

*Anne Ipsen*

**Plowing Rocks**

Many years ago, I saw a TV show about the Peace Corps. A young man was sent to a poor Central American village with a failing agricultural economy and seeing that the fields had more rocks than crops, he picked up some stones and tossed them to one side.

“Crazy American,” the villagers laughed, but a few good-naturedly joined him in his fruitless pursuit. Soon others joined in the fun and the pile of rocks grew quite large.

The next time the villagers plowed, the job was done in half the time and the crop they planted yielded more than ever before, including more rocks to add to the pile.

“Reminds me of home,” the young man said. “I’m from New England where our farmers have plowed rocks for centuries. Our stonewalls are now much admired, but little do strangers know that past generations built them one stone at a time, not for their beauty, but because they were in the way of the plow.” And the young man rearranged the pile of rocks into a low stonewall that soon encircled the field.

So, when you have to plow a field and rocks keep getting in the way, remember that part of the job is picking them up—one rock at a time. Eventually, you will have a beautiful stonewall as well as a more plentiful crop.

Anne Ipsen writes memoir, historical fiction, and occasional essays. Her next novel *Running before the Prairie Wind* will be published in September. For more information about her work, visit <http://www.AnneIpsen.com>