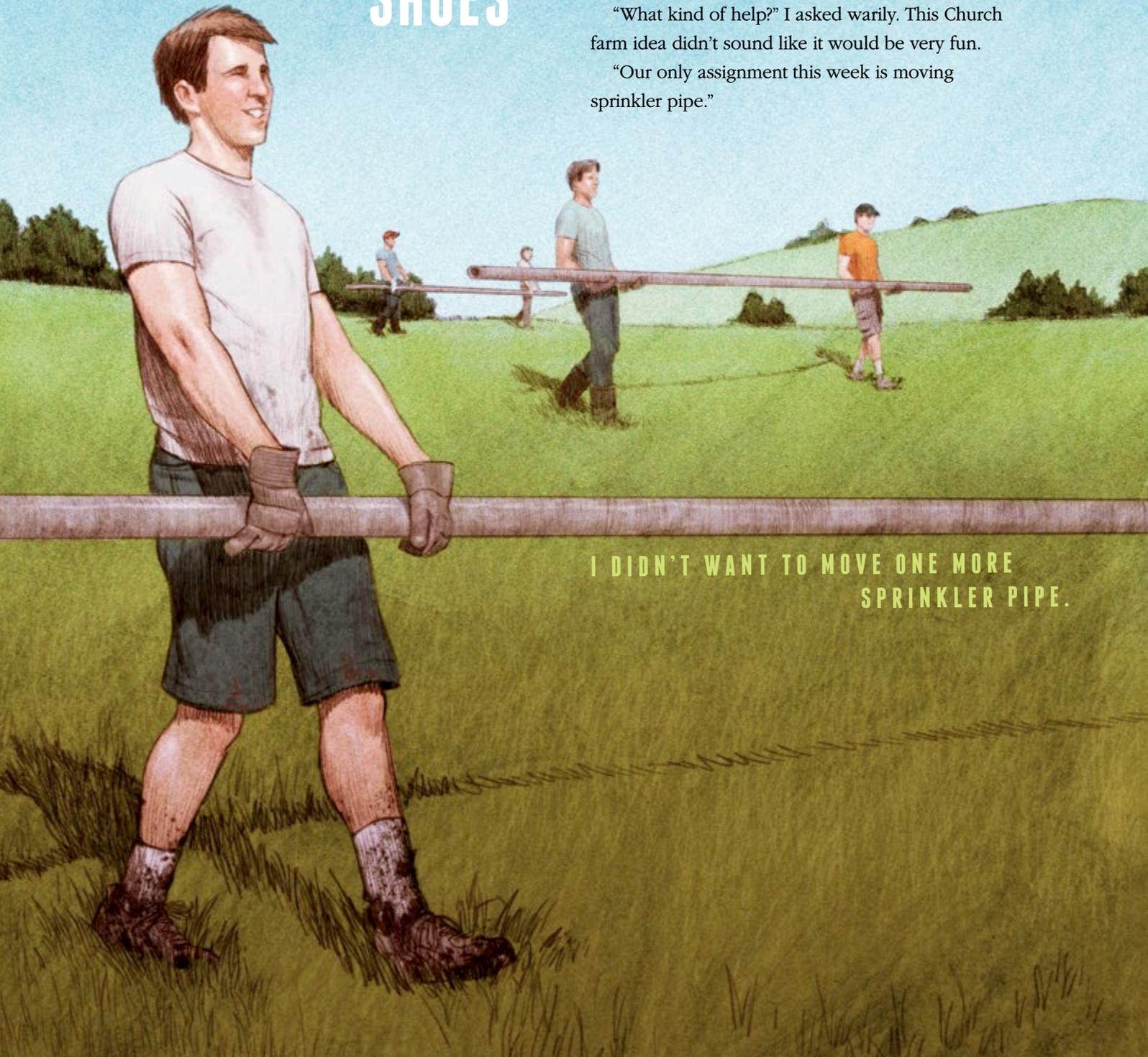
MOVING PIPE IN MUDDY SHOES

By Raymond M. Allton

“Thanks, Bishop Rowley. We’ll be glad to help.” Brother Hulet, our deacons quorum adviser, took the clipboard from the bishop’s hand and announced, “I have a sign-up list for volunteers at the Church farm. I’m sure the Lord would be pleased if all of us would help out this coming week.”

“What kind of help?” I asked warily. This Church farm idea didn’t sound like it would be very fun.

“Our only assignment this week is moving sprinkler pipe.”



I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE ONE MORE
SPRINKLER PIPE.

Moving pipe! The words filled me with dread. My thoughts turned to a few months earlier when mom had insisted that I get a summer job. In our small town, that meant pretty much one thing—moving pipe. So all summer, my cousin Scott and I were moving pipes.

On the first day of our summer job, we stood gazing across a vast landscape of green alfalfa. The 40-foot-long (12 m) pipes were linked together in a straight line that seemed to stretch out for miles. After a short training, Scott and I disconnected our first pipe. Scott lifted his end up, and cold water splashed all over my tennis shoes. We hefted the pipe through sticky mud and reconnected it at the next riser. As we walked back for the next pipe, my sloshing shoes became heavier as mud clung to them in ever-thickening layers. Eventually, the mud, water, and our own perspiration drenched our clothes and spirits.

My thoughts returned to volunteering at the Church farm. “Well, I—I don’t think I can come,” I stammered. “I have to go to my own job every morning.”

“That’s no problem,” assured Brother Hulet. “We always go to the Church farm in the afternoons.” Brother Hulet passed around the sign-up list. “When each one of you was ordained to the priesthood, you were given the power to act in the name of God. And when we serve Him by serving others, we are acting in His name. Besides, with all of us helping, the work won’t seem hard at all.”

The list was passed to me. I couldn’t believe that, so far, everyone had signed up to go every day this week. Didn’t they know how miserable this was going to be? I felt a great weight of righteous peer pressure exerted on me. Grudgingly, I signed up and passed it on.

Monday afternoon, I sat in my room recuperating from the morning’s work when I heard Brother Hulet honking his horn outside. I hesitated for a moment before changing back into my smelly, damp work clothes.

We soon pulled into the Church farm. Everyone but me raced toward the field. I lagged behind, head down, kicking rocks, when I was surprised by a hand on my shoulder. “Thanks for coming with us,” Brother Hulet encouraged.

“I know you worked hard this morning.” We walked together in silence for a few moments. Then he ran ahead to organize the group.

I watched him and thought about what he had said to me. I had worked hard that morning. I was tired and smelly, and I wanted to go home. But what about Brother Hulet? He had worked hard that morning too. So had all the guys, for that matter. So why did they seem happy to be here?

I caught up to the others, and we began our work. At first, I tried to cheer myself up by thinking of the noble sacrifice I was making. But soon my self-absorbed thoughts ended, and I noticed how quickly we were moving with everyone helping. We laughed and talked, and suddenly I realized I was actually having fun! In a few short hours we had completed our assignment.

As we rode home, I realized that what I thought was going to be an unbearable sacrifice seemed small. In fact, with everyone helping, it seemed like no sacrifice at all.

Brother Hulet stopped his station wagon in front of my house and looked back at me. “Thanks for your help today. Your hard work made it easy for the rest of us.” He smiled and winked.

I grinned back. “Thanks, but all of us helping together was what made it easy.” I climbed out of the car and closed the door.

Brother Hulet put the car in gear and began to pull away. “See you tomorrow, then?” he called through the open window.

“Sure. See you tomorrow,” I said. **NE**

Raymond M. Allton lives in Utah, USA.

