

of innocent babes in the womb. "After all," I heard her say as she held up her fingers to an inch width, "they're only this big." Humanity is now determined by size. And what is our size in the hands of God?

Representing the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, and invoking the god called "Will," this unhappy woman, hater of life, lover of self, worshiper of death, gave forth her Hymn to a Holocaust. "It is our right . . . it is our body . . . it is our choice." It was the creed of Hell.

And we sat through it. And many clapped. And no young David stood up to sling the stones of refutation: "Thus says the Lord—you shall not murder. Thus says the Lord—you shall do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Thus says the Lord—you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Thus says the Lord—whatever you do to the least of these you have done unto me. Thus says the Lord . . ." We are too polite for telling people to their faces that they are false prophets and in danger of Hell fire.

"Did you hear what happened to the swan?" he said again. This time I turned to listen.

As the geese fly in across the beautiful lakes which adorn our campus and glide to a peaceful aquatic landing, one is touched by the feeling that all is right with the world. It is all very Browningsque. The white and black swans float gently on the placid ponds. In the little Kingdom of Eastern College, this outpost of Christendom, the shalom of God reigns. All seems otherworldly. But it is not the case.

"Someone kicked to death one of the swans."

It was like an arrow in the soul. It takes some real will to kill something so beautiful. And swans are not small animals; they'll fight.

"But that's not all. They also stomped to death the eggs. Crushed all the eggs in the nest."

Crushed the signets. Herod. O Ramah. Weep for the children, for they are no more. And they invent new forms of evil. Total depravity. Calvin was right. Tares among the wheat. And Pharaoh slew the children. Wickedness.

As Evangelicalism continues to grant the pulpit to the pro-death forc-

es, one can think of no more fitting parable. Someone crushed the eggs in the nest.

*James L. Sauer is Director of Library at Eastern College.*

## Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

### The Dakota Men

"What ever happened to real men . . . the kind of men with good old-fashioned values like honesty, integrity, sincerity, and ambition?" asks FOOD—Farmers of Ongoing Determination—in a promotional flier. It turns out that they think they have a corner on the real-man market—and I'm willing to let them suspend my disbelief.

North Dakotans Larry Jaeger and Karen Tyndall cofounded FOOD in 1986. The nonprofit organization had three express purposes: to let people

know just how bad the farm economy is; to raise money for what they refer to as the "American Farmer, the backbone of our country"; and to let city folks know that today's farmers are far from being hicks.

FOOD literature says, "As we all know, the farmers of our country are experiencing very difficult times. The seriousness ranges from severe economic hardship to losing three- and four-generation family farms. Other losses include income, pride, and heritage, not to mention numerous cases of farmers taking their own lives. Unfortunately, this is more widespread than the general public is aware of."

Now, there are some who might argue that farmers' hardships are caused by governmentally, artificially set prices and the easy loans that follow hard on their heels, and that no amount of self-help will help the farmers unless the government backs off, taking its money with it. There are some who would question that family farms (as opposed to, say, farming corporations) are *in themselves* such an important part of the American cultural gene pool that we should subsidize

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them. There are some who might ask, "If we're so worried about the farmer's 'way of life,' what about the doctor's? the grocer's? the schoolteacher's?"

But in the face of the brave determination of Jaeger and Tyndall and the people at FOOD, such questions seem mean and petty. They aren't asking for a handout or a tax break or a better-than-even chance of success—at least, not here. They've come up with a product to sell, and proceeds will go to needy farm families across the country for food, clothing, housing, and job retraining, with part of the money going to state mental health organizations and a college scholarship program.

The product? The 1988 "Dakota Men" calendar, featuring, on heavy satin gloss, 14 of the ruggedest, best-looking guys that ever tossed a bale or overhauled a Deere. All single. All "looking," or so they claim. As wholesome and inviting a bunch of males as you could find this side of *The Cosby Show*. (The saltiest month is October, featuring Ted Hanson, 24, who says, "Friendship is a critical first step in a mutually supportive relationship," and feels that "farming provides an opportunity for creative and aggressive minds." Ted is "a free-spirited man" who enjoys "fishing naked and French kissing in a classic '57 Chevy.")

January's Cary Reiswig, 22, sits in a barn in his sheepskin coat and a plaid flannel shirt, nuzzling a colt. Cary says, "I like girls," and adds that he wants a wife to go along with the winters and his chosen farm life. Cary's not stupid. Kevin Pifer, 28, a farmer and fledgling politician, stands in the state capitol with his pinstripe jacket over his white-shirted shoulder; "Harvest season is a beautiful time of year to share intimate moments with someone special," he says. Dennis Dipple, 28, likes "open, honest people, physical fitness" (in front of his combine, Dennis Dipple ripples in jeans and a body shirt), "studying the markets and a sense of humor," and feels that "women can be some of your most supportive friends." Perry Miller, 26, FOOD's director of public relations, presents the only real beefcake in the calendar as he poses in a bathrobe with one leg exposed to mid-thigh, opening a Christmas present on a stylish hearth. There is a lot of white

tooth in this calendar, and more than an occasional soft mustache. These guys *reek* of rugged sensitivity. You can give this calendar to your Mom or your maiden aunt with a clear conscience.

Back in June, all of the Dakota Men (13 months and a cover) were auctioned off to 14 young women for dates, which the men paid for themselves. Proceeds from the auction went to FOOD. Since early spring 1987, there have been dozens of local and national television and radio interviews, including a spot on the *Today* show (FOOD is now trying to get them to do a follow-up story), and they're "coming at Johnny Carson from three different directions," says Roger Jaeger, founder Larry Jaeger's brother, board member, and Mr. February. Features in *Cosmopolitan* and *Women's World* will come out in a few months, and even farm journals—read mostly by men—are covering the story. Twenty-five thousand calendars were sold in the first two weeks, through 85 North Dakota access points and displays in Waldenbooks in eight other states, and FOOD is planning a mailing to 3,000 college bookstores. In Texas, 8,000 nursing students will sell the calendars as a fund-raising project for *themselves* ("We're very willing to negotiate on terms," says Roger Jaeger). As if all this isn't enough to guarantee success, the huge Women's International Bowling Congress, which will convene in Bismarck, North Dakota, in 1989, is interested in "doing something" with the calendars.

That all 14 1988 Dakota Men are North Dakotans is a coincidence, Roger Jaeger tells me; FOOD considered men from several states. What's more important is that every single one of them is an honest-to-God *farmer*. And plans are already being made for the fall 1988 pageant (to pick the 1989 Dakota Men), which will be held in South Dakota in order to get more entrants from there and widen the calendar's appeal. Nineteen eighty-nine is both North and South Dakota's centennial, which won't hurt at all. Clearly, FOOD is not fooling around.

"Farming schedules make it hard to get all the Dakota Men together," says Roger. "We were very lucky this June to get all the guys into a barn for a group shot." (Farmers will understand

just how lucky that mid-June shot was, especially since all the men wore tuxedos.) The original projection was that FOOD would sell a million 1988 calendars, at \$8.95 retail. They won't come close to that figure this year, or even next. But hundreds of thousands of farm families are genuinely in trouble, never mind the reasons, and FOOD aims to sell an honest product in an honest way to help them. Something here appeals to me. Possibly it's Front Cover Jeff Dahl, 31, who likes the feel of black velvet and riding bareback in the warm summer rain.

*Jane Greer edits Plains Poetry Journal. The toll-free number for information on FOOD and calendars is 1-800-345-8000.*

## Letter From a Sodbuster

by David Tillotson

### *Breaking the Antaeon Bond*

Corn planting season has arrived again, and the soil is moving. Hot spring winds that have foresters on red alert are picking up the earth, clay fractions first, and sending it off. This gale mocks the fine print don'ts on the 50-pound sacks of rootworm pesticide. It too is blowing in the wind. No way will the stuff conform to the encyclopedic "Regulations for Application" printed on the bags.

Halfway between Milwaukee and Madison, towering clouds of soil rise from the pithy muck-farm fields as "Black Rollers," ghosts from the 30's, drift across I-94, a mystery to the hedonistic rubbernecks heading toward a rock concert in Mad City; "must be a fire over there somewhere."

North of Uvalde and hours west from San Antonio in "Cactus Jack" Garner's West Texas hill country, the goats have pared much of it down to bedrock. Like Rodney Dangerfield, the goats don't get no respect, but they *do* get all the mesquite, cactus, rabbit brush, the tough thorny things that any other self-respecting grazing critter would leave unbrowsed.

We can see white slabs peppering