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 However, as the years went by, they were forced to sell much of their land, only to watch the trees torn down and houses be 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 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**.

VERMONT 2059

Envision your town in the year 2059 and write about what it's like. Best submissions will win cash prizes and potential public presentation.

Due May 29

Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit that engages students to write. We operate **youngwritersproject.org,** a safe online community for Vermont's young writers. YWP also builds **Digital Writing Classrooms** for schools. Early sign-up ends **May 29.** For more, go to: **ywpvt.net.**

Farming

By Derek Foley
OXBOW HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 12

A friend of mine works and lives on a farm. He works extremely hard every day and has long hours. He milks the cows at the farm he works on better than the other workers, which means he is the only one trusted to do it on a regular basis.

I met him in the summer three years ago because he was playing soccer on the summer team that I joined. The team was part of an adult league that consisted of teams throughout the Upper Valley. My friend is an amazing soccer player. He is barely over five feet tall and he is not very muscular, but he is so quick he can beat just about anyone.

I have gone to the farm to give him rides to games and I have also just visited him. I was surprised how high-tech the farm was. They had machines for milking the cows and other electronics that I can't even begin to explain. Yet my friend knew how to operate all of it and he was good at it. There were hundreds of cows and it took him hours just to set the cows up to be milked.

Some people hate my friend because he is an immigrant from Mexico. He works harder than anyone I know and he makes very little money; the money he does make gets sent home to help support his family. He keeps so little for himself that he couldn't even afford cleats to play soccer, so the team pitched in to get him some. He told me the story of how he came here once. The hardships he went through were something I feel would have stopped most people. ... Many people say that these immigrants are stupid and have no right to be here, yet my friend can operate the very complicated machinery necessary to an American farm and he fought his way into the country to be allowed to do it, all for almost no money.

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 at 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.

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. First we mow the field, then we 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 onto a hay wagon. When the wagon is full we pull it up to the barn to unload it. We put it on the conveyor, which brings it up to the top of the barn. Then we stack the hay. We bale three times a year. 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.

Spreading manure

By Lance Bergmans
FERRISBURGH CENTRAL SCHOOL, GRADE 3

On our muddy road by the hay field
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.

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