

The Power of Knowing What You Desire

I'd avoid making generalizations about this group forever, yet if there's one thing that has impressed me about these fifteen interviewees, it is that this group of young people know who they are. They know what they want. Malena Handeen and Mike Jacobs now on Easy Bean Farm near Milan, Minnesota, have bought land and are acting out their own dreams with a CSA. Craig Fernholz is building theater sets at the Guthrie. Colin King went to his own kind of Liberal Arts College and is working hard on the nuclear freeze issue. Heather Benson teaches elementary kids about gardening in urban San Francisco. Katie Fernholz knew she could not work with agriculture, but is dedicated to sustainability for the trees. Differences? Absolutely! But they know who they are in the world and what they desire.

"I want every minute of my life to be true to myself," declares Katie Fernholz. **"Then I will be content."** **"I really have strong feelings and desires to work with social and economic justice,"** states Adam Warthesen. **"I must have stars,"** says Inga Haugen.



Josh and Jacob Van Der Pol in hoop-house

Adam tests this "knowing" against the various work options he might encounter: **"I know that this work at the Land Stewardship Project might not be forever, but in some aspects I made the right decision because now there are certain places that will never hire me. For instance, [he laughs] now I can't go to work for Smithfield."** ❖

Josh Van Der Pol likes the hours of his work and likes having the kids with him all day. He knows he's made the right choice to stay on the family farm. So does Janaki Fisher-Merritt, calling it **"the most interesting and fulfilling and hopeful work I can think of."** ❖

"Knowing how to grow stuff or kill stuff is at the root of our confidence."

Connie (Fernholz) Carlson and her sister, Katie talk about confidence. **"Just knowing where your food is coming from [is security] and knowing how to grow stuff or kill stuff is**

**Inga Haugen in
Renaissance
costume**

at the root of our confidence." Connie is quite sure she will run her own theater company one day, and says she could probably work around any barriers. **"This is something that I think is unique to our family. We know what we like and dislike, almost instantly. There are few gray areas. It's gut instinct."** Her sister Katie added: **"People that are wishy-washy astonish me. Indecisive people teach me . . . I guess we have these high ethics of self-respect and knowledge of what is right and wrong."** ❖

Colin King talks with the same kind of confidence about the concept of *place*. **"Understanding a concept of place is critical,"** said Colin, **"Without that, it's hard to go forward. Lacking place is almost like lacking family—you have nothing to give and no reason to give."** These were words spoken with certainty. ❖

Inga Haugen also epitomizes this confidence. **"Mom always told me I'm special. Once when I was little, someone chanted at me, 'You go, girl!' and I called back, 'I'm not a girl, I'm an Inga!' I want country life; I don't need the convenience of town life. I will have animals (thinking of hair to fiber) and food animals. And I will have land and flowers and . . . It'll be great to travel, but if I don't have some connection to the dirt, I'll go nuts!"** ❖

