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# A HARVEST OF HOPE

BY CHARLES CAPALDI



*“Though this be madness, yet there is method in ‘t.”* Hamlet

**L**oose gravel pinged against the undercarriage of my truck as I navigated the foothills of Vermont’s Green Mountains en route to Butterworks Farm in Westfield. The driveway, indistinguishable from the gravel lane that it abuts, proudly sports the name “Trumpass Road” – a name that my three children, bouncing on the truck seat beside me, repeat with glee and varying amounts of stress on the –ass part (“Just like the animal!” they point out in self-defense).

Jack Lazor is first on the scene, braced against the biting cold of a Vermont winter in a well-worn blue parka customized with a band of duct tape around the wrist to hold in any down that might otherwise escape. Duct tape – a product dearly beloved by many Vermonters. His full head of white hair blows willy-nilly in the wind that steadily turns an 80-foot tall turbine jutting out of the field in front of their barn. His white

whiskers stand firm against the breeze as he hangs on to the side of a tractor in conversation with its driver.

“Santa Claus...” whispers my youngest son. While we haven’t promoted the myth of Santa in our family, I have to concede that the resemblance *is* uncanny.

Anne Lazor emerges from another doorway, a bucket in one hand, a bundle of papers in the other, Rosie, her faithful Corgi following closely on her heels. Anne’s long brown hair is pulled back and bound into a braid which has been carefully nestled in a hand-knit hat, a gift from her daughter, Christine, who lives with her husband Collin and their two children in what everyone refers to as “the white house.” Just down the lane from the barn and yogurt room, the white house earns its moniker from a coat of white paint, rather than any resemblance to the presidential palace on Pennsylvania

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Avenue. Having just finished milking Butterworks' 49 cows, Anne's blue jeans are covered in manure stains, loose straw and sawdust. Her hands, roughened by years of work, grip mine with the strength of a woman familiar with the working end of a pitchfork.

**S**cott Nearing once wrote that *"Every generation produces its adventurers and activists, and sometimes pestiferous doers. Not satisfied with a soft life, they are ready to climb mountains, rebuild cities, or go to the moon. They revel in strenuous, sustained effort. They are up at dawn, spending their days in unending action, their nights in libraries or laboratories. They are not deterred by dangers or obstacles."*<sup>1</sup>

Jack and Anne Lazor, cut from the same back-to-the-land cloth as the Nearings, relocated to this corner of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom to live out their values, their dreams and their aspirations, no matter what the cost. They left their teaching jobs in 1979 with a small herd of three Jerseys cows and started delivering homemade butter, yogurt, cottage cheese, and raw milk to twenty-five families within ten miles of their farm. Sometimes adventurers, sometimes activists, and *always* pestiferous doers, the Lazors are country folk at heart – real people motivated by a desire to tread lightly on the earth, live a self-sufficient lifestyle, and above all, to eat well. "We live to eat," Jack explains. "It's all about food and process for us."

The Lazors reject most measures of business success espoused by mainstream society. Yet without the "mainstream" success they have achieved, Butterworks Farm would never be able to feed the multitudes. To be sure, they nourish and sustain their customers in many of the eastern states with what they call, "good, honest food" -- Jersey Milk Yogurt made without additives, stabilizers or thickeners, pints of Sweet Jersey Cream, and a dizzying assortment of heirloom and open-pollinated beans, grains and flour – all organic. You may find their products in Whole Foods grocery stores and coops, but neighbors from far and wide come right to the farm for a quart of yogurt, a gallon of raw milk, or a bag of cornmeal. So do their employees, interns and willing workers. It isn't uncommon to find someone spooning mouthfuls of yogurt from a quart container during a break – something that is not only allowed, but encouraged. "We have to feed the people here first," Anne explains, "so that they can help us feed everyone else who eats our yogurt."

But the idea of feeding people at Butterworks is also a metaphor for the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional sustenance available to anyone who gravitates into their sphere of influence. Dairy products from the rotationally grazed herd of Jersey cows make up almost 90% of Butterworks Farm's annual sales. Beans, grains, flour, seed

and animal feeds sold under the Missisquoi Valley label comprise the remaining 10%. To be sure, Jack is an explorer at heart and plenty of his adventures result in a product like flaxseed oil that may not ripple down to the bottom line. But every trial, successful or not, accrues to the experience that Butterworks Farm shares with other small farmers through workshops, speeches and good old-fashioned advice. Make no mistake about it, the real crop at Butterworks, the real harvest, is a harvest of hope.

Jack and Anne are quick to admit that they started out with the goal of being self-sufficient – a goal that hasn't really changed over the past twenty-nine years – although it has evolved and continues to do so on a regular basis. Anne points out, "I'm not sure that we can be truly self-sufficient unless we stop relying on fossil fuels." Jack interrupts with a brainstorm, "Well, I've been thinking of taking those fields we aren't grazing and converting them into biomass." Anne smiles, nods, and gently asks, "How much will it cost to do that?" and then she turns back to me and says, "Maybe true self-sufficiency can only be achieved by downscaling to two to three cows."

**T**his isn't a theoretical discussion. It is a practical one because as the Lazor's fortunes have changed over the years, their lifestyle has not. Home may be where the heart is, but chez Lazor, it is also where the hearth is. Theirs is an old fashioned wood cookstove that dominates the kitchen/dining room and heats the household water so efficiently that every now and again our conversation is interrupted by the hiss of the pressure relief valve venting steam. Butterworks may be big as small farms go -- in fact, the Vermont Department of Agriculture points to it as a rousing example of how the small farmer can add value to his own products and diversify into other areas -- but it's clear that on this homestead, the lessons of the past didn't get thrown out with the bathwater. A spinning wheel with a patina of age and hard use stands at the ready with half a bobbin of Alpaca yarn waiting patiently to be filled. The bread is homemade – dense, moist and black. The walls are plastered with "real" plaster, instead of being cobbled together with sheetrock. The bookshelf sports a copy of the venerable "Morrison's Feeds & Feeding", and the raw milk that Jack splashes into his tea squirted, just minutes before, from the rosy pink teats of a cow named Juniper, or Clotilde, or Morelle.

**A**s they plan to transition their farm to the next generation, specifically to their daughter and son-in-law, Christine and Collin, it was necessary to "value the whole operation." Jack laughed when he learned that commonly accepted business practice held that he should buy the organic milk for his yogurt from a source selling it for less than he could produce it himself. His laughter died down to a chuckle when he learned that his closed herd of Jerseys raised exclusively on organic grains grown at Butterworks Farm was worth no more on paper than

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<sup>1</sup> Nearing, Scott. *The Making of a Radical*. Chelsea Green Publishers, 2002.

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the price they'd bring at auction. When it was explained that "according to the numbers" he was not really a farmer, but a yogurt manufacturer (the source of most of Butterworks Farm's revenue) – he hit the roof. "I'm a farmer, dammit – not a manufacturer!" he exclaimed.

"Jack doesn't really make business decisions based on a profit motive." Anne said. "Instead, he makes emotional decisions based on the direction in which he wants things to go." In other words, Jack is a ruggedly stubborn idealist who has managed to quite literally spin straw, or in this case -- raw milk -- into gold. The trick seems to have been to never focus on the gold, and instead, to continue to make choices based on what he knew to be true in his heart. Admittedly, this is contrary business advice even at the best of times. The fields that make up Butterworks Farm often sport obscure and heritage crops – like Roy's Calais Flint Corn, a 19<sup>th</sup> century heirloom variety adapted to this climate and given to Vermont's first settlers by the Abenaki, one of the first peoples indigenous to this area. Sometimes these choices mean accepting lower yields, higher inputs, or no crop at all.

"I used to say that we got a reasonable sunflower crop in one out of every four years." Anne said with a smile. "But I'm revising that to one year out of every six!" adding that this year's crop of sunflowers was shared with the bear and coon long before it could be harvested. Ultimately, it is about achieving a balance between crops that yield in any given year, and those that don't. Jack, Anne and their fellow Butterworkers strive for diversity in their crops, as well as in their staff and interns. Jack plays Yang to Anne's Yin – he's the inveterate dreamer, risk-taker and explorer. Anne is the pragmatist who can see past the brilliant idea to the hard work inevitably hidden the flash of brilliance.

Jack's agrarian roots stem from his childhood. "As a kid, we always used to have a big garden." He explains. "I used to take a wagon and peddle the vegetables to our neighbors." This same entrepreneurial bent served Butterworks in good stead over the years, especially when they were still making yogurt and cottage cheese on their wood cookstove to be sold on the streets of nearby Newport, Vermont. "Since I didn't grow up farming, I had to experience the whole history of it first-hand." Jack said. "We started out milking by hand, then into Surge buckets with a can cooler, and eventually over the years, we graduated to a bulk tank and a pump." Today the farm operation has seven employees and the yogurt plant has ten.

**W**here Jack's ideas are electric, Anne is a steady-as-she-goes pragmatist who serves as the quiet, but persistent voice of reason. Anne is fully infected by the agrarian bug which she caught while working at the Old Sturbridge Village and Farm ([www.osv.org](http://www.osv.org)) – a living history museum and working farm that, to this day, introduces visitors to the reality of rural life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Anne is committed to agriculture with heart. In a very tangible way, she approaches farming from a deeply

rooted set of philosophical principles that she lives out with every cow she milks, every person whose life she touches and through her involvement with the community that surrounds her. A quiet soul, she is often a strong, outspoken advocate of bringing kids to the farm, and the farm to kids, appealing to them through their taste buds, and through their bellies. Each week, Butterworks delivers to dozens of stores and coops across the New England area, but as Anne points out, "Food should be affordable, not elitist." She works hard to make it so. The local Community Cupboard, a food shelf, regularly receives a shipment of Butterworks Farm's products – at no charge. Local old age homes and senior centers benefit from the generous donation of cases of yogurt or bags of Jacob's Cattle or Black Turtle beans. Struggling coops on the outer ring of their delivery area benefit from subsidized shipping to keep the price of Butterworks Farm's products on the shelves and available at a price that co-op members can afford to pay. But above all, Anne is committed to feeding people locally and allowing the excess to flow from the center outward. The flow of food may be outward, but the flow of calls, visitors, and requests definitely moves toward the nerve center of the farm – a single phone line, shared by the yogurt room, the barn and the Lazor household.

The phone rings incessantly and there is a pattern to the calls. The lady from Manhattan who is "addicted" to Butterworks yogurt but can no longer get it at her local grocery. Anne gives her the number for a local distributor. The man from Boston who wants to know why there isn't any more Sweet Jersey Cream at his local store. "We are just a small 49 cow dairy." She explains patiently. "We bottle the cream, but there is only so much of it each week and when we run out ..."

There's a pause, and then she nods her head, "Yes, of course the cows go outside." Hers is the voice of a small farmer who understands that "local eaters" rely on the yogurt coming from her herd, but they may not necessarily know much about where their food comes from. With the patience of Job, she is happy to fill in the gaps. In the world of Butterworks Farm, connecting people with the food they eat is a priority.

**T**o be sure, the odyssey that brought them here has been anything but smooth. Anne, who feels strongly about making time for granddaughters Ginny (3 years) and Ursula (6 months), vividly remembers milking cows with her own daughter in a back pack. "She'd start squirming and I'd take the bottle, fill it right up from the teat and pass it back to keep her happy." The image is bucolic and heart-warming. The reality was a lot harder.

"We built our own silo," Jack explains, "and when it blew down in a storm, we built it again – better the second time." In their first year of farming, they harvested their forage by hand for hayledge. The next year, they hired a neighbor to chop it for them. To be sure, the lessons haven't been easy, but it is clear that they have been well-learned. Of course, there's still ample room for new lessons -- like the 80 foot wind turbine that generates a mountain of power as long as a



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lightning strike doesn't put it out of commission and necessitate the purchase and installation of three new 25-foot blades, a crane and a crew of wind generator specialists from South Dakota. Jack shrugs and says, "There's always a new frontier to cross ..." and then segues into a discussion of rape seed oil.

Both Jack and Anne empathize with young agrarian hopefuls who may be well-educated but lack either the hands-on experience or the capital to carve out their own niche on the agrarian edge – after all, they were once young hopefuls themselves. Their website (<http://www.butterworksfarm.com>) has an internship and "willing worker" application. Interns become part of the extended Butterworks Farm family and cycle back, not only through Jack and Anne's lives, but through the lives of many other Butterworkers. "We've created something here that gives a lot of people happiness," Jack said. "And we have all these people working toward our dream, so we don't have to go anywhere. It all comes back to us."

And come back to them, it does! Todd Taska is a wiry-framed red-head, trained as an engineer, who arrived in a blaze of nervous energy in a VW bus with his wife Cindy decades ago. Since then, they've settled just down the road, homeschooled their two children (both now in college and willing Butterworkers during school breaks), and carved out a life for themselves in Vermont's Green Mountains. Todd is Butterworks Farm's yogurt maker and possibly, the employee/friend/former intern with the longest institutional memory. On any given Wednesday night, the trucks are loaded with yogurt, cream and a variety of dry goods in preparation for the next day's deliveries. Todd peers through a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles, his hand nervously working that shock of red hair back and forth as he considers just how to fill the last minute order scrawled on the back of a used feed sack. With the help of his assistant, Christina Rumery, he is responsible for ensuring that the milk from the 49 Jerseys in the barn below is transformed, packaged and shipped every week. While he may have started at Butterworks as an intern, his role has expanded and grown over time so that now, he helps mentor the next generation of folks coming through the barn doors. Christina was working toward a degree as an art major and is now considering studying alternative agriculture.

The word mentor has been around (in Greek) since 1,000 years before the time of Christ. It didn't really enter the English language until 1699, when a French nobleman wrote an imitation and continuation of Homer's Odyssey to help educate the heirs to the French throne about the duties of royalty. Today, a mentor implies a teacher who dispenses knowledge, but is also a trusted counselor and friend – someone who provides feedback from their experiences, successes and failures to help their protégé solve challenges and problems. At Butterworks Farm, former interns haven't just run off and recreated another Butterworks Farm elsewhere. Instead, they've leveraged their experience in

order to shorten the time it would otherwise take to reach whatever THEY define as success.

**L**ynn Miller has asked over and over again, what good it does anyone if the fella' who took the draft horse workshop, read the book and watched the video can't hitch up his own team and get his work done.

Perhaps it's nigh time for those of us living on the agrarian edge to recognize that isn't enough to just hand somebody a copy of "Raising Sheep the Modern Way" or to answer their questions, we have to get into the muck and mire in order to lead them out of the mess they are in, or the mess they are about to get into.

Over the years, the good folks at Butterworks Farm have done just that. They have worked, observed, graded and encouraged. They have benefited from and given to their interns – a reciprocal investment that pays dividends of goodwill and synergy over the years. They've carefully saved those seeds of hope, through good years and bad, and kept them in reserve until they could be frost-seeded on the fields of internship, friendship and community. And as you'll see from the following profiles - those seeds have grown into a crop that, unlike this year's sunflowers, can be harvested well before the bears and coon get to it. Laini Fondiler of Lazy Lady Farms took the seed they offered and nurtured it into the certainty that if somebody else could make a living off their small farm, so could she. Brendan Holmes and Katia Clemmer of Misty Brook Farm found hope for self-sufficiency. Katherine Sims with Planting Seeds of Change found hope for the future.

"We are very hopeful." Jack says. "Success is being able to do whatever you really wanted to do." He sighs contentedly and then says, "For us, this is it."

## SIDEBAR

### The Seed of Hope Sprouts

#### PROFILE: Katia Clemmer and Brendan Holmes – Misty Brook Farm

The name Misty Brook Farm conjures images of a bucolic farmstead nestled among rolling hills. The reality is that Brendan Holmes and Katia Clemmer rent their land on a month-to-month basis and work as many as ten parcels that are miles apart. "Our dairy herd is 15 miles from our hay land." Brendan explained. "Every couple of days, I load up my pick-up and bring hay back to the dairy barn."

They would use their team of Morgans much more often if distance weren't an issue. "If I want to rake the hay with the horses, I've got to get them down there the night before, throw up a temporary fence and put them out some on rough pasture so that they are ready to go in the morning. Otherwise, it would take too long to get them there and they'd be tired before they started." Theirs is the face of a young farming

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couple trying to make a go of it and accepting all the hardships that entails in just their fourth year down on the farm.

Both Brendan and Katia attended Emerson College in England where they spent mornings in the classroom and afternoons working on farms as part of their training in biodynamic agriculture. As a graduation requirement, they had to line up an internship on a farm of their choosing. They visited Jack and Anne Lazor over Christmas in 2001, and returned for an internship over the summer of 2002.

“We were really open to whatever they had to teach us.” Katia explained. “Our ideal was, and still is, to learn to grow all the food for our own livestock. Jack is an expert at that.” Their openness and willingness to learn certainly served them well. Jack inspired them with his enthusiasm for and interest in growing grain. Anne taught them how to make an herbal calendula teat salve. “We learned the most from the hands-on experience.” Brendan clarified. “They told us what they wanted us to do, and we did it.”

More than anything else, Brendan and Katia left Butterworks Farm inspired to continue working toward their own agrarian dream. “Jack and Anne started with nothing. They created something from nothing. We had never thought of starting a business that way.” said Katia. It seems the “less is more” business model is working out well for them. “We learned that you could make a good living farming the way you want to farm.” Brendan explained ... and that’s exactly what they are doing. They both have strong biodynamic leanings (based on the writings of Rudolph Steiner), but the market in their neck of Massachusetts pays a premium for organic, so they went ahead and got certified.

Sure, there are obstacles. The investment in necessary equipment is out of reach for the time being. As Brendan says, “It’s hard farming different bits of land.” They’d love to have a contiguous piece of property. Unfortunately, the cost of land in the Connecticut River Valley is prohibitively high – a 100 acre farm with 80 open acres can easily bring \$775,000. Many former dairy farms have been converted to high-end horse operations. The face of agriculture in Massachusetts is changing – the state lost 20 of its 92 remaining dairy farms last year alone. Their town of Hardwick used to have 30 dairy farms and now has only 3, but Misty Brook Farm is one of them and the first new dairy farm that their inspector could remember ever inspecting!

There must be something to be said for being the new kids on the block. Brendan, Katia and their 1 year old son, Alister, milk 13 cows and bottle about 200 gallons of milk per week. No fancy bottling machine here – they use Delaval buckets and bottle from the bulk tank into sterilized glass ½ gallon containers. Massachusetts has slightly higher standards for raw milk than it does for pasteurized milk, and every bottle bears the food safety label warning of the risks of drinking raw milk --- but that doesn’t seem to matter to their customers,

who also relish the organic cream, pork, beef, veal, eggs and vegetables available in their self-serve, on-farm store.

As you talk to them, their passion for what they do and how they live is palpable. “My parents told me that I knew I was going to be a farmer when I just five years old.” Brendan explained. His love of pigs, that started with his first sow at age seven, has grown exponentially. They use their herd of swine to clear land, and produce Tamworth and Gloucester Old Spot crosses for just the right blend of flavor and texture. Their organic pig feed comes from Butterworks Farm and as Katia happily points out, “The pigs are the most profitable thing we do because they fit in so well with dairy and direct-marketing.”

Wee Alister may be too small to do much work, but apparently he’s very interested in the pigs, dogs and cats. Brendan quips that “he may be the first baby to wear out a snowsuit in his first year of life.” And life is the operative word at Misty Brook – because Brendan, Katia and Alister are working on their version of the agrarian dream. Brendan summed it up nicely, “I’d like to grow more veggies ... well, I just want to do everything!”

Misty Brook Farm  
P.O. Box 62  
Hardwick, MA 101037  
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## SIDEBAR

### The Seed of Hope Flourishes

#### PROFILE: Laini Fondiler – Lazy Lady Farm

The phone rings and a machine answers: “Lazy Lady Farm ... we are too lazy to answer the phone right now, but we love to listen to messages.” It may be called Lazy Lady Farm, but I’d argue that there isn’t a lazy bone in Laini Fondiler’s body – she may be short in stature, but between her fiery-red hair, a rhinestone nose stud and the ability to swear like a sailor in French, Laini is more like a force of nature. She has worked on more farms than I can count, but her own is small, sustainable and appropriately sized for her operation – or more accurately, her operation is appropriately sized for the farm it’s on.

Laini first worked on a hog farm which fell apart when the bottom fell out of the pork market. Then she worked on a dairy farm that was doing well until the bottom fell out of the milk market. “I started wondering – Oh my God, where am ever I gonna’ get the capital to farm?” She explained. Shortly after, she found herself in France working on a dairy farm that raised free-range chickens on the side. “It was like the first picture I had of what *could be*.” She exclaimed. “It was also where I learned about rotational grazing.” That experience was followed by a stint on a farm that produced meat, milk and cheese, followed by another farm that grew sunflowers,

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small grains and sheep. Each experience informed the next to help paint an increasingly clear picture of what was possible and what she wanted.

“In 1986, I was working at a hippy-dippy restaurant in Randolph, VT where the Lazor’s were selling their wares: yogurt, butter and farmer’s cheese.” She explains. “I met Jack – he was just a soil freak -- and right away, he said, *Come work at my place.*” And that’s exactly what Laini did. Jack and Anne were doing it all – grazing, milking, processing their own milk into yogurt and cream, getting the orders out the door to their customers and Laini’s American “Ah-Hah!” moment came at Butterworks Farm: “Jack and Anne showed me that it was possible to make a living from a small farm – they were doing it! I just thought to myself, if somebody else can do in, then by God, so can I!”

During her year at Butterworks, Laini continued to save every penny she made and by the time she had bought her own place, she had twenty thousand dollars in the bank and a dream the size of Guam. “I started with veggies and flowers. If I had a lot of green beans, then I made green bean salad. I picked fiddleheads ferns and sold them for fifty cents apiece.” She said. “I was fighting for farm life – I HAD to make that income!”

Over the intervening years, Laini raised sheep, and wove rugs. She gardened, raised hogs and made specialty sausage, but when she bought a goat and realized how much she liked the cheese she could make from its milk, she knew she had found her niche. “The herd grew to 8 does and I was making cheese in a plastic lined-closet. I didn’t have two dimes to rub together, but it didn’t matter, I was gonna’ make it.” Or so she thought, until the day the state of Vermont put a halt to artisan production and marked the beginning of a three year legal battle for the right to be artisan.

Having lived in France where there is a value for artisan foods, Laini was familiar with French food-safety and handling laws. “I couldn’t see why we weren’t just looking at what the French did in order to figure out what we had to do here in Vermont.” By her own admission, she is bull-headed, determined and stubborn – not the type of person that takes “NO” for an answer, as legislators soon found out. “I guess I rub a lot of people the wrong way,” she explains. “Most people don’t understand why I felt I had to claw and fight so hard to make it. It takes money to make money and I didn’t have any.” And make it she did.

With help from the Vermont Community Loan Fund, she borrowed thirty thousand dollars, bought a pasteurizer, built a cheese room where she can hand process two hundred gallons of milk per week, and started making cheese year round. She’s a presence at any number of farmer’s markets, and her world-class goat cheese is aged in a cave built to French specifications. As I pulled out of her place, a small round of Lazy Lady Barack Obama cheese scooted off the dashboard and into my lap – a parting gift snuck into my truck when I

wasn’t looking. When later, I called to thank her, she explained: “I come from Missouri where one syllable words like “brick” are pronounced with two syllables “buh-rick”. So anyway, I got these new buh-rick molds and that made me think of Barack and the cheese you are eating is the result.”

## SIDEBAR

### The Seed of Hope Reseeds Itself

#### PROFILE: Katherine Sims – Planting Seeds of Change

At first blush, Katherine Sims looks like just another local – cropped dark-brown hair frames a radiant smile anyone would find hard to ignore. Her combination of youthful exuberance, raw intelligence and heartfelt excitement about what she’s doing makes her the perfect choice to facilitate the “Planting Seeds of Change” after-school program at five local elementary schools. Students build, plant and maintain a garden as part of a program that includes plenty of hands-on nutrition and agriculture activities. “The real challenge,” she said, “is developing long-term *sustainable* gardens.”

Katherine isn’t exactly your typical ‘garden lady’. She sports a history degree with a concentration in sustainable architecture, and at twenty six years old, she’s lived more than most people twice her age. In Connecticut, she was involved in developing a sustainable food project to help students learn to grow food in an urban environment and she wanted to learn more.

Katherine took a semester off from school and started looking for internship opportunities. “I loved being outside, being right where my food came from,” she explained. Unfortunately, most of the working farms she spoke to didn’t need her help – until she called Butterworks. The Jack and Anne Lazor simply asked: “When can you come?”

And come she did, supplementing an Ivy League education with a graduate degree from the Butterworks Farm school of agrarian life. “Sure, you can read about it, but to see someone actually doing it, actually living it – to see the lifestyle. It made it all seem achievable to me.” In the thrall of life on the agrarian edge, Katherine started casting about for ways to live it herself. “How can you not care about good food?” she asks.

She describes her internship as being filled with long days peppered with one discovery after another. But the nights were the highlight of her internship. “Jack and Anne were always open for late-night discussions about their lifestyle and the world at large.” -- Discussions that continue today, sometimes hilarious and sometimes heated, but always tempered by Anne’s gentle smile and persistent questions. “They mentor me in different ways,” she explained, “but really it was all of a piece. Jack’s the dreamer, the visionary, the guy who gets as excited as I do about an idea. Anne is the pragmatist who sees through the flash of an idea to the day-to-day work necessary to make it a reality.”

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Katherine took all these lessons to heart. She'd already met, Josh, the local beekeeper who would later become her husband. Instead of moving back to New Haven, Connecticut, Katherine put down roots in Westfield, Vermont. "Anne and Jack were the reason I came to Vermont," she explains, "and Josh is the person that kept me here. What could be more natural than to have Anne officiate at our wedding?" Katherine works to fill the stomachs of school children by connecting school cafeterias directly with local farmers. Meanwhile, she and Josh have settled not far from Butterworks with their livestock, a couple of solar panels, Josh's bees, and Katherine's mission.

"The kids help me stay inspired about growing food -- they are so excited by what they've planted." She exclaims. She, in turn, is excited to provide them with hands-on experiences in her outdoor classroom. "What better place to teach math, science and art?" she asks. Meanwhile, area schools are not only receptive – they are downright enthusiastic. There's a waiting list for the Planting Seeds of Change program and Katherine is hard at work on a new non-profit organization to expand the connection between kids and their food. "My dream is that people who go through these kinds of programs will grow up to garden themselves, or simply become better-informed consumers of the food they eat. As Michael Pollan said, eating IS an agricultural activity!"