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Jayne E. Barnes

The University of Montana

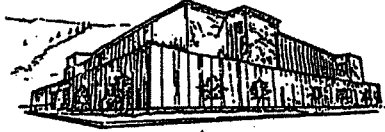
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A FARMING COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION:
THE IMPACT OF SPRAWL ON THE AGRICULTURAL LEGACY
IN THE BITTERROOT VALLEY

by

Jayne E. Barnes

B.A. Wittenberg University, 2003

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

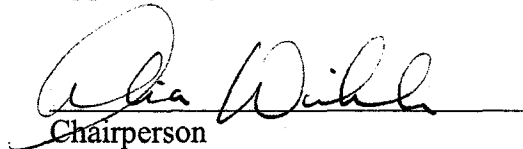
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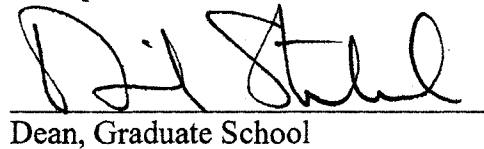
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A Farming Community in Transition: The Impact of Sprawl on the Agricultural Legacy in the Bitterroot Valley

Chairperson: Celia Winkler *W*

Farm communities across the United States are faced with increasing development pressures and changing community cultures. The Bitterroot Valley in Western Montana has experienced rapid population growth and rising land costs, coupled with an increase in debates over land use and land preservation in the valley. The changing culture of the valley impacts how farmers and ranchers view the future of farming and their prospect for continuing their way of life.

This research explores specific agricultural legacies in the Bitterroot Valley, seeking to understand how they affect the choices future generations make in their decision to farm and their ability to continue their agricultural legacy in the Bitterroot Valley. Social and economic factors shape these legacies, and influence the actions taken by farmers to ensure the survival of their family farm and their agricultural legacy. Four case studies are used to provide examples of farm families' opinions about their agricultural legacies, their reactions to sprawl, and its effects on their farm operation. These case studies, which are labeled Traditionalist, Property Rights Advocate, Growth Advocate, and Innovator, provide an interesting way to examine the diverse opinions regarding the effects of sprawl on agricultural legacies in the valley.

Cultural factors enable and constrain options that serve to protect farmland and open space from development. Farmers that focus on the need to protect property rights and emphasize the economic gains that can be derived through the sale of farmland may find it difficult to achieve the kind of cultural environment they find desirable. Farm families that encourage their children to continue farming and emphasize farming as a way of life tend to create innovative ways to make their farm successful amidst changing conditions in the valley. One method families use to preserve their farm or ranch is the encouragement of future generations and adapting their farm practices to create opportunities for succession. This study shows how cultural aspects in farm communities can inhibit or encourage farm preservation for future generations in the Bitterroot Valley.

Preface

I would like to thank all the people who have guided and supported me throughout the completion of this project. First and foremost I would like to thank my committee members Celia Winkler, Lyn Macgregor, and Josh Slotnick, who have provided countless hours of their time assisting me with this thesis. My experiences in graduate school have been profoundly impacted by their dedication to teaching and their passion for helping students develop a critical view of the world around them.

I would also like to thank all the farmers and ranchers that welcomed me into their lives and allowed me to gain an understanding of the experiences of farmers and ranchers in the Bitterroot Valley. I wholeheartedly appreciate the time spent meeting with me, the lunches you provided, and the rich stories about farm life that helped me to understand the issues facing farmers in the Bitterroot Valley. It has truly been a rich experience.

I would also like to thank my family and friends, whom without their support I would not be completing a graduate degree.

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Chapter One

Introduction

When Dale Henderson was in second grade, he made the decision that he would someday be a farmer. “Ever since then I knew I wanted to farm and didn't want to do anything else.” It was a cool fall day as we sat in the yard of his farmstead, discussing his family's farming history in the Bitterroot valley in Western Montana. Dale's thirty year old son Jared sat next to him, retelling the story he had heard many times before about how his father was able to purchase the adjoining farm next to the existing family farm.

“Our neighbor Sara Maserly, who's been our neighbor for seventy years, can verify this. She told me that when Dad was just a little kid, he asked if he could buy their farm someday when they were ready to quit. She said, “Dale, when we're ready to sell it we'll let you know.” And they did let him know, and they did sell it to him when they got to retirement age.”

For Jared, the opportunity to purchase new farmland has proved to be a much more formidable task. In a proposal much like his father's, he met with a great deal of discouragement, and outright mocking of his wish to continue farming:

“When I was in high school, I asked the lady that had the adjacent farm next to us, inquiring if there was ever any way I could contract to buy her land...and she basically said I was nuts. That I'd be stupid to want to farm. I think they weren't as successful farming as they would have liked to been, so they're going to tell someone young that they won't be successful either.”

Jared's story is not much different from those of other young farmers in the valley who wish to continue the family legacy of farming, yet find a disagreeable economic and social climate in which to purchase land to expand a farming operation and continue farming. The Bitterroot valley is no longer seen as an agrarian community by many of its residents, as it has become home to a diverse community of newcomers who have come

to take part in the lifestyle and scenic beauty of the Bitterroot valley in Western Montana.

What is happening in the Bitterroot valley is happening in many farming communities across the United States. Farmland is disappearing as subdivisions pop up across the countryside, scattered in areas where developers can purchase undeveloped farmland at a price that allows them to build houses and sell them to those interested in having their own piece of the country and the lifestyle that goes with it. Property owners, including retired farmers and those who have chosen to give up farming in favor of receiving high compensation for their land, have been able to make a sizeable profit by selling out to developers, leaving those interested in expanding their farm operation left out of the expanding market.

The American Farmland Trust, a national organization that works to preserve productive farmland in the path of development, reports that every minute of every day, America loses two acres of farmland (www.farmland.org). Between the years of 1992 through 1997, over six million acres of agricultural land was developed, at a rate of 1.2 million acres per year. This rate was fifty-one percent higher than the period between 1982-1992 (www.farmland.org). The kind of development that happens on this raw land is termed a “greenfield,” and often happens as a result of the cheaper costs of land accompanied by fewer planning restrictions (Hayden 2004).

The Bitterroot valley is a prime example of mass development onto 'greenfields,' as Ravalli County has virtually no county-wide zoning laws or a county building code (Diamond 2005). When it comes to regulating land use, Ravalli County relies on its thirty-five voluntary zoning districts, which exist as a way for neighborhoods outside of town limits to pose restrictions on land use in that specific area. The zoning districts are

regulatory, focusing on land use and the design and intensity of development (Ravalli County Growth Policy 2004). Despite their regulatory nature, residents of Ravalli County have voiced concern that the zoning districts do not carry enough weight in controlling sprawl and development of farmland.

Ravalli County also makes use of an eleven member Planning Board, comprised of citizens from each of the school districts, a representative of the Bitterroot Conservation District, and three at large members, which volunteer their time to examine subdivision and variance requests and make recommendations to county commissioners regarding the impacts of each subdivision proposal. The group was instrumental in the 2002 passage of the County's Growth Policy, which acts as a guide for development and conservation decisions. As stated in the Growth Policy, "It is not a regulation; rather, it is an official statement of public policy to guide growth and change" (47). Many residents feel that the Growth Policy has "no teeth" and that the Planning Board does not have much power in regulating land use.

The Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch, a nine member board of farmers and ranchers that volunteer their time to make recommendations to the the Planning Board, was appointed by the County Commissioners in 1999. The Right to Farm and Ranch Board receives copies of the subdivision proposals that are presented to the Planning Board, and are asked to comment on the effects each subdivision will have on the agricultural sector, loss of agricultural ground, effects on surrounding agricultural activities or practices, and the effects on agricultural water-user facilities. Despite the many actions Ravalli County has taken to regulate the immense growth in the valley, the community continues to struggle with the rapid changes in Ravalli County's land use.

Competing views are apparent in Ravalli County, resulting in constant turmoil between those with opposing interests in the varied issues that arise through the course of development. Opinion articles in the local newspaper attack traditional uses of the land by stating that “Ag is dead” and that “Feel good concepts like ‘the right to farm’ and “open space preservation” cannot exist unless accommodation [of newcomers] is accepted” (Ravalli Republic September 7, 2005). Other articles in the newspaper bemoan the loss of community and the lack of friendly waves between community members since the arrival of newcomers (Ravalli Republic October 31, 2005). Planning Board members are accused of being biased towards growth, and developers are accused of creating “barrack-like communities,” as one resident stated, “We don't want that stuff in our agricultural and rural communities” (Ravalli Republic December 6, 2005). It is not surprising that this turmoil limits the county's ability to come to a consensus on how to handle the rapid change in the valley.

The population in Ravalli County is one of the fastest growing in the United States, and has experienced a faster rate of growth than any other county in Montana at 44.2% during the last decade (Ravalli County Growth Policy 2004). The population reached 39,376 in July of 2004, and is projected to reach 73,000 by 2025 (www.bitterrootlandtrust.org). In 1982, there were 271,000 acres of farmland in the county. In the early 90s, that figure dropped to 240,000 acres of farmland. In 2002, an estimated 216,000 acres were held in area farms and ranches (www.bitterrootlandtrust.org). The average farm size decreased from 267 acres to 170 acres between 1982 and 2002 (Lemon 2005).

When we look around the United States to observe what is happening, we see that

Americans have a propensity to develop those places that afford attractive views and a degree of privacy. Farmland provides the solitude and country scenes that seem so distant from the hustle and bustle of city life. Ethnographer Sonya Salamon (2003), in her book *Newcomers to Old Towns* notes, “The restructuring of rural America is driven by a robust national preference for the safe, friendly, close-to-nature, agreeably scaled, family-focused, peaceful life, associated with old, agrarian, small, rural towns” (6).

More specifically, the farmland in the Bitterroot valley offers not only views of grazing animals and irrigated hay fields, but also mountainous landscapes, as the jagged peaks of the Bitterroot range rise to the west and the Sapphire range rises out of gently sloping foothills to the east. An easy commute up Highway 93 to Missoula provides access to amenities, jobs, and culture associated with city life. For the outdoor enthusiast, the Bitterroot river provides fishing, kayaking, and other recreational outlets.

The development pressures and the effects of the overall loss of farmland contribute to the changing nature of life for farmers and ranchers in the valley. As new people have moved in and farmland has been developed, not only has the face of the landscape changed, but also new residents have brought with them ideologies and traditions that are different from those that existed in the valley prior to the increase in population. The culture of the community, which is made up of the ideas, norms, and material culture that form the shared ideologies of a society, is affected by this influx of newcomers (Flora et.al 2004). The changing culture of the valley impacts how farmers and ranchers in Ravalli County view the future of farming and their prospect for continuing their way of life in the Bitterroot valley.

The goal of this research is to explore the farming culture in the Bitterroot valley

in order to understand how the increasing pressures of development and sprawl affect the legacy of farming in Ravalli County. I will be addressing three research questions. First I seek to understand “What are the agricultural legacies of families in the Bitterroot valley?” I will use a constructivist viewpoint to understand the values and norms that make up these legacies, from the perspective of the farmers and ranchers. I then seek to understand “What perceptions do farmers and ranchers have about the impact of development onto agricultural lands?” And finally I wish to find out “How do the farmers and ranchers perceive the impact of development on the agricultural legacy?” The answers to these three questions provide insight into how the economic and social conditions in the Bitterroot valley affect the farming culture and the legacy of farming in the valley.

Chapter two provides a glance into the how the concept of a legacy is a useful tool to analyze cultural change and communities in transition from a sociological perspective. An examination of land use perspectives, as well as an analysis of sprawl and its forms is offered to help understand the situation in the Bitterroot Valley. The culture of farming is also explored, to understand how farm families are unique in their ability to pass down legacies. Finally, I take a look at the measures currently in use to protect farmland from development, and explain the term “growth machine” and how it will be used in this manuscript.

Chapter three focuses on the Bitterroot Valley and its historical background in agriculture. I cover why it is a unique site in which to study sprawl and its effect on the agricultural community, and discuss how it's “boom and bust” agricultural settlement mirrors that of the west as a whole, yet differs due to its unique character. Chapter four

discusses the methodology used to understand the topic at hand as well as noting the limitations of this study.

Chapter Five will cover four case studies (Traditionalist, Property Rights Advocate, Growth Advocate, and Innovator) that help to understand how four farm families respond to sprawl and how they perceive its effect on their agricultural legacy. These families offer a unique way to understand how such a diverse community of farmers and ranchers react to the changes in the valley, and what they see as the future of their farm operations. The themes that emerged throughout the course of this study are noted in this chapter, and allow us to understand the future prospects for agriculture in the valley.

Chapter Six will discuss the findings and conclusion, offering suggestions on how farmers can prepare for the valley's changes in years to come. It is apparent that reactions to sprawl are diverse, as well as the legacies affected by the development in the county. Contrary to previous sociological literature (Roher and Douglas 1969) this study has found that farmers that view their legacy as something worth preserving have found innovative ways to increase profits and remain in the farming business. The influence of prior generations in encouraging future generations to remain in farming has been a key element in determining the future of farms in the Bitterroot Valley.

Cultural factors enable and constrain options that serve to protect farmland and open space from development. A lack of cultural solidarity, as well as farmers' inability to come to a consensus on how to react to sprawl and the current changes in the valley have hindered their ability to shape what they would like the valley to look like. This study notes the role of culture in determining methods of farm preservation.

Chapter Two

Farm Legacies and Land Use Perspectives

The concept of a legacy can be used to understand the meaningful association people give to passing down values, ethics, and a way of life to the next generation. Parents and elders pass on an understanding of a society's culture and the individual's role in it, which includes speech, dress, and ways of being (Flora et.al 2004). Legacies can consist of material possessions as well as the values and norms that are passed down through social institutions, such as the family, school, and church (Flora et.al 2004). Legacies are also a combination of what parents have achieved in their own lives and what they hope to see their children be able to achieve in the future. These cultural legacies are passed down as representative of a way of life of those that have come before them. A legacy contributes to the understandings people have about who one is and what one is to become. Legacies affect the choices children and future generations make about their own future, as well as the future of the culture and community of a place like Ravalli County.

Social and economic factors shape the legacy young people receive from their family and community. In the Bitterroot valley, the economic conditions for farming are not as favorable as they once were which makes passing down farmland and the lifestyle that goes along with farming much more difficult. Despite this, many farmers still wish to pass on to their children a heritage that connects them with the land in the same way that they and their parents have been connected to it. In agricultural communities, the land can be passed on as a legacy representative of those who have worked on it before. In the same way, norms and values can be passed through the work ethic, respect for the

land, and a farming lifestyle's quality of life. With rising development pressures in Ravalli County, the decision to continue farming or sell the land becomes a dilemma involving the loss of opportunity to pass on the legacy of farming to future generations.

Flora et.al (2004) outline three goals that parents tend to work towards in order to leave behind a legacy for their children; “Enabling their children to have a place to live, a means by which to earn a living (sometimes viewed as standard of living), and personal fulfillment (sometimes viewed as quality of life)” (32). The author goes on to point out that for those who operate a farm; these three goals are combined in a single place. The farm provides a meaningful place from which one can reside, earn an income, and learn valuable life lessons that contribute to one's well-being. There is often a relationship and connection that farm families feel with the farmland, as it is seen as holding much more value than just a means to make a living or a function of growing crops and raising livestock. These aspects are at the core of understanding the legacy of farm families in the Bitterroot Valley, as they influence the decisions farm families must make concerning the future of their farm operation amidst sprawl and development.

Family farms are often seen as a way in which families still bond and work together through shared labor. The place of work and residence are intertwined, which creates an atmosphere in which family members cannot help but be affected by farming decisions and matters. Salamon (1992) explains, “Inevitably, because farm families blend home and work, family relationships cross a multitude of interpersonal domains” (40). Farm family members may also find it difficult to evade farm work for the same reason. To grow up on a farm is to be a part of the entire farming experience, which includes gaining an understanding of both the benefits and rewards of farming, along

with the downfalls.

Many farm children are socialized in a way that encourages future participation in farm work as well as teaching the importance of rituals and symbols associated with farming. Aside from learning the value of a work ethic, farm children learn responsibility which conveys to them their importance to the family enterprise (Salamon 1992). As potential heirs to the future farm operation, they have a stake in the business even at a young age. Farm children are often socialized to understand the many components of farming at a very young age, through the encouragement of playing with toy machinery and animals. They are often encouraged to play outside on the farm as well as follow their parents while they are completing chores and doing other farm work. Socialization theory asserts that parental values and interests have considerable impact on the values of their offspring, which has been supported in previous research of the transmission of parents' values to children (Kohn et.al 1983).

Farming, as an occupation, is often accompanied by risks of fluctuating commodity prices, weather patterns such as drought or hail (which can destroy crops in a matter of minutes) and unfixed incomes. Yet for many farmers the benefits of working for themselves and experiencing autonomy in their daily lifestyle far outweighs the risks associated with the inconsistencies of farming. For those that have continued to farm, their choice is often seen as a decision requiring perseverance and a will to face hardship. Owning one's own business is often seen as a desirable aspect of farming, as it promotes a sense of individuality and responsibility in making a living.

Many farmers feel that their specific farmland in the Bitterroot valley is meaningful because of the location, production capabilities, and the “viewshed” it

provides for their enjoyment. Their land symbolizes a means to do one's chosen work. Salamon (1992) found that when land is owned it gives farm families a sense of security. Families that pass land down through the generations can further establish a sense of attachment and security to the place their forefathers have farmed. Through the years farm families can establish a sense of community through the deep rooted commitment to farming one area. "Thus, land is a concrete and tangible symbol on which to focus personal and community attachment" (Salamon 1992:96).

Agricultural communities are often perceived as having a shared sense of cultural and community values. The culture of a community is most often developed by those that originally settled the land, as community members develop ways to deal with each other that reflect the setting and the economic base (Flora et.al 2004). Farming communities are an example of this type of historical development, as there is a shared set of values that reflect a respect for working the land and developing a work ethic to deal with the hardships a farmer may face. Although the Bitterroot Valley historically developed as an agricultural community, the recent changes have sparked debate about land use and the community's culture.

In *Transforming Rural America*, Douglas B. Jackson-Smith (2003) outlines three perspectives that arise in discussions of land use planning in rural areas. He notes that much of the research and applied policy literature on rural land use is examined using the "urbanist" perspective. More attention has been paid to land that lies at the edge of a large urban area (often termed "urban sprawl") whereas development into extended rural landscapes has been overlooked. Ultimately, this results in a lack of research and understanding of "rural sprawl" and its effects.

A second perspective in rural land use discussions is that of “ag essentialism,” which views agriculture and other traditional rural economic sectors as critical bases of the economic activity and the lifestyles in a rural community. From this view, the utmost concern in land use planning is protecting and preserving rural lands that remain in agriculture. By protecting the rural lands, “ag essentialists” often argue that they are protecting a way of life and a culture (Jackson-Smith2003).

A third view, “Ag minimalism” views agriculture as a dying economic entity, which does not deserve the attention the ag essentialists demand. “They argue that because agriculture is economically and socially unimportant, any focus on farmers or agricultural lands in the land use discussion diverts attention from the real story of economic and social life in modern rural America” (Jackson-Smith 2003:306). Jackson-Smith contends that these competing views limit the ability to understand and meet the challenges of rural land use.

The term “sprawl” is used widely in discussions of development patterns in the Bitterroot Valley. But what exactly is sprawl? The term sprawl is heavily laden with connotations, and often brings to mind housing developments spread across the countryside. Merriam-Webster's (1998) Collegiate Dictionary, tenth edition defines “sprawl” as a verb that means “to spread or develop irregularly; to cause to spread out carelessly or awkwardly” (1138). Dolores Hayden (2004), in her *Field Guide to Sprawl* defines sprawl as “unregulated growth expressed as careless new use of land and other resources as well as abandonment of built areas” (7). The term concentrates on the act of building constructed space, and the unplanned manner in which it is done. Sprawl often is associated with low-density construction that is heavily dependent on automobile use,

with isolated single use development such as malls or residential subdivisions.

Sociologists and planners often note that sprawl is very difficult to define, but very easy to describe (Hayden 2004, Lindstrom and Bartling 2003). Many people will recognize sprawl when they see it, but find it difficult to conceptualize.

The key differences between what we have come to know as “urban sprawl” and “rural sprawl” has to do with the patterns of residential development and where it occurs. Development along an urban fringe is witnessed by the growth of suburban residential areas, and is often followed by the development of retail, transportation, and employment opportunities for the increase in population. This is often referred to as urban sprawl because it is driven outward from a larger metropolitan center. Urban sprawl in the Bitterroot valley is exemplified by the increasing number of subdivisions in the northern portion of the county, nearest to Missoula. The Ravalli County *Growth Policy* (2004) estimates that fifteen to twenty percent of the residents in the Bitterroot valley commute to work in Missoula County.

“Rural sprawl” on the other hand, often consists of larger lots that are located farther away from urban centers, and consist of fewer numbers of people with significantly larger amounts of land per person. It is often accompanied by purchases of land for use as recreational or vacation land, a second or third home, or retirement homes. The growth of the digital and service economies and telecommuting has also influenced an increase in rural sprawl (Johnson 2001). It is easy to spot forms of rural sprawl in the Bitterroot Valley, as the majority of developments occur outside of town limits on larger tracts of land.

Data from the Population Census and American Housing Survey has shown that

between 1980 and 1997, 70 percent of the new residential acreage was located in rural areas (Vesterby and Krupa 2001). Over the past twenty years, the acreage per person for new housing almost doubled, and since 1994, 10+ acre housing lots have accounted for 55 percent of the land developed (www.farmland.org). These trends show a theme in the way Americans prefer to live, demonstrating a 'bigger is better' mentality. Larger lot sizes provide more space, privacy, and picturesque views, and in turn, promote development that requires more acreage of farmland. This is problematic for farmers because this style of development encourages the sale of larger tracts of farmland at a more rapid pace, which is a less effective way to control the spread of population growth out into productive farmland.

One method of controlling sprawl is the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) and purchase of development rights (PDR). These are joint agreements between a landowner and a nonprofit or public entity, in which the landowner voluntarily sells the right to develop the land in exchange for cash compensation, tax benefits, or other financial incentives (Jackson-Smith 2003). PDR and PACE have been practiced since the early 1980s, and in 1996 the government began supplying matching funds through the Farm Bill's Farmland Protection Program. In 2002, the government committed to appropriating 10 billion dollars over the course of 10 years, with land trusts leveraging half of the costs to these matching funds (Berton 2002).

These policies have received much debate as to their benefits and constraints. Some farmers view them as a positive way to preserve the aspects of the land that they see as valuable, allowing them to shape a conservation easement to make it profitable and at the same time beneficial for the farm and the community. Other farmers vehemently

oppose the idea of drafting a conservation easement, viewing the contract as a way that farmers lose valuable property rights and decrease the overall worth of the land.

Those who view conservation easements positively see them as a way to protect farmland while compensating the property owner for keeping the land in open space and agricultural production. Valerie Berton (2002), a writer for *Planning* magazine, sees PDR and PACE as a positive offset to zoning because it compensates the landowner rather than reducing the land value. She goes on to explain how PACE compensates property owners at a sum that is usually the difference between a parcel's development value and its worth in agricultural land, in exchange to keep the land in farming and a commitment to follow guidelines set forth in their particular conservation easement. An employee of the Bitterroot Land Trust echoed this sentiment, noting that each conservation easement starts as a blank slate, with infinite options as to what the landowner would like to see on the land. "You try to target what the landowner is giving up, so that it doesn't infringe on their desire to realize certain components of their land down the road."

Others would disagree that the benefits of a conservation easement are worth the forfeiture of rights given up in the deal. Several farmers in the valley expressed that they would not be interested in forfeiting any of their property rights, because in their mind the rights are worth more than any amount of compensation. Jackson-Smith (2003) has noted that often the unintended outcome of conservation easements in areas without a framework of planning and zoning is a checkerboard pattern across the countryside, or protected lands surrounded by unprotected lands which can become highly developed. Another issue is that small farms may not benefit from tax incentives since their property

taxes are not incredibly high, nor are they bringing in large amounts of taxable income.

In the Bitterroot, it is often easier and more attractive for a wealthy land owner with a large land base to put their land in a conservation easement because they are more likely to benefit from the tax incentives. An employee of the Bitterroot Land Trust commented, "It's pretty easy to just make a deal on a conservation easement with a wealthy landowner who needs a tax break, who bought the land because he thinks it looks beautiful anyway and isn't really worried about financial liability over the long haul. He bought the land to protect the conservation values anyway." For this reason, it has been a much more difficult task to encourage the smaller farmers with smaller land holdings to preserve their land through PACE agreements. Because Ravalli County is largely comprised of small farms and ranches, the purchase of development rights through agricultural easements has been a slow process. However, the Bitterroot Land Trust sees this as its mission since it is a local land trust and can focus on preserving the most productive and historical farms and ranches, even if they happen to be smaller and provide less open space for the community. Over sixty conservation easements have been made by landowners in Ravalli County, protecting more than 30,000 acres (Daniel 2005).

Currently there is a proposal to preserve farmland through the passage of a bond on the 2006 ballot, which would raise money for the county to enact PDR and PACE agreements that would be funded by the local community. Following the example of Gallatin County's 10 million dollar bond issue that passed in 2000 and has preserved over 40,000 acres of land, the Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch board is proposing a ballot initiative which would give voters the chance to approve a tax levy for

appropriating funds to keep Ravalli County farms and ranches in open space. The Right to Farm and Ranch Board is encouraged that other counties in Montana have found this to be a helpful tool to encourage the preservation of open space, and hope the residents of Ravalli County will be supportive of the bond.

The term “growth machine” has been used to describe the patterns of development in Ravalli County, which is a term coined by Sociologist Harvey Molotch to describe why localities encourage growth and development. Molotch (1976) explains, “I speculate that the political and economic essence of virtually any given locality, in the present American context, is growth (18).” Molotch emphasized that the groups in a community that benefit from growth will act more or less in accordance to promote it. Growth in terms of population, land area, and economic activity is often equated with prosperity, and therefore groups that work in opposition to growth will experience constraints (Hayden 2004). Bankers, realtors, construction companies, developers, local governments, and automobile manufacturers can all benefit from growth, and therefore will work to promote it.

Molotch goes on to explain, “Further, this growth imperative is the most important constraint upon available options for local initiative in social and economic reform” (18). Members of the Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch Board deal with this constraint, noting at their monthly meetings that the regulations set forth by the state of Montana and Ravalli County make it easy for developers to put houses on productive agricultural ground. One member of the board remarked, “We're fighting an uphill battle. The system is slanted and it's slanted pro-development.”

The Right to Farm and Ranch Board hopes to encourage developers to build

houses on the unproductive agricultural ground closest to town centers. They are also in the process of creating a list of criteria for what qualifies as the best (most productive/unique) agricultural ground, and hope it will have some sway with county commissioners and developers. If they can encourage a developer to build only one house on a 50 acre plot of quality agricultural ground proposed for development rather than 50 houses, they believe they will have won a small battle.

Despite the county's increased commitment to planned growth, the Right to Farm and Ranch Board feels it has had a hard time influencing change in the way developers plan and propose subdivisions. They receive the proposals after much work has been put into the subdivision process, and therefore their ideas do not hold very much weight. They also feel that the large number of small subdivisions they have received make it harder to discourage sprawl on productive farmland. "We've been nickel and dimed to death," one member of the board commented, "The problem is that we haven't had subdivision proposals for major subdivisions on larger acreage. It's the twenty [acres] here, the forty [acres] there."

During the monthly meeting, the conversations that round out the meeting usually resolve to what can and should be done regarding the subdivisions and increasing development, and how they can minimize the impact on agricultural land in the valley. There is a spirit of hopefulness in planning for a way to keep some of the prime ag ground from being developed, coupled with an urgency and stark realization that they are fighting an uphill battle. Even if they do come up with criteria for saving the best farm land, will they be able to compete with the interests of the private property owners and their wishes for what is to be done with the land?

The farmers on the Right to Farm and Ranch Board struggle for the power to shape the future of the valley yet find themselves met with the task of persuading those that benefit politically and financially from the valley's growth to consider the implications of losing farmland and open space. One farmer on the board recalled, "When we had meetings to establish a growth policy for the county, people said that what they valued was open space, clean air, clean water, wildlife, etc. Well why aren't we considering this when we approve subdivisions?" As we saw, Molotch's "growth machine" theory allows us to understand why farmers face these constraints in their efforts to sway developers and others that benefit from the growth in the valley. It offers insight into how groups with differing degrees of power compete for space and resources.

Chapter Three

The Bitterroot Valley

As I began my ethnographic research in the Bitterroot Valley, I was primarily interested in understanding the cultural legacies that make the Bitterroot valley a meaningful place to farm or ranch. I sought to understand, “Who are the farmers and ranchers that live and work in Ravalli County?” When asked to imagine a “typical” farmer or rancher from Montana, one would probably picture a rugged, independent, hard-working man wearing wrangler jeans and a cowboy hat. Most would assume that this man lives somewhat of a solitary life, relying on his own work ethic and possibly the help of his family to get the job done, even if it takes from dusk until dawn. Campbell et.al (2006) have examined these assumptions of rural masculinity, suggesting that rural masculinities as described above are often at the forefront of how we envision the American farmer and the American male in general.

I have come to find that this “typical” depiction of the Montana farmer or rancher is not necessarily true of the farmers in the Bitterroot Valley. While some of those characteristics described several of the people I interviewed, the farmers who live and work in Ravalli County are a very diverse group. Many are involved in a social life outside of the farm, serving on community boards and other civic organizations, and pursue hobbies unrelated to farming. As a whole they are very articulate and up to date on current issues concerning the local community and the greater world. The romantic idea of the cowboy riding the range and leading a solitary life of rustic individualism does not apply to most of the farmers in Ravalli County.

However, other traditional attributes tied to the American farmer such as

independence, a strong work-ethic, and autonomy in work are very apparent in the attitudes of the farmers and ranchers in the Bitterroot valley. As we will see, a central idea behind what it takes to be a farmer is the value of work. Many farmers in the Bitterroot valley consider themselves hard-working people who rely on their own perseverance and strength to run their farm operation successfully.

The settlement of the Bitterroot Valley mirrors that of the greater west as a whole, as a series of “booms and busts” in terms of population growth and agricultural endeavors. The valley was originally claimed for the United States in 1788 in the Oregon Country Acquisition, and explored by Lewis and Clark in their expedition in 1805-1806. The land was home to the Salish (Flathead) and Pend d'Orcille Indians before the creation of the Flathead Indian Reservation in the Jocko Valley, north of the Bitterroot valley.

The valley's settlement was markedly different from that of the rest of the state of Montana in that settlers were not originally attracted to the region for its farming prospects. William Clark recorded that the land on the valley floor was “poor and stony,” with scattered trees and snow on the surrounding mountains (Langton 1985). Rather, Marcus Daly, the “copper mining magnate” came to the valley in search of timber to supply his mines. Timber was harvested from the valley to power Butte's big copper mine, as well as to build miner's houses and mine shafts (Diamond 2005). In 1860, over a dozen farmers moved to the valley to provide food for the mining camps, and served approximately one thousand people (Jiustu 2000).

During this same period, vast portions of land in eastern Montana were settled as a result of the Homestead Act of 1862, providing 160 acres of land each if settlers would establish a home on the land and work on it for at least five years (Flora et.al 2004).

Settlers were to increase the productivity of the land, and were dispersed across rural regions in a loosely connected organization. These homestead families were viewed as possessing individuality, a hard work ethic, and rugged lifestyles as they tried to make a living off land that was often less than desirable for farming. The second Homestead Act of 1909 raised the amount of land to 320 acres, further encouraging western expansion.

A study of homesteading in Montana reported that between 1909-1918, seventy thousand to eighty thousand people came to settle on farms in the state (Manning 1995). The nation's farm population peaked in 1916, as settlers took advantage of free land and America's ideology of manifest destiny. "The American mythos of the rugged, persevering individual was cultivated in the nineteenth century as European settlement "conquered" the frontier and as industrial capitalism became the dominant economic form" (Lindstrom and Bartling 2003:xix). This point in time was the heyday of agriculture in America, and in Montana the land under wheat rose from 250,000 acres in 1909 to 3.5 million acres in 1919 (Manning 1995.)

Yet this was not to become a continuous trend, as the total number of people on farms has steadily been in decline since the peak in 1916. By 1922, sixty thousand of the homesteaders that had rushed to Montana had left (Manning 1995). Farming in the arid grasslands of the west turned out to be a lot harder than originally expected of its hopeful inhabitants.

The Bitterroot Valley shares the boom and bust qualities of other regions of Montana agriculture, yet differs in several important ways. Dubbed "Montana's Banana Belt," the valley has a particularly mild climate for the region. The rainfall in the valley is low, at 13 inches per year, yet with irrigation farmers are steadily able to grow fruits

and vegetables. Rather than being settled by homesteaders, who were predominant in eastern Montana, the Bitterroot Valley was purchased by land prospectors and later sold to farmers and ranchers.

Irrigation ditches were constructed as early as 1860 to gather water from streams draining from the Bitterroot Mountains. From 1908-1910, farmers worked together to put in an irrigation ditch to water the bench lands, which was known as “The Big Ditch” (Jiustu 2000, Diamond 2005). This increased their ability to plant orchards and raise crops, and the valley was dubbed “the land of opportunity” to entice hopeful easterners to move west and buy a farm.

From 1900-1910 the population of Ravalli County grew from 7,822 to 11,666 people. The county seat, Hamilton, had a population jump from 1,800 to 3,000 people between 1907-1911, as easterners moved west and bought up orchard tracts to begin farming apples and other types of fruit (Green 2005). Along with all the farmers came businesses and merchants to support the swelling community. Enticed by the promise of fertile land and an agreeable climate for growing fruit trees, many farmers were unprepared for the difficulties that can arise in farming. By 1920, the “apple boom” had busted, and many farmers sold their land and moved on. The farmers had suffered killing frosts, soil depletion, and changing markets (Jiustu 2000).

Although Ravalli County suffered a period of economic decline, the valley survived the hardship through farming and timber production. Truck gardens, dairies, and sugar beet and potato farms continued to remain productive, and provided much of the food for the growing Missoula valley. Unlike other areas in the nation, the valley grew during the depression years of the thirties until World War II

(www.cityofhamilton.net/faq.htm).

The face of agriculture in the valley has experienced a variety of changes through the years, as industrial agricultural trends called for the consolidation of farms and ranches into larger, more efficient enterprises. In the 1960s and 1970s, family operated farms and ranches largely produced hay, grain, milk, wool, cows, calves, sheep, and lambs. Most of the agricultural land was owned by the operator, although profit margins were small (Schultz 2006). Since the increase in population and development since the early 90s, small and medium farms and ranches have become fragmented into even smaller tracts.

A recent qualitative study of the changing economic structure of agriculture in the valley found that as older farmers engaged in traditional agriculture age and sell their land, “lifestyle” farms and ranches are gaining popularity, where making a living off the land is not the primary objective (Schultz 2006). The owners of these “hobby farms,” as many residents call them, wish to enjoy the rural lifestyle and use the land to raise horses, llamas, a few sheep or goats, or possibly some poultry. They enjoy the privacy and open space between neighbors, and sometimes lease out part of the tract to farmers. As Schultz (2006) noted in his study, “The house is often placed near the center of the tract, making irrigation, fencing, grazing, or crop production more complex and expensive (8)” These types of hobby or lifestyle farms contribute to the sprawl in the valley, as many residents prefer open space to high density housing.

The type of growth that occurred in the '20s and '30s was heralded as a success in the past, yet today is viewed much differently. The newcomers to the Bitterroot Valley are now seen as contributors to the valley's “growing pains,” as the pattern of

development differs from that of its agricultural settlers in the past. In the same way that people were drawn to Montana for the opportunity to homestead and seek out a life of individualism, people today still seek out a life in rural regions, close to agricultural open spaces and quaint rural towns. The frontier spirit has been renewed today in an entirely different form. Rather than battling the harsh elements of frontier living, current inhabitants of the valley have access to amenities our frontier forefathers would never have imagined. Could it be possible that America's emphasis on individualism and the frontier spirit has contributed to the haphazard settlement of which we now term "sprawl?"

The goals of developers in the early 1900s were not very different from those of developers in Montana today. Jiustu (2000) describes the development of the early 1900s: "These recreation communities were to feature summer homes and clubhouses; the planners hoped to draw Midwestern city dwellers to summer or retire under Montana's big skies" (22). Newcomers continue to be attracted to the valley for its recreational amenities, and a large number use the valley as a site for second or third homes.

History has a way of shaping the future in ways that are sometimes altogether unexpected and unimaginable. The orchard tracts created in the early 1900s still play a major role in determining what the landscape of Ravalli County will look like. The land is still divided up in ten acre orchard tracts, and farmers who own large parcels of land are actually farming on smaller ten acre parcels. These ten acre orchard tracts were "grandfathered" in, and cannot be divided into smaller parcels without going through a lengthy (and sometimes costly) subdivision process. However, farmers have the option

of selling a ten acre tract without going through the subdivision process, which has encouraged the sale of ten acre tracts for development.

One farmer commented that the orchard tracts were a contributor to the sprawl that he's seen across the countryside. "What we have going on here is definitely sprawl. But we can contribute a great amount of that sprawl to what was done in the early 1900s when those irrigation districts were formed, and the apple boom came along. Well, in those days when you were going to have an apple orchard, if you had more than ten to twenty acres as a family, you couldn't handle it. So they divided all this ground into ten acre tracts that are still here today. These fields that you look out here on these benches along the bottom... they're not really eighty, ninety, one hundred acres. They're eight or nine or ten-ten's. So that's part of what led to our sprawl."

Farmers in the Bitterroot Valley react to sprawl in diverse ways, and hold unique views regarding what should be done in the face of development in Ravalli County.

—These issues will be explored further in future chapters. But first, it is important to understand how I came to understand the opinions of farmers and ranchers in this study.

Chapter Four

Methodology

The research method used in this project consists of qualitative fieldwork examined from a constructivist viewpoint, which focuses on understanding how the participants in the study construct their social reality. The ideologies and beliefs of the participants are the most important aspect of the research, as matters of moral significance are uncovered using an inductive research process. The findings of the study are literally created as the topic is investigated and as individual participants voice what they perceive to be true (Guba and Lincoln 2004).

Qualitative methods are the most appropriate method for this project because they allow for deeper understanding of the thoughts, actions, and feelings of farmers and ranchers, as they are able to explain their positions through personal narratives.

Qualitative research is best suited for research that “emphasizes observations about natural behavior and artifacts that capture social life as experienced by the participants” (Schutt 2001:265). It would have been nearly impossible to gather the amount of rich data needed to answer the questions at hand using quantitative data.

Thirteen semi-structured intensive interviews were conducted with nineteen participants, between the months of September 2005 and December 2005. Of the thirteen interviews, ten families acquired a primary income from farming and ranching. Half of the interviews took place with both a husband and wife, with the husband actively answering all the questions and the wife adding her thoughts from time to time. Only two women actively participated in the interviews. As much as I encouraged the wives to participate and fill out the informed consent form, they almost always declined, saying

that they did not have very much to offer on the subject. When placing phone calls to request an interview, if I spoke to a woman I specifically asked her if she would be willing to participate in order to get a more diverse sample, and almost every time she declined, stating that her husband would know more about the matter. Three of the farmers in the interview population were serving or had previously served as members of the county planning board, and one was also a real estate agent. These roles provided a variety of insights and deeper understanding of the complexities of the topic.

If possible, group interviews were conducted with one or more family members. Since this research deals with the passing down of a legacy, the perspective of parents was important, however it was not a criteria for the participants since it is still possible to pass down norms, values, and ideas to community members, future generations, and other family members. The study was not limited to 'traditional' families and included single parents and in some cases, several generations of one family. Interview participants were all over the age of eighteen, and either owned or rented land to farm.

Three interviews took place with members of the agricultural support community; a county agricultural extension agent, an employee of the Bitterroot Land Trust, and a salesman at a local feed and farm supply store. These interviews provided further information on the topics discussed by the farmers, and allowed for data triangulation, in which comparisons between sources uncover discrepancies and inconsistencies.

The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A) were primarily concerned with how the participant viewed the effects of development on their farming operation. Introductory questions were asked to understand the specifics of the farmer or ranchers' type of operation, as well as the history of the farm, and how farm life was experienced

by the family. The second set of questions concerned how the farmer perceived the development in the county, and if it affected the farm operation. A third set of questions concerned the future of the farm operation and the future of the farm culture in the valley. Although these questions served as a guide through the research process, many other subjects were covered in the course of the interview as they held more of a conversational tone. The participant was allowed to spend more time discussing what they felt to be pertinent, rather than sticking to the interview guide. Length of the interviews ranged from between 45 minutes to 3 hours.

Interview participants were selected through a snowball sample of farmers and ranchers in Ravalli County. Four gatekeepers to the sample allowed for different types of farmers and ranchers from a variety of locations within the county to be reached. Participants were contacted by telephone after being referred by a previous participant or gatekeeper and were given a straightforward account of the background of the research and the intent of the project. Interviews took place in the respondent's home, somewhere on their farm, or in a convenient public area that was agreed upon by the researcher and participant. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. All potential interview subjects that were contacted agreed to participate except for one, who felt he was too busy at the time.

Participants were ensured confidentiality through a informed consent form guaranteeing that their identity would be kept private and pseudonyms would be used. Lofland and Lofland (1995) note that along with ensuring confidentiality, it is important to communicate that the goal of the research is to ensure understanding, rather than passing moral judgment or imposing immediate reform. The approach of the research

was to “capture and report multiple perspectives rather than seek a singular truth” (Patton 2002:546). No elaboration of my opinions regarding development onto agricultural lands was given, in order to encourage respondents to answer honestly with their own opinions.

Observations were conducted at meetings of the Right to Farm and Ranch Board, which met once a month and were open to the public. Members were made aware of my role as a student researcher and understood that I would be using information gathered at the meetings to produce a master's thesis. My role at the meeting was that of a bystander and listener, as I did not involve myself in the conversation or debate during the meeting. The meetings were not tape recorded; however I did casually take notes from time to time.

Observations were conducted at a public forum conducted by the Bitterroot Valley Board of Realtors, (with the cooperation of the Bitterroot Building Association, the First American Title Company, and the Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce) which provided information about implementation of Montana Senate Bills 116 and 290, concerning impact fees and new laws governing land use in Montana. An ad in the local newspaper titled *“Imagine... People Coming Together to Help Create Cohesive, Coordinated Development and Growth Management”* encouraged all land owners, developers, and those that care about the growth in the valley to attend (Ravalli Republic November 14, 2005). Despite the welcoming nature of the advertisement, the meeting consisted of information that was primarily of use to realtors and attorneys, and there was little room for dialogue or discussion with the general public.

I attended a workshop titled, “Estate Planning for Farm Families” which was sponsored by the Bitterroot Land Trust and the Right to Farm and Ranch Board. This

workshop educated farm families on how to prepare to manage their estates for future succession, and encouraged land owners to become aware of the rules and regulations surrounding land transfers and taxes. It was also a place where I could obtain information to better understand the concerns farmers had about the issues surrounding farm succession.

Regular reading of the county's local newspaper, *The Ravalli Republic* also kept me informed of current debates over subdivision proposals and regulations, the possibility of introducing impact fees, information about local conservation easements, as well as letters to the editor concerning development onto agricultural land and changes in the nature of life in the valley. This information also served as a method of achieving data triangulation. I found it extremely helpful to be up to date on the topics of interest in the county, as farmers often referred to these topics in the interviews.

Despite my attempt to remain detached from the topic as I interviewed farmers and ranchers, nearly every respondent wanted to know where I was from, if I grew up on a farm, and what kind of farm I grew up on. I answered their questions, letting them know that I grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio and that my father now breeds cattle and raises dairy heifers. This information often prompted several interview participants to respond with, "Well then you know what I'm talking about." Regardless of their point of view, they often felt that my background entailed an understanding and agreement of their position on the subject. Whether or not I agreed with their position, I communicated an understanding of what they felt to be true, and a further interest in how they came to hold their views. Patton (2002) notes that data quality in qualitative research is enhanced by providing clear, factual data, rather than focusing on objectivity and distancing oneself

from the phenomena being studied.

The data was analyzed using content analysis, in which transcripts were coded to look for relevant themes. Coding frames organized the data and allowed for themes and concepts to emerge, which helped identify findings. As outlined by Glaser and Strauss, analytic induction “combines analysis of data after the coding process with analysis of data while integrating theory” (Berg 2004:282). I was interested in the uncovering the latent content, which contains the deeper, interpretative meanings in each interview.

Limitations to this study include a small sample size for the population I was studying and a short duration of fieldwork (ten months). The findings are not to be interpreted as representative of the views of all farmers and ranchers in Ravalli county. My hopes are that this study will provide an understanding of the impact of development on the agricultural legacy of several farm families, which will help us to better understand how some farmers react to similar issues of social change within their community. The study allows us to understand what the future holds for farming families faced with changing landscapes and pressures of development. By gaining knowledge on the impacts of development on the lives of farmers and ranchers, we can be better prepared to assist them in planning for change and implementing programs to alleviate some of the hardships that accompany a changing lifestyle and economy, which contributes to the ability to pass on values and land to future generations.

Chapter Five

Four Perspectives— Reactions to Sprawl

Let us now revisit some of the farm families interviewed throughout the course of the study in order to gain an understanding of how they perceive the effects of development and sprawl within the context of their specific farm legacies. It is important to understand that each family has its own idea about what a farm legacy means to them, and therefore they each place differing ideals on the importance of preserving a farm legacy and their concerns about their future and way of life. I have identified four specific families that serve as examples of four perspectives regarding the effects of development on agricultural lands and an agricultural legacy. These four perspectives are referred to as Traditionalist, Property Rights Advocate, Growth Advocate, and Innovator. Each perspective includes attributes that are exemplary of the reactions of several farmers I spoke, while at the same time they each have exceptional characteristics that make them unique and interesting. When possible, I have noted when other farmers voiced similar concerns and when themes emerged throughout the entire group of farmers that were interviewed.

Traditionalist

The first thing I noticed when I turned down the lane to the Morgans' farm was how different the land looked from other Ravalli County farms. On the left of the lane was a small field of corn, with an old fashioned one row harvester and horse-drawn implements sitting in the field. Most farms in the Bitterroot valley do not raise feed corn, nor had I seen such old, outdated machinery. As I approached the Morgans' small farm house I noticed an older man with a thick bushy beard and two teenage boys outside

working on an engine. They looked like a rough, hardworking crew, and I could tell by the grease on their clothes and their hands that they are the type of farmers that pride themselves on performing their own work on their machinery and equipment.

Henry came to greet me, and I was immediately made to feel at home by his warm eyes and strong handshake. He led me to the house to meet his wife Margaret, and we took a seat at the kitchen table. I glanced at Henry's large hands, which were evidence alone that he is a hardworking farmer. Covered with rough calluses, grease, and dirt, they tell the story of a man who is unafraid to work. Henry's fifteen year old son joined us at the table, eager to hear what I had come to ask his father, as it is not everyday that a college student comes to interview a farm family.

Henry's entrance into farming was similar to that of many farmers in the valley. He spoke of always knowing since he was just a young boy that he would someday be a farmer. Most farmers that I spoke to in the Bitterroot Valley knew at a very young age that they wanted to farm, and spoke of an "opportunity" that came along, in which they decided to buy their parents' land or expand on their parents' farm by acquiring more land. When the opportunity presented itself, it was just a matter of making the decision to farm.

Henry told me a little about his family's farming history, explaining that his grandparents came to the United States from Russia to settle in North Dakota. During the Great Depression, his parents moved to the Bitterroot Valley and started a truck farm, raising some livestock on the side. Henry was the youngest of twelve kids, and recalled that although his family was large and they worked together, it was extremely hard work keeping up with all the chores on the farm.

I asked Henry if he felt that his parents influenced his decision to become a farmer, since he had spent so many years working with them on the farm as he grew up. Henry's response communicated that although his family instilled a love of the land in him, they did not directly affect his decision;

My parents didn't influence me one way or the other, we went about our own business. They didn't tell us what to do. When you were about fifteen years old you were grown up and that was it. If I was gonna farm I was gonna have to buy the farm, it wasn't going to be given to me, because there's a lot of brothers and sisters. I had an option to buy it, so it worked out good.

The current Morgan family situation is similar in that Henry feels it is important to let his kids figure out on their own what they'd like to do, while his job as a father is to support them in their efforts. Since Henry's son, Adam, was in the room, I took the opportunity to ask him if he was interested in farming in the future. He replied that he would indeed be interested in farming, but would like to go to school first to learn another trade so that he would have something else to fall back on if farming didn't work out.

When I asked Henry what he feels his children have learned from growing up on a farm, it didn't take him long to reply. He feels very strongly that growing up on a farm equipped them with practical skills that they are able to take with them to use in other arenas of life, such as rebuilding engines and repairing machinery. He swelled with pride as he commented on how his eldest son had gone away to college to become an engineer, and a professor called Henry on the phone and said, "If you have any other boys, send them to us, because your son can do so much with what we have around here!" Even if his children did not continue to farm, they were able to acquire skills on the farm that would benefit them in other career pursuits.

Henry's wife Margaret chimed in with her appreciation of some of the aspects of farm life that have benefited their children. Having grown up in a large city in Montana, Margaret compared her experiences growing up to those of her children:

Raising kids here versus the big city, it's not even comparable, you know. The work ethic is also one of the big things. When the kids come home from school, they would just run, be outside, and then they'd go back and they'd work, and then play in the creek after they did the chores. They were used to having chores...having the responsibility of feeding cattle for the family. They would go out with their dad and feed the horses. Seeing them come home and be in this atmosphere with these values, and being able to spend time with their dad is just the best part.

Not only did Margaret see the farm as a place to develop a work ethic, but also a place to enjoy the outdoors and enjoy quality time with parents.

The Morgan family also represents common characteristics of most Bitterroot farm families in that Henry has another job outside of his occupation as a farmer. He explained that he must work as a full-time landscaper in order to obtain a steady income. When I asked how he feels about being a part time farmer, he looked at me with confusion and corrected me; "Actually I farm quite a bit....I am a full-time farmer, and a full-time landscaper. I've got two full times." In order to keep up with the farm operation, Henry noted that he must spend equal time farming as he does with his other job. He commented that if he didn't work outside the farm he wouldn't be able to make the payments on the land.

Other farmers in the valley echoed this situation, and spoke of the need for one of the family members to get a job outside the farm to support the family and provide a stable income. This situation is similar to national reports which show that the average family farm earns only 14% of its income from farming (McMichael 2003). The need for health insurance and retirement benefits were seen as a major reason to pursue outside

careers. For many, the choice to get a job outside of the farm reflected their desire to maintain the farm lifestyle, with the opportunity to raise their kids on a farm. Many farmers laugh and joke around about working another job in order to support their farm “habit.”

Yet Henry's farming situation is unique from other Bitterroot valley farmers in another way. When it comes time to plow and plant his fields, he uses a team of draft horses rather than using tractors and conventional machinery. He decided to make the switch to horses about fifteen years ago, and said that he couldn't be happier with this more traditional agricultural practice. He explained that their equipment costs were piling up and they needed to lease more ground in order to keep up with the pace of modernizing agriculture. Henry found that when they sold their cows and paid their bills, there was no money left over. He felt the extra work that was required to lease more ground, keep equipment running, and stay financially solvent was a headache.

One of Henry's older neighbors, Peter, had used a team of horses for years, and as Henry recalls, when he was a kid the rest of the farmers used to laugh at Peter for his failure to adapt to modern ways. Yet at a young age, Henry noticed how much work Peter and the horses could get done, and Peter's farm was still able to remain profitable. Henry watched Peter as he was able to pay off his farm and still be able to contribute to a gravity irrigation system put in by a small community of farmers. “Peter always seemed to have more time off than the rest of us,” Henry recalled. As a young boy, Henry was puzzled as to how an old-fashioned farmer like this could make a steady income without large, modern machinery. These images stuck in the back of his mind, and as he became older he began to consider making the switch to farming with horses.

Another memory that has stuck with Henry from his younger days was the day when his parents went to the bank to pay off the escrow on their farm. He recalls that it was one of the proudest days in his parents' lives. Sitting in a chair behind them as they talked to the banker, he heard the banker tell his parents that the only reason they were able to pay off the farm was because they never bought any new equipment. Henry chuckled as he recalled using all the old equipment his father ran on the farm, and remembered thinking to himself, "When I'm older, I'm buying a new tractor!" That day in the bank has served as a reminder to Henry that buying new equipment may not be the best way to run a farm.

"They say a brand new swather is \$160,000. How can you cut corn for \$160,000? So that's why I work with teams of horses, so I can have money left over," Henry explained. Henry's ideas about farming have undoubtedly been impacted by his parents' and Peter's influences and the effects of this influence can be witnessed each Spring in the Morgans' farm planting ritual. Peter, who is now eighty-seven, Henry, who is forty-five, and Henry's fifteen year old son Adam all work together with the teams of horses to get the job done. Working with draft horses is a skill that can take a lifetime to master, and requires patience and practice. Henry sees this ritual as a valuable way to spend time with his children and teach them the values of hard work and dedication to a skill. Henry would also like to see them be able to continue the farming operation if they were interested. Yet with the high land values, he is unsure of how this will happen.

Henry recalled, "I remember when I bought this place, everybody told me that I was nuts, that I'll never be able to pay for it, and now when I look at this land, I say, 'Boy, these kids will never pay for it.' But that's what people thought about me too!"

When it comes time to retire, Henry would like to pass his land along to his kids, and work with them in figuring out how to make the land transfer possible through payments. "I think that would be great; I could become a gentleman farmer and they can keep working, and I'll help them out," Henry laughed.

Henry also admitted that the land is his '401K,' since all his money currently goes back into the farm. However, he is convinced that they can find a way to work it out so that his children will be able to someday own the land. For Henry, the development in the valley is not a burden that can't be overcome, but rather it is a time of significant change that can be discussed and planned to find the best solutions for everyone. He explained,

We have herded our cows down Hamilton Heights for years, and plan to keep right on doing it. The development really has helped in some regards. Back when there was no speed limit people used to drive 100 mph down Hamilton Heights! A kid came over a hill and killed 10 cows in one hit! He lived through it but just barely. Now the speed limit is 45. If your cows got out it'd probably be a little safer.

Henry has also been able to rent smaller tracts of ground since the larger parcels are being subdivided, and smaller parcels are unattractive to farmers who are looking for larger acreage to use big tractors and big implements. For a small horse farmer like Henry, the situation is ideal. He does not feel that the development will stop him from being able to live the kind of life he desires, nor will it keep him from farming productively. He is able to pass down his farm legacy through a willingness to adapt his farming practices to the changing conditions.

Henry went on to explain that he feels the county needs to make the valley a place that everyone can enjoy, creating more high density development and creating public spaces for families to go.

We need places for kids to ride their bikes, for mothers with strollers to walk. Maybe people won't need the ten acre yard if they have a place to go. There is no other country that has as much lawn as we have! My landscaping company mows ten acre yards! People want that, but it's ridiculous!

Henry has had many experiences with the newcomers in the valley, as they often come to him for their landscaping needs. He has befriended several of them, and he noted that they often come visit him on his farm from time to time. He commented,

They come out here and sit and they don't leave. They want the calm of it but they don't know how to get it. They want what they can't have. They want this laid back life, but they don't want to give up anything for it either. They want the new car and the new two million dollar house, so they just try to buy the lifestyle.

Like many other farmers interviewed in the study, Henry believes that many of the newcomers move to the valley to enjoy qualities of an agrarian lifestyle. However, he feels that they have replaced the older agrarian standards of a laid back lifestyle with the standards of consumption. Large, professionally landscaped yards and “trophy homes” serve as a display of the consumption of a place and landscape, which is seen by farmers as a distinct contrast from old farmhouses and productive farm ground. Sonya Salamon (2002), an anthropologist who has studied newcomers to agrarian communities has found similar situations in which new residents to “postagrarian” towns place more emphasis on the concept of property and place as a commodity. For Henry and other farmers in the Bitterroot, the farm life they experience is not something that can be commodified, but rather exists as part of a legacy that is passed down and learned through the experiences of farm life.

Although Henry prefers that productive agricultural ground not to be developed, he does not see a problem with the creation of subdivisions or golf courses on

unproductive agricultural ground. In commenting on the infamous “Stock Farm” development and golf course outside of Hamilton Tim remarked, “You couldn't hardly raise twenty head of cattle up there, it was all sage brush. Now there are millionaires up there who aren't polluting the country, and everybody's getting some work out of it.”

Henry has been able to benefit from some of influx of population through his landscaping business, and therefore sees that the situation can prove beneficial for area businesses.

Henry's ideas about the intersection of a farm legacy and sprawl are characterized by that of adaptation while remaining traditional. By going back in time in respect to agricultural practices, he is able to regain his family's ability to remain productive agricultural producers while maintaining a quality of life that is desirable. Earlier in the interview when I asked Henry, “What does the farm mean to you beyond providing income?” he responded, “I think it means something to my kids because that's the only thing that I would probably leave behind, and I could give them.” Henry identified that the land will serve as a tangible form of a legacy that displays a respect for what the land can provide and the livelihood it can sustain. However, Henry failed to note that he will leave behind much more than a piece of ground.

Henry has a genuine enjoyment of farm labor, which he communicates through his respect and appreciation for the tradition that has been handed down from farmers that have come before him. He will pass on his respect for farming as a process, as his children have grown up with an understanding of the qualities of traditionalism that Henry sees as important. They have witnessed the work ethic that is necessary to live the kind of life that is desired by their family, and understand the sacrifice one must make to achieve it. These intangible aspects of the Morgan's family legacy represent what it

means to farm “as a way of life,” and to carry on with what their family's forefathers deemed as important.

Property Rights Advocate

It was a snowy December day when I drove down the long lane to John and Patti Stone's beautiful old farm house, which was surrounded by old farm machinery and barking dogs. I gratefully accepted an invitation to join them for lunch, hoping that the casual atmosphere of a home would allow the interview to take the form of a private conversation. As we settled down at the kitchen table John started to tell me about the history of his farm and how he came to be a rancher twenty years ago. A retired lawyer and professional football player, John was drawn to ranching due to the higher energy, physical part of the job, along with being able to spend more time with his kids rather than only spending time with them on the evenings and weekends. He commented that had he stayed in Missoula and worked as a lawyer, his family could have lived more luxuriously, however he enjoyed the rural lifestyle and therefore chose ranching instead of practicing law.

John and Patti are the parents to six children, who have all gone on to pursue careers outside of the Bitterroot Valley and outside of the farming occupation. John did not believe they were interested in farming, yet noted that the situation was “very complex.” When asked what he thinks the future of the farm will hold, he responded, “When I die, it goes to my wife. When we die, it goes to my kids.” I probed a little further by asking, “So they'll do what they want with it?” After a long pause John replied,

I have two points of view on the future of this place. One is that these concepts of conservation easements and various other easements, various

other ways to tie up your property in a contract after you're dead... they don't appeal to me. I think that a hand from the grave shouldn't be controlling how today's people live. I'm opposed to controlling it myself.

After several bites of his sandwich, John began again,

Two, I think that you show your influence on what you leave behind through your children. If you have passed those values on you have accomplished leaving a legacy, so it's up to your kids to control whatever you leave behind.

After another pause, John went on with a third point to the discussion,

Three is... a place like this really shouldn't be given to anybody. It should be taken. It should be won. And if they're strong enough to hold it, fine. If they're not strong enough to hold it...more power to whoever gets it.

This response puzzled me, as it was extremely different from any other response I had received from a farmer or rancher. "When you say "take it" do you mean it needs to be bought by somebody?" I tentatively asked John, not wanting to offend his straightforward, authoritative personality. He responded, "That's the way people take things these days, is to buy them."

In the first few minutes of our conversation, John had managed to bring up many of the key points in my research. The first idea concerns the issue of the degree of control farmers have in decreeing the fate of a particular plot of land, the future of their offspring, and possibly the future of a community. One could argue that regardless of how much a person wishes to surrender control over the future of a piece of land, it seems to be nearly impossible to separate this control from the actions of daily life. To develop the land for a large housing subdivision would alter it so that it could not be used as ranch land again. To place a conservation easement on the land (to which John is opposed), would make the land unavailable for future development. One could argue that both situations are a method of controlling land use. Later in the interview, John brought up a

seemingly contradictory notion to his previous opinion about the control of his land. On the topic of real estate development versus farmland use, he remarked,

People in agriculture are real estate developers. We take land in its natural state, clear trees, level ground, change the forage. And depending on what terrain we're in, we either drain the swamps or create swamps. And we do it for the purpose of growing food and fiber. Open space is just a residual gain. A secondary gain. The current residential real estate development in Ravalli County is just a competing form of development.

Under this philosophy, his current use of the land as ranch land is a form of development, which plays a part in determining the future use of the land. John's issue of control seems to stem more from the desire to have the liberty to do as one pleases with the land, rather than be held up in a contract. The question for John is not so much whether or not it is "better" to develop or to farm, but whether or not one has the right to develop the land or farm it, as the current land owner sees fit.

To keep the land in its current land use, which is ranch land, seems to be John's intention for the future of the land when it comes time to pass it on to another owner or his children. By leaving it as it currently exists, John does not feel like he has controlled the future through his own ideas and actions, but has allowed the next generation the liberty of choosing the best outcome for the land.

John's second point concerns the issue of his legacy and what he is leaving behind for his children. John speaks of this legacy in terms of personal values and actions, rather than being tied to a particular piece of ground or a particular occupation. He is more concerned with the values he has passed down to his children which will in turn be shown through his children's actions. John noted that through working on the ranch his children were able to gain a work ethic; however of more importance were the values he and Patti taught their children throughout their lifetime, which weren't necessarily connected to the

experiences learned on the ranch.

John's third point deals with the issue of the legacy of his farm. He does not wish to give land directly to his children, as he sees it as an object that should rather be "taken." This can be interpreted as meaning that land should not necessarily serve as a tangible form of a legacy, and that John does not assign a meaningful association to passing down his land to his children. By saying that the land should be "taken," I believe John is clarifying that he feels that the person who ends up with the land should deem it worthy of the purchase it would require to "take" it. If his children are unable to afford to keep the land and had to sell it, it would be their own fault and therefore, they do not deserve it.

Later in the interview when discussing his large land base (over 1,000 acres), John mentioned, "In the end, my genetics will have an economic benefit to survive in whatever future there is." He feels that his land provides economic security for his children, provided they are able to manage it effectively. As he leaves his land behind, he wishes for his children to use it in a way that will bring them the greatest benefit. Part of John's legacy is assuring that his children will have a future of prosperity and wealth.

As John, Patti, and I continued with our lunch of BLT sandwiches and chicken noodle soup, I further questioned the issue of conservation easements, to find out why John felt opposed to this arrangement. He responded with a sigh,

Oh, people talk to me about conservation easements... every six months, they try to sit around the table and put your ground in a conservation easement. Basically you've got some outside aggregate coming in and telling you what to do. I don't do well in that situation. What if you sell a conservation easement to "XYZ" Trust, and the trust company takes that easement and gives you some money, and you give up all your development rights on that ranch other than agricultural purposes. Four or five years pass, and the new highway comes through. Well, who gets the

new money coming in from the highway? That's not an agricultural purpose. They've got to condemn the conservation easement's interest in that too. What happens if, for example, oil is found underneath the ground? Who owns that interest? The conservation easement. They own those commercial uses. You cannot foretell with sufficient accuracy to decide today how this place should be used fifty years from now. There may be a significant public good that the place should be used for that you can't foresee today.

John paused, and I decided not to interrupt because I could tell he wished to elaborate on the issue.

I'll tell you it's a very short term idea. A very short term gain. The money part is illusory. First you have a ranch with all the rights, now you have a ranch with less rights and some money. Then you have to pay the [people who own the conservation easement] to make sure you're conforming. Before you know it, all that money got paid back. So I'm opposed to it.

Again, John reiterates the idea of a loss of private property rights as being the highest concern and primary reason not to take action to preserve the agricultural qualities of the land. The interesting aspect of his argument is that he views conservation easements as a short term idea. Most proponents of conservation easements would argue in opposition to his reasoning, claiming that placing a conservation easement on a piece of land is a method of long term planning, with long term gains of protecting farmland which is vital to food production, wildlife habitat, and open space. Contrary to this line of thinking, John believes that a ranch with the rights to make changes as seen fit is more effective in the long term scheme, rather than a ranch the surrenders some rights in order to be destined to remain a ranch in perpetuity.

Although John feels very strongly that property rights should be considered first in discussions about the future of farmland in Ravalli County, like most farmers and ranchers in the Bitterroot Valley he feels strongly in favor of keeping productive agricultural land in farming. He notes, "I very much would rather see the residential real

estate development occur on land that is not productive farmland. Productive farmland is scarce and extremely valuable for producing food. But once you put a house on it, it's not productive for food purposes.” John commented that if he could make a law concerning protection of agricultural lands in the Bitterroot Valley, it would say “No building can be constructed on ground that will produce five tons of alfalfa per acre.” With this statement, we see that John is not completely against regulations that would infringe on a person's property rights.

John went on to comment that his bias is that every community should have its own secure food supply, and that populations of people should be located near sources of food.

It is my opinion that there is a future value that will be developed for agriculture in the Bitterroot to feed the growing populations of Missoula and the Bitterroot, and there's going to be a very strong need for it. But for that to happen, cheap transportation needs to end.

John believes that the people in the Bitterroot Valley will regret destroying productive farmland, and in years to come, the farms that are left are going to prosper due to the increased demand for local food.

John has had previous experiences dealing with the issue of land use planning in Ravalli County that have contributed to his ideas about how the issue of property rights should be handled. He explained how he initially got involved in the debate over land use rights in the county five or six years ago when some men came to him and proposed building a motor sports track on his land. He recalled,

They took me around to some of these areas where there were motor sports tracks. It looked to me like the families came to the tracks and were having a pretty decent time, and so I went along with it.

After several more bites of his sandwich John continued.

Well... all hell broke loose, and the neighbors protested. There were big debates, and we were on TV. And in the end the neighbors were probably right, since the thing we didn't take into account is that the Bitterroot Valley is a closed airshed, and there's not a place for smoke and sound to go. Plus, a mile away is the Lee Metcalf wildlife refuge.

John went on to explain that through the upsurge of community response to the racetrack a significant portion of the citizenry decided that it was time to do something to control development in the valley. This sparked a discussion about creating a county-wide growth policy which would serve as a guide to county government officials, making suggestions on how changes in land use in the valley would affect the community positively or negatively. This initial discussion about a growth policy led to much debate about what the Ravalli County growth policy should look like. John recalled several growth policies presented to the public, and each proposal was vigorously opposed and defeated at the polls. John noted;

I began to realize, I am a stakeholder in what happens down here, since I have a large land holding. So I started going to the meetings and listening to what they had to say. At one point I got so mad, I blew up and walked out of there. And then I got to thinking about it, and I realized I needed to go back and get involved with this growth policy. The more I got involved with the growth policy, the county commissioners wanted me to be on the planning board, so I was on the planning board. And then Ravalli County went into great political turmoil about this new growth policy. What did they call that? (John asked Patti) The Blitzkrieg... yeah... the Blitzkrieg growth policy. Anyway, it was rushed into play, and I insisted that it be put to a vote. But I had no power to put it to a vote. So I lobbied and lobbied and lobbied a commissioner until finally it was put to a vote and it passed.

John was instrumental in the passing of the growth policy that is still in effect today, which shows his dedication to the county's need for planning and controlling certain aspects of growth. Although John places great importance on respecting an individual's property rights, he explained that regulations are necessary in order to protect

the environment and citizens of the valley. He notes that there are a great deal of bureaucratic processes that members of the community face when they propose to subdivide and develop land in Ravalli County, and although it can take years to get a proposal through the entire process John does not feel that the rules and regulations are unreasonable.

Like other residents of Ravalli County, John has learned that despite his preference for preserving an individual's property rights, there is a need for management of growth and development in the county. Years ago, as John was storming out of meetings about the growth policy, other community members were responding with guns and militias in public meetings about planning, emphasizing their opposition to land use zoning. This struggle was noted by Jared Diamond (2005) in his book *Collapse*, as he explained how the increase in development and discussions about planning bring two of Montanan's most cherished attitudes in direct opposition to one another. On one hand, Montanans emphasize the importance of individual rights and a dislike of government regulations, which Diamond (2005) explains, "arose historically because early settlers were living at low population densities on a frontier far from government centers, had to be self-sufficient, and couldn't look to the government to solve their problems" (63). On the other hand, their pride in the quality of life they experience is being threatened by the rapid rate of development.

Although the protection of property rights is still important to many members of the Bitterroot Valley, many have begun to realize the need for regulations to protect their quality of life. They have come to realize that adherence to a strict private property rights ideology may not offer a community the chance to control what they want their

community to look like over time. They first need to ask themselves, “What kind of values does the community want to protect?” If property rights are the highest value, then every land owner could sell their land for the highest value, which is going to mean selling it for a subdivision. If the values they wish to protect include open space, productive farmland, wildlife, and clean water, this may also include surrendering some private property rights in order to achieve those values.

John's property borders a large piece of real estate near Highway 93 that is currently being stripped of its topsoil and will later be developed into housing. The current landowner is proposing a 290 home subdivision, which will undoubtedly affect John's farm operation and the view from his ranch. When I asked John how he feels about this proposed development, he responded:

Well, I tell you, it's a moral question. We are instructed not to covet our neighbor's land, which I take to mean not to put your own ideas on how your neighbor should run his land. And I pretty much say, whatever he can do is his own business and I just let it rest at that.

John remembered how hard this property owner's father and grandfather worked to earn a modest living from farming the land, and feels that this owner has earned the right to do what he can with it, provided there is no harm done and that it is done in a “reasonable manner.”

John finished his lunch and thanked me for coming to talk with him, explaining that he needed to get back outside to tend to a calf that was sick and wouldn't get up.

Before he went back to work, he left me with one more comment:

What the development is doing is making us all a great deal of money... excuse me... a great deal of wealth. Now the question is, do you convert that wealth to money or do you try to maintain that lifestyle you enjoyed down here before the development really took off?

Although John was not explicitly clear about what the future of his ranch would hold, he did make it clear that it was important to keep all options open, so that the future land owner would have to the right to do as seen fit. He has shown that he is willing to adapt to change, and finds it necessary to be prepared to accept changes as they come. John has an open mind towards what the valley should look like, and doesn't wish to impose his ideas on other people, as long as their actions are done in a reasonable and safe manner. John's legacy is made up of those values that he holds as important in his life, including his property rights, freedom to do as he wishes, and the ability to make changes as needed in the future.

Growth Advocate

I met David Weiler in a small, yet bustling diner in the heart of Hamilton, where we planned to have lunch and discuss his opinions on the changes in the Bitterroot valley. David's perspective was valuable, as he works as both a rancher and a real estate agent and has had plenty of opportunities to think about the effects of development on farmers in the valley. I asked David whether his principal occupation was farming or selling real estate, and he answered, "It's 50/50." Yet later in the interview, he mentioned that if it hadn't been for real estate, he would have been out of the ranching business years ago.

It didn't take long for me to realize that David has a general disdain of government interference in his life and feels stifled by laws that constrain his personal choices. Although the questions I asked were concerning his perspective regarding the influences of development on agriculture in the valley, his responses always came back to the topics of government interference through farm regulations, farm subsidies, forest service regulations on open grazing, and other topics that he felt constrained his personal

freedoms.

A good sociologist will make note when a respondent chooses to sway questions away from the original topics or decides not to answer a question altogether. Perhaps it is because they did not understand the question, they did not wish to answer the question, or they find the question irrelevant. When I asked David, "How is farming in the Bitterroot Valley meaningful to you?" he waited several seconds and then responded, "Meaningful to me?" After a long pause, he commented that there was very little income generated from farming, and went on to elaborate on how the forest service shut down open grazing on public lands. He blames this on the people he calls "extreme environmentalists," and believes they have destroyed the opportunity for the residents of Ravalli County to produce anything on public land. He finds this problematic in Ravalli County because 73% of the county's land base is held in federally managed land.

David's avoidance of my questions pertaining to his farm legacy and the reasons he continues to farm was the first bit of evidence of his changing opinions about farming as an occupation and a way of life. Through the course of the three hour interview I began to understand that David saw a disconnection between his experiences growing up on a farm and his experiences as a farmer today. As David elaborated on his family's farm history he expressed an appreciation for the things he had learned growing up on a farm, yet noted that there were marked differences with today's farm children and the farm children of the past. He felt that when he grew up, his family worked together more than today's average farm family. David explained,

I understood the value of a calf. I knew if this calf dies, that's \$500, and that's \$500 less we have to pay the bills. The kids in my family understood that it buys our shoes. My parents went through the depression and the dust bowl, and they ingrained it into me.

David felt that in the past, farm children worked more with their mother and father and were able to pick up on the values of the parents, without the outside influence from “city kids...you know... let's smoke this or do that...they're in town running around.” David communicated a general concern for the urbanization of the countryside and its effects on farm families and farm children.

David's children have chosen a different way of life from the one he grew up with, and according to David they are not interested in farming or ranching as an occupation. When I asked him why he thought his children weren't interested in farming he responded, “Economically it doesn't make any sense. There's not much money in it.”

After pausing to think, he continued,

These days, we're raising different kids. In my mother's family, there were fifteen kids. Out of the fifteen kids that homesteaded, my mother was the only one that stayed on the farm. In my father's family there were six kids, and only one that stayed on the farm. In my family there were five kids, and only two of us stayed in ag. I have four kids and none of mine are going to stay, and my sister has four kids, and none of hers are going to stay. Our kids say, ‘Yeah, Dad, we want the ranch.’ But what the hell are you going to do with it? It's just sentimental attachment.

David elaborated on how his children have changed through the years:

Now my kids, generally they worked with me on the ranch, but then they went away and they got their degrees, and they became liberal. We are producing a generation that doesn't have their wits back! The 1900s was agriculture, now its the dot-com industry. People say we don't need these farms here, they're a nuisance, get rid of them. We'll get it from China cheaper anyhow. That's their attitude and it's a new way of thinking. We're letting our kids think that's okay, cause that's the generation we're raising. We're becoming more dependent on the government and we're having less of our freedoms. It's a different lifestyle.

In stating that “we are producing a generation without its wits back” and “that's the generation we're raising” David shows responsibility towards rearing a generation of

children that are unsupportive of the agricultural climate of the valley and in the United States. He realizes that unless farming and ranching is shown to be an important aspect of the local economy and culture, the next generation will not view it as a viable choice from which one can make a living. Other farmers in the Bitterroot Valley echoed the same concerns about the way agriculture was viewed in the valley.

Jared, the young farmer mentioned in the introductory chapter, felt that there was a strict divide between the farm families who encouraged their children to continue farming and to carry on the family farm legacy, and those who encouraged their children to pursue other job opportunities. Jared believed the farmers who discouraged their children did so because they were not as successful as they would have liked to have been, and therefore felt their children could not be successful either. He said,

I always give my dad credit for encouraging me to farm. There were a lot of kids I went to school with that their parents told them they couldn't do it. They'd say, "No, you'd be stupid if you did that. And my parents made me get an education so that if it didn't work I'd have something to fall back on, but I wasn't required to leave the farm.

Jared's reasoning about the changes in attitudes towards farming differ from David's in that he places the apathy on the older generation that is unsupportive of agriculture in the valley, rather than the younger generation. He continued:

The apathetic farmers throw up their hands and say, "You can't stop change, I hate to see it go, but that's the way it is, and you can't do anything about it. I'm owed the 401K to sell out, cause I didn't prosper and the younger generation isn't going to prosper either. There is an apathy here with some of the older generation farmers.

Jared saw this apathy as problematic in that it creates a lack of opportunity for the younger farmers to continue farming. David did not mention whether he had influenced his children to farm or not, although it is apparent that he does not see farming as an

economically viable enterprise.

An employee of the county extension office also commented on how intergenerational support, or the lack thereof, affects the youth of today's generation that want to continue farming. He said, "Most of [the children] know there is no future in farming. It's just a matter of time before the parents sell out. But for others, the way of life is kind of a religion. They really love it, and [the parents] teach that love." The diversity of attitudes towards socializing children towards farm life in the Bitterroot Valley creates diversity in attitudes towards the future of farm viability and the ability of youth to continue to farm.

David also brought up changes in the community's farm culture that have affected farmers' and ranchers' ability to make it through hard times.

When we grew up here and it was thirty below and you needed help your neighbor was there to help you, and you realized you may disagree over things but what you all agree on is that when you're in trouble you help each other. We don't have that anymore.

David saw this lack of community solidarity as a reason that farmers struggle today to make a living as a farmer or rancher in the Bitterroot Valley.¹ He believes that the previous way of life is a thing of the past, and with the changing times there is no way to get it back.

David's reasons for expecting a further decline in agriculture in the valley come from the lack of support he sees from future generations, community members, and the

¹ An article in the Agriculture section of the Ravalli Republic (November 22, 2005) echoed David's feelings about the need for farmers to develop a sense of community. It explained how the local Farm Bureau chapter was seeking resurgence in Farm Bureau member connections, hoping to gain more active members to discuss concerns and develop ways to solve problems together. Hans McPherson, a member of the local Farm Bureau, was quoted in the article, remembering that when he was a kid growing up in Stevensville in the 50s and 60s, Farm Bureau meetings were a big deal, with families getting together to socialize and discuss the needs of local agriculture (Daniel 2005). McPherson went on to note, "In the past few years... [the Farm Bureau] has been pretty quiet (10)."

government. An employee at a local feed mill summed up David's way of thinking when he said, "Many ranchers have resolved their attitude to understanding that the farm or ranch has a finite life span." David is unsure of what the future of his ranch will hold, since his children are not interested in farming or ranching. They carry "sentimental attachment" to the land, but do not see it as an economically viable way to make a living. This leads me to wonder; if a ranch has a finite life span, does that mean that the legacy of the ranch is also finite?

David agrees that ranching is not the best way to make a living, and commented that without his real estate business, he would "be crazy out there figuring out how to make it with 100 cows trying to pay the bills." He went on to explain how corporate America has gotten into agriculture, which has ruined the opportunities for the small farmer. He blames the government for allowing the import of agricultural products without tariffs and he dislikes the subsidy programs which only focus on certain agricultural products and benefit corporate farms. David explained,

The big corporations are moving into agriculture as a tax write off, and it kills the small guy. We're a democracy, and in a democracy, we're supposed to take care of minorities. We're not supposed to step on their rights. But the agriculture rights are really getting stepped on.

David's feelings about the rights of small farmers and ranchers can be understood as being similar to that of John's, in that he believes that farm families should have the right to use their land as they see fit and should be able to extract the most value from their land. David is disappointed with the current state of agriculture in the United States and in the valley, and has turned his focus towards what land can mean for a farm family in terms of the highest economic benefit. His experiences as a realtor have influenced his feelings about whether or not a farm family should sell their land, as he places more

emphasis on the changing agricultural economy and the rising value of farmland in the Bitterroot Valley than on farming as a way of life.

Like John, David is opposed to conservation easements, but for reasons that go beyond disliking the forfeiture of property rights. David is more concerned with how a conservation easement would limit the value of land down the road. He believes that land should be sold for the highest value possible, so that farm families that no longer wish to remain in agriculture can cash out on what they worked so hard for their entire lives.

Using my lunch as an example, David explained his opinion on why conservation easements are not an economically viable option:

Remember when I told you that the farmer and rancher have got to get the most out of that land that they possibly can? Well, when you restrict it... when you buy a piece of property you get all these rights too. Now. Let's just say this plate that you have is your property rights. (pointing to my plate of french fries) Okay. Now those are all your rights in all of those french fries. Now I reach over there and I take them and put them in my bowl and you've got three french fries. Now, how much will you pay for that plate of french fries now? It changes the price.

He went on to say,

Why would I take my ranch, say I got a couple 100 acres... why would I take \$200,000 for my development rights, and then I'm locked in. I can't even sell it for what it's worth. Ten years from now, just think of the poor sack that went and put a conservation easement on his property to save it for his kids.

David shows no regard towards the idea of saving agricultural land for future generations, which could be contributed to his feelings about his own family's ranching situation. If he views the legacy of his ranch, as well as other ranches in the Bitterroot as finite, what reason is there to preserve the land to keep it in agriculture in perpetuity? With this point of view, profit becomes the highest motive, and “farming as a way of life”

is disregarded. If a farm family has no motivation to preserve the land for future generations to farm and do not wish to remain in agriculture, they have no reason not to sell for the highest dollar, which most often is going to mean selling it to a developer.

David went on to explain what he has seen as the effects of Oregon's statewide land use program, which sets mandatory planning standards to preserve agricultural lands to maintain them for farm use. Oregon's program has been described as the most fully integrated and comprehensive in the country, using agricultural zoning to protect ag lands with the best soils (Antonick 1997). David's opinion differs:

In Oregon, they went in and they zoned it. They said, "You're going to stay in the ranching business. You can't ever break out. We saved agriculture." You just put that guy in prison! Cause he can't sell his ranch. Not even near what it would be worth compared to a Montana ranch. Those guys have lost everything. They worked all those years and now they're in retirement homes.

Again, we see that David feels much more strongly inclined to emphasize the economic benefits of selling a ranch versus the benefits of keeping it in agricultural production. In his mind, the farmers whose land has been zoned to remain in agriculture have lost "everything."

David's position as a realtor allows him to realize the positive economic effects of growth in Ravalli County, and therefore he is rewarded by encouraging growth and development and selling ranch land to be developed rather than supporting concepts like conservation easements. David's emphasis on the economic value of agricultural land exemplifies the "growth machine" frame of thinking that was discussed in Chapter Two. As a realtor, David is able to reap the monetary benefits from the rapid development in the county, and therefore encourages growth and land sales.

Molotch (1976) suggests that to understand why individuals act in accordance to

promote growth at any cost we must ask the question, "Who benefits from growth?" Economics and politics shape the growth of locations, and therefore in order to understand how, why, and where growth occurs we must first understand the way growth impacts communities economically and politically. It is clear through David's statements that he feels that he benefits more from the county's growth than he does from ranching, and he views his ranch as a side business rather than a way of life.

Many farmers in this study experience constraints within a conflict of interest in terms of the growth machine. Farmers are able to realize a profit as the valley experiences growth, as their land values rise and they could someday experience increased wealth from their land. However, many farmers that believe farming is a way of life would like to see Ravalli County have the same small farms they grew up with, with a thriving agricultural community. They also would like to be able to expand their farm through acquiring more ground, which is extremely difficult due to the elevated cost of farmland. As land holders, they have the ability to profit from the growth machine, yet are hindered by it as well.

Unlike many other farmers in the Bitterroot Valley, David does not feel that slowing the growth in the valley would benefit the agricultural community. He emphasized the need to be open and willing to allow newcomers to settle in the valley, and feels that an exclusionary attitude will only exacerbate the desire people have to move there. In David's mind, growth is not a problem in itself. He explained,

We don't have a growth problem, we have an attitude problem. Farmers should accept the fact that people are going to come. That the more you try to stop people from coming, the more they're going to want it. They all want something they can't have.

David also elaborated on how his experiences as a realtor through this time of

growth have influenced the way he views the land and the way he does business.

I remember the first time I sold a ranch to an out-of-state buyer. I was taking him and his friend to look at the land, and we were driving in my truck, and he looks over to his buddy and laughs, saying that he couldn't believe he could buy this amount of acreage for the same amount he spent remodeling his kitchen last year. That was when I knew I had to take off my 'ranching hat' and start selling the lifestyle. People come here to buy the lifestyle.

By saying that he needed to “take off his ranching hat,” David meant that he needed to view the land in terms of what it could provide someone who wanted to buy a lifestyle, rather than a piece of productive ranching ground. David began to see the land as more of a commodity, emphasizing the subjective aspects tied to the land rather than what it is worth in terms of agricultural production.

Later in the interview, I asked David, “Do you think what is happening in the valley would be called sprawl?” He responded,

Well, you know, that's a term that has come out... you know... you can call it whatever, you can call it growth, you can call it progress. If you're against people coming here, if you bought your acre of ground next to that ranch, it's sprawl if that ranch is going to subdivide.

Later in the interview, he said, “I think that people should get the most out of their land. And that's how I feel about the sprawl theory.” David feels that he is doing what is morally right by helping farm families get the most out of their piece of land when they are ready to sell it. David mentioned earlier that he was sick of seeing the agricultural families' rights get stepped on, and by selling a farm or ranch for top dollar; he feels that he is helping farm families recoup what they have worked for all their lives. In David's mind, this is both a just and moral action, and allows farm families in the Bitterroot Valley to be compensated for a life of hard work.

Through David's dismissal of the idea of farming as a way of life, he has

concluded that many Bitterroot farms and ranches are on their way out, and therefore their legacy is finite. “Ag is Dead,” is a phrase commonly heard from those that believe that Ravalli County has lost its agrarian culture and lifestyle, and David exemplifies this frame of thinking. He left me with one final quote concerning land use in the valley: “Always more people... never more land. You're never going to stop the sprawl. And that's it.”

Innovator

Six year old Sara answered the door and invited me in to her family's farmhouse as her mother Abbey stood bent over the kitchen sink, washing her hair. I began to think that I came at an inopportune time, until Abbey looked up at me and nonchalantly asked, “Do you care if we go out and shovel manure in the hoophouse² while we talk?” She swung her wet hair over her shoulder as we walked outside and began talking about their family farm. I immediately felt at ease in Abbey's presence, as her laid back personality communicated an enjoyment of her slow-paced rural farm life.

The Mountain View Farm was as quaint as one could imagine a small organic vegetable farm in Montana could be. The rustic barn was old yet sturdy, surrounded by a small pasture filled with sheep, as well as a farm pond used to irrigate the vegetable fields in the summer and as a hockey rink in the winter.³ Cats wandered around the barnyard with bells tied around their necks (Sara later informed me they serve the purpose of warning birds of the cat's presence). The pastoral scene was complete with several chickens pecking the ground, while Abbey and her husband Mike worked together to

2 A hoophouse is similar to a greenhouse in appearance, yet differs in that it is unheated. It is used to extend the growing season of crops.

3 The Mountain View farm pond was featured in an article in the local newspaper, The Ravalli Republic, detailing how neighbors and community members arrived each weekend during the cold winter months to play hockey together.

complete a variety of farm chores.

Abbey and Mike began farming for the Mountain View organic produce farm twenty-two years ago, coming originally from Blanco, Texas and Los Angeles, California. Fifteen years ago they purchased the farmland they currently occupy, so they could continue to be a part of the Mountain View Farms Corporation, yet be able to own the land they farmed. Abbey recalls, “There was nothing here, just a long trailer and a barn! Our friends thought we were just completely nuts. They said we were going to have to work our asses off for ten years before we had anything, and they were right!”

“But at the end of ten years, we had everything,” her husband Mike chimed in.

As I continued talking to Mike, I understood that the “everything,” he referred to meant more than land ownership, but also the opportunity to live a lifestyle he enjoys. His farm brings together a fulfilling way to make a living, as well as the opportunity to enjoy farming as a way of life. Abbey echoed this feeling when she explained how they came to be farmers and why they enjoy what they do:

Mike and I had a conversation about working on an organic farm, and decided that it was the most morally pleasing and politically active thing we could do... growing local organic food for our community. You cover community building, environmental issues, land use planning, and politics... cause when people eat locally they are taking responsibility for their local community. And that's the kind of community we wanted to build up, where people are responsible for what they are doing. So for me, this was a good fit. I feel real lucky.

Abbey feels that her job as a farmer allows her to fulfill her goals in life and provide a way to enact change in her community and in society. Farming is seen as much more than just an occupation that provides an income. Organic farming is often tied to these values of localism and environmental stewardship, through a dedication to preserving the quality of agricultural land and the surrounding community. These values

are exemplified in her work as well as in her lifestyle.

Mike and Abbey are parents to three children, aged twelve, nine, and six. When I asked if she thought her children might end up farming in the future, she responded,

Well, on that particular issue I can't imagine that my kids are going to end up wanting to farm. But that doesn't matter to me as far as my intentions for this property. Mike and I want to preserve this farm, no matter who is the farmer. But parents can't control their children. We want to give them the opportunity and make it as attractive as possible. I tell them all the time that I hope they'll eventually want to come back. I hope they'd want to farm with us, but I'm not an idiot, I mean... kids don't do that. They'll have to leave, and then maybe they'll come back, and as long as I can make it attractive to them they might be interested.

Abbey tries to make the farm attractive to her children by encouraging her children to take an active role in farm work, as a way to earn money to save for college. Last summer, her two oldest boys and several of their friends harvested strawberries and prepared them for the farmer's market, reaping the rewards of a monetary profit and an educational experience. Mike and Abbey's nine year old boy recently told them that this summer he wants to be responsible for growing all the cucumbers for the farm. Abbey is pleased that her children are interested in participating in farm chores, and hopes that they are establishing skills they can take with them in the future. She commented,

I hope that even if they don't come back and live here and farm this property when they're older, they'll know how to work, they'll know about farming, and they'll know why it's important to eat local. They'll have an attachment to land, they'll have an attachment to place, and wherever they end up they'll bring that with them.

Abbey and Mike's sense of what their kids can learn from farm life goes deeper than just learning a work ethic and skills. They emphasize a need to think about their connection to the land and their reliance on the land as a source of energy. They wish to pass on those ideals that were connected to the reasons they became organic farmers.

These values contribute to building up a vibrant local community with responsible, active citizens. If her children can understand the importance of eating locally and being engaged in supporting a local community culture, she feels they will have learned an important lesson from their farm upbringing.

In the same way that Mike and Abbey encouraged their children to take an active role in the farm, other farmers in this study echoed the need to find ways to provide opportunities for their children to participate in the farm operation. They felt that if parents did not find ways to make it possible for their children to make a living at farming, their children would not view it as an occupation to consider. One example that demonstrates this frame of thinking is exemplified in a dairy farm that decided to expand its operation by building a brand new milking facility which allowed them to milk more cows in a more efficient manner. The farmer mentioned,

Part of the reason we built this facility is we wanted to give any of the children an opportunity to come back if they wanted to. We knew that if we didn't build the facility we were making the choice for them... they wouldn't. It was just an antique, and it needed replaced. They're all well educated, and can go anywhere and have good money. So we had to make it attractive for them to come back.

This is an example of how farmers have found innovative ways to make farming a feasible opportunity for younger generations to pursue.

In order to finance the construction of this milking facility, the family decided to sell off portions of farmland that were less productive and further removed from the core farmland. The farmer noted that the unproductive land they sold was difficult to irrigate and had wonderful views, which made it an ideal place for development. He spoke of the situation in the Bitterroot Valley as a “two-edged sword,” as rising land values allow farmers to sell off small portions of land in order to generate capital to finance farm

renovations. At the same time, these rising land values hinder opportunities to expand the land base. He explained, “It goes against the grain... to sell land, but its one of those things. In order to make this dairy operation feasible we needed to generate some capital to do that.”

- Most farmers in the study understood that the occasional sale of portions of farmland was necessary and helpful for farmers who needed to generate income. Several farmers spoke of the need to sell portions of land to pay for unexpected medical expenses as well as financing farm improvements to keep the farm profitable. Although these kinds of developments would be considered “rural sprawl,” resulting in houses scattered across the countryside at the edge of farmland and along roadsides, many farmers felt that the trade off was necessary in order to keep farms in agricultural ground.

Other farmers have found innovative new ways to increase profits and benefit from the influx of newcomers. For example, one dairy farmer created his own composting service to complement his farm operation. Using manure from his dairy cows to create a rich “moo poo” compost, he is able to sell compost directly to customers while disposing of farm wastes in a sustainable manner. This farmer makes regular deliveries to people around the county who wish to fertilize their lawns, gardens, and landscapes around their houses. The demand is so high that he has a hard time meeting all the requests. He is currently researching ways to use the nitrogen-rich liquid waste to create a “brew tea” that can also be used as fertilizer. This farmer realizes the constraints he has in expanding his dairy in terms of land, so he has found other ways to increase profits and keep his family in the farming business.

Mike and Abbey's small organic vegetable farm is conducive to the changing

nature of life in the Bitterroot Valley, as they have also been able to profit from the increasing amount of people living in the valley that can purchase their goods. They are able to maintain a profitable farm and way of life, while farming on a small amount of acreage. Mike and Abbey did not necessarily have to change their farming practices to be able to maintain their quality of life, yet they have come up with ways to increase profitability and respond to the environment in which they live.

Following the “old fashioned truck farm model,” Mountain View Farms scaled down their production and began distributing their food to local grocery stores and farmers' markets. Through cutting out the “middle man,” they have been able to make more money for their time and labor. They have even been able to purchase more farmland at development prices, which most farmers in the valley say is impossible due to high land prices. This is mostly due to the fact that with their type of intensive agriculture, a large land base is not needed. Mike and Abbey have found a niche market, and are able to control the means of both their production and distribution.

Mike and Abbey have also become part of a local group of farmers that have created their own brand of labeling which represents quality farm practices and an emphasis on localism. The brand “Homegrown” refers to products grown in the Bitterroot, Missoula, and Mission Valley without the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, under the humane treatment of farm workers and animals, and emphasizing localism through the support of local businesses. Many of the farmers that are joining this “Homegrown” label are giving up their USDA organic certification, in favor of representing a style of agriculture that is more concerned with the qualities listed on the “Homegrown” certification. They wish to exemplify a close connection to their

consumers and a strong relationship with the local community. Twenty-one farmers are currently participating in this project, which is set to begin in May 2006, and will be marketing their items in the same local stores and farmer's markets where they currently sell their items. They hope it will be a success, and believe that customers that currently purchase food labeled "organic" will realize the "Homegrown" label represents those same organic qualities, yet goes several steps further in identifying the food as locally grown and encouraging the support of the local economy.

The growth of communities in Western Montana, spurred by newcomers who have come to take part in the local environment and culture, has encouraged the growth of locally produced organic food and farmer's markets (Slotnick 2004). Residents of the Bitterroot and Missoula valleys can involve themselves in the culture of the place they live by purchasing local items and investing themselves in the local food system. Josh Slotnick, professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana states, "...involving oneself with local items is in effect involving oneself with a place (witness the beer named for wild places and wild things)." A farm like Mike and Abbey's is able to thrive in an environment where newcomers and current residents can take part in and become "local" by participating in the local community by eating locally produced food. In the previous "Growth Advocate" perspective, David, the real estate agent, explained that he believes newcomers desire to purchase a lifestyle instead of simply purchasing a piece of land. In the same way, newcomers may wish to purchase a legendary "Bitterroot McIntosh" rather than just purchasing any type of apple at the store, thereby demonstrating their connection with the place they live.

When I asked farmers, "What is the future of Agriculture in the Bitterroot

Valley?” every farmer responded that agriculture will need to change to become more focused on place-based marketing, the creation of niche markets, and an emphasis on value-added types of agriculture. Several farmers noted that they hope that in the future their farm could become 'vertically integrated,' owning all forms of production from start to finish, marketing their products and creating “Bitterroot Brands” to increase their sales and profit margins. Dairy farmers spoke of one day being able to bottle their own milk in the Bitterroot, beef farmers are trying to find ways to finish out their own calves, and a local feed company seeks to buy local agricultural products to market as value-added products to sell to neighboring farms and hobby farmers in the county. Nearly every farmer in this study realized the need to innovate new ideas on how to make their farm and ranch profitable.

Many farmers in the Bitterroot Valley are actively finding ways to keep their farm profitable amidst the change in agricultural markets and their community atmosphere. Yet it is discouraging when they see other farmers sell land to be developed. Mike and Abbey spoke at length about how they felt about farmers selling their land, and the morale that is displayed through these actions. Mike explained,

I hear farmers say, ‘Well... I can't afford not to develop’ and I'm not sure what that means. If they have a lifestyle they like, I always wonder what that means. Often what it seems like they mean is “I can't make the amount of money I could make developing rather than ranching.” Well that doesn't seem to be the right way to look at it. Yeah... we could all do things to make more money than we do. So I've never understood that way of thinking. And you hear that so often.

For Mike and Abbey, the idea of selling their land for what it's worth in terms of development potential would contradict who they are and how they wish to live their lives. In their minds, the ultimate value of the land is in what it can provide them in

terms of a lifestyle and in terms of achieving their goals as responsible citizens of their community. To sell the land would consist of putting a price on their way of life.

Mike saw the choice to sell farmland for development as indicative of the way our society emphasizes economic gain as the highest goal. He explained what he saw as the mindset of many farmers; “I mean, I guess maybe it’s so ingrained in us that to make more money is not a choice. I mean, that if you have the opportunity to make more money then it’s not really a choice to turn that down or to close that door.”

Mike's feelings about the land use ideology of many Bitterroot Valley farmers are reflective of the ideas of the popular agrarian philosopher Wendell Berry. In Berry's book, *The Gift of Good Land*, he outlines a similar thought about why farmers often fall into the mindset Mike describes. Berry (1981) writes, “For complex reasons, our culture allows “economy” to mean only “money economy.” It equates success and even goodness with monetary profit because it lacks any other standard of measurement.”

Berry goes on to describe the role of the small farmer working to maintain the quality of life found in rural farm cultures, admonishing them to focus on the subjective aspects of farm life that go beyond the economic gain produced by a farm. He writes,

Defenders of the small farm must take care never to use the word 'economy' to mean only 'money economy.' We must use it to mean also- as the origin of the word instructs- the order of households. And we must therefore judge economic health by the health of households, both human and natural.

Wendell Berry and Mike both believe that if the health of households is of more importance to the small farmer than the money economy, farmers that value the farm as a way of life will seek to find ways to remain on the land.

Abbey also echoed this sentiment about our culture's emphasis on the money

economy when she spoke about a neighboring landowner that is currently renting his ground to a local dairy farmer, but is likely to develop the land in the future. She stated,

I just wish that soon there would be some option for him, that he would be encouraged by the culture, by friends, neighbors, his church... persuaded that maybe his land is far more valuable to the community and to the planet to be kept in open space because it is really prime agricultural ground, rather than turn it into a giant bank account. But that's a giant leap. That means changing our whole culture, rearranging those priorities and views about what's valuable and what is not.

Abbey's idea demonstrates that there is a need for a cultural shift in the way we view land and the importance of farmland to our society. She spoke of a need for another option for him, to be able to find another way to extract value from the land that didn't require selling it for development.

Many farmers spoke of the issue of choice, stating that they wished there would be some other choice for farmers that no longer were interested in farming, were retiring, or needed a way to extract an income from the land. They voiced the concern that so many farmers relied on their land as their "401 K" since they did not have any other way to retire comfortably, and therefore needed to sell to developers. One farmer stated:

It's unfortunate that in the current situation that we're in the only way to extract value from the land in order to retire is to sell it or develop it yourself. Right now exposing of the land in those two ways is our only choice. There's not a farmer, rancher, or ag producer I know that says, 'I really want to develop this.' They don't! They say, 'I'll develop this if I have to, or I'll sell it to a developer,' but it tears at their gut. They don't want to do that.

Abbey noted that the way residents of the valley (and our culture in general) think about the valuable attributes of their environment is inconsistent with their actions. She believes this is a profound contradiction that people need to realize in order to preserve the aspects of the valley that are valuable, such as open space, wildlife, and productive

farmland. She has seen changes in the Bitterroot Valley over the past twenty years that in her mind are counterproductive to what people really enjoy about the valley. She explained,

It is striking to me to know that all of our greeting cards and postcards... if we want to make someone happy we send them a pastoral scene. Or we send them a scene of open space. You don't send them a picture of urban sprawl. That's not what pleases people. If we want to be happy, we look at produce, we look at beautiful things like flower gardens, pastures, cow and deer, elk and mountains. We look at open space; we don't look at people space, right? And yet as a culture we're doing everything as fast as we can in the other direction. We're paving things over, putting in more roads, putting in more houses. And maybe we have to have more houses, but let's plan them so we can all enjoy what people can evolve with over the hundreds of thousand years that we've been evolving.

The preservation of productive agricultural land, open space, and wildlife are just a few of the things Abbey values and sees as crucial to preserving her way of life. Mike and Abbey wish to be a part of a community that focuses its energy on protecting those aspects of the valley that people are drawn to in the first place. They wish to build up the kind of community in which residents are socially aware of their actions and feel responsibility to their neighbors and fellow citizens.

Many farmers like Mike and Abbey have found ways to preserve their quality of life through innovative ways of increasing farm profits amidst the changing social and economic conditions in the Bitterroot Valley. They value the subjective aspects of farm life and have encouraged their children to take part in the farming operation in hopes that the family's farm legacy will continue in the future. The final chapter will further explore the issue of the protection of farmland and farm legacies, seeking to understand what farmers see as future possibilities and constraints.

Chapter Six

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of sprawl on the farm legacies in the Bitterroot Valley in Western Montana. Through personal interviews, observations, and ethnographic research of farmers in the valley, I have come to see that the reactions to sprawl and the changing landscapes are diverse, as well as the legacies that are affected by the development of the valley. The four perspectives offered provide an understanding of the effects of sprawl on farming legacies, yet are not all-inclusive and only capture a range of ideas that come about in reaction to the changes in the valley.

What can these perspectives tell us about how farmers deal with the changing social and economic conditions for farming in the Bitterroot Valley? First, we understand that their reactions are dependent on what they see as their agricultural legacy, and whether they view the legacy as something that is worth preserving. Each farmer finds his or her own way to ensure the farm's survival, or secure their financial future amidst change. The farmers in the Bitterroot Valley are active social agents in creating situations in which their farms can thrive. Many farmers have been able to find ways to include their children and encourage future generations to farm. These actions are heavily influenced by what the family perceives to be their agricultural legacy and its importance in their lives.

For some, farming is a way of life, and actions that work to preserve farmland and one's ability to farm allow farm families to live the kind of life they find fulfilling and rewarding. Dedication to farm practices and life skills learned on a farm are given high priority, and serve to demonstrate the inherent qualities of farming that are desirable.

For others, farming is seen as more of a business that must change and adapt in order to accommodate changing markets and social circumstances. This may even include selling the farm for financial profit. For those that view farming as simply a way to earn an income, the sentimental attachment to farms and farmland is seen as a mere demonstration of a romantic ideal. For these farmers, the farm should not necessarily be preserved if it hinders profits that can be realized through the sale of farmland.

Other sociological studies on farm communities have created typologies that demonstrate the same differences in orientations towards farm life, dividing those who see farming as a business “venture,” and those who take an attitude that farming is a way of life or “refuge” (Roher and Douglas 1969). These typologies have offered the perspective that “traditional or sentimental notions about farming prevent operators from taking a chance, expanding, and thus becoming expansive and competitive” (Salamon and O'Reilly 1979:526). The findings in my research seem to suggest otherwise. Farm families that emphasized the need to include future generations and focus on the positive subjective aspects of farm life found innovative ways to create profit and remain in the farming business. Farmers that did not have future generations that were interested in taking over the farm placed less emphasis on farming as a way of life, and were not as interested in finding new farm practices that would help preserve the farmland and encourage new ways of generating profit.

Wendell Berry also commented on the attributes of farmers that are able to survive in today's economy, who make up the kind of farm communities that can thrive amidst change. In speaking on the attitude of farmers that are willing to go the extra mile to remain a profitable family farm that is also interested in preserving a way of life, he

says,

Such an attitude does not come from technique or technology. It does not come from education... it does not even come from principle. It comes from a passion that is culturally prepared – a passion for excellence and order that is handed down to a young people by older people whom they respect and love. When we destroy the possibility of that succession, we will have gone far in destroying ourselves (Berry 1977:44).

Perhaps the best methods for farm preservation are cultural, rather than technocratic. The influence of prior generations in encouraging future generations to remain in farming has been shown as a key element in determining the future of farms in the Bitterroot Valley. One farmer demonstrated this when he explained how his desire to farm also comes out of a appreciation for his forefathers, and a feeling that he owes it to himself and his family to continue the tradition:

I've farmed for the last 30 years and basically my father has been... and his father... have been stimulus for me to try to keep things going. My grandfather lived to be 97, my father is currently 85, I see how they lived and how their lifestyles were and how their marriages were and stuff, and I see that as a very positive influence on my family and our health and our well-being and I think I can't really put a value on that. Am I making \$100,000 a year... no, I'm not doing that, but that's not what I'm searching for. I'm looking for self-satisfaction of keeping this ranch in a heritage situation where I am a steward and I hope that whoever has it after me, if it's in my family, is a steward too.

The desire to continue that which one's forefathers began years ago is a crucial aspect of the decision of whether to remain in farming or to sell one's land for a profit.

How can the farmers of the Bitterroot Valley plan for change in years to come? Currently groups of farmers are working together to implement programs that can be used to keep prime agricultural ground in production. Groups like the Right to Farm and Ranch Board, the Bitterroot Land Trust, and the local county extension office have put together a series of programs to connect farmers and discuss possible tools that can be

used to further their cause. They have discussed tools such as the purchase of development rights, establishing stricter development standards for areas in the county with the best soils, river setbacks to protect water quality and wildlife, design education for developers and landowners, the encouragement of cluster development, and have even discussed the implementation of zoning laws. The farmers in Ravalli County have come a long way in their work to create planned growth and to shape their county into what they desire it to become.

However, not all farmers and ranchers in the valley are on board with these ideas. Many farmers and ranchers do not agree with the methods proposed by the Right to Farm and Ranch Board, and would not agree that the county should start to consider zoning as a tool to protect agricultural lands. For those that agree with the “growth advocate” frame of thinking and are concerned with protecting their property rights first and foremost, these discussions are irrelevant and will not help them achieve their goals.

The farmers I spoke to realize that there is a lack of unity among the farmers in the community, and this is one of the main reasons for their inability to control sprawl. An employee at the Bitterroot Land Trust summed it up well when he explained the current situation for farmers in the valley:

I think because the farms and ranches in the Bitterroot are so small there's going to have to be a level of cooperation among the farm families in the Bitterroot that hasn't been seen anywhere in a long time. There's certainly a camaraderie and a recognition that they're all in the same boat, but there isn't a vehicle or structure of cooperation. There used to be things like farmers' cooperatives, farm bureaus, granges, and things where they got together and talked. And now there are informal network places and sort of hubs of discussion and connectivity, but there's not a place where the agricultural community comes together in a big way and really talks about the strategy and how they can work together.

One of the reasons for the current lack of farmer connections goes back to the

responses given by several farmers that felt that there was a lack of cultural solidarity in the valley today. One farmer explained how this affects their ability to come to a consensus on how to react to the pressures of development:

Part of the reason is the Western philosophy of 'You're tough, you're gonna make it on your own. And if you can't make it you shouldn't be out there anyway.' And I think that's a pretty hard thing for people to let go of. It is a pretty heavily instilled value in Western culture. And it's a value that could easily be replaced with a huge emphasis on supporting one another and working together with cooperation, as one could argue is just as high a value.

The farmers in this study realize that a cooperative effort is needed to create change in the valley, and it is up to them to decide what needs to be done to protect agricultural lands. The development in the valley has created the need for farmers to unite, and has allowed some farmers to realize what it is that they are really fighting for. One farmer explained that the influx of population has made his dedication to the farming community even stronger, as he now realizes what can be lost, and must work to preserve it. He noted,

I am more passionate than ever before because I never ever saw a threat before. It was... I think we all take things for granted. And because we're losing it so fast, and we're losing our way of life so fast, the taking it for granted is gone.

The true question of what farmers can and should do to protect farmland and farm legacies comes back to what they value, and what they are willing to give up in order to achieve it. A community member summed it up well when he stated,

I think we're at a critical point in the Bitterroot where people have a choice in how they want the Bitterroot to be over time. And I think it's going to be up to the community to decide, and it comes back to the value thing... what kind of values do people want to protect?

Agricultural legacies can continue to thrive in an environment where residents of

a community work to preserve those aspects of their heritage that they find valuable and important to their lives. Aspects of each farm family's legacy will influence the future of their farm, their community, and the culture of the Bitterroot Valley. The current farmers in the valley, through their actions, cooperation, and dedication to farming will help shape the future of farming in the valley and the culture of the Bitterroot Valley's agricultural community.

Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. How long have you been farming in the Bitter Root Valley?
-Did you farm elsewhere previously?
2. How many acres do you farm?
3. Do you or someone in your family own the land you farm or do you rent?
-How do you feel about that?
4. What types of crops/livestock are on your farm/ranch?
5. Is farming/ranching your principal income?
-If no, what else serves as income?
6. Who does most of the farm work on your farm/ranch? How are chores divided?

HISTORY

7. Did your parents or grandparents farm?
- If so, how long?
-Where did they farm?
-What type of farm was it?
8. How was it that you became a farmer/rancher?
9. When and how did you make the decision to farm?
10. How did your parents or family members influence your decision?
11. What does this farm mean to you beyond providing income?
12. How is the Bitterroot Valley meaningful to you?
13. What are the benefits of farming here as opposed to somewhere else?

DEVELOPMENT

14. How do you feel about residential development onto agricultural lands?
- Are there any particular instances that made you feel this way?
15. How do you see development in the county affecting you and your farm operation?
16. Has any of your land been developed for non-agricultural use?
17. Would you entertain the idea of selling your land for development for residential use?
18. How would you feel if it was developed?

CHILDREN

19. Do you have children who are interested in continuing to farm this land?
20. How has the development in the Bitterroot Valley influenced your children's decision or ability to farm?
21. How do you feel the development in the valley will impact your ability to pass down land to children and/or other family members?
22. What are some values that you would like to pass on to your children?
23. How are these values tied to the farm and the agricultural background in your family?
24. How do you feel the development in the valley will impact your ability to pass down these values?
25. Has the development in the valley affected your family on a day to day basis?

26. How has it changed the customs and traditions in your family?
27. What is the future of agriculture in the valley?
28. Do you feel there will be a place for agriculture in the valley in 10 years?
29. How does your family fit into this?
30. If you could make the law in the Bitterroot concerning development and agricultural land, what would you do?

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