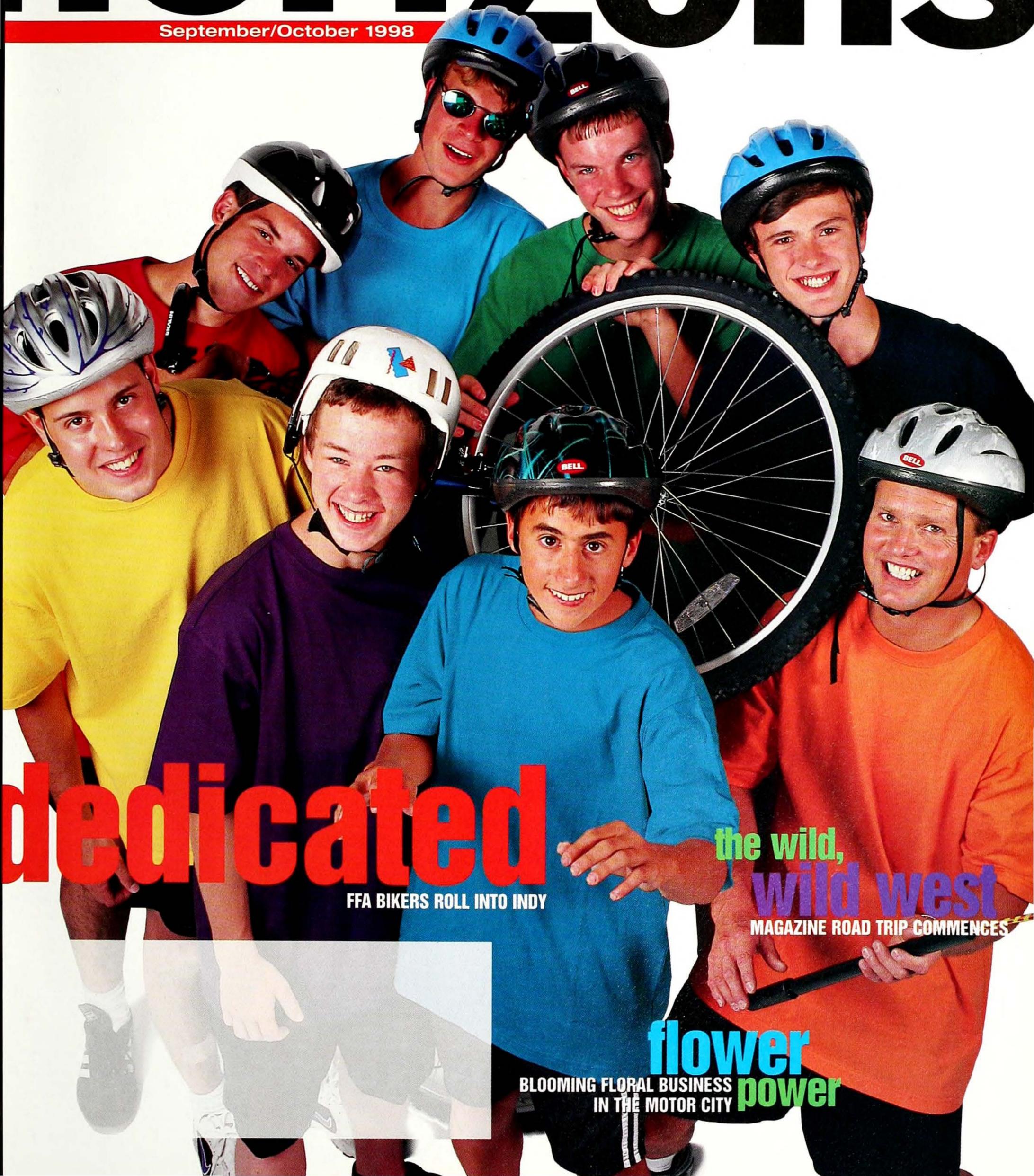


# new horizons

The magazine of the National FFA Organization

September/October 1998



# dedicated

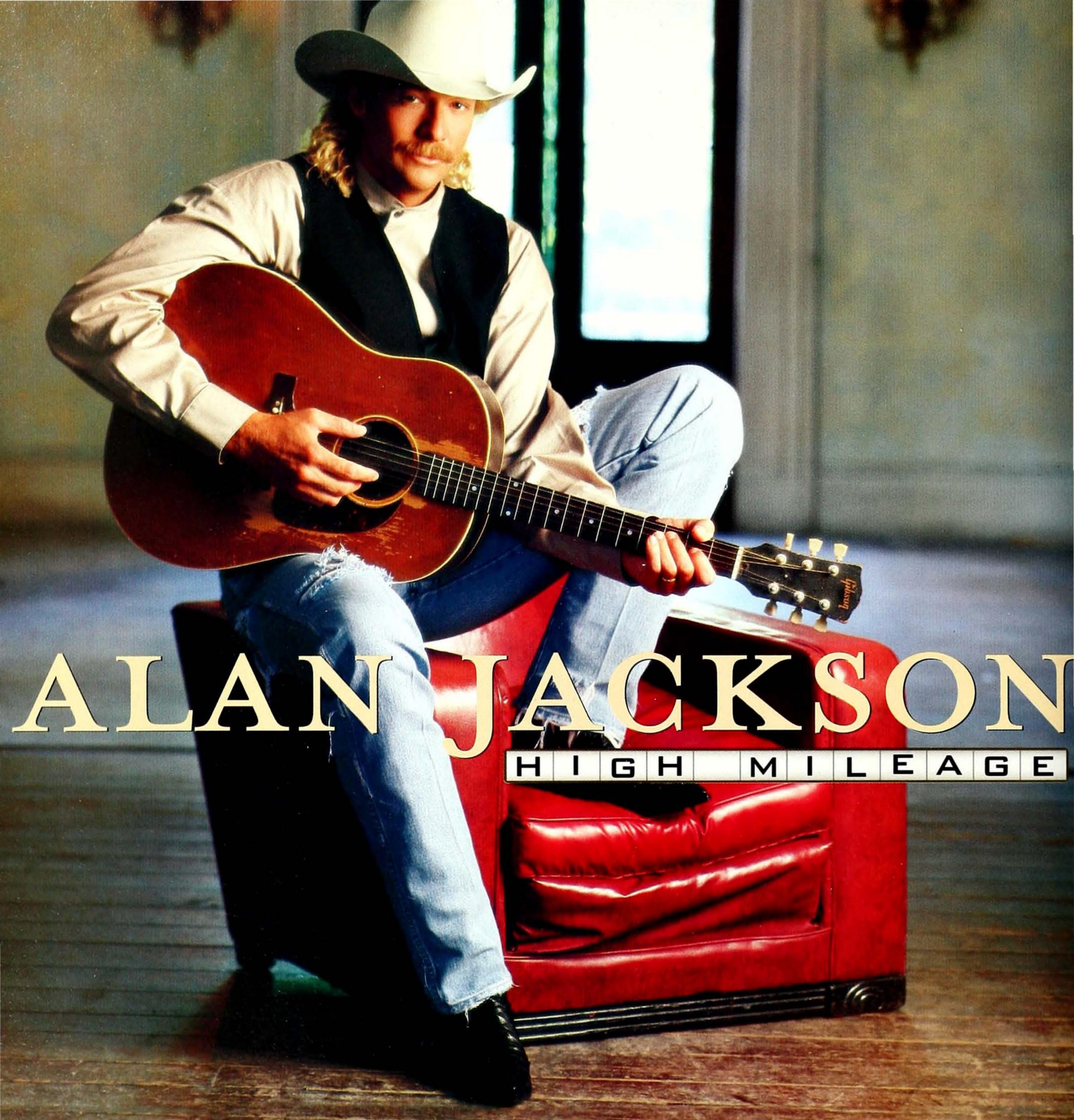
FFA BIKERS ROLL INTO INDY

the wild,  
wild west

MAGAZINE ROAD TRIP COMMENCES

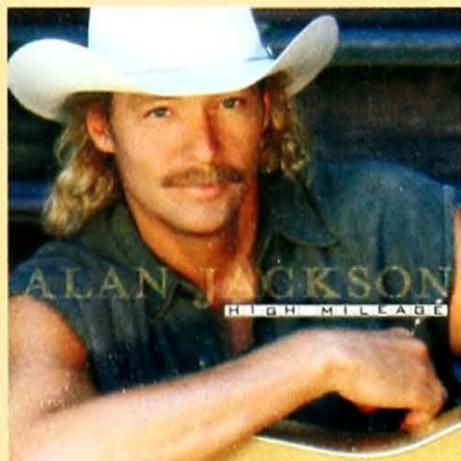
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# ALAN JACKSON

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The National FFA Organization affirms its belief in the value of human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership and staff as an equal opportunity employer.

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**contents**

September/October 1998

**coverstory**

**9 Dedicated**



You have to have a pretty good reason to ride your bike 115 miles into the wind when it's 95 degrees outside. See why eight adventurous members and advisors from the Ohio's Preble Shawnee FFA Chapter made the marathon ride all the way to Indianapolis.

**features**

**6 Convention by the Numbers**



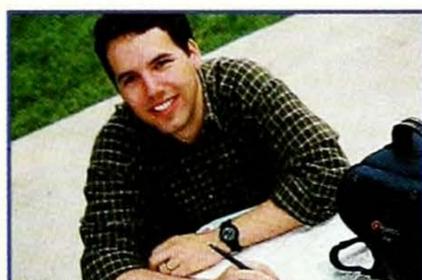
The 1998 National FFA Convention is upon us. Since it's the last convention in Kansas City before the move to Louisville, Kentucky, next year, it's time to brush up on your national FFA convention trivia.

**14 Flower Power**



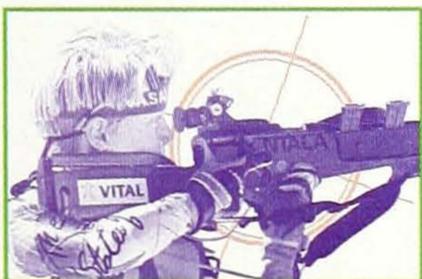
Shequilla Pruitt found her calling when she enrolled in a floral design class. And, as long as people continue to get married, her new business will do just fine.

**18 The FFA Highway**



Join us for the first in our series documenting our editor's 30-day, 20-state, 5-jet, 7-rental car, 10,000-mile, cross-country road trip in search of FFA members. The journey begins in the West.

**28 Focused**



Find out what it's like to shoot a target the size of a half-dollar with the world watching on TV. And find out how you and your friends can help stop gun violence in your school.

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**FFA Mission Statement**

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

**Agricultural Education Mission**

The mission of agricultural education is to prepare and support individuals for careers, build awareness and develop leadership for the food, fiber and natural resources systems.



On the cover: Bikers from the Preble Shawnee FFA Chapter in Ohio. Photo by Jim Callaway/Millennium Picture Group

one on one with  
**Shannon Wilcox**

Do you ever say to yourself, "This is the coolest thing I've ever done"?

Just about every day. There hasn't been a time when I've been real homesick or had a second thought about being a national officer. It's been one thrill after another—I can't believe it's almost over.

Having had an up-close look at the agricultural industry, what advice can you give FFA members who want to pursue a career in this industry?

I'll tell you three important things that we kept hearing from businesses: continuing education, being flexible and being able to communicate. If you can focus on these three areas, you'll be in good shape.

Your officer team will be the last to give retiring addresses at the national FFA convention before it moves to Louisville. You are also the first team to work out of the new national FFA center in Indianapolis. How does it feel to be an officer as the FFA gears up for the future?

It's just amazing to think that we're the team that will be fortunate enough to do this. Our team theme is "The Power of Change," and I think that says a lot about what we've gone

through this year—making the transition from Alexandria to Indianapolis and being the last team in Kansas City. We really haven't taken it all in yet.

If you could go back in time, to which time period would you go?

The turn of the century—anything from the 1880s to the 1940s. I would like to be about my age now in about 1910, just because I think the lifestyle then was so cool.

What makes your home state of Ohio a special place for you?

That's where my roots are. I've been to so many different states, but I always find myself comparing them to Ohio. We may not have the mountains like Utah, and we may not have the southern hospitality, but it's my favorite Midwest state. I love it because it's so diverse—there are four seasons, and hills to flatlands.

What's the first thing you'll do after the national FFA convention?

I would like to spend some time catching up with some people, doing some things with the Ohio FFA, and just preparing for college. ★

**VITALS**

**Hometown:** Kenton, Ohio

**Age:** 21

**Chapter:** Upper Scioto Valley

**Advisor:** Lori Dyer

**SAE:** Diversified crop and beef production enterprise

**Education:** Junior at The Ohio State University

**Major:** Agricultural education

**Last movie I saw:** Titanic

**Last book I read:** A Night to Remember by Walter Lord

**In my 5-disc CD player**

**right now:** Titanic Soundtrack, George Strait, Jimmy Buffett, Aerosmith and Frank Sinatra

**Favorite college class:**

Ag education classes

**Favorite baseball team:**

Cleveland Indians

**TIMELINE**

**Age**

- 14** • named Star Greenhand
- 15** • attended first national FFA convention
- 16** • began working at WKTN Radio
- 17** • country teen of the year
- 18** • won DeKalb Award
- won state FFA public speaking competition
- lost bid for state FFA officer
- 19** • elected state FFA reporter
- won national collegiate award for radio broadcasting
- 20** • elected national FFA officer



National secretary: Shannon Wilcox



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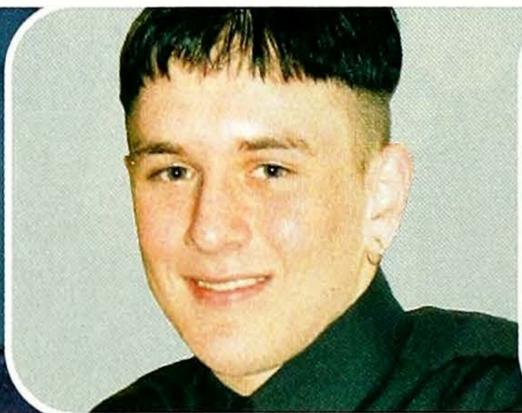
FFA members selected as "FFA Stars" will receive \$500 from 1-800-COLLECT which can be applied to the Washington Leadership Conference or an FFA International Experience. You can nominate yourself or any FFA member. Write us a note and tell us why you think you or your nominee is an "FFA Star." See page 32 for more details. ★

**CALIFORNIA****Megan Ausmus**

As the 1997 California State Creed Speaking champion from the Gustine FFA Chapter, Megan knows that you can do anything if you work hard enough at it. After winning the creed competition and attending the 1997 National FFA Convention, she realized she could do even more, so she ran for chapter office and plans to be a state FFA officer some day. Megan raises market sheep for her SAE and participates in opening and closing ceremonies competition. She relies on a wheelchair to get around, but it's clearly no obstacle for Megan. ★

**MISSOURI****WASHINGTON****CONNECTICUT****COLORADO****Jennifer Williams**

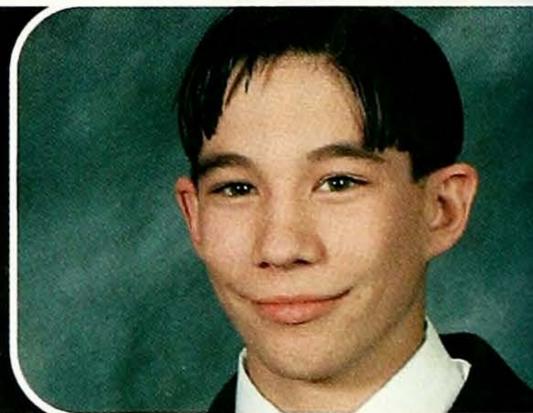
After being seriously injured in a car accident, Jennifer, 17, fell into a coma for two months. After a total of four and half months in the hospital, Jennifer went home to join her classmates at the upcoming high school prom and graduation. As a member of the Couch FFA Chapter, Jennifer was a Star Greenhand and chapter reporter, and also participated in Made for Excellence and Washington Leadership Conference. She was also named all-conference in softball. ★

**Trevor Haas**

He's a singer and a radio broadcaster, and he's not even out of high school yet. At 16, Trevor's voice is already taking him places. Last year, this Cathlamet FFA Chapter member went to Kansas City with the National FFA Chorus. And at school he announces the basketball games on the radio. Trevor is also a lifeguard and teaches swimming lessons and a junior high bible study class. He plans to attend Washington State University next year and major in broadcast communications. ★

**Stacey Stearns**

If a member of the Storrs Regional FFA Chapter ever needed a role model, advice, or just someone to talk to, they could always turn to Stacey, who was chapter president for two years before graduating in the spring. Her leadership earned her a silver medal when she competed in the national poultry CDE. Stacey has a dairy SAE and also works with horses on the family farm. She has also competed in the Grand National Morgan Horse Show. ★

**Nicholas Colglazier**

There's one direction for Nicholas to go—and that's up. This 17-year-old Holyoke FFA Chapter member has done it all in FFA. He's been Star Greenhand, chapter vice president and president, district vice president and president and the chapter's top fund-raiser for two years. This summer he served on the state FFA nominating committee. Add to that his involvement in drama, music, church and sports, and you've got one busy FFA member. ★



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Convention by the

# numbers

## Little known facts about the national FFA convention

There are all kinds of lists, numbers, awards, names and dates in the FFA archives that relate to past national FFA conventions. Since this is the last national FFA convention in Kansas City before we head to Louisville, Kentucky, next year, we decided it was time to dig up some interesting figures from past conventions. So we leafed through old files, questioned some longtime FFA staffers and performed some very unscientific calculations.

Perhaps the most impressive figure we found is the most obvious: 71. That's the number of this year's convention. It tells of

the enduring legacy of the FFA, and of our great relationship with Kansas City through all those memorable years.

This year's convention (November 12-14) promises to be among the best yet. With an action-packed schedule of convention events (see the complete schedule at [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org)), you can walk for hours through an expanded career show; build your confidence in leadership workshops; be inspired by top-notch keynote speakers; and be part of a fired-up crowd that could approach 50,000 (roughly the population of St. Cloud, Minnesota).

**34,491** Attendance at the 1994 National FFA Convention

**313** Number of exhibitor booths at the 1998 National FFA Career Show

**10,000** Number of hotel rooms reserved for this year's convention

**7,111,000** As announced at last year's convention, the number of dollars raised for FFA member programs by the National FFA Foundation, Inc.

**3** Percentage by which the population of the greater Kansas City metropolitan area will temporarily increase during the 1998 National FFA Convention

**44,021** Attendance of the 1997 National FFA Convention

**1,900** Attendance at the 1930 National FFA Convention

**4** The number of U.S. presidents who have addressed national FFA conventions

**217** Attendance at the 1942 National FFA Convention (World War II significantly reduced the number of attendees)

**10,034** Attendance at the 1963 National FFA Convention

**30** The average low temperature in Kansas City in November

**720** Approximate number of working hours the 1997-98 National FFA Officer Team will put in at this year's convention

**17,422** Attendance at the 1974 National FFA Convention

**6** Estimated number of golf carts to be used by national FFA staff at this year's convention

**21,671** Attendance at the 1978 National FFA Convention

**47** The average high temperature in Kansas City in November

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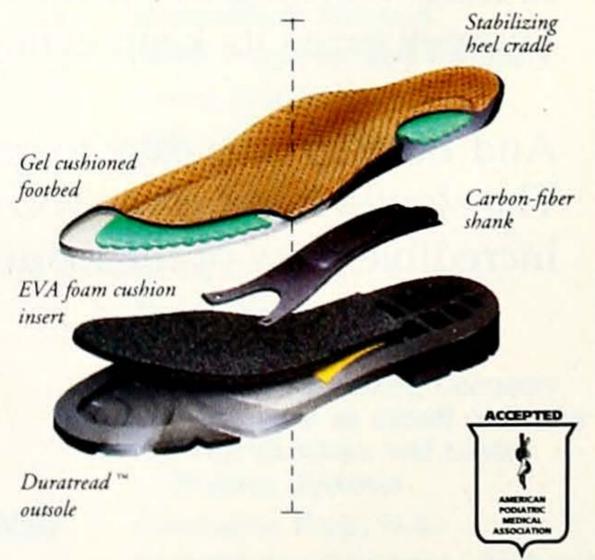
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FFA Bikers Roll into Indy

# dedicated

By Erich Gaukel

Preble Shawnee FFA members (L-R) Joey Roell, David Bowman, Eric Donaldson, Jimmy Strong, Jamie Larreau, Kip Hamilton (advisor), Harold Niehaus (advisor) and Dennis Roell catch their breath after riding their bikes from Camden, Ohio, to Indianapolis, Indiana, for the dedication of the new National FFA Center.



**Y**ou can knock off 115 miles in a car in a couple of hours. On a bike it takes a couple of days. So why ride your bike when you can drive? For six Preble Shawnee FFA Chapter members and their two advisors, it's all about dedication.

They wanted to be among the 1,300 FFA members, advisors and guests to attend the July dedication of the new National FFA Center. But witnessing the dedication simply wasn't going to be enough—they wanted to be a part of it. So they came up with a plan—one that would both get them to Indianapolis and show their dedication to the FFA.

### Early start

Before the sun made its appearance on the morning of July 20, David Bowman, Eric Donaldson, Jamie Larreau, Dennis Roell, Joey Roell and Jimmy Strong—and their advisors, Harold Niehaus and Kip Hamilton—showed up at the high school with their bikes.

Still shaking off sleep, the eight riders embarked on the 115-mile journey, which would take them from the backroads of Ohio and Indiana to the busy streets of Indianapolis and on into the driveway of the FFA center.

For two days the group battled 20 mile-per-hour headwinds and 95-degree heat. After a 100-mile day of riding, the group checked into a motel just outside of Indianapolis. The next morning the group rolled out of bed, got on their bikes and pushed their way another 15 miles to the FFA center.

### On-time arrival

Inside the center, where members from several states were already touring the facility, word spread quickly that the bikers had arrived. A small crowd rushed outside to greet the bikers, who were tired, but glad to have reached their destination exactly on time.

After posing for pictures and re-staging their "entrance" for a TV camera (which, as luck would have it, produced the only wipeout of the trip), the sweaty riders lowered their kickstands and walked proudly inside for a look at the new home of the National FFA Organization.

After a tour of the building, this group headed back outside for the official dedication ceremonies, where they reflected on their ride, the new center—and, just maybe, a 150-mile ride to Louisville for the 1999 National Convention.

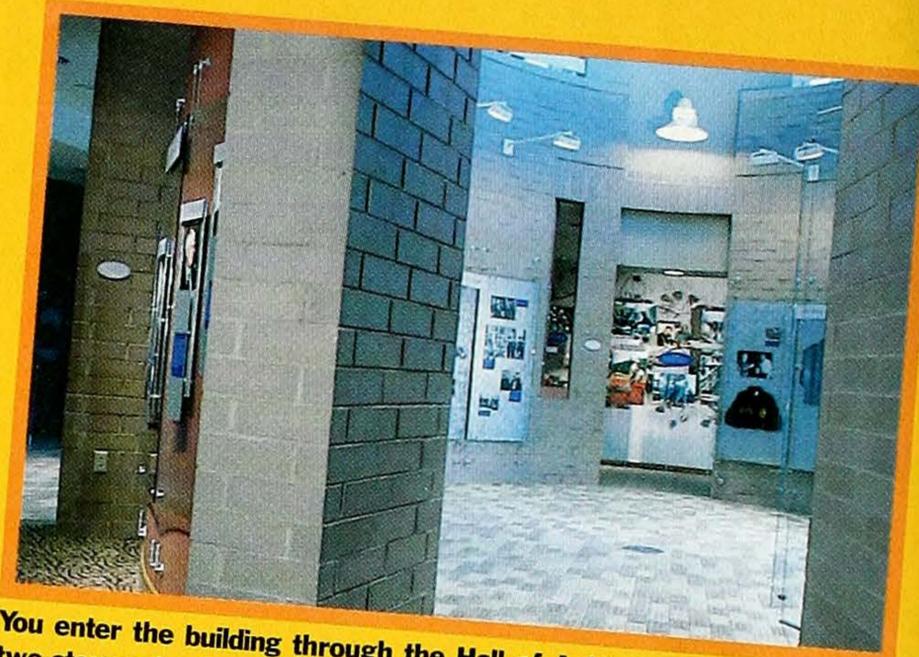




The new National FFA Center was designed using principles of the Prairie School of architecture, which was pioneered by Frank Lloyd Wright more than 90 years ago. The FFA center, like much Prairie School architecture, is characterized by strong, horizontal lines, a low-pitched roof and open spaces. Together, these elements unify the center with its natural surroundings.



The work areas were designed to be both efficient and comfortable. All staff members work in well-lighted and technologically advanced cubicles. Staff members can send and receive e-mails and faxes right on their computers. The cubicles also facilitate easier communication among staff members. The bikers are shown here touring the center.



You enter the building through the Hall of Achievement, a bright, two-story rotunda that highlights the achievements and history of the FFA. The first thing FFA staff members see when they come to work every day is the FFA mission statement. The hall's exhibits—on everything from the FFA jacket to the NFA—line the perimeter of the hall. A computer in the hall can help you find your engraved brick (if you or your chapter bought one to support the center's construction); another is constantly linked to National FFA Online.



# dedicated

FFA members from several states gathered for dedication ceremonies during the week of dedication activities. Soil from every state was brought to the center by state officers and spread around the base of the flagpole in the background. The American flag now flown at the center (not visible here) previously flew above the U.S. Capitol and the old FFA center in Alexandria, Virginia.

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Detroit FFA member's floral business rolling

# flower power

**F**lowers aren't exactly the first things that come to mind when you think of Detroit—the home of the auto industry and the birthplace of the assembly line. After all, it's known as the "Motor City."

By Erich Gaukel

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For 19-year-old Shequilla Pruitt, however, flowers are always on her mind. She was one of ten 1997 National Agri-Entrepreneurship Award winners, and her team took a silver finish in the floriculture competition at the 1994 National FFA Convention.

Now she's running her own business that specializes in wedding floral design. Named "Designs by Shequilla," the business is run from her home only during the summer months. She's working on a college business degree

during the school year.

When she's done with school, she plans to move full speed ahead with the business. "Hopefully in the next few years I'll be opening my own shop," she says.

### Starting Out

Shequilla laughs as she talks about how she got started in floral design. "It's a funny story. When I was in high school, some people came to the



Shequilla plans to open her own floral shop in the next few years. Until then, she'll continue to do weddings and work on her degree.



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school to recruit students for the area's vocational-technical centers. I didn't even know what floriculture was. They said it had something to do with flowers, so I took it and I've been sticking with it ever since."

Her new interest led to her FFA successes and her decision to pursue floral design as a career. She took on a couple part-time jobs in floral shops to get a better feel for the business.

She says she gained one very important thing from this: "I learned a lot about actually being in contact with customers."

Customers make or break businesses, so this experience really paid off. In her wedding business, which she has operated for the last three summers, she deals extensively with each of her customers to make sure they're happy. It's not a simple matter of selling somebody flowers.

She says the routine usually involves "making out a wedding plan for customers, finding out what they want during a consultation, going over a payment plan and then ordering the flowers."

She then has to deliver and set up all the flowers (usually roses, Calililies and Casablanca lilies) and decorations at the church and reception. The job has to be done right because her number one source of new business is word of mouth. If she does a great job, her customers will tell their friends and family. It's all about "people telling other people," she says.

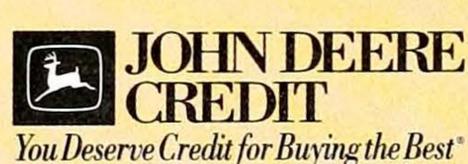
It also helps when your customer knows that you love what you're doing. "A wedding is a big job—it takes a lot of time. But I like to do weddings more than anything," she says. ★



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FFA Advisor Name \_\_\_\_\_ FFA Chapter City \_\_\_\_\_



Entry forms must be postmarked by October 23, 1998. No purchase necessary. The JDC Classic 4020 Tractor Giveaway is open to all current active FFA members in good standing throughout the continental United States. Merchants, advertising and promotion agencies, employees (and their families) of Deere & Company and its subsidiaries are not eligible. FFA Advisors and FFA Corporate Members are not eligible. Contact your local FFA Advisor for rules and full details.

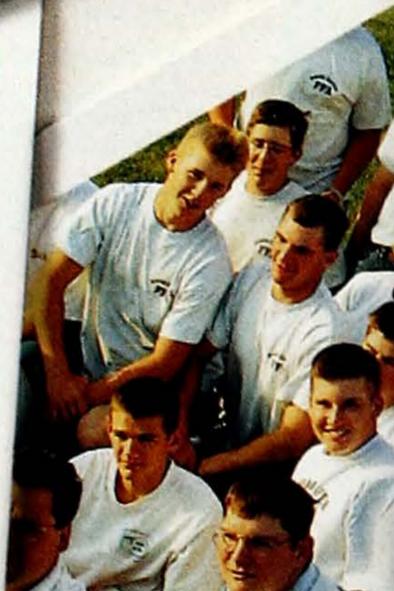
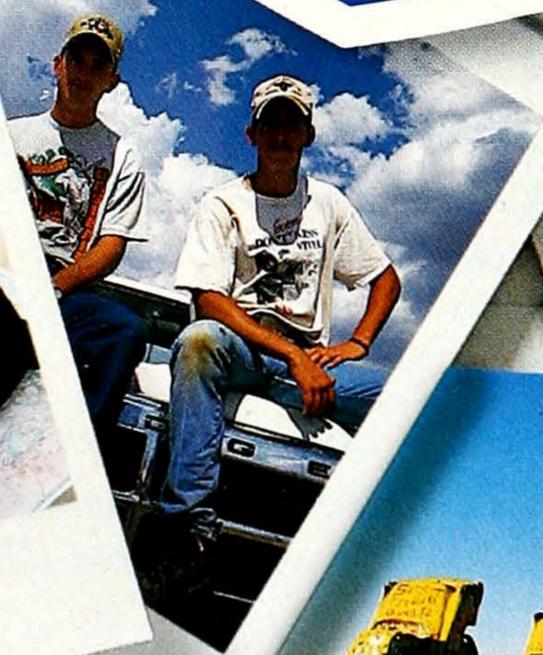
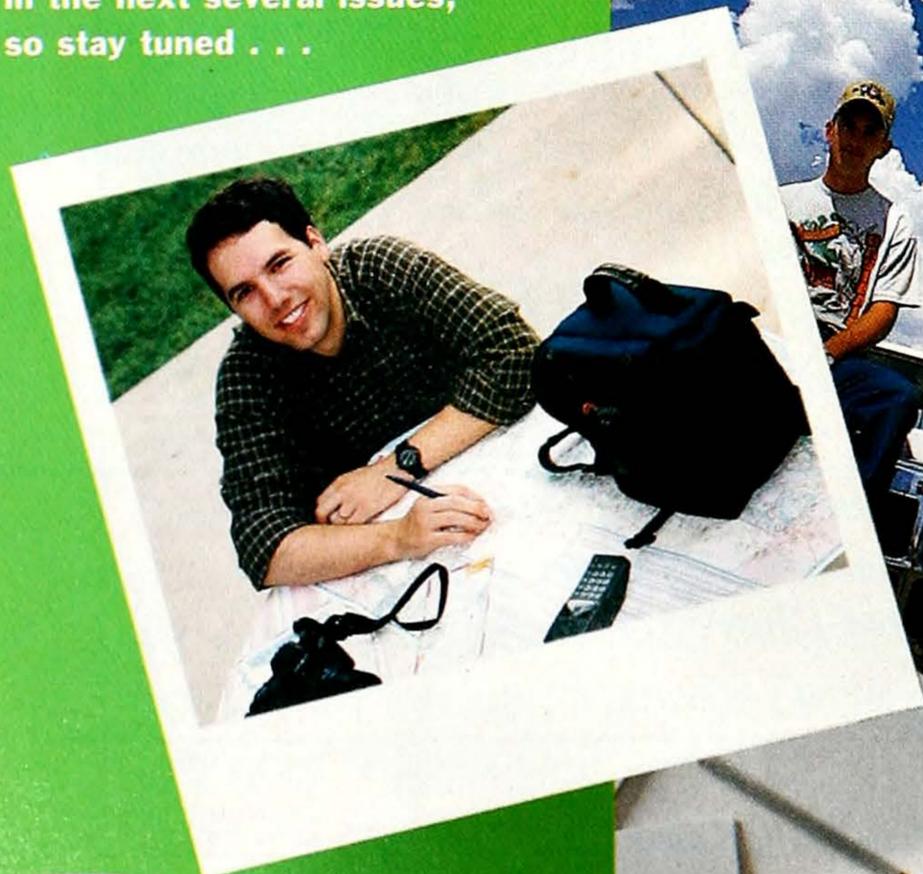
**S**ince I announced (a couple of issues ago) that I was spending a month this summer traveling across the U.S. to meet FFA members, I have traveled from coast to coast and from Minnesota to Texas. I logged over 10,000 miles, visited members in 20 states, shot over 700 photographs and crashed one rental car (it was my fault, I admit it).

The idea behind the trip is to give you, the reader, the chance to meet FFA members from other parts of the country—it's a unique opportunity to see where they live and what they do. You might be surprised to learn, for example, that someone 2,000 miles away has an SAE just like yours, or that there's an FFA chapter in Alabama that doubles as a volunteer fire department.

So buckle your seat belt and join me on the "FFA Highway." The trip begins this issue with the West. The journey will continue in the next several issues, so stay tuned . . .

**A 30-day, 20-state, 5-jet, 7-rental car, 10,000-mile, cross-country road trip in search of FFA members**

# FFA HIGHWAY



**This road trip brought to you by The New Dodge**

*(continued on page 20)*

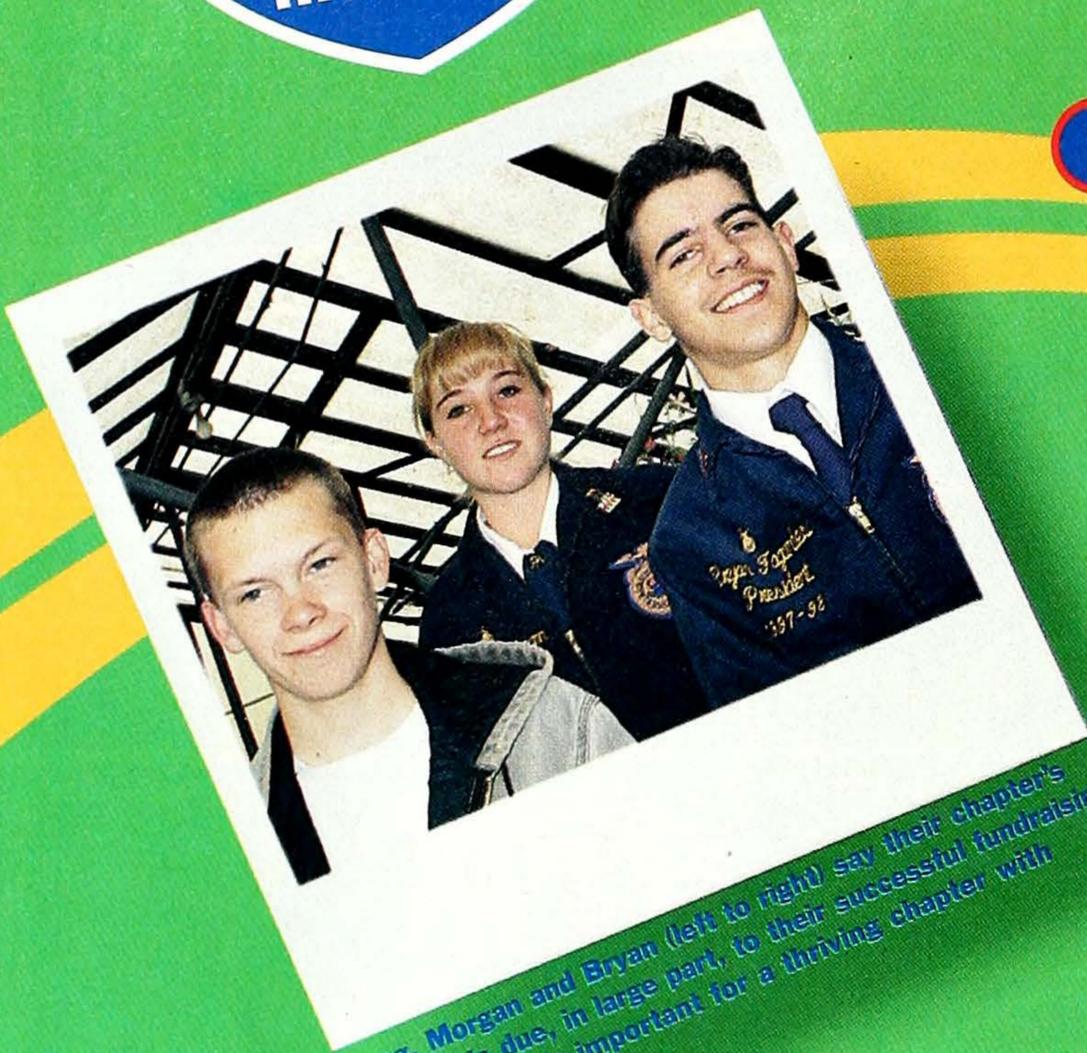


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Greg, Morgan and Bryan (left to right) say their chapter's success is due, in large part, to their successful fundraising efforts. This is important for a thriving chapter with 231 members.

## 1 Livermore, California

The first thing that catches your eye when you drive into Livermore are the hundreds of windmills lining the range of hills just east of town. Livermore FFA Chapter members Morgan Deickmann, Bryan Fegundes and Greg Ledger told me that the windmills provide much of the electrical power for this region. The cattle that graze beneath the huge towers anchor the local agricultural economy.

While most of the FFA members here live in town, the chapter has its own small farm nearby, where members house their show animals. This is important because one of the chapter's biggest showing events of the year is the Alameda County Fair in nearby Oakland.

To secure the funds to go to the fair and other events such as the state FFA conference, the chapter has to raise its own money. Bryan says fundraising has been the key to their chapter's success. One of their more successful fundraisers is the "free" car wash. How do they make money on a free car wash? Easy. They go out ahead of time and get pledges for each car washed. Then, at the actual car wash, they collect tips from generous customers.

## 2

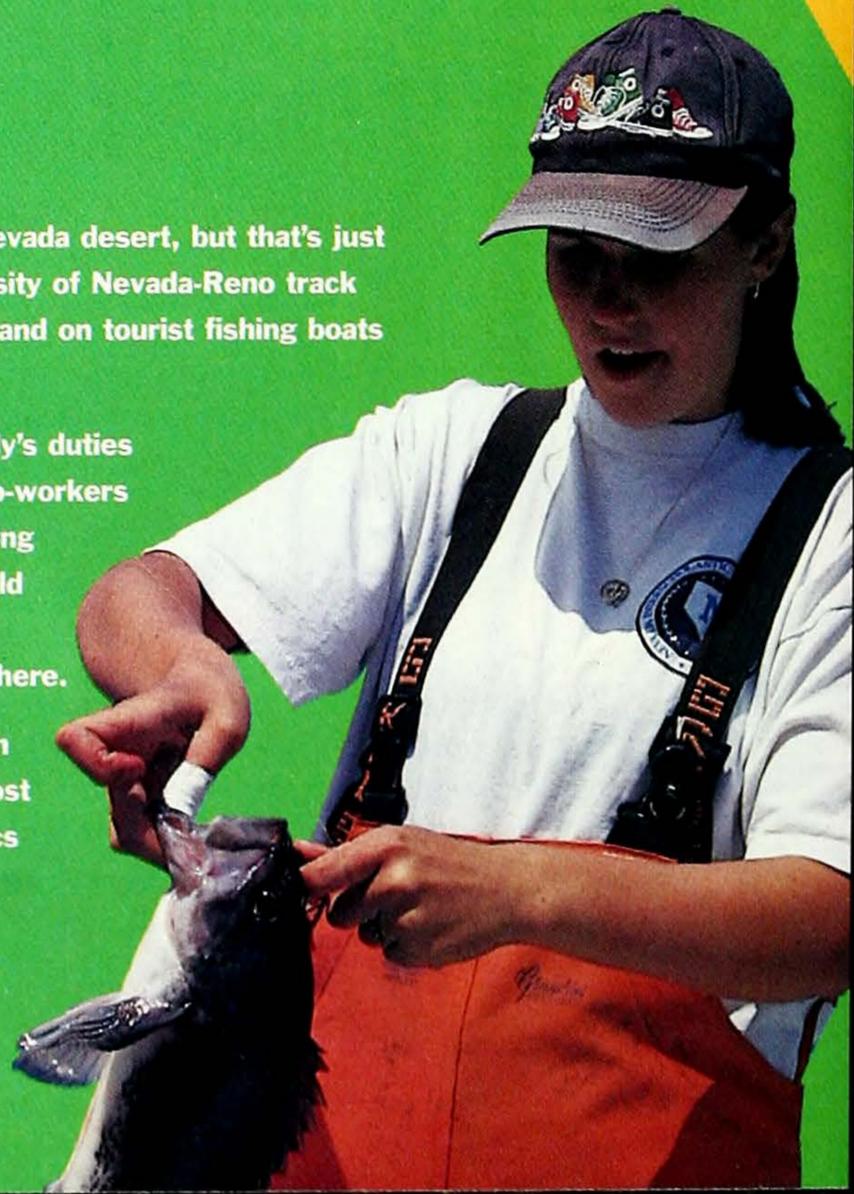
### Depoe Bay, Oregon

You usually don't have to go to the ocean to find an FFA member who lives in the Nevada desert, but that's just what I had to do to find Kimberly Newton, an FFA member who's also on the University of Nevada-Reno track and field team. She has spent the last few summers working on her SAE as a deckhand on tourist fishing boats in Depoe Bay, Oregon.

A 1997 National Proficiency Award finalist in the area of outdoor recreation, Kimberly's duties include fish baiting, boat preparation and customer service. Along with two of her co-workers at Tradewinds Charters, Kimberly took me out on the Pacific waters for a short fishing excursion. As Kimberly expertly juggled lures, poles, reels, fish and buckets, she told me that Depoe Bay is the smallest navigable harbor in the world. And, according to locals, the 16th century explorer Sir Francis Drake once took shelter from a storm here.

Transitioning from the desert to ocean every summer, Kimberly admits the change in weather takes some getting used to. It's a lifestyle change too. Here she spends most of her time here on boats with tourists—a departure from the classroom and athletics routine back home. "I have to kind of switch my whole mode of thinking," she says.

Kimberly is studying education and biology and hopes to eventually teach and coach.





Wendy Schweitzer and her brother Beau have both been elected state FFA officers. They grew up on the cattle ranch pictured here. They're standing in Idaho, but the land in the far background is Oregon.

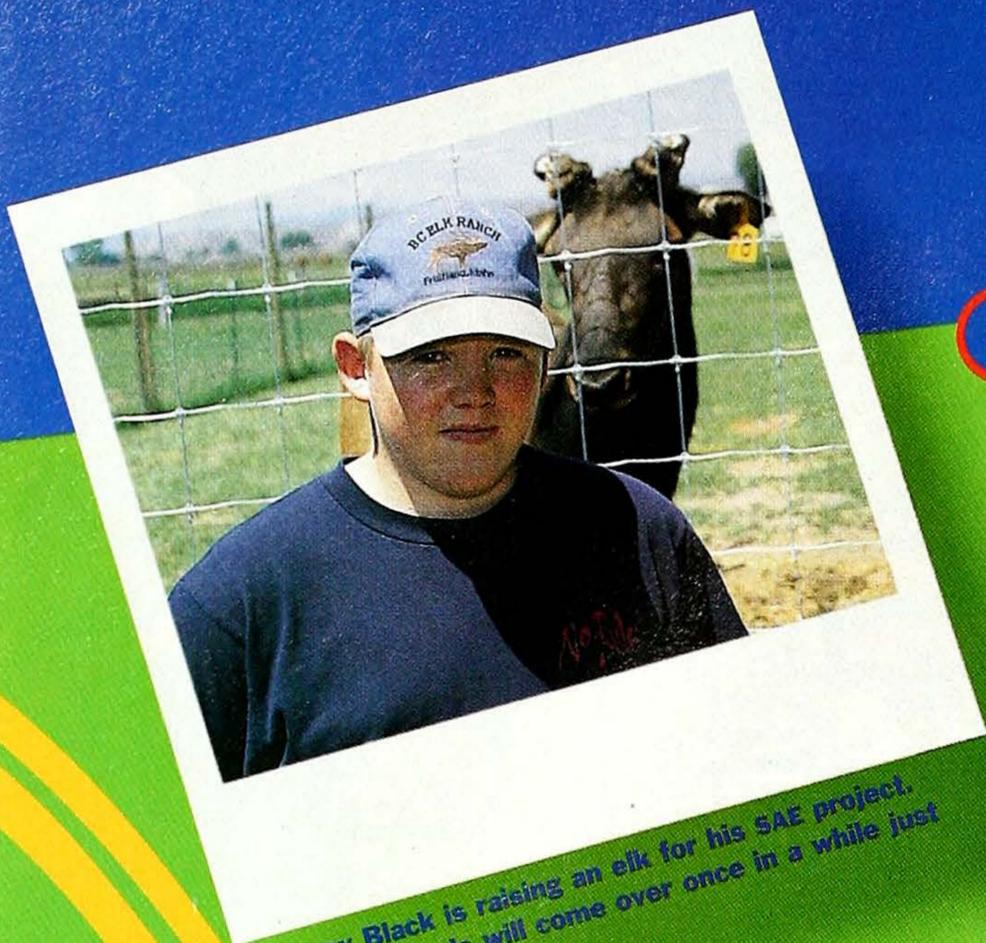
### 3 Parma, Idaho

Beau and Wendy Schweitzer can claim something that few other brother-sister combinations can—they were both elected state FFA officers. Raised on a ranch straddling the Idaho-Oregon border, Beau and Wendy are experts in showing cattle.

For Beau, who's now a philosophy major at Notre Dame, FFA was initially a way to get into showing cattle. Along the way, he attended a state convention and, perhaps more importantly, got a chance to dance with Miss America at the National FFA Convention. From that point on, he was hooked on the FFA. He took advantage of the many available leadership opportunities, eventually becoming state president.

Now the torch is carried by Wendy, who is the current state reporter. This is the perfect office for her because she plans to leave the ranch to go to college and become a TV news anchor. Wendy believes her determination and FFA experience will give her the edge it takes to make it all the way to the top in this highly competitive career area (look out, Tom Brokaw).

When he's done at ND, Beau plans to get back into agriculture. Philosophy might not seem like the most practical degree for a guy looking for a career in agriculture, but Beau sees it as a way to stretch his mind. And that's an asset wherever you go.



Jeremy Black is raising an elk for his SAE project. He says friends will come over once in a while just to check it out.

## 4 Payette, Idaho

If you think elk are only found in the wild, think again. The North American Elk Breeders Association, which has around 900 members, reports there are currently 70,000 elk on ranches in North America. And that number appears to be growing. Jeremy Black, who's a sophomore and a member of the Payette FFA Chapter, is a small part of this growing trend. He recently bought an elk for his SAE project.

Raising it alongside some of his dad's herd, Jeremy sees a future in elk, which are raised in the U.S. primarily for their antlers, which are sold abroad for medicinal purposes. Also called "velvet," the antlers are cut off yearly and sold for about \$60 per pound. A mature bull can grow as much as 25 pounds of velvet a year. Jeremy's young elk won't make him any money for about two years. So why does he do it? He says he simply enjoys working outside with livestock. And, he points out, "Being around elk is fun." Jeremy also raises a steer.

## 5 Salt Lake City, Utah

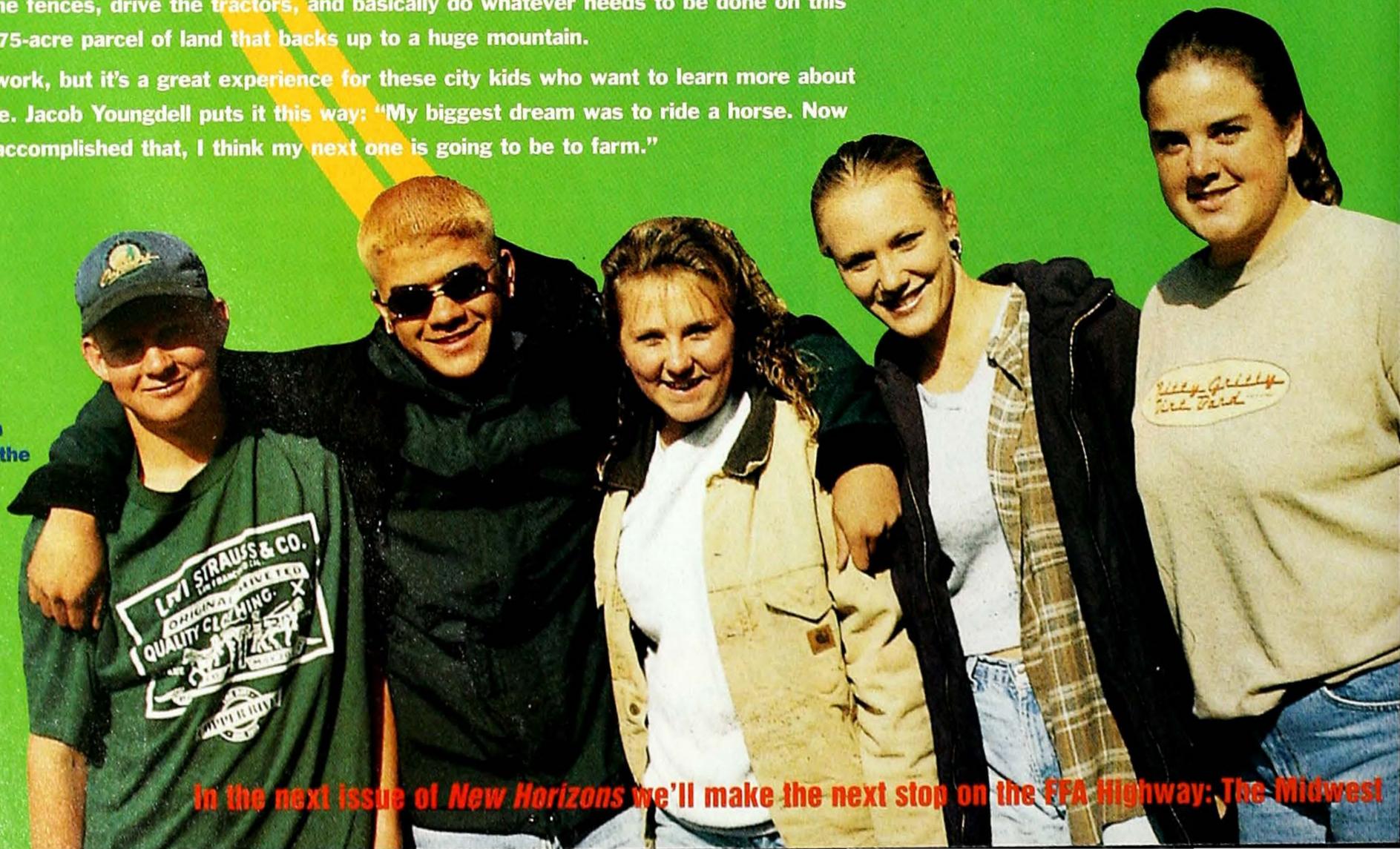
Founded in 1847 by Brigham Young and a band of Mormons fleeing persecution, Salt Lake City has a rich and interesting history. Part of that history includes agriculture, and Wheeler Historic Farm is the place where that tradition is preserved. It's really a living history farm where people from the community can milk cows, collect eggs, go on a wagon ride and see all types of agricultural demonstrations.

It's a perfect home for the Granite Mountain FFA Chapter, which draws students from six area high schools. The FFA members, who spend parts of their school days here, learn while they do behind-the-scenes work. It's their job to make sure things on the farm work smoothly when busloads of visitors come pouring through. They get the horses ready for rides, feed the chickens, fix the fences, drive the tractors, and basically do whatever needs to be done on this beautiful 75-acre parcel of land that backs up to a huge mountain.

It's hard work, but it's a great experience for these city kids who want to learn more about agriculture. Jacob Youngdell puts it this way: "My biggest dream was to ride a horse. Now that I've accomplished that, I think my next one is going to be to farm."



Members of the Granite Mountain FFA Chapter are the workers behind the scenes at a living history farm in Salt Lake City. For many of the members who live in the city, it's their only exposure to agriculture.



In the next issue of *New Horizons* we'll make the next stop on the FFA Highway: The Midwest

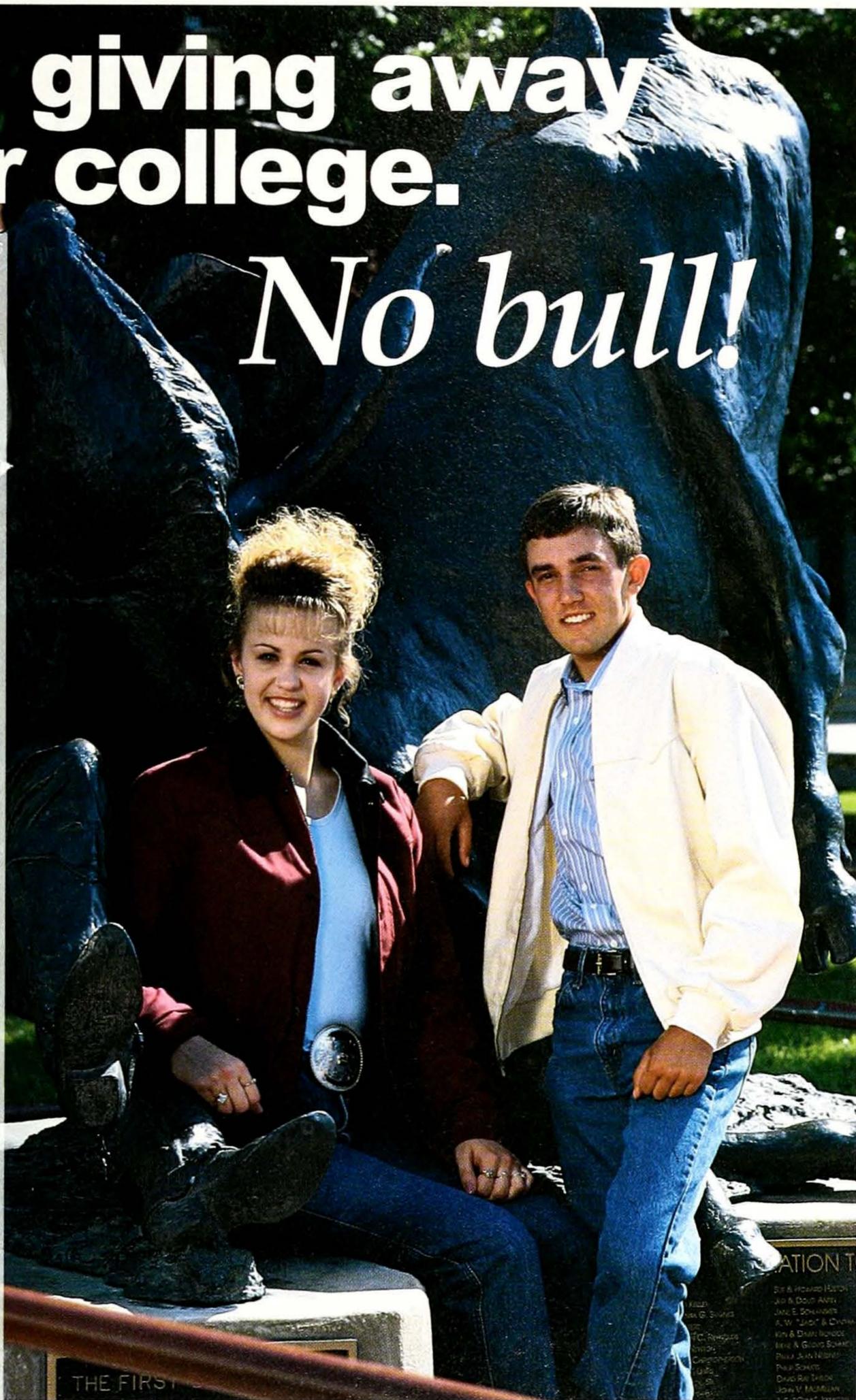
# Walls is giving away cash for college.

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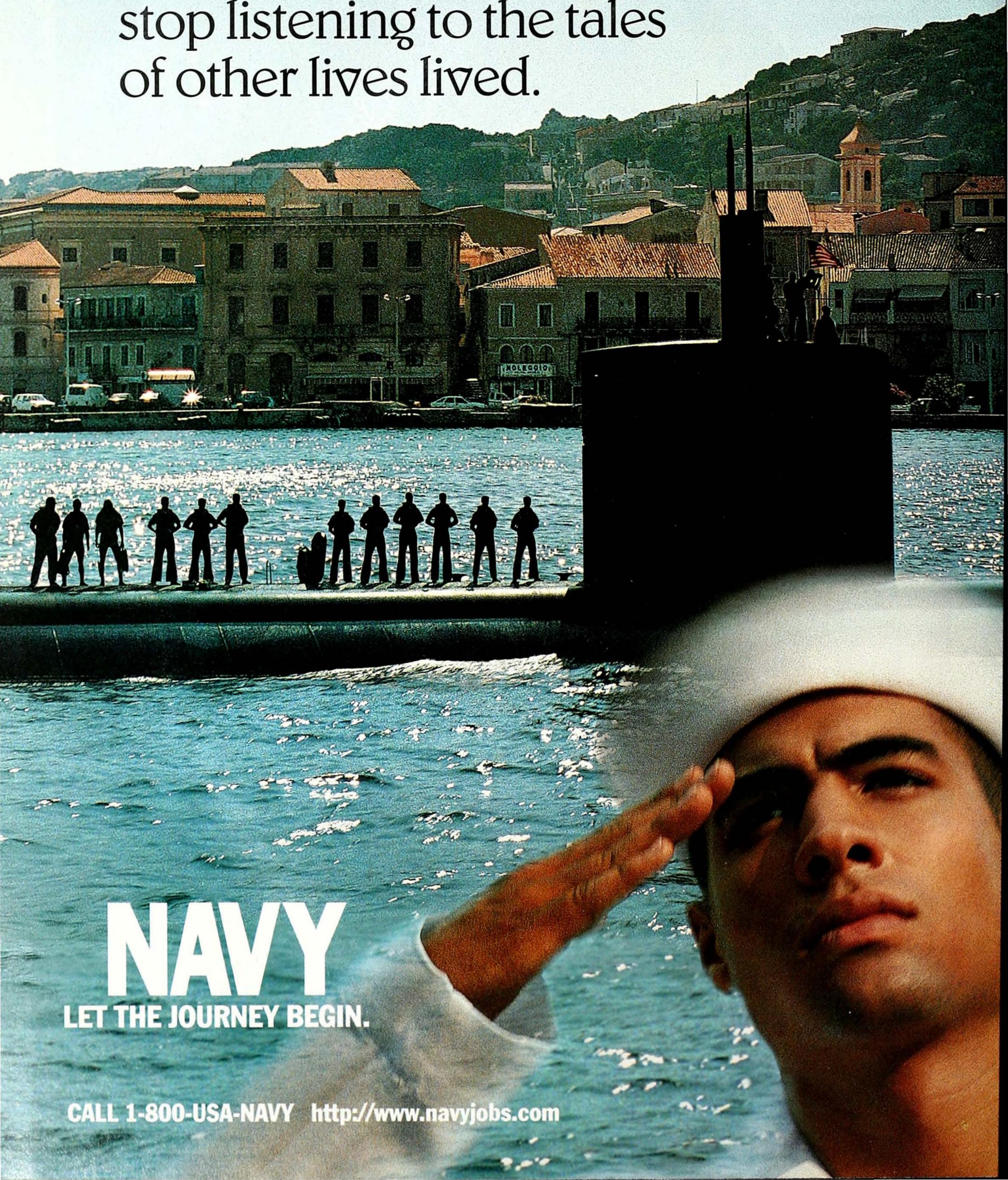
1997 Scholarship Winners *Brekelle Deeg* of American Falls, Idaho, and *Sam Halcomb* of Franklin, Kentucky, in the Fort Worth Stockyards National Historical District during their recent Walls photo shoot.

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interview

# interview



## Stockton's stock rising

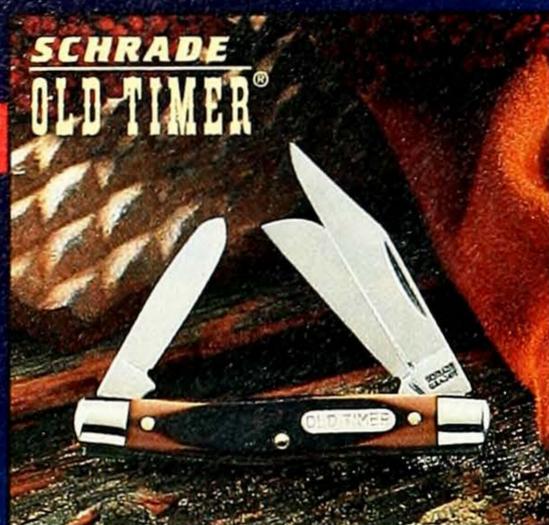
Oddly enough, Shane Stockton got his break in the music business at the state FFA convention in his home state of Texas. Now, with his own record out, this 24-year-old is ready to take on the world, one song at a time

So how does it feel to have your own record out on a major record label?

It's pretty incredible. You work all your life for something like this. I started playing clubs when I was 15 or 16 years old and still in high school. Singing country music is all that I've wanted to do since I was nine or ten. Now I actually get to do it and people hear it. That's amazing to me. And the fact that I got to write all the songs—that's even more incredible.

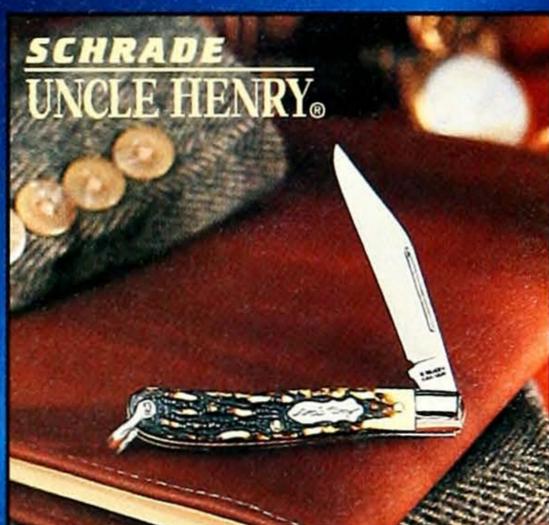
When you were in high school, did you know this was going to be the career for you?

Yeah. I knew real early along that this was what I wanted to do, and when I got in high school, there were other things I did—I was real active in football, theatre and FFA. But I still sang all the time. I'd play football on Friday nights and gigs on Saturday nights. All through high school I knew that was what I wanted to do. There were other things I thought I might be able to succeed at, but this was my love and my passion, and that's what I did in all my spare time. A lot of times on Saturday nights, if I didn't have a gig, I wasn't out partying or dragging the main street—I was usually in my room writing songs.

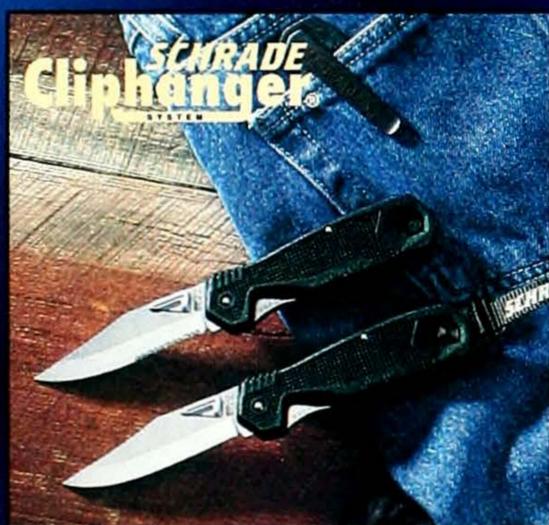


## **SCHRADE KNIVES AND TOOLS**

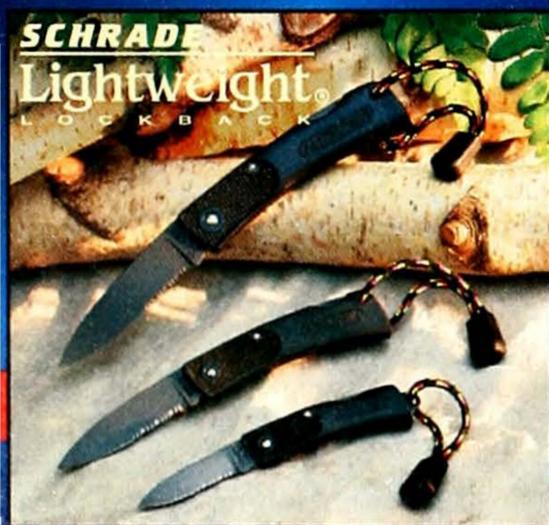
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I heard that you got your big break into the music world when you performed at the Texas FFA convention. How did it happen? There was a guy there in the audience whose nephew was a publisher in Nashville. He came up and got my number that night, and then he called his nephew that night and said, "Man, I just heard this kid sing at state FFA convention. He sang a song he wrote, and he's pretty good." So his nephew and I started corresponding over the phone after that. Within two or three months we were in Nashville pounding the streets. That's what got it all started.

**I would imagine that's right at the top of your FFA memories.**

Hands down. That was a great trip overall—and it was fun. I met a lot of great people, and we would hang out in the hotel rooms, and I would play my guitar with kids from other schools. It's just a great camaraderie in FFA. It's like everybody's friends, even if you don't know each other.

**Where do you make your home now?**

Breckenridge, Texas. I'm probably going to move in the next year. I'm going to stay in Texas, though. I've lived here all my life, and I can't see any reason to leave.

**Did you have a backup career in mind in case the music thing didn't work out?**

Yeah. Oddly enough, I probably would have followed in my father's footsteps and would have gone into the ministry. I definitely thought

of that. I also had scholarships in football, but I knew I wasn't near big enough—I'm about 6'2" and 210. That's not near big enough (laughs). Or I might have gone to college to do something in theatre, which I thought was fun in high school because I got to sing.

**Do you do much guitar playing these days?**

Yeah. A lot. I do all the acoustic work on our live shows, as well as a couple of solos. I love to play the acoustic guitar. I actually wanted to be a lead guitarist, but about the time I got serious about that, I was starting to songwriter. So I kind of put my lead guitar playing on the back burner.

**What's in your CD player right now?**

I just got the Conway Twitty box set, so I've been listening to that a bunch. I still listen to the old acts. I have the Roger Miller, the Merle Haggard, the Buck Owens and the Conway Twitty box sets. Those are my idols, and that's the main stuff I listen to.

**You wrote almost all the songs on your new record. Do you connect better with the songs when the words are your own?**

I think so. I wrote nine by myself and I co-wrote one. The main thread that we kept seeing when we were doing this project was the thread of my songwriting. We looked around for other songs, and I told my producer and the guys that while I'd be happy to cut someone else's songs, I want to cut something that sounds like something I would have written myself. ★

# what's HOT

Movie \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fast food chain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Color \_\_\_\_\_  
 Politician \_\_\_\_\_  
 Type of pet \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foreign country to visit \_\_\_\_\_  
 Brand of athletic shoe \_\_\_\_\_  
 Summer leisure activity \_\_\_\_\_  
 Place to go on a date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Place to do homework \_\_\_\_\_  
 School event or function (non-FFA) \_\_\_\_\_  
 FFA event or function \_\_\_\_\_  
 Candy \_\_\_\_\_

# what's HOT

Movie \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Place to do homework \_\_\_\_\_  
 School event or function (non-FFA) \_\_\_\_\_  
 FFA event or function \_\_\_\_\_  
 Candy \_\_\_\_\_

### send your picks to:

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 Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Congratulations are in order for the members of the Reedsburg FFA Chapter in Wisconsin. They are hereby recognized as this issue's Hot Chapter for mailing in the tallest stack of "What's Hot/What's Not" surveys. They just edged out California's Redwood FFA Chapter and Virginia's Louisa FFA Chapter.

**hot** **agriculture** class/subject in school **english** **not**  
**hot** **george washington** person in history **adolf hitler** **not**  
**hot** **pizza** school lunch item **hamburger** **not**  
**hot** **kansas city** road trip destination **school** **not**  
**hot** **no smoking** school policy **dress code** **not**

**hot** **basketball** after school activity **detention** **not**  
**hot** **doctor** career outside agriculture **fast food worker** **not**  
**hot** **to kill a mockingbird** novel **moby dick** **not**  
**hot** **football** sport to watch **golf** **not**  
**hot** **football** sport to play **golf** **not**

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Olympic biathlete Ntala Skinner found that you have to aim high when your target is success

# focused

**P**rior to the 1990s, the women's biathlon hadn't made it to Olympic platform. Now, after seeing action in the Lillehammer and Nagano winter Olympic games, the sport is blossoming. In this sport, which is traditionally dominated by Europeans and Russians, American Ntala Skinner has made a name for herself, as a member of the last two Olympic biathlon teams.

The biathlon is among the most difficult and least understood of winter Olympic sports. It's a unique blend of skiing and marksmanship that, in the women's individual event, challenges "racers" to stop at four points on a 15 kilometer course, where they fire five shots at targets 50 meters away, twice from the prone position and twice standing.

To compete at this level, competitors must be highly skilled cross-country skiers and expert marksmen. And they must be in incredibly good physical condition.

## Mind and body

Skinner says this sport is particularly tough because you must be able to make crucial decisions in a matter of seconds. "It's probably 75 percent mental when you get right down to it," she says, noting that every time she skis into a shooting range on a course she has to ask herself a series of questions: What is the wind doing? Do I have to move my sights? How hard have I been skiing? Have I been skiing too hard? Do I need to take a little bit more time to relax my body or do I just go ahead and shoot?

"You have to just be able to analyze it really

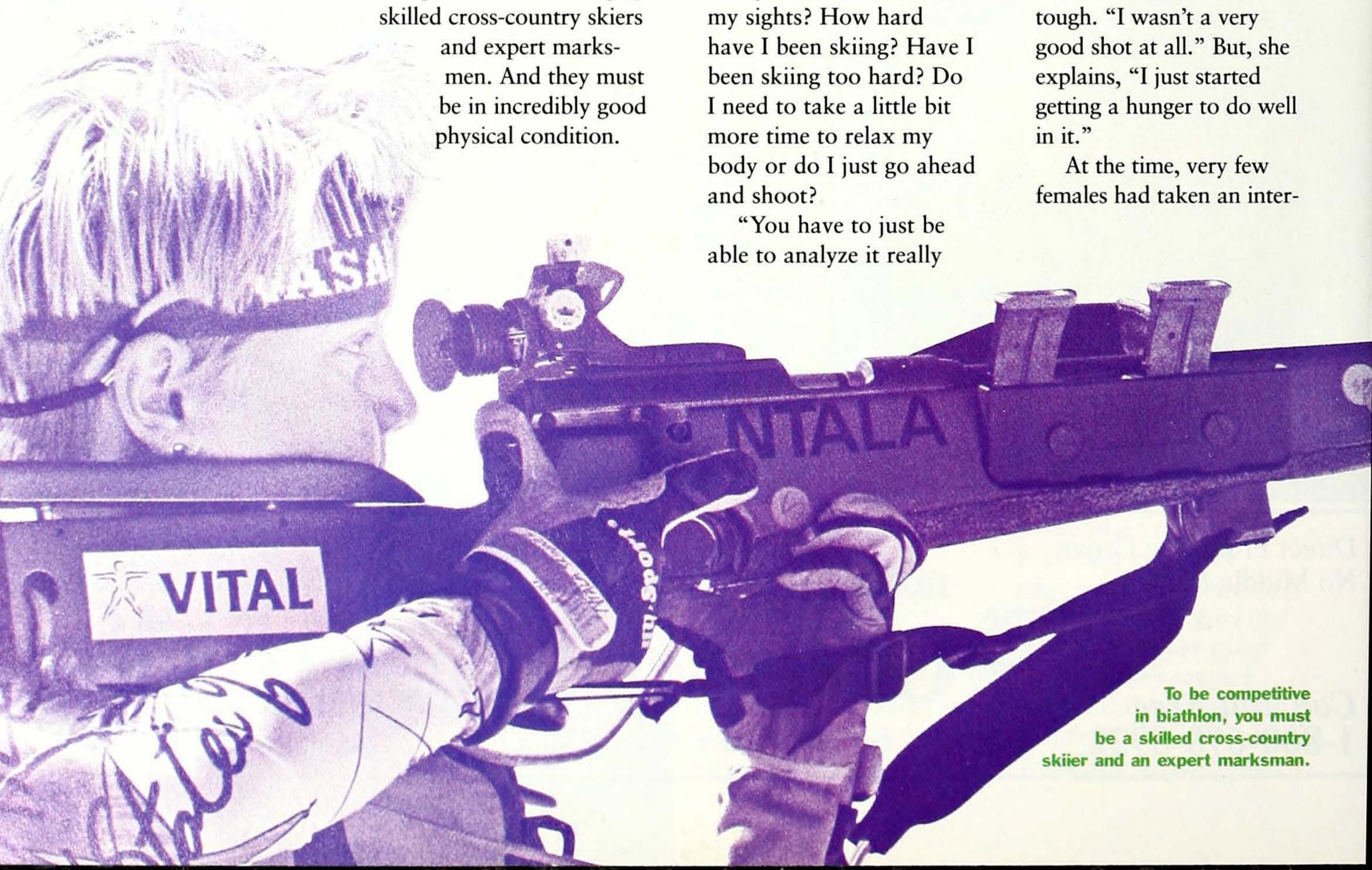
quickly, adapt really quickly and not let the situation overcome you," she says.

## A natural

Skinner grew up in Idaho and Wyoming, where skiing came to her as naturally as walking. After her brother gave her his old rifle, she got serious about shooting and decided to put it together with skiing.

For a while, it was tough. "I wasn't a very good shot at all." But, she explains, "I just started getting a hunger to do well in it."

At the time, very few females had taken an inter-

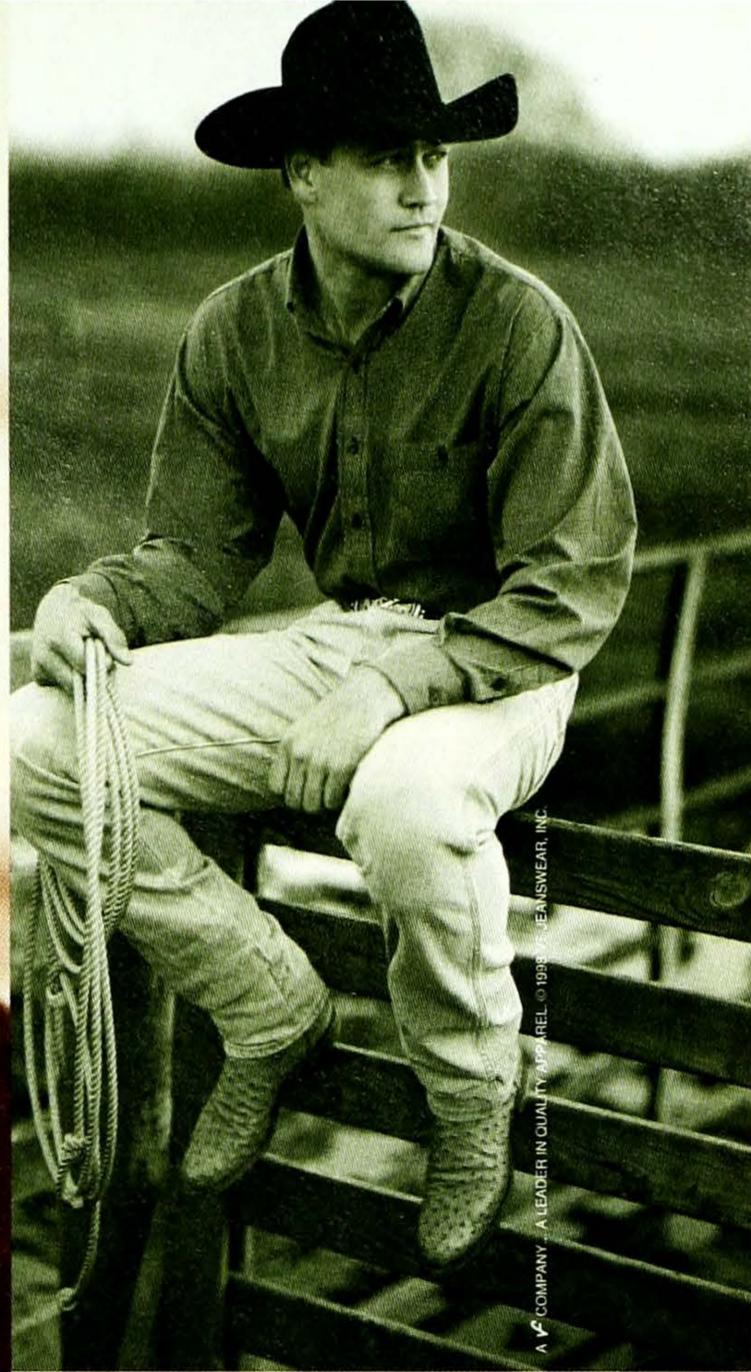


To be competitive in biathlon, you must be a skilled cross-country skier and an expert marksman.

# STRAN

# SMITH

# UNTIED

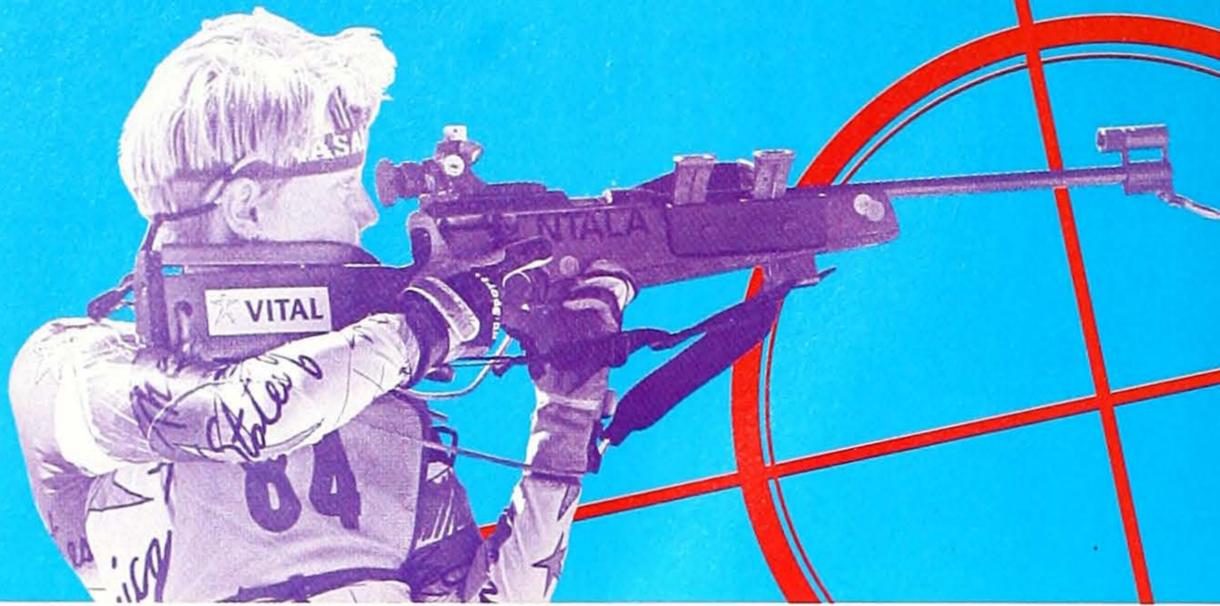


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est in the biathlon, especially in the junior division. Skinner saw this as an opportunity to pursue the sport. At 15, she made her first world junior team. At 19, she made the national senior team. The following year, she anchored the World Cup silver medal team and qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team.

### Military support

At around the same time, Skinner decided to join the Idaho National Guard, an ideal place for her because she could earn some much-needed money and still have time to train and compete. "I actually started enjoying being a soldier," she says. After she joined she heard about a new program the National Guard had started.

Called the World Class Athlete Program, it was designed to put Olympic caliber athletes in the Guard on active duty orders to train specifically for a sport and represent the military at the Olympics.

Skinner jumped at the opportunity and propelled herself to the Olympics in '94 and '98. Even though she didn't win a medal, she knows it's an achievement just to have been there. "I look back on it now, and if I decided not to come back [to the Olympics] in 2002, I would probably be happy with what I've accomplished."

### Decision time

The decision to come back has been difficult because she just got married and is planning to pursue a business degree in college. "I know what it takes to get to the top," she says, "and I if I want to get back into it, I can only take a couple of years away . . . and then I have to be right back in it."

She says it's even harder to commit to that lifestyle when she goes home and sees what she's been missing. "Your horse is sitting in the pasture and looks at you when you come home and is saying, 'Where the heck have you been?' Or the dog looks up at you like 'Who are you? . . . Oh yeah, you throw the stick for me every now and then.' Those are the little things." ★

## A Father's Advice



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Matters not the least to me.

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Though of time it cause a loss  
From your gun the cartridge take  
For the greater safety's sake.

If twist you and neighboring gun  
Bird shall fly or beast may run  
Let this maxim ere be thine  
"Follow not across the line."

Stops and beaters oft unseen  
Lurk behind some leafy screen.  
Calm and steady always be  
"Never shoot where you can't see."

You may kill or you may miss  
But at all times think of this:  
"All the pheasants ever bred  
Won't repay for one man dead."

Written by Mark Beaufoy of Coombe House, Shafisbury, Dorset, England, in 1902, on presenting his eldest son, Henry Mark, with his first gun. Reproduced here by permission of the author's granddaughter, Mrs. P.M. Guild.

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In light of the all too common shooting incidents taking place in our schools, we strongly encourage you to participate in the **Student Pledge Against Gun Violence**, which will be observed in schools throughout the country on October 8.

All you need to do is sign the pledges below (they're identical—you keep one and you give the other to an adult you trust, such as your FFA advisor, parent or coach). By doing so, you and thousands of other students are making a statement that you will not tolerate guns in your schools. Designate someone in your FFA chapter to count the total number of pledges signed in your chapter. Then report that number to the following address:

The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence  
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Northfield, MN 55057

Find out more about the Pledge and the October 8 day of observance online at [www.pledge.org](http://www.pledge.org)

## I pledge

I will never bring a gun to school.

I will never use a gun to settle a dispute.

I will use my influence with my friends to keep them from using guns to settle disputes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

You keep this copy

## I pledge

I will never bring a gun to school.

I will never use a gun to settle a dispute.

I will use my influence with my friends to keep them from using guns to settle disputes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

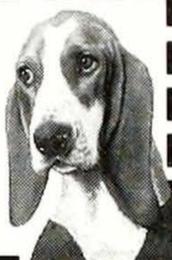
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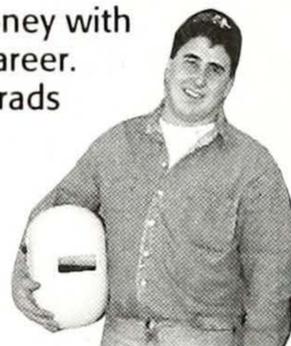
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# Last Laff

**Q:** What did the photographer say to Cinderella?

**A:** Some day your prints will come.

**Tish Langford**  
Magnolia, Arkansas

**Q:** What do you call the little rivers that feed into the Nile?

**A:** Juveniles.

**Meg Thompson**  
Grafton, Ohio

**Q:** Why do you always find stuff in the last place you look for it?

**A:** Because once you find it you stop looking for it.

**Rebel Smith**  
Fremont, Michigan

**Q:** What do you get when you play a country song backwards?

**A:** Your get your wife, dog and house back.

**James Brummett**  
Fort Cobb, Oklahoma

**Q:** Why did Mickey go to space?

**A:** To find Pluto.

**Elliott Bottjen**  
Kingsley, Iowa

**Q:** What do you call a cattle trailer with nothing in it?

**A:** A cattle-lack.

**Brandon Slagel**  
Fairbury, Illinois

**Q:** Which is faster, heat or cold?

**A:** Heat. You can catch a cold.

**Jean Metzger**  
Thorntown, Indiana

**Q:** What did the police do when 200 hares escaped from the farm?

**A:** They combed the area.

**Shekinah Diercks**  
Marionville, Missouri

**Q:** What is the difference between a cat and a comma?

**A:** A cat has claws at the end of its paws, and a comma is a pause at the end of a clause.

**Donnie Bereniski**  
West Plains, Missouri

**Q:** When does Friday come before Thursday?

**A:** When it's in the dictionary.

**Tiffany Price**  
Sugar Tree, Tennessee

**Q:** What did the ghost eat for breakfast?

**A:** Scream of wheat.

**Jamie Dougherty**  
Elk Grove, California

**Q:** Why was Sir Lancelot so smart?

**A:** He went to knight school.

**Kyle Berger**  
Saratago, Wyoming

**FFA New Horizons will pay \$5.00 for each joke selected for Last Laff. In case of joke duplication, payment will be for the first one received.**

**To submit a nomination for "FFA Stars," tell us why you think you or your nominee is an "FFA Star." You must also include the following: color photo, name, address, phone number, chapter and birthdate of nominee, as well as your name and phone number (if different).**

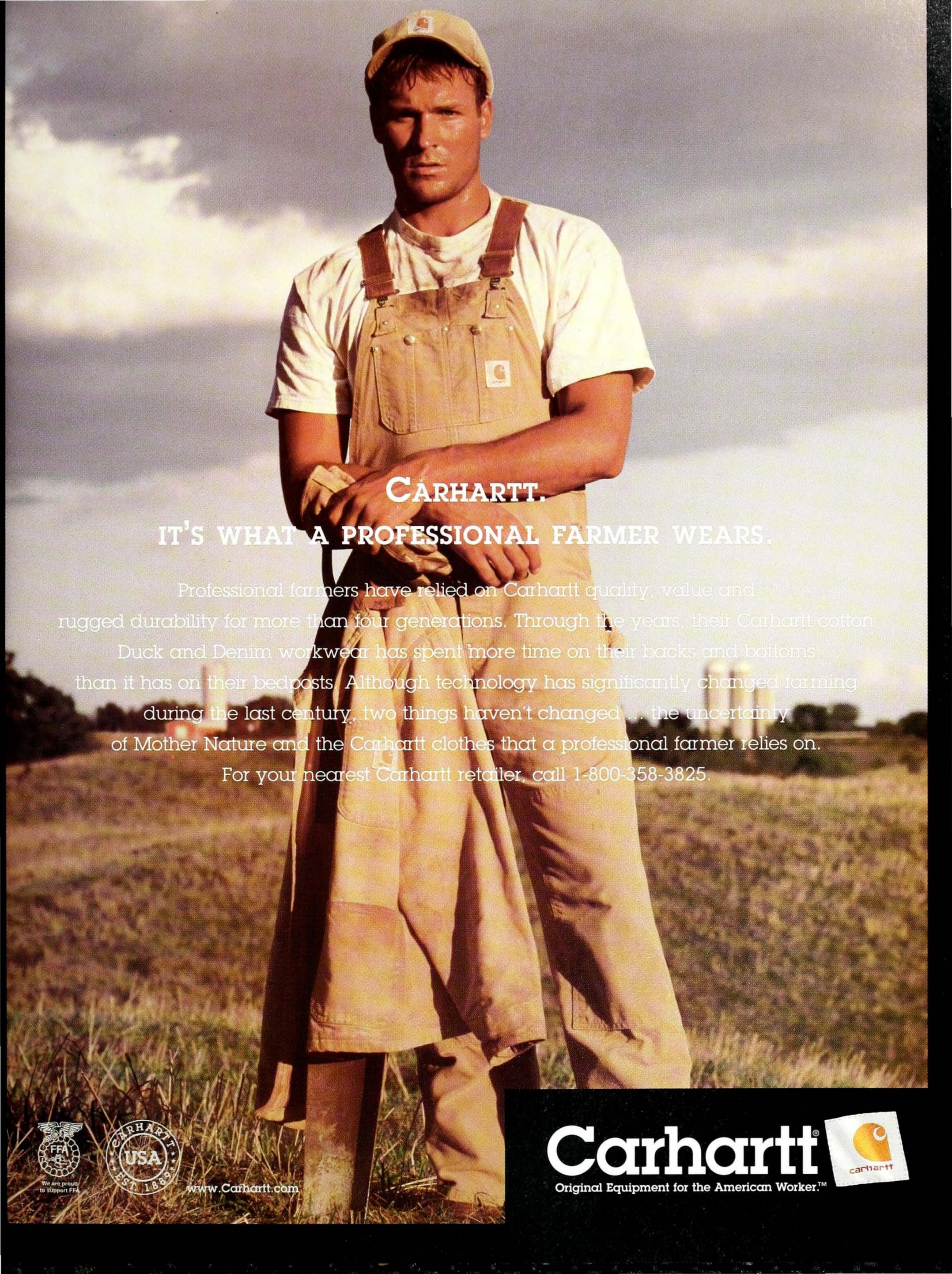
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