

Vermont Environmental Report

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FARMING & YOUTH:

IN THIS ISSUE AND THE AUGUST ISSUE THE VER WILL CONTINUE AND CONCLUDE ITS SERIES ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND FARMING.

HERE THE YOUNG FARMER SPEAKS OUT, TALKS ABOUT HIS PROBLEMS, AND DISCUSSES THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN VERMONT.

"The desire of the non-farm population to keep Vermont rural, open, yet prosperous, has been intensified by the changes in surrounding States and the crisis in nearby urban areas. There seems also to be an intuition that the values of independence, integrity, self-reliance, traditionally associated with farm family life, would somehow disappear along with the cultivated land and the cows if Vermont were to become totally an industrial and recreational State."

GOVERNOR'S FOOD COMMISSION, 1976

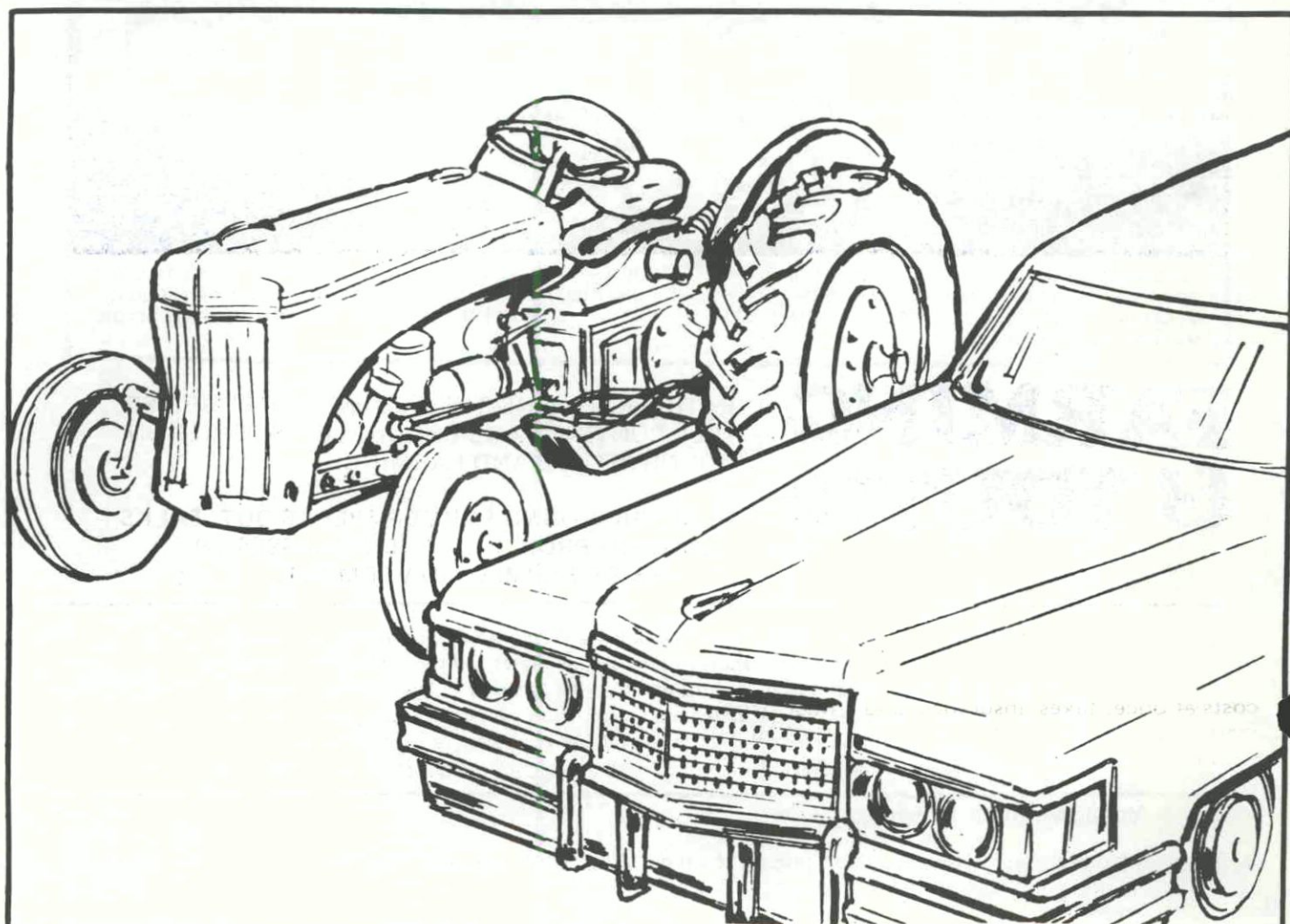
Young Vermont farmers...

Who are they? How are they getting started? What problems are they facing? Are they going to 'make it'?

Nothing simple can be said, because being individuals, young farmers are all different.

Granted those words of caution, we can observe these things.

- 1) **Getting started isn't easy.** It is very expensive and the risks are high.
- 2) **Most young farmers come from a farming background.** Of course there are exceptions. Many young farmers have kicked around at other work. But they know they want to farm; they know they want the farming life.
- 3) **Getting started takes time.** By the time he actually gets his own place, the young farmer is likely not to be so "young" anymore. He has been in it one way or the other for a long time. He has built up his tools, his herd, he has some equity. At the back of his mind is always the dream of owning his own place.
- 4) **Farming is a demanding occupation.** Young farmers are not apologetic. As a group they are versatile, intelligent, articulate and mature.
- 5) **There are plenty of young people who want to farm and can't.** These young people are hard to identify. They have melted back into the general population and are driving trucks, working in factories, going to school, looking for work. When you do find them, talk to them, they are like other people whose ambitions have been blocked, who feel defeated, they have little to say, and little inclination to say it.



Young Farmers Speak Out!!

1. **Ed Smith**

Ed Smith, 29, has a four-year lease on a house and barn and 176 acres of land in Brookfield, Vermont.

It may not be as good as owning your own place, your own cattle and equipment, free and clear of debt, but for someone starting out who doesn't have a cent to put down, it's a way to begin.

Smith, like most young farmers, has a justifiable fear of indebtedness.

"If you borrow \$100,000," Smith cautions, "the payments are going to be \$800 a month." And that might just be scratching the surface. Says Smith, knowingly, "If a fellow does not have a damn cent to put into it, you can use up \$200,000 just making ends meet."

Smith didn't just jump into dairy farming. He had good preparation. He was in the U.S. Air Force for close to four years. "I signed up for jet engines," and he adds, "It helped me out