

ADDED TEXT FOR RINGEDNECK PHEASANT

I can't resist recounting one of my fondest memories of our pheasant farm days, though it was not particularly enjoyable at the time.

Since we were always short of money to procure necessities such as wood, wire and gravel for the benefit of our growing bird collection, we were not above borrowing these materials from nearby Westover house constructions. We always needed more gravel which was on hand to maintain proper drainage in our pheasant pens. Fortunately, we had a plentiful supply just a couple of houses away at Mr. and Mrs. Perry R. Bass's driveway. They certainly seem to have far more than they needed.

So early one Sunday morning Tom Loffland, Dutch Phillips, Scott and I armed with two shovels and two wheelbarrows made our way down the street to the Bass's driveway. Oh, so much gravel!

We filled one wheelbarrow and had just begun on the other when without the slightest warning sound of an engine, a car appeared from around the corner and came to a sudden stop right by us. It happened so fast that we didn't have time to even think about running away. No such luck that it might have been some sort of early Sunday morning delivery or a servant. In fact it couldn't have been worse. It was Mr. Perry R. Bass at the wheel, his wife Nancy Lee on the seat beside him and if I recall clearly in the back seat were all four boys Sid, Ed, Bob and little Lee. Down came the electric window on Nancy Lee's side, and Perry leaned over. Unfortunately, he recognized Tom, his neighbor's son, immediately. The rest of us just stood there dumb.

"What are you doing?" Bass said, acting as if he didn't know.

Tom did the talking. "We needed some gravel for our pheasant farm, sir, and it looked like you had more than you needed."

"Pheasant? So that's what I've been hearing making so much noise every morning (It was Spring breeding time when several of our species call loudly, especially our Himayalan Impeyan Pheasants which in their native land call so piercingly that they can be heard from mountain to mountain)

"Yes, Sir, That's what you've been hearing."

"Well, I guess you know that what you are doing is wrong, don't you?" Bass said. The boys in the back seat said nothing. Nancy Lee was quiet too.

"We're sorry, sir," said Tom.

"Well, " said Bass, " you can have the two wheelbarrows full, but no more, ok?"

"Yes, sir, Thankyou, sir."

The electric window began to go back up, then stopped. Perry leaned over again and shouted out of the window this time smiling. "I suppose you can't do anything about those damned pheasants calling at five o'clock in the morning, can you?"

"We'll try our best, sir."

I don't think Mr. Bass even heard Tom. The car sped off leaving us with legs shaking, standing in a cloud of gravel dust. But there's a little more to this story.

The next afternoon while Tom and I were feeding our birds and cleaning their waterbowls, a huge dump truck rumbled down the long driveway passing the Loffland house to turn down behind the house to the large courtyard where all the garages were. It came to a stop at the steep stone stairway which descended to our pheasant farm. Tom and I hurried up to investigate the commotion.

The dump truck was loaded with gravel. A lot of gravel. It was clear that the driver had been given definite instructions. Right there by the stairs and with the loud grinding of gears and a straining engine, the back of the truck tilted to empty its load. Out spilled a mountain of pea gravel. We just stood there in awed silence.

As soon as this was done the driver got out of the cab and without a word walked over to the gravel pile. He took out a small piece of paper with some writing on it. He took a pencil out too. He placed the note against the gravel and stuck the pencil through it. Again, without a word he gave us a kind of two fingered, naval salute, got back into his truck and drove up around the curving drive and was gone.

Tom and I walked over to the gravel pile. The note read. "This gravel ought to hold you awhile, Leave mine alone."

Perry