

## Hay Day

**Sophie Parker-Goos, Semester 49**

*Editor's note: Sophie Parker-Goos (or "Peeg" as she was known in her semester) wrote this essay for her college applications. Peeg is a native of New York, and returned to the farm from the city during the summer after her semester to work for two weeks in the summer of 2013.*

The morning of Hay Day, on Salt Marsh Farm at Chewonki, I stood in the doorway of the barn. Swallows were chirping and flying in the rafters above as I watched Megan. She wore her sturdy hat, jeans, and tank top while driving Sal through the field. Sal, our draft horse and machine of the farm, pulled a tedder that threw the hay gently into the air. I watched in awe as Megan gracefully guided this powerful beast, turning the hay slowly and methodically. There was rhythm between the moving parts that I had never seen before. It was a dance, from farmer to horse and from horse to land. Despite the fact that the work was hard and the heat was excruciating, I only saw Megan's beaming smile as she proudly held the reins.

This image stayed with me throughout the day as I went through the mechanics of my daily farm tasks and waited for haying. Finally, as the dust sparkled in the hazy late afternoon sunlight I grabbed a broom and pitchfork and walked to the hay field with the farm crew. As we swept, sweat poured down our backs and the seemingly endless task became overwhelming. How did the poetic image so quickly become tedious? Suddenly, volunteers began to appear; people I had never seen on the farm before. They waved and said, "Hey! How can we help?" and as each grabbed a pitchfork my smile grew. I now understood why the farmers delighted in Hay Day. It brought people from all areas together: it brought them into the field talking to one another, sharing stories, and working towards a common goal as a community. There will be days of extreme heat, there will be days when you just want to sit around and not move, but it is easy to see the joy and beauty when others are there to share in the struggle. Until I worked on the farm, I never fathomed how much our lives rely on our connection with other human beings.

As the truck pulled me away from the empty field and towards the barn, my body was sprawled on top of the heaps of hay. The hay poked at my tired arms and legs as I wiped the sweat off my forehead and I realized my face was sore from laughing. I never thought I would be so happy doing this work; I never thought I would find pride and joy through soreness. Salt Marsh Farm has been a place of growth and reason for me. It has been a place of honesty, a place where I have learned that life is profoundly beautiful and complex. On Salt Marsh Farm I fell in love with the sound of fresh milk hitting the bottom of a metal pale and I fell in love with waking up at 5:45 in the morning to groom a sleepy

eyed draft horse. In those moments I never questioned myself, but rather I trusted my instincts and learned through the process. Nobody gets any milk out the first time they try and everyone is scared to touch a grumpy giant horse. But farming makes you take risks, you must not fear making mistakes; if you do the land will not be plowed and the hay you have been drying for three days will not be collected. In farming you must dive deep rather than only brush the surface. It pushes you to search every corner of yourself, understand your mistakes, then pick up a tool and see what you can do to fix them. Salt Marsh Farm was the beginning of my journey into agriculture and myself. It taught me that I am ready to dig up that rich brown dirt because I know that in the end the sweat and toil will not drag me down, but lift me up.