

# ARTS & VARIETY

## From Dirt to Hay: What it Takes to Become a Farmer

BY JULIA FOLZ

**F**ARMING IS SUCH A VITAL PART of our economy, health, and everyday lifestyles and yet few consider it as a potential career option. This may be because of the difficulty that people face to begin their careers as farmers and the amount of hard work and dedication that it takes to be a successful farmer.

According to Steven Stolberg, a farm employee in Forest Lake, Minnesota, “It is very challenging to get into farming. To be honest, I think that the two ways to get into farming these days is to either have money or have a farm generationally passed down.” While this may work for some families, several families do not have anyone willing to continue to work on the farm.

Unfortunately for new farmers, one of the difficulties of farming is simply having enough money to even begin. Stolberg tells us, “In order to buy land in Minnesota it is anywhere from \$2,000-\$10,000 per acre.” Farmers not only have to be able to afford the land that they farm on, but also all of the equipment. Stolberg states, “In order to get all of the equipment that you needed to get a start on farming, I would guess that it would cost somewhere between half a million and one million dollars. The price depends on your focus in farming. If you only wanted to plant hay, you would need less equipment than if you wanted to plant hay and corn.” Acquiring enough money to start a farm is extremely difficult, but keeping the farm running is just as challenging.

According to research done by the Minnesota State Demographic Center in 2015, most farmers have another source of income to survive financially. They state, “For forty-seven percent of principal operators, fifty-eight percent of second operators, and fifty-one percent of third operators, something other than farming serves as their primary occupation.” This research shows that about half of Minnesotan farmers need two jobs in order to continue their way of life.

Stolberg says that one of the most time-consuming things to do on the farm is growing hay. For this process a farmer must till a field, plant the hay, rake the hay, bale the hay, and finally bring a tuck into the field and load the hay unto a trailer. Stolberg explains that “A 137-acre field will have between 630-650 bales per cut and there are three cuts per year.” Each of these steps has to be completed within a certain amount of time to be sure that the farmer is making the best quality of hay possible. Stolberg tells us, “We will spend ninety hours in one week for 350 acres of hay” and Dan Taylor plants roughly 2,500 acres of hay each year.

From the long hours, the expensive machinery, and the struggle to buy or rent land, I wondered how someone would even begin starting their farming career. Steven Stolberg and his brother Alex began their farming careers together, with the hope that it would be easier to get into this business with a partner. The Stolbergs began farming by buying a few cows from a local farmer. They then needed hay for their cows which is how they met Dan Taylor. Taylor decided to hire both Alex and Steven to help with his own cattle and crops. Stolberg says that this is valuable to him because “he is teaching me how to become a farmer and all of the ins and outs of owning my own farm.” Without the help of Dan Taylor, the Stolberg brothers would have had a hard time affording their own land, equipment, and livestock.

The two brothers found forty-seven acres of land that they are now renting for \$2,500 per year. Taylor allows the Stolbergs to use his equipment for free to help them get started. Steven Stolberg stressed the importance of the farming community and how much they have helped him and his brother to begin farming. He describes this group by saying, “The farmers in our community are very nice. Whatever the situation is, someone is always there to help.”

Stolberg tells us that throughout all of these challenges he still wants to be a farmer. “It is rewarding to see your hard work grow into something right in front of your eyes,” he says. He also stated that he enjoys the outdoors and being physically active, making him a perfect fit for this line of work. When asked if he would do anything differently if he could go back Stolberg stated, “No. I love what I do. I am able to be outside, see my animals, and work with my hands every day. This is my life.” †

## Book Review:

### *A Review of Orwell's 1984*

BY ELI GRUBBS

**G**EORGE ORWELL'S 1984 stands as one of the most influential and popular books of modern times. The 1949 novel celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and its themes of authoritarianism, paranoia, surveillance, and the effects of widespread ignorance are still very relevant today. On its surface, the book is a thrilling, as well as depressing dystopian story about a horrific state of the world, where Great Britain has become “Airstrip-One,” a province governed by a totalitarian authority with a man called “Big Brother” as its leader. The story follows Winston Smith, a man who works for the government rewriting historical documents, and his struggle with the society that he lives in.

Written at the beginning of the Cold War, 1984 explores many things about society and the people that make it up. Various roles within the societal structure are examined, such as the classes and the kind of influence that they have on government. In the book, control is maintained because of fear of the consequences of individualism is imposed upon everyone. There is a cult mentality that is projected onto the populous that makes people reject fact and reason;  $2+2=5$  becomes something people are willing to accept because they are brainwashed by a constant barrage of propaganda, lies, and fear.

A comparison readers might make to 1984's "Airstrip-One" is the North Korean Regime, but one should stop to consider the parallels between the Orwellian society of 1984 and the rest of the world, including the United States. Every day we are subjected to endless advertisements, telling us what we need, what we should buy, what we deserve, what our children deserve, and show us “the ideal” life. Every time we glance at our smartphones, watch our TVs, listen to the radio or drive down the highway, we are subject to countless messages that influence our subconscious heads. We believe things that we don't know how we came to believe, and we want things we don't know why we want.

Jealousy and envy are byproducts of an overindulgent society that encourage people to live as consumers, and to ultimately be consumed by our own hopes and dreams, which more often than not consist mainly of monetary and material gains. The lesson, and what we can glean from 1984's wisdom, is that we should all be a little more aware of our environment, and especially of ourselves. †

## Movie Review: *Twenty-Five Years of Pulp Fiction*

BY ELI GRUBBS

**2**019 MARKS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of Quentin Tarantino's cult masterpiece Pulp Fiction (1994). The director's second feature-length picture turned out to be an unprecedented success, gaining near-universal acclaim among critics. The wildly popular avant-garde film set the tone for the director's career and foreshadowed a filmography that has rivaled the greatest of all time.