



Farmer George Smith heads for work in his pick-up.



Martha Smith shows Connie, her 4-H cow.

# Close to the Earth and Close to

"The family farm with a few chickens, a pig, and two cows is gone. Today you have to be big to exist," Rita Smith said. She was discussing life in a Spencerport farmhouse that dates back well into the 1800's.

Her husband George Smith, with his brother Lesley, owns 240 acres. They rent additional land for a total of 350 acres on which they grow wheat, corn, hay, and alfalfa. Wheat is grown as a cash crop, but the others are used as ensilage for their 100 dairy cows.

George has been farming for 45 years, but claimed that he is still learning. He explained that the problems of farming today are no greater than they were when he started, but they've changed. He said that his biggest problem is "trying to be a farmer in an urban environment." It is also becoming increasingly difficult to hire good help at a price that can be afforded.

Questioned about the hungry in the world and the nation, Smith said that he believes it is possible to feed everyone. He said that he views the hungry as part of the market for his product.

The role of the farmer is changing as farms become larger, he said. Farmers are functioning more as managers and doing less of the actual work themselves. With the rising cost of fertilizer, seed, land, machinery, and help a farmer needs a good business head. Mrs. Smith, who helps her husband with the books claimed, "The old adage 'dumb farmer' is very misleading."

If farming itself is changing, the life and values it traditionally fosters continue. Snacking on fresh milk that tastes like vanilla ice cream and a three-layer chocolate scratch cake after school, making a gown for

the senior ball, training a 4-H cow to show, chasing barn cats waiting for milking . . . farm life moves on at a pace which 18-year-old Peg Smith described as "always going, but in a different direction (from the city)."

The Smiths have five children. Sue, 21, works in Rochester. She graduated from Monroe Community College and lives at home. Mike, 19, is a student at S.U.N.Y. at Alfred, majoring in accounting. He earned enough money to pay for his college education working for his father on the farm. His father credited today's youth saying, "Lots of kids would do the same if they had the chance. Most just don't have the opportunity."

Peg is a senior at Spencerport High School. Next fall she will attend S.U.C. at Plattsburgh where she plans to study home economics. Like her mother and sisters she sews and bakes. Her mother explained that as a family they value being home making something more than going out to a show.

Martha, 17, has followed in Peg's footsteps in cattle 4-H. The past three years she has won first place for showmanship at the Monroe County Fair. Marjie is 10.

Mrs. Smith said that children in the country are confronted with many of the same problems that plague youth in the city, but that in the country young people have the "open spaces where they can walk and forget themselves and sort things out."

The Smiths believe that the farmer is closer to God because he is more conscious of dependence. George used to tell his children, "Watch God help the beans grow." The Smiths are members of St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport.



The Smith Family, standing, from left to right, Peg, Rita, George, and Sue. Marjie and Martha are seated with dog Tiny between them. Son Mike is away at school.

Asked how she feels about the changes in farm life, she said she and her family, when they were always available to do without . . .

Mrs. Smith said she has more time to spend when their children are home, always eating a meal, always . . .

George's farm is still a necessity. He is still a part of the life of the hired hand. He breaks when he goes back to work. He doesn't work other weeks . . .

At 62, George says he supposes he'll stay inside a barn . . .

Rita Smith says they bo . . .



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