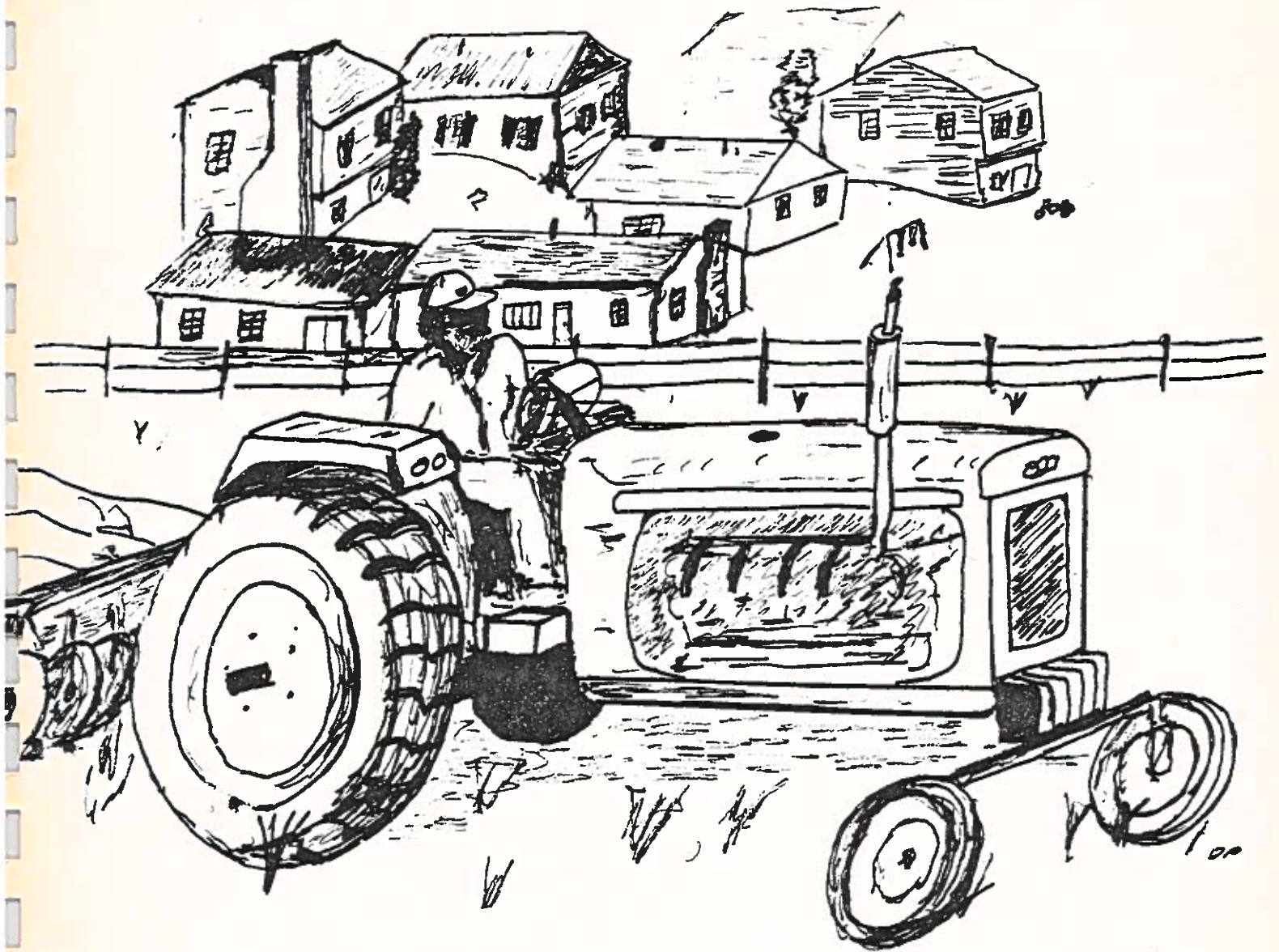


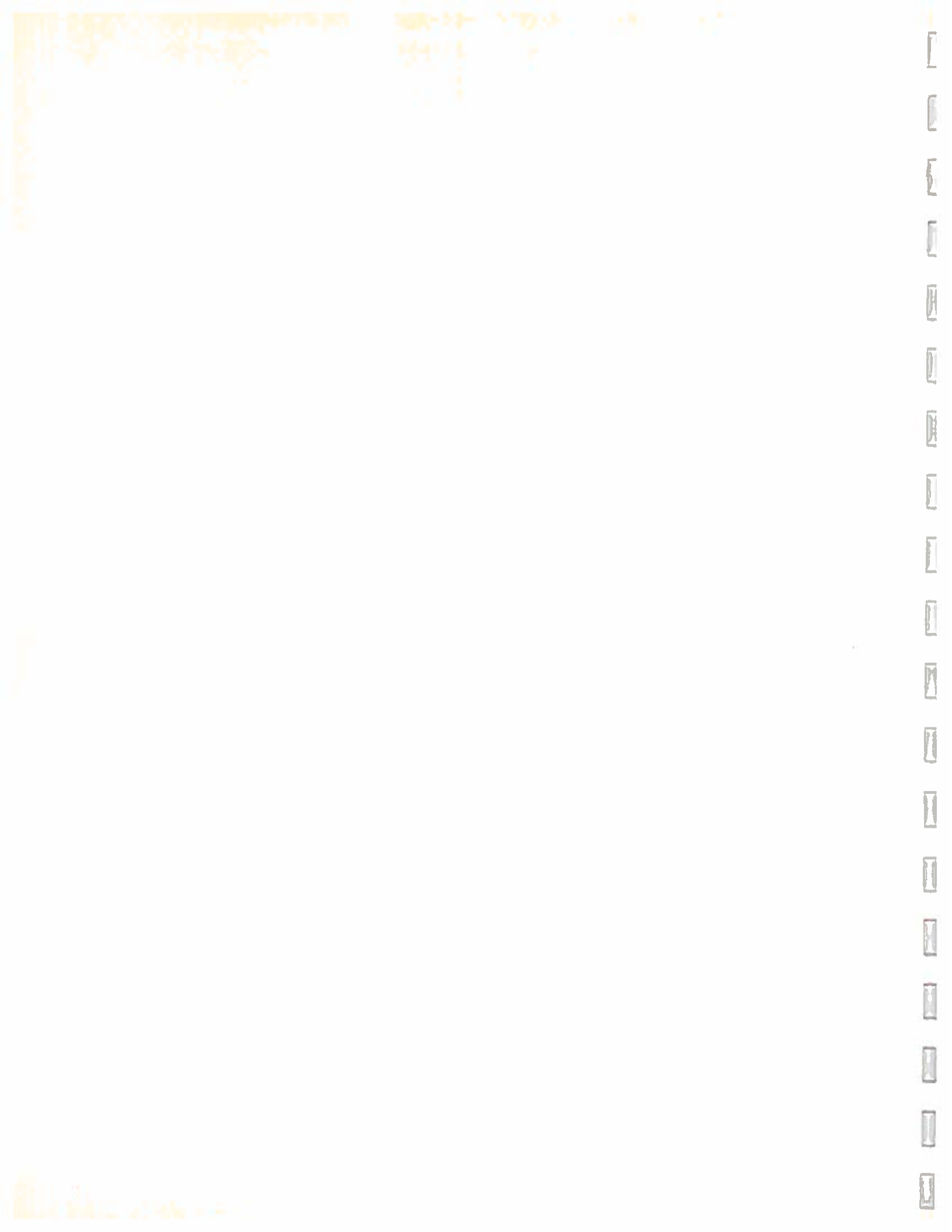
FARMERS AND THE FUTURE:
Opinions and Views of Maryland Farmers



NATIONAL COLONIAL FARM

Research Report No. 10

THE ACCOKEEK FOUNDATION



FARMERS OF THE FUTURE:
Opinions and Views of Maryland Farmers

Compiled and Edited by
David O. Percy, Ph.D.

and

Robert Ware Straus

With the Assistance of
Charles Leach, Ph.D.

and

Jody Palmour



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INTRODUCTION

This is the latest in the ongoing Accokeek Foundation series on new approaches to preservation of lands. This study, made possible by a grant from the Wallace Genetic Foundation, reveals new and unsuspected directions.

A quarter century ago, the Accokeek Foundation began pioneering imaginative new techniques of conserving open space. One then unique concept became the National Colonial Farm, a living historical model of a farm on the eve of the American Revolution. This Farm's strong historical research program produced a profile of a successful, export and subsistence agriculture, based on low capital costs, short labor supply and few chemicals.

We began to receive questions on the applicability of our work to present tragically deepening problems of current agriculture, which for years has been driven in the direction of: bigger is better, with more and more middlemen, with ultra-refined foods, with artificial substitutes, and controlled ultimately by world petroleum prices, higher and higher capital machinery costs, more and more chemicals and longer and longer supply lines.

We started to look around us in Maryland. We found our agriculture appears to be beginning a revolutionary change.

Many large and able organizations are studying these changes from a statistical standpoint. Our task was to examine the element which the recent great statistical studies have not covered - the individual. To that end, building on the work of Dr. Wayne Rasmussen of the USDA in a similar effort a dozen years ago, we talked with and observed individual farmers in a pilot area, and most intensively, Southern Maryland.

The late Margaret Meade sharpened our ability to observe our own nearby culture with new insights. Naturally, we started with what we hoped were open minds, but equally obviously, we were influenced by stereotypes. These stereotypes faded as we talked with old farmers, young farmers, successful farmers and those who have not been so successful in their farming. The results were a surprise to us.

We hope this study will lead to similar inquiries in different parts of the Country, and they will be as surprised as we. These surprises may help our thinking about the new shape of American agriculture by the year 2000.

Jean Wallace Douglas
Jean Wallace Douglas
Chairperson
Research & Development Committee

PREFACE

After months of research, the Accokeek Foundation's senior staff began talking with Maryland farmers in late 1981 and early 1982 about farmland preservation. They were selected to include new and old farmers, successful and struggling, full-time and part-time. Some were long-term friends, most were strangers. All helpfully cooperated with hours of revealing discussions. We wanted to discover what these closest to actual use of agricultural lands really felt about how lands were being and should be used - and what they say is the future uses of these lands.

This pilot study was purposely limited in geographical scope, covering the Maryland Counties of Calvert; St. Marys; Charles; Prince Georges; Montgomery; Howard and Carroll. (A preliminary study looked into the Eastern Shore of Maryland and also Northern Virginia). This area ranged from lands already threatened by urban expansion to lands which would now, and in the foreseeable future, remain "agricultural" in the broad sense.

These thoughtful farmers revealed important considerations which obviously bear on developing public policy covering agricultural land use. What they told us has not been illuminated by the extensive and detailed economic studies which have provided the previous bases frequently cited for planning the future agricultural land use.

In our interviews we found that the farmers in Maryland, and by inference throughout the Northeastern and other sections of the Nation, are very knowledgeable about the various aspects of the agricultural business. Not only are they aware of markets and production costs, but also about real estate law, tax structures, estate planning as well as government programs at all levels. In part, this is reflective of both formal education and practical experience that these men and women possess. As one reads what they have to say, these facts will become apparent and we believe that the old stereotypes of a poor, dumb farmer may be finally laid to rest.

For clarity and to protect the privacy of those who talked to us, the concepts which came out of the hundreds of hours of interviews are set forth in the actual words and, of course, those of their wives. Taking the classic rules of unity of time, place and action, we have attributed these words to six typical, but unidentifiable, Maryland farmers.¹ We have labeled these models: Tom and Thomas, Dick and Richard, and Harry and Henry. Each pair represents farmers who are similar in age, economic status, and background, but have differing views. Through them, we hear the actual words and feelings of the scores of flesh and blood farmers as they discussed their views with us.

¹ However, our senior staff interviewers were given permission by each farmer to quote and identify them. Students who conducted preliminary interviews did not request such permission and none of their material has been used in this report.

The only changes we have made is an occasional sanitizing of the barnyard figures of speech. We have added our own interpretations in italics so these cannot be confused with the basic data.

Dick and Richard represent various farmers who have been farming most of their lives. They are in their mid-life. By Maryland standards they are large operators. They obtain all their income from farming.

Tom and Thomas on the other hand, are typical of those who have tried other occupations, or at least feel they are qualified for other ways of earning a living. They are in their late twenties or early thirties. They generally own little land and tend to rent much more land than they own.

Harry and Henry speak for those who are not full-time farmers. In fact, they make as much or more from some other occupation--agricultural services, law, real estate, insurance, etc., occupations that have variable time demands and allow time for the necessities of farming. They tend to be in their fifties and fairly well-off financially.

In each case, their wives speak for themselves.

CHAPTER I

IMPRESSIONS, SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Echoes of the past continue to sound today. In the summer of 1969 the U.S. Department of Agriculture conducted a series of informal surveys. Throughout the Nation farmers talked about their lives, their work and their problems. A salient point was that farming as a way of life offered advantages both for the individual and for the Nation which city life could not provide. As a way of making a living, farmers had some reservations about agriculture as an occupation, but these reservations tended to be ephemeral and usually were overridden by the advantages of rural life.

A bit over a decade later, a similar survey in Southern Maryland, Maryland's Eastern Shore, and Northern Virginia, conducted by the Accokeek Foundation, found that the relatively unheeded messages of the earlier survey as reported by Dr. Wayne Rasmussen had still not been heard by decision makers, planners, or the general public. In addition, the Accokeek Foundation's informal survey of Maryland farmers found that many of the various levels of government had taken well-meaning actions and formulated policies with the goal of aiding farmers, but in reality they had not adequately addressed the needs and concerns of those involved in farming. In

spite of the problems expressed by farmers, the survey found that the traditional rural values of American farmers were alive and well. There was very little, almost an insignificant amount of defeatism among the farmers surveyed, despite the deepening agricultural depression sweeping the Nation. Rather there was a willingness to deal with problems and a sense that given appropriate opportunity and barring or removal of obstacles, farmer's problems could be surmounted.

We heard farmers affirming their way of life and calling for public understanding of their occupation. It is a call which is being made by a small, but growing, important minority. Unless decision makers and the citizens who ultimately control public policy listen to the American farmers, the farmers state clearly there must be concern for America's future. As William Jennings Bryan said in 1896, "Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country."

Before summarizing the views voiced by farmers in the Accokeek Foundation's survey, a word or two should be said about the interviewers' impressions of the farmers interviewed. The Maryland farmer is informed, intelligent, thoughtful and articulate. By and large, they are still in relatively comfortable material circumstances, enjoying the same amenities as urbanites. We also

found an abiding faith in the future which is commonly associated with farmlife. However, this optimism is not Panglossian, but a sober analysis of both their way of life and agriculture as a means of making a living.

Another important impression is that the farmers of today place a great value in education both formal and experiential. As a result, they are well-versed in the business aspects of farming, in the attitudes and beliefs of the non-farming community, and about politics at all levels of government. They present an unexpected knowledge and understanding of society.

Finally, the winds of change are blowing across Maryland and the Maryland farmers have tested these winds. As society reawakens to the nutritional values of fresh fruits and vegetables, they find that local farmers are meeting their needs, utilizing integrated pest management and other conservation practices which not only care for the land but the produce of that land.

The Accokeek Foundation's survey was designed to dig deeply into what farmers thought about the current use of lands which are, or had been, used for agriculture and the efforts to preserve good farmlands for agriculture. The farmers we talked to were concerned that a great deal of farmland had been taken over for development. They understood that people wanted a place to live. However, they thought that agricultural lands should be used for agriculture and

that residential development should be restricted to those areas which could not be easily or economically farmed. While most of these farmers were well-informed about efforts to preserve farmland both on a state and county level, they did not believe that the current or past programs have been successful in preserving farming. A frequently voiced concern was that current programs did little to preserve the farmers' equity in land. Equity was important not only as surety for loans but also as a convertible asset for retirement or other unforeseen emergency.

Some of the farmers interviewed thought that the Federal Government was the only political body with sufficient power to preserve farmlands for agricultural uses. Concomitantly, there was skepticism that the Federal Government could effectively develop and administer such programs. In part, this may be the result of farmers' experience with and views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While lauding programs such as the Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, and agricultural research, a significant number of the farmers said the main focus of the USDA was on the agricultural consumer rather than the agricultural producer. They thought because of this emphasis, that the Federal Government spent too much money (which by inference should have been used to aid farmers), to accomplish social ends, such as food stamps and agricultural subsidies which tended to benefit some farmers who could not compete in an open market.

Farmers' views on land conservation practices and the future of particular farmlands revealed both an emotional attachment to the land and an assessment of its economic potential. While the farmers said soil conservation practices were important because the soil was the basic resource for farming, there was also a belief that it was the individual farmer's duty to care for the land as well as he could. This dichotomy was underscored by farmer's replies to the question of to whom they would sell their farms to if they had to sell. They said that they would prefer to sell to another farmer, if possible. A few even said that they would sell their farms for slightly less to another farmer. At the same time, they also said that they would try to receive as much money as possible for their land. This would probably mean selling to a developer. While this was a hypothetical question, there was a significant generational difference among farmers about the future disposition of their current farms. The younger farmers believed that the time would come when farming would no longer be possible where they now were and when that time came they would sell out for enough money to buy another farm elsewhere. Many of the Southern Maryland farmers planned to move further south in Maryland, unaware of the strong development attitudes in most counties. Those well-established, usually middle-aged farmers, had a greater attachment to their particular farmlands and would attempt to stay where they

were for as long as possible. The older farmers in our survey, generally saw no circumstance in which they would sell their farms unless it was to support their retirement. Since many had provided for retirement support through other resources, these older farmers saw themselves continuing to live and perhaps work on their farms.

These generational differences showed up in other areas as well. Most of the younger farmers had entered into agriculture as a conscious choice. They believed that they could have made a living in some other occupation. The middle-aged farmers tended to have become farmers because their fathers had been farmers. There was, however, among this group a belief that they could have followed another pursuit, but they did not really want to do so. Finally, the oldest group of farmers had either been farmers all their lives without having ever thinking why; or they had become farmers after having had a successful non-farm career.

Another generational difference was in whether they were making a living from agriculture. Younger farmers tended to either have a non-farm job or their wives worked to help support the family. In some cases, the wives farmed and the husbands had outside occupations. Middle-aged farmers were the most likely age group to earn all their income from farming. The older group either

had expanded from exclusively farming income to supplementing it with a farm related business or had income from another, often professional occupation.

Many of those we interviewed were concerned about the current economic state of agriculture. They noted that low prices for agricultural produce combined with high cost for the means of agricultural production threatened many farmers. At the same time, most of these same farmers believed that they would weather the current bad times in agriculture. They would do this because they could change their type of crops, be more sophisticated in their operations, or because of the economic advantages of proximity to Baltimore's port or the markets in the greater Washington-Baltimore area.

This belief in the future was underlined when the farmers said that they believed it was possible, although not particularly easy, for young people to get into farming today. They said that the new farmers would need a good education, skills in both management and farming experience, financing, and perhaps, a bit of luck.

The surprise was the clarity with which the farmers saw change in the future of Maryland farming as they now know it. They were generally aware of a shift away from the traditional grain, tobacco, and livestock operation to more specialized farming in crops such

as vegetables, fruits or tobacco. They pointed out the changing food habits, the high costs of dragging table food 3,000 miles across the Nation, and the dangers inherent in depending on long tenuous supply lines. With urban markets and growing demands for local produce, these farmers predicted that direct produce and pick-your-own operations would continue to increase in numbers in the future. A surprising number of the farmers were already making the shift to these more specialized operations.

Finally, the best endorsement of farming in Maryland was that almost all those interviewed stated they would be farmers again, if they had their lives to live over.

Maryland is often characterized as "U.S.A. in Miniature". If Maryland farmers are a cross-section of American agriculture, farms and farming are in good hands. They are adapting to the new conditions. While traditional high capital investment grain and animal farming faces mounting problems, the newer types of low capital, labor intensive human food farming is moving ahead.

Thus, farmers are developing new solutions to their problems. They see a future which allows them to hold to a quality of life they want, a way to earn a living, and an essential contribution to the Nation and the world.

CHAPTER II

MARYLAND FARMERS SPEAK

The discussions opened with the views about lands controlled by the farmers.

Dick (representing the classic farmer-owner attitude): "I farmed all my life on my own land. To me, land is basically a commodity. It's security for loans and credit to purchase seed, fertilizer and machinery. It also is our retirement security. By renting it out or selling it, we can retire when we can't farm (any longer).

I am a conservator of farmlands, particularly my own land. I am proud of how I work the land. I hate to see erosion. My operation is successful because I take care of the land. It's a good example for people who want to rent land to us; they see that we care for the land."

Richard (who came from the same background, but had a different approach): "My land is a heritage. It's been in our family for generations. I use proper farming practices, including fertilizers, rotation of crops and contour plowing.

I would say that it doesn't pay to put too much into rental lands. If you do, the owners will either raise the rent or divide it up for houses."

Tom (who spoke as a renter): "Land is a resource, and investment, and a commodity. Owning some land makes it possible to get loans."

Thomas (also a renter): "I treat the ground as a conservator. I rent a great deal of land and depend on maintaining a good relationship with the owners. I see many farmers (who rent lands) trying to get everything they can from it and putting nothing back. They don't care how it is farmed or harmed. The end is soil erosion, soil depletion and unusable land."

Harry (who like Henry is a part-time farmer): "I don't like the term 'gentleman farmer', but I guess that's what I am. I take great pride in my farming, my knowledge of farming, and my commitment to preservation. This land is both our home and a farm."

Interpretation:

It is apparent to us that there are several points of view on this one question. First of all, who are full-time farmers? It is clear that the land is both a commodity and a trust to be preserved. As a commodity it is an asset which may be security for loans, rented out for income, or sold for capital gain. There is prideful attachment to particular lands which in a number of cases have been handed down from previous generations. Conservation is important because it enables a decent living from the land now and in the future. There are conflicting views about the conservation practices on rental lands. In essence, the care of such lands

seems to be contingent on whether you can rent farmlands, or the probability this can be done in the future. If there is a future for renting lands, then there is willingness to invest in conservation practices. This is reversed if probability of renting the land in the future is questionable.

Those who do not rely totally on farming for income, tend to take almost wholly a view of land as a trust. In this opinion, ownership of the land protects it from other non-agricultural uses.

Since the majority believe that some farmlands should be exclusively preserved for agricultural uses, we discussed who should determine the use of land? Uppermost in these discussions was the Maryland Farmlands Preservation Program² setting up agricultural districts, providing for transfer and sale of development rights and farmland tax advantages.

Dick: "Who should determine land use policy is a terrible question. Your age determines how you look at it. At retirement, your concern is equity and you don't want somebody saying yesterday it was worth \$5.00, today only a dollar. If you are a young farmer, the (County) land preservation program would be a great help in getting started because it would keep prices down. If you're in-between, you can go either way.

"It's important to conserve equity. The county program had unfortunate timing. Little housing development would have happened

² A leading statewide program, under which each county can have a different set of regulations on actual application to its particular problems.

anyway because of the recession. Yet, we ruined some of the equity. You can't sell a TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) today.

"The problem ought to be worked out among all concerned. You don't want somebody telling you, you can only drive a Chevrolet, or impose a curfew. I don't want somebody telling me I have to plant grass or nothing at all. I hate to think we need something more, though I don't know the plans we now have are the best way to do what needs to be done.

"The county could have said no more nothing, and there's no money to compensate the farmers. They had the votes. The real reason they were opposed to development was that residents didn't want any more citizens. The newcomers move into a new area and like to think they own everything they see. They don't want any new houses blocking their view. Farmland preservation was only a factor. People who moved from the city...don't want more landowners, kids, etc. in the neighborhood. This was not really very fair to people as a whole who want to move out into seclusion. On the one hand, you think about feeding the future and maintaining open space. On the other, you thought you owned the land and its equity.

"I'm afraid we need planning. We'll hurt a few now rather than many later. But there should be some balance.

"When the State/County farmlands program started, I had mixed emotions. It was needed for the good of mankind. I was younger, and saw that if somebody was hurting for money, and had to sell a

piece of land, it would be an opportunity for me to buy at a good price because its value would have gone down. But then I realized that my equity (in land) would go down too. And I'd be taking advantage of somebody; maybe in the same fix as my father. (If the county land preservation program had started) five years earlier, equity would not have been a problem.

"I feel like I'm kind of on the fringes of understanding the problem that's a lot deeper than I am. The point is to try and see all sides."

Tom: "I think the Federal Government should be involved (in farmland preservation), or all the good land will be done away with and there'll be no food. I think that everybody should be involved, but farmers have a right to make money on their land. Farmers who want to hand down (their lands) as a farm also (need) to make enough money (off the land in order) to retire. Everybody's a little greedy."

Henry (an older part-time farmer and part-time professional whose farm is in Montgomery County): "We need a national land use policy - for the ultimate need of mankind. Some land is of state-wide and not just local interest. Federal parklands and wilderness areas are a step in this direction. The best lands are in Iowa and Illinois."

Harry (a retired government employee, now farming): "The state, local, and federal governments together don't have enough sense to operate a wheelbarrow."

Harry's Wife: "That doesn't answer the question, Who should control farmlands? Individual farmers don't always have a vision of how our children's children will live."

Harry: "A lot (of land) is owned by individual speculators like lawyers and doctors, who couldn't care less what happens to the land. They let it grow over, let buildings fall down. They can't even see if you're taking care of it. Tough question. How are you going to get into the hands of people who are going to take care of it?"

Harry's Wife: "The main voice should be the owners, but they should come together in a community."

Harry: "I think the Feds had better take action to stop the loss of farmland. I don't see how we'll feed future generations if we don't stop (taking land out of agricultural production). There's only so much land and they're not making any more."

Harry's Wife: "We can't go on building houses everywhere, especially single family houses, spread all over the landscape. We must determine which land is valuable for farming and which for other purposes. There's not enough discrimination, like building on bottom lands because it's flat; there's plenty of hillsides for houses."

Thomas (a young farmer from Howard County): "The Federal Government should stay out of farmland preservation, because they would screw it up like all their other programs. If the county or state government wants to preserve farmland, they should tax everyone in order to pay the farmer for his rights on the property."

Henry: "I believe that some system of land preservation together with zoning is the only way to save farmlands. The County government is controlled by (suburbanites). As a result, both zoning changes and further subdivisions are inevitable. The farmer has to work with the Commissioners to get the best kind of zoning legislation for themselves.

"Zoning has to be more sophisticated. Not all lands in an agricultural area are suitable for farming. If those lands on which farming was almost impossible could be developed, then both society and the farmer would benefit. PUDs (Planned Urban Developments) are a means of preserving farmland while providing people with a place to live. PUDs, however, should be placed on hillsides and swamps unsuited for farming."

Tom: "I believe that the Federal Government could restrict development to protect the lands. I'm not sure that the Federal Government would actually be able to do so. The Federal Government is too much under the control of big business which would influence government regulation (of land use)."

Thomas: "I don't trust zoning to preserve farmlands. It is important to have agricultural zones, but if you're going to be realistic, any zoning designation is dependent on politics. Thus, zoning is changed because of the political instability of the commissioners."

Richard: "The land is best preserved by good farmers doing their job without government interference."

Interpretation:

Basically, one hears the majority believe that the Federal Government is the only political body with sufficient power to preserve farmlands. However, there is also skepticism of the Federal Government's abilities to develop and administer a policy of farmland preservation. Local and county zoning ordinances may have some promise of protection. But there is a sense that zoning ordinances are too subject to political pressures to adequately protect farmlands. A sentiment shared by many farmers is that the individual farmer offers the best protection for lands staying in agriculture at least in the immediate future.

Although there were some indications of being aware of county and state land preservation programs, the discussion turned to, how much is known about them and why the individual farmer does or does not participate in these programs?

Dick: "I've been to a few meetings about this Land Preservation thing. I won't join it unless there's no other way to get money. I don't think I'll ever have to do that. You see, if you sell your rights and nobody else does, you'll be surrounded by people and then (with the land rights sold) your land couldn't be sold for what it's worth. I wouldn't be able to buy another place I could farm".

Richard (a Howard County middle-aged farmer): I know both the County and the State programs. But I don't think that they're set up right or run right. The way the county program was originally proposed (a TDR system) was a fair plan. The program that was adopted wasn't. I would like to see those people who want to move out here pay farmers for the rights to develop. That way the price of land (for farming) would be about \$1,000 per acre. At that price we could afford to buy land and make a living from it."

Dick's Wife: "We can't farm here much longer. We're going to sell. So if we put our lands under one of the protection programs, we won't be able to get the best price for our farm."

Richard's Wife: "I agree about having to move on eventually. But we have to preserve farmland somehow. I am a member of the County Agricultural Preservation Board. The problem isn't with the farmers--the real farmers. The whole area around us is being taken

over by "horse farmers". They can afford to be farmers for fun. Prime (farm) land can't exist if it's surrounded by a bunch of quarter acre lots. Our suppliers will leave--no way they can make a profit. In addition, the neighbors begin to complain about spraying or the smell. A farmer can't win.

"If the universities really want to do the farmer a service, they will stop trying to figure out how to keep the farmers in business in the middle of the suburbs and look at how to put suburbia on the steep slopes and other places which are useless as farmlands."

Dick: "I agree that it's important to save farmlands. The question is how to do it. Planners should find ways to put houses on steep hills and rocky ground. That way people could enjoy the scenery and leave the bottom lands for farming. Transfer of Development Rights is one way to do this. But I don't think I'll see it in my lifetime."

Richard: "I think it (TDRs) will come in about five years--if it doesn't, there won't be any use."

Dick: "I guess I don't really give a damn about the program as it is now set up. The county tried TDRs but it was only a way to promote zoning. The farmers opposed this land grab. Someday the whole country will be developed. I'm surprised that anybody is in the program."

Tom (a successful, young, full-time farmer in Southern, Maryland): " I think the Maryland program should help, but it depends on circumstances. Some of the farms going into farming districts are just trying to make money off selling the development rights. The programs are designed to get rid of the small farms.

"I was a prime mover, or at least one of them, in getting the County's program started. Although we got all the papers ready to go, we haven't filed them because of the Commissioners would just reject them. It's all politics. TDRs are not practical for most farmers because they fix the value of land and make no provisions for its rising value. The main reason a lot of farmers get into a district is the exemption from nuisance suits."

Thomas: "I've heard of the programs, but don't really understand it enough to say I'd join it even if I had enough land to do so. There seems to be a lot of limitations, like using the mineral rights...that could be really hard."

Harry: "I haven't put my lands into the programs because there isn't any need to. No one will ever develop (my lands) while I'm alive. I also can't see selling my development rights for less than their market value. It is the nature of the existing preservation programs in the state and county, to have less money available each year than the number of acres put in as requested for purchase of

rights. The farmers have to accept less than market value for the rights in order to be accepted into the system. The lowest bid gets accepted."

Henry (a successful businessman and farmer): "There's really no advantage to the Farmland Protection Act. It's just keeping (land) prices down and making parklands. I really just don't want anything to do with the government."

Harry: "I agree with that. If the (Agriculture Protection) laws were changed, my sons could be forced out of farming. If the laws were changed, then the tax rate could be changed and that would threaten their land because their return (from farming) would not equal the taxes."

Henry: "Part of the problem is the public's and government's attitudes about land. The whole county is for development. The zoning is set up for subdivisions. I don't think anybody wants to stand in the way of progress."

Interpretation:

Most farmers apparently have enough knowledge about the county and state agricultural land preservation programs to judge them. Further, what is known about the programs leads many to distrust the way they are currently set up and operated. The impression is

that if farmland is to be preserved, it must be lands in rural areas, individual farmers should be paid for the development potential of their lands, and the state and county programs should be revised so that the benefits of preservation are passed along to the farmers. The opinions are that more discrimination on where development should take place--e.g., steep slopes and rocky lands.

Attitudes of individual farmers about the best means of conserving farmlands were related to why they are farmers.

Tom: "I come from a long line of farmers. Our family has been farming this land since colonial times and I've been interested in farming all my life. I guess it's in the blood."

Thomas: "My parents weren't farmers, so I guess it was a choice on my part. I started by working for farmers in the area when I was a teen and decided that it was what I wanted to do in life."

Tom: "I know that I could earn more money doing something else. But then I wouldn't be my own boss. Here, I do what I want. Besides, it's a good life--particularly to raise a family."

Thomas: "I agree. I also got into farming because of the challenge. You are your own boss and your decisions make or break you."

Dick: "My father grew up on a farm, but worked for the university. He came back to farming when I was a teenager. I never

wanted to do anything else. Farming's been good to me. It's hard work and can get long--six months a year. Nature is a cruel task master. It's not like working on a piece of paper you can leave on your desk for the weekend without fearing it will deteriorate while you're gone. As they say, you have to make hay while the sun shines. It's not a high living, but it's a good way of life."

Richard (a successful, full-time farmer in Southern, Maryland): "With the exception of my time in the army, I've been farming all my life. After being overseas, the lure of faraway places lost their attractions. It seemed natural to go into farming--carrying on the family tradition and all that. By living on a farm, you aren't crowded in like people in the cities. You have to understand that that was the way it was when I was young--you followed in your father's footsteps. I like the independence and the chance to work outdoors. Farming is my whole life--a vocation, a hobby, everything."

Dick: "I ought to add that I tried a full-time job once, but it was too much to do that and farm too--so I quit."

Harry: "I was originally a farm boy and I still do some farming. However, I didn't think I could make the kind of living I wanted, so I went into real estate. I'd like to go back to farming. It's a better way of life for a family."

Henry: "I took over from my father after he had a heart attack. I'm the third generation to farm this land and the fourth and fifth generations are coming up. Farming, whether you work full-time or not, is a way of life--it's something that gets in your blood and no matter what, you're a farmer who gets some--maybe most of your income elsewhere."

Interpretation:

Most, if not all, are farmers by choice and that choice was made because farming offered a desirable way of life. Interestingly, it appears that the younger, full-time farmers were more aware of making a choice than the older full-time farmers. The latter, it seems, were simply following in their father's footsteps. Perhaps, this is a reflection of the non-farm career opportunities available to the younger farmers and their broader education.

All this led to another question: While as a way of life, farming is desirable, is it also a way of making a living?

Dick: "I've managed to survive and have a fairly comfortable life. I'm not rich, mind you, but I get by. There's really nothing I want that I can't get."

Richard: "It's a good living, if you are a good farmer. The metro area makes the cost of living high around here; not only for me, but for the people who work for me. The market's bad now. If many farmers quit, the consumers are in trouble. With a lot of equity, a man could stay in, maybe, the next five years. Like other businesses, not all farmers operate equally. Some manage better. There is a good livelihood to be made in agriculture, although things might be bad the next year or two. People always have to eat. You'll just have to be a better operator and manager in the future to maintain an adequate living."

Dick: "There's not much money (in farming); you won't end up rich, but if you're suited to it and like it, it's a good life."

Richard's Wife: "You have to look at the business end of it (farming). Unless you are a good businessman, you won't be able to enjoy the way of live (that farming brings)."

Tom: "My wife works and she pays the household bills. So, I guess, you have to say that our farm doesn't wholly provide a living. It's hard to say that, but it's that the farm is our future and her work is just temporary. It's not much different than the rest of the society where wives have to work to make ends meet. Right now, it's a 50-50 proposition--like most folks."

Thomas: "I believe in the future. I'm doing all right now. I'm getting ready to build a new house. We are going to make a good living in the future too."

Thomas' Wife: "As for making a living, it's hard. After all our costs and work, you make only about \$20 per acre."

Harry: "I've been a professional all my life because I didn't have enough money to farm."

Henry: "I make a good living from farming and my farm service business. I get about fifty percent from each. What we've built up over the years make a living for me and my sons and their families. It all comes from the farm. I became an intelligent farmer by becoming a middle-man. That's where much of the money is to be made."

Harry: "You gotta have about a thousand acres and machinery to make a living. Otherwise, you can't make what you would make on a job. Less than half the farmers in the (Montgomery) county make their whole living from farming. These are guys who can afford to own the land without getting everything out of it. They're well-off and live in the country. With incomes from law, medicine and government, farming is not just a business to them. For them, it's a way of life they cherish."

Interpretation:

There appears to be a generational difference in whether one can make a living from farming. In part, there maybe a difference in what one considers to be an appropriate life-style. The young farmers tend to rely upon a second income, particularly from a wife's job for their living. The same is true for the older farmers: many of them have another source of income from a business or profession. The farmers in the middle earn their livings wholly from farming.

Although all indicate that it is possible to make a comfortable living from agriculture, if one works hard and is a good businessman, we often hear very pessimistic reports about the current economic state of agriculture. What is the problem?

Tom: "I make out all right, but the price of corn isn't keeping pace with rising costs."

Thomas: "Economics is the greatest problem facing the American farmer today. It's low income against rising expenses. Our combine is only five years old and grain farming at the prices we get today just doesn't make replacing it at \$70,000 worthwhile. The land values does not economically justify the costs of raising grain."

Farmers have done a lousy job of public relations. The public doesn't understand that first and foremost, farming is a business. It's a business which produces goods at low cost, sells them to a middle-man who jacks up the prices, and then lays the blame for high prices on the farmer. We're caught in a business which we have to pay "double" taxes for social security. And although we get a tax break for our farmlands, we pay high taxes on our buildings and equipment which are just as necessary for farming as the land."

Tom: "I'm still young at it. It's gotten worse over the last five years. I don't think I could do it now (get into farming). Corn, for example, has gone from \$2.70 to \$2.40. You can't go into farming, if you don't get your money out of it."

Thomas: "Farming was good in the fifties and sixties, but it's been going downhill ever since. You've got high costs, low prices, and no good labor to hire. You can't compete with welfare for workers. If you want to preserve agriculture, you've got to raise the prices (which farmers get for their crops). Why stay in farming if you can't make money? It all comes down to the Federal Government giving away too much--welfare, food stamps, foreign aid--nobody cares about the American farmer."

Dick: "I got some data here that shows that farmers in Howard County cannot make a profit given the current grain prices, costs of production, customary land rents, and prevalent yields. This was caused by overproduction and government interference in free foreign trade. This shows that the only way you can make a profit is to farm large acreages and use your own equipment on your own land."

Richard: "It's the low prices, mainly, that's causing farmers problems. Unless you can store your grain till the right time and then sell, you're at the mercy of the grain buyers. Even then, you might not get a good deal. I lost 42¢ a bushel on my corn when the dealer didn't call me."

Dick: "Unless you have a thousand acres, you can't make a go on grain and the investment in cattle with fences, etc., is so large that only big operations can succeed. For me, it's better to concentrate on tobacco."

Richard's Wife: "You have to educate the consumers that food is a bargain in the U.S. compared with other countries. The consumers shouldn't continue to expect to spend so little of their income on food."

Dick: "The only way to make money in farming in today's market is to lease a lot of land to work at a cheap price. You got to be large enough to make farming pay. You got to cut costs by using 'no-till'."

Harry: "Farming has had its bad times before, but it has survived. We need to get back to a free market for agricultural produce. This will allow the good farmers to make a profit and drive the bad ones out. In addition to being big enough, farmers need new technology to make better use of their lands. For example, we need more mechanization in tobacco to overcome the high labor costs for bad workers.

"One of the greatest difficulties we have is finding competent workers who will work as hard as we do. Our real enemies are social security, welfare, and unemployment insurance. Well, maybe not social security, but far, far too much welfare. People don't have to work. One day the people in Washington will wake up and be too hungry and they'll wonder what's wrong. It's all since Roosevelt.

"The people we hire are too trifling to work; they get food stamps, so they won't even grow a garden, even when I give them the land, seeds and fertilizer. I gave a butchered hog the other day to one of my people and he let it rot--a couple hundred dollars worth of meat. You can't help people like that. They just don't care and they break up things."

Henry (speaking as an old time farmer of many years): "I've had the same workers for twenty years. So you can't say they're all too lazy. It's hard to get seasonal workers, but things are changing as jobs are harder to find."

Interpretation:

While there are some definite economic and social problems which affect the current state of agriculture, these problems are problems of society. A serious, but not unique problem for farmers, is low prices for what they produce with high costs for production inputs. Another problem seems to be the lack of competent seasonal farm labor at a salary level which can be afforded. There are a number of possible solutions to the dilemma--greater public appreciation of the farmers' economic problems, more effective use of machinery through size of operation, better management of land, capital and labor. And finally, a realignment of public support of able bodied individuals.

When the discussion turned to whether it was possible for a young farmer to get into agriculture today, the problems noted were put into perspective.

Harry: "I think a young man would have to have a rich uncle or a rich father-in-law to get into farming these days. That's the only way in the world."

Harry's Wife: "I don't agree. If a young man went into truck farming, specialty table food farming fruits and berries, milking goats or some other specialty item like trees and plants, grapes, etc., and properly managed it, a young fellow could move into a higher income bracket that would allow him to buy more land. You'd have to start young and know what you want to do. You have to be discriminate about loans so they're a help and not a burden to you. Sharp guys are doing it. The farm magazines show it. My neighbors are doing it. People don't seem to realize what's happening. There are more farmers in the county than there were ten years ago."

Henry: "Young men can still get into farming. The best way is to own a small amount of land--about 15 acres, say--for a base of operations and rent the rest. He could make use of SBA and FmHA to purchase his equipment and land. He'd have to operate like a good businessman by writing off depreciation, etc."

Harry: "Those young farmers just starting out have to be good businessmen. The ones around here, they're better farmers than those of the past; they're college grads in agronomy with plenty of smarts in marketing, credit handling, etc."

Dick: "Yeh, the smart ones are going to college first, then hiring out to large operators. This gives them experience and gets them a grubstake to start their own farm."

Richard: "It'd still be hard to get into farming now unless you inherited the land and equipment--the costs are just too high. The farm next door was on the market for \$300,000--about \$3,000 per acre. That's too high for farming, even if you got a low rate loan."

Dick's Wife: "It would depend on their goals and how they managed their land. It's possible to make a go of it, but you'd have to be a good businessman and a good farmer."

Dick: "He'd have to practice a different kind of farming--using land wherever he could rent or buy it."

Richard: "The point remains that you'd have to have some (financial) help to get started--you just can't do it on your own with the cost of money. Only a fool would go into that kind of debt today."

Tom: "Sure, it's still possible, but you'd face very high risks and you'd have to have a lot of money. The best way is to inherit the land or get it on good terms from your folks. Ten years ago, when you could get a 3% FmHA loan, it wasn't so risky. I don't know if I'd take the risk now."

Thomas: "It's just not realistic to do it now. The only possibility of making it now would be growing something like tobacco."

Tom's Wife: "Most young farmers take over from their families."

Tom: "That's hard too. You still have to be a good manager, have some schooling, and keep up with new scientific methods."

Thomas: "With the low prices and higher start-up costs, a young man just cannot make back his costs."

Tom: "If you had that much money (to start farming), you would do better investing it."

Thomas: "Those who have started farming in the last ten years are a new breed. They're educated--they have college degrees. If you have the education, you'll probably make it. There's quite a few new farmers who are doing just that. You can do it in low capital farming."

Interpretation:

All are saying the same things. For a young person to go into farming today it requires a great deal of capital and that the best way for him to get it would be through inheritance. Unless they are good businessmen, managers and farmers, even with sufficient capital it would be difficult to stay in farming. The easiest way to get the skills is through higher education and some say that this should be followed by experience gained through working for established farmers.

The discussion indicated that it isn't easy for a young person to get started in farming today. The discussion then turned to, what is the future for farm children? Should they become farmers and will they?

Tom: "Yeh, I want my children to become farmers. If we help them get land and money for the first years, they'll be able to do it."

Thomas: "My kids are girls, so I don't think that they'll carry on. Although times are changing and they may want to get into the dairy business. They're really too young to know yet. But if they want to, I'd sure help them."

Harry: "I wouldn't be building new buildings if I didn't expect the next generation to farm. I think both my son and grandson want to be farmers."

Dick (a middle-aged full-time farmer): "I don't think any of my children will go into farming. One of my boys tried it part-time for awhile. He said he could make more by working overtime than he could possibly make in farming. The only way a man will get into farming now is if he likes the life style better than anything else."

Richard (another middle-aged full-time farmer): "While it's up to them, I expect my kids to be farmers. I think they feel the same way as I do about our heritage and our land."

Interpretation:

From these comments it appears that most farmers would like to see their children go into farming, but also, at least some believe that they will not. Is this because of the future of agriculture in a greater metropolitan area such as most of Maryland?

Dick: "I see Howard County as being a fully developed area in the future."

Richard: "You know it might be better to have people farm on worse land in West Virginia than to have people living way over there with the tremendous transportation costs to get here to work. Since the support service (people need and want) are already here, it makes sense to farm worse land in West Virginia. Productivity has and will continue to rise. We'll always need places for people to live. I can't really see the next hundred years. Something has got to happen. It's a shame just to let all that land slip away."

Dick: "I think that if you came around in 2000 you'd find my farm broken up among my kids. They'll have their homes on it. The whole area will be developed--you can see the creeping fringes of suburbia already. It's coming along the road on either side of my farm."

Harry: "The basic attitude down here in St. Mary's county in Southern Maryland is for development. The future for farming, I think, is part-time, by people who have another full-time job off the farm. We already see this happening. As farmers are getting older, more and more of the next generation are farming part-time. There is no real advantage to a big farm. If you have 12 to 50 acres and a full-time job, that's already big enough to grow tobacco. Produce, fruits, berries operations are the coming thing as more people move into Southern Maryland."

Henry: "In the future you'll see more productive people. The farmers of the 80's and 90's will be 22 to 32 years old--they won't be only old goats--out of college, schooled in business and management techniques. I don't think that there will be a radical change in acreage of farms, but there will be "bigger farming units". What I mean, is that the people in farming will be leasing land in addition to their own. You can already see this happening east of (Highway U.S.) 301. A lot of doctors and others own about 80 acre

plots which they lease out to farmers to keep the assessments down. The buyers are investors, primarily professional people who were born and raised in the country. West of 301 will all eventually be developed in some form--mainly in three or less acre plots by the year 2000."

Tom: "The future for farming in Charles County rests with specialized crops or a PYO operation. Without tobacco, there'd be a lot fewer farmers than there are now. In the long run there's really no future for (traditional grain) farming in Charles County."

Thomas: "I don't see any real future for (grain and livestock) farming in Howard County either. The land's too expensive. Even the ability of farmers to lease land is getting more difficult. As for farm services, they've already moved out."

Interpretation:

It seems that there will be considerable changes in future agricultural operations in Maryland. Particularly, the Washington-Baltimore, Annapolis-Frederick axis, farming will be different in the future. In part, the future of farming depends on an individual's definition of a farm. In the traditional view of a farm, that of an operation raising large quantities of a few

commercial commodities sold to distant markets may disappear. The future of Maryland's farming in the year 2000 appears to be in producing specialized crops such as tobacco or fresh vegetables, fruits, grapes, and so forth. Direct produce marketing holds great promise, both as PYO operations and in farmer's markets, as these areas become more urbanized.

Now that we have looked into the future on a general basis, what do archtypical individuals see as their personal futures in agriculture?

Tom: "I plan to stay in farming. If I have to stop farming here in Charles County, which may not be that far off, I'd sell out for as much as I could get and move next door to St. Mary's and buy another farm."

Thomas: "You might say that I'm in the process of abandoning Howard County. I've already begun to move my operations to Adams County. I don't like the idea of moving, but in order to expand, I've got to move--land here is just too expensive."

Harry: "I'm staying in farming from now to eternity. I got out once, but I wasn't happy, so I rented a place and started a dairy. I'm old enough so I really don't have to move. I'm in the process of transferring my farm to my kids. As a kind of expert

in real estate law, I'm fixing it so it won't be broken up. If that happened, it wouldn't be worth a nickel."

Henry: "As long as I'm alive, this land can't be sold. I'm saving it for my sons and their children. What they'll do with it after I'm gone is up to them. I really don't have to sell my land to keep farming, but I do have approximately 20 lots overlooking the river for sale."

Dick: "I'll stay in farming along with the last 25% (of farmers) surviving this protracted depression period. Some farmers are smarter than me. You shouldn't give up."

Dick's Wife: "We'll stay in farming as long as it makes us a living. When it doesn't, we'll get out. And if that time comes, we'll develop it. It's possible that the children can farm it more intensively, making it pay more dollars per acre of tilled land, but that's up to them. We don't see changing our style of farming."

Richard: "We have two options for the future. One is to intensify our operations on our land and the other, more likely, is to move west. We don't think we'll be able to continue under the present conditions for more than 10 years. By then, we'll have moved west."

Interpretation:

Again there seems to be a generational difference between the older farmer represented by Harry and Henry; the middle-aged farmer, Dick and Richard, and the younger farmer, Tom and Thomas, in whether to continue farming at the present locations or whether to move on in the future. The younger farmers believe at some point, and some see that point in the not too distant future, that they will sell their present farms and move elsewhere. They indicated that farming in their present areas does not have much of a future. The middle-aged farmers seem to want to hang on to their present farms as long as possible. While the older farmers do not plan to move out at all. It seems then that what is said about agriculture in Maryland in the year 2000 will probably come true. It also seems that the younger farmers want to continue in agriculture and that where they farm is less important than their desire to continue in farming.

The discussion then turned to whether living in the shadow of a large metropolitan area, had an effect on agriculture.

Harry: "We're far enough south so that Washington doesn't affect us much now, but I see its influence growing. A couple of years ago a gravel company made me an offer for my gravel bed. I didn't take it, but the company "rep" said that someday I'd receive an offer I couldn't refuse."

"The Baltimore corn market has a positive effect on us--at least up to about two years ago when railroad deregulation occurred. The corn prices in Baltimore were higher than the national average and with our lower transportation costs, we could grow corn at a profit. In the northern part of Charles County, and I would suspect in St. Mary's and Calvert too, Washington has more affect. It's close enough for the commuters."

Henry: "There are some advantages to being near Washington or Baltimore, particularly if you're into direct selling--like vegetables, either in the city or along the roadside."

Dick: "I think it has a great influence particularly in Howard County. You've got the suburban sprawl like Columbia. The result is that the price of land has gone up to where we can't afford it as farmland. It's also made the scramble for rental land more difficult. And it's raised the problems of these subdivision people complaining about farming--you know--fertilizers, chemicals, noise, smell--they moved to the country for peace and quiet, but don't like farmers farming."

Richard (an established farmer): "Not only the cost of land, but everything else is driven up by being near Washington. It makes the cost of living high for me and for my workers. But, on the other hand, I'm closer to the markets and shipping than they are in

Iowa and Nebraska. I get higher prices but not necessarily higher profits than they do. With our costs and their prices, we'd be in trouble. Now 30% of what we grow is exported."

Tom (a young farmer in Southern Maryland): "The cities have little effect on tobacco. Baltimore's international port for grain results in our getting 70¢ more per bushel than the market. The Eastern shore (demand for grain) also has an effect. To balance this there are the problems increasing population brings. We got motorbikes tearing up grain fields, hunters in the woods, and people cutting wood without permission."

Thomas (a young farmer): "Being close to the markets is good. We can send our hogs to Baltimore easily without the transport costs that Midwestern farmers have to pay. It is also an advantage for marketing vegetables. We sell at RFK's stadium's farmers market (in Washington, D.C.) and at Silver Spring (Maryland) too. As prices for everything go up, it will be more important to be close to the markets. We start out with a 30% advantage over California just in shipping costs alone, to say nothing of water, land and labor costs. It's a good picture."

Interpretation:

It seems that the effect of a metropolitan area depends on what kind of farming one is doing and the kind of metropolitan area. Obviously, a large, international marketing center close at hand is a distinct advantage. Thus, Baltimore's port is a positive factor. For those farmers involved in marketing vegetables, metropolitan areas provide an active market. Living near an expanding metropolitan corridor is not without its problems--the complaints about the noise, smell and agricultural chemicals used by farmers and damage done by thoughtless suburbanites who don't see fields as crop production units and destroy crops through ignorance or even malice.

One area of discussion concerned the sale of lands and to whom would one sell it; who would one prefer to sell it to?

Tom: "Obviously, I'd want to sell it to another farmer, but at today's interest rates it'd be impossible for him. The only people with enough money would be developers."

Thomas: "If I sold my land it'd be to the highest bidder. I'd rather sell it to another farmer and would if the price was near--a few dollars an acre--the highest bid, which would probably be a developer."

Richard: "I'd first try to sell to another farmer, but if I couldn't, I don't have any problem selling to a developer. Right now, the two or three farmers buying land in the county are losing money, if they consider the land simply as farmland. Eventually, they'll have to turn it to some other use."

Dick: "If I sold, it would be because I wanted to buy farmland elsewhere. So, I'd sell to the highest bidder. That might be a combination of TDRs and a farmer."

Harry: "It's difficult, if not impossible, for people to buy land at \$2,000 an acre for farming. The taxes alone are \$140 a year."

Henry: "You know land has gotten so high--\$3,000 to \$4,000 per acre--that's even more than developers will pay. Most developers here in St. Mary's won't pay more than \$1,500 per acre because of all the development ordinances. It's the "residential farmers"--those people buying ten or fifteen acres--who'll pay the higher prices. There aren't any farmers who could make a living buying \$3,000 acre land."

Interpretation:

While there seems to be a desire to sell farms to another farmer, if forced to sell, the farmers indicated that they would

sell to the highest bidder. Also, there was a belief that the highest bidder would be a developer or maybe a "residential farmer."

The discussion then turned to the effects of past preservation programs and how these programs have already had a noticeable effect.

Harry: "Maryland's tax assessment act, which provided for taxing land according to use, which, I think was passed in 1959,^{*} saved a lot of farms from going under. Even though speculators bought a lot of land, they had to rent it to farmers to get the tax reduction. As a result, there are a lot more acres being cultivated now than twenty years ago, at least in Montgomery County.

In about '57 or '58, a speculator had the upper parts of the county zoned for half-acre lots. This would have totally destroyed it as farmland. This was at odds with the general county plan of green wedges and corridors. In 1974 the Council fixed everything outside the water and sewer envelope at five acres. This was a great mistake. It destroyed farmland at an even faster rate. If a developer put up ten houses, he now took out fifty acres instead of five.

*This act was the direct result of efforts by the Accokeek Foundation and other concerned groups about the vanishing open space and farmland in Maryland.

"The last step in 1979 was the 25 acre requirement, still five for a house. The state created the Agricultural Lands Foundation that can buy up development rights. Farmers bid to sell their rights, with the lower bids winning. The greater the threat and the higher quality the land, the more they get. TDR receiving zones were set up. A farmer can sell his development rights to a developer who can then use these rights to build higher density housing in the receiving zones. In the upper eastern part of the county there's room for 3,500 TDRs. The farmers together have to determine what is a significant piece of farmland to become part of a district agricultural zone."

Henry: "When the county decided on the 25 acre requirement for a house, they thought they were saving land. But that's not big enough to farm and too big to cut the grass. It's not practical to grow food on."

Henry's Wife: "Unless you're truck farming."

Dick: "Zoning might be a way to protect farmlands, if some way was found to protect the farmers' land values. Right now, if you had zoning to save farmlands, the farmers' land wouldn't be worth as much, so he couldn't get loans."

Richard: "I think that the real estate tax relief for farmers has been a great help. My taxes are less than \$2,000 per year."

Tom: "The TDR program has failed in part because the receiving areas were poorly defined. As a result, many landowners became edgy over just what would happen."

Thomas: "In Charles County, we are just becoming aware that planning and zoning should carefully examine farmlands, determine the amount of land that's tillable, and its location before deciding where farm districts should be established."

Interpretation:

In essence, it does not seem that most of the previous or current programs have provided adequate solutions to the problems of farmland preservation. The notable exception is the agricultural real estate tax relief provided by the state. It was noted that zoning may have some merit as a means of preserving agricultural lands, if the value of lands can be maintained for the current landowners.

Throughout the discussions, very little comment was made about the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The question was asked how they felt about the USDA and its programs.

Richard: "Department of Agriculture? You mean the Department of Consumerism. The bureaucrats don't have any idea what farmers want and need; they're too busy playing politics. About the only good programs are Extension and Soil Conservation, the rest just serves the bureaucrats or the consumers."

Dick: "The USDA and its subsidies just keep marginal farmers alive. They're not good businessmen. They plant hoping for good crops with high prices, knowing that the government will shore them up if luck isn't with'em that year. They merely contribute to the surplus and government is doing them a great disservice by keeping them in business. If the government pays to remove land from production, it'll simply cause the least productive land owned by a farmer to be removed--it probably wouldn't have been planted anyway. If subsidies were dropped, the marginal farmers would fall by the wayside and American agriculture would be stronger for it."

Richard's Wife: "The subsidies just raise everybody's taxes without doing anything good. In addition to the Soil Conservation, I think the research the government does has helped us. But, all-in-all, there's been too much emphasis on consumerism."

Dick's Wife: "Get the government out of buying crops, distributing food stamps, and controlling produce sales. While research has been good, the universities and private companies could do it as well or better than the government."

Interpretation:

It seems the U.S. Department of Agriculture, while providing services and information to the farmer through the Soil Conservation Service and the Extension Service and helps solve agricultural problems through its research work, devotes too much of its money and effort to activities which do not benefit farmers. Also there is a concern that the philosophy of the Department of Agriculture maintains farmers who shouldn't be in farming through subsidies and that the Department is more concerned with the consumers than with the producers of agricultural goods.

The discussions also concerned what these farmers saw or would like to see in the future for agriculture.

Thomas: "I'd like to see farmers do a better job telling the public about agriculture. Most people don't understand the business end of farming, so they don't pay any attention to farmers' complaints. The public is really oriented toward consumption rather than knowing the facts of production. I think if the public understood this, then farmers would get a fair shake."

Richard: "When I was in Europe during the War, the farmers lived in villages surrounded by their farmlands. While I don't think I'd like to live in a town and commute to my fields, it

might be a way to give people a place to live and to save the land for farming. The way it is now, cities are spreading all over. Probably the greatest threat to American agriculture are the farmettes or acreages of city people."

Dick: "I see just the opposite. If, say 25,000 acres were set aside all in one place for just farming, then it would keep the feed stores, the implement dealers, and other services we need. Separate farms surrounded by developments can't make it. The farmer is continually putting out brush fires or fighting law suits over spraying, or noise, or smells. If farming and development are going to exist together, then we're going to have to educate the newcomers."

Richard: "When you get right down to it, the amount of agricultural produce coming from this county is just a drop in the bucket and won't be missed if not one vegetable were grown here next year. If the nation wants to preserve land, then they ought to be trying to preserve land out West, not here in the East. In any case, it ought to be the landowners who control the land. If the country needs land for whatever purpose, then it should pay the landowner for his equity."

Harry: "The future will probably be in smaller farms, where a man works someplace else and then comes home to farm. It'll

also be growing more produce and less grain. Tobacco, as long as there is a market, will continue in Southern Maryland. The future farmers are going to have to work it out so that they get the same depreciation breaks as industry.

Interpretation:

There is obviously a wide diversity of opinion about projections for the future. It indicates that there maybe significant changes in the way farming is done (in smaller, part-time operations) and in what is grown (human food instead of feed grains), but also some changes that are needed such as greater public understanding of farming, tax and financial systems, protection of farmlands and the right to farm.

The final test question was simple. Would you be a farmer, if you had your life to live over?

Tom: "I sure would. The only thing I'd do differently is get into farming sooner."

Thomas: "All in all, I'd do it again. I know I could earn more money doing something else, but then I wouldn't be my own boss and couldn't go fishing or hunting when I wanted to."

Dick: "If I had to do it again, I'd probably start further down in the county (Charles). Even though I did all right with a horse, a plow, and a grade school education, I believe that I would like to have had more education."

Richard: "Probably not; I have had a good life and I enjoyed it, but it's back-breaking work."

Henry: "I've had the best of both worlds (farming and an off-farm profession), so I'd say I wouldn't change a thing."

Interpretation:

Most of those interviewed must be fairly satisfied with farming as both a way of life and an occupation, since most of them would be farmers again given the opportunity to do it over again; perhaps a different kind of farming, but still farming.

Publications of the Accokeek Foundation

Foundation Reports

1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1975, 1982

Research Reports

The American Chestnut, 1979

Amerinds of the National Colonial Farm Region: A Collection of Five Articles, 1979.

A Conflict of Values: Agricultural Land in the United States, 1981.

Corn: The Production of a Subsistence Crop on the Colonial Potomac, 1977.

The Development of Wheat Growing in America, 1981.

"English" Grains Along the Colonial Potomac, 1977.

Of Fast Horses, Black Cattle, Woods Hogs, and Rat-Tailed Sheep: Animal Husbandry Along the Colonial Potomac, 1979.

History and Experience of the Accokeek Foundation: A Case Study in Open Space Conservation, 1961.

A History of the Legislation for the Creation and Development of Piscataway Park, Maryland, 1979.

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