

Family farming

By Nolan Benoit

Spaulding High School, Grade 10

My grandfather was a farmer. He lived in a brick house built in the early 1800s with his wife and his four children, the same house that he grew up in. They had cows, horses, chickens, pigs, sheep and a few other random animals. He loved to farm — it was a way of life for his family and him. However as the years went by, they were forced to sell much of the land they owned, only to watch the trees be torn down and have houses built on it. Then one day, though my grandfather opposed the idea strongly, the state built an access road to the interstate right through his land. It began to be obvious that the more time that went on, the more land they lost. Finally he was forced to give up farming on that land. In his later years he still had a farm with cows that he milked. He still calls himself a farmer, even if he doesn't actually have a farm. He is part of dying group of people, farmers.

Past

By Rachel Lombard

Enosburg Falls Middle School, Grade 8

Farming is part of my life
 Red walls
 Silver roof
 Old, shabby barn
 Farming is part of my life
 Meadows of flowers
 Green grass swaying
 Ready for grazing
 Farming is part of my life
 Cats meowing
 Cows mooing
 People yelling
 Farming is part of my life
 Tractors chug along
 Mowing the fields
 Smoke belching at the rear
 Farming is part of my life
 Shoveling the gutters
 Scraping the mangers
 Covered in poop
 Farming is part of my life
 Dressed in plaid
 Blue jeans
 Straw hat
 Farming is part of my life
 Planting plants
 Weeding the gardens
 Picking the veggies
 Farming is part of my life
 Random times
 Random jobs
 New adventure every day
 Farming is part of my life
 I'm getting older
 Years have gone
 Those days are like dreams
 Farming was part of my life

FARMING CONTEST WINNERS

Each year Young Writers Project asks students to write about farming and selects the very best among their submissions for cash prizes. Here is some of the winning writing from this year's contest. Each of the students on this page has won a cash award courtesy of

St. Albans Cooperative Creamery and Cabot Cheese.

To read all the winning selections, go to youngwritersproject.org

VERMONT 2059

Submissions due May 29

Envision your town in the year 2059
 best submissions will win cash prizes
 and potential public presentation.

Go to

youngwritersproject.org

sign in and create an entry

choose Vermont 2059 keyword



Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit that engages students to write. We believe strong writing skills are essential for success. YWP operates youngwritersproject.org, a safe online community for Vermont young writers. YWP also builds

Digital Writing Classrooms for schools.

Early sign up ends **May 29**. For more, go to: ywpvt.net.

The abandoned farm

By Roberta Hemmer

Mill River Union High School, Grade 11

Spindly weeds crackle in a stiff early autumn wind. A fiery leaf flips and twirls like a dancer, gracefully coming to rest on a silken cushion of emerald moss. A muffled thump focuses my gaze downward. Speckled with browning worm holes, a pale green crabapple glances off my boot, rolling over an uneven hillock. I blink away wind tears, rough wool scratching my cheek as I wipe my streaming eyes. My little apple is gone. That peculiar, distinctive autumn scent fills my nostrils as I chase after my quarry, scrambling over ground marked here and there by inscrutable, lumpish knolls.

My feet still, my breath catches as a shadow unfurls before me. Coarsely hewn stones, fingered by trailing roots, ring a murky hole that once served as a well. And that stone wall there, not ten paces off, must have been the front wall of an old Vermont homestead. Eyes widening with realization, I survey this fading landscape, imagining the working farm it once was. Blossoming apple trees sway in the orchard, the small courtyard overflows with farm machinery, chickens peck at corn kernels scattered round the well, as a small herd of cows dapples the verdant hillside behind it.

That was the springtime of Vermont's farming era, and what a glorious springtime it was. But now, here at this uncertain meeting of summer and autumn, the fate of small Vermont farms dangles over a precipice. How long before my classmate's farm bows to the thickets encroaching upon its borders? How long before all vestiges of Vermont's apple industry stink of the rotting fruit left to fade under the impassive sun? I turn slowly into gusting wind, a glimmering tear slipping down my cheek.

Many tasks

By Conner St. Pierre

Cold Hollow Career Center, Grade 9

I live on a farm in Enosburg. We own about 550 acres and about 250 of it is tillable. We milk about 110 cows in a tie-stall barn. Because this is not like a parlor it is a lot more manual work. We also raise about 120 heifers. We sell some of them and milk the rest. We start milking at 4:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

It usually takes between 2 and 3 hours to milk. It takes a little longer at night because we have to feed the cows, which we only do at night. We raise all of our own animals.

In the summer we crop all of our own land. My job in summer is to haul feed. We spread our manure after every cut of hay. We usually get three or four cuts.

In the winter we work in the sugarbush and cut wood. We usually cut about 50 or 60 cords per year. We hire a logger to pull the wood out into a pile and we cut and split it to sell. In the sugar woods we walk the lines to look for downed trees. We cut off the trees that are on the lines.

In the future I would like to own the farm. I like working on the farm and prefer working outside doing manual work like sugaring or driving a tractor. I also like working with cows and being my own boss.

That cross-eyed look

By Reliance Touchette

Crossett Brook Middle School, Grade 7

The boxy red numbers read four thirty in the morning.

I pull on my jeans and t-shirt.

My dogs nip at my boots as the mud on them speckles their wet noses.

The barn door creaks open and, even though I am used to the smell, my nose cringes.

I flip the second-to-last switch and the lights dance one by one across the dust-coated roof.

The cows moo at each other as I reach them and lead the first to the milking room.

As I fix her to the machine she gives me that cross-eyed look saying, "Again."

I turn on the machine and can hear only a bit of the thunderous roar through my earplugs.

Spreading manure

By Lance Bergmans

Ferrisburgh Central School, Grade 3

On our muddy road by the hayfield

My dad drives the huge tractor

The smell of manure spreads everywhere

People in their cars scrunch up their noses

At the smell

The manure looks like it is raining

And the field is as brown as cardboard

I feel sick to my stomach

But after my dad is done

He will run to me

And give me a hug.

Taking care of cows

By Derek Jettie

Cold Hollow Career Center, Grade 10

I work on an organic farm in Fairfield. We milk 50-55 cows each day from 5:30 - 7:00 a.m. and 4 - 5:30 p.m. We feed them hay, grain, cornmeal and kelp made from ground up seaweed.

In the summer we hay. To get the hay you first have to mow the field, then ted the hay a few times to help dry it. We rake the hay into rows for square baling. The baler kicks each bale of hay into a hay wagon. When the wagon is full we pull it up to the barn to unload it. We load the hay onto the conveyor, which brings it up to the top of the barn. Then we stack the hay. We bale three times from our fields. After each cut we spread manure. First we have to agitate the pit, then we pump it into a spreader and then bring it to the field and spread it out to fertilize the land.

During milking chores we have to clean the cows' teats off with wipes. We then put the milker on each teat. We wait until there is no more milk going into the milking machine and then take it off. We have to repeat these steps for each cow. At the end of milking I have to go in the back of the barn to scrape under the calves and feed them hay. We have to scrape down the tie-stall barn and put down sawdust to keep the cows clean and keep them from slipping when they come back in the morning.

Farming is hard work. You have to enjoy it to do it. I like that at the end of the day I get to see what I have done.