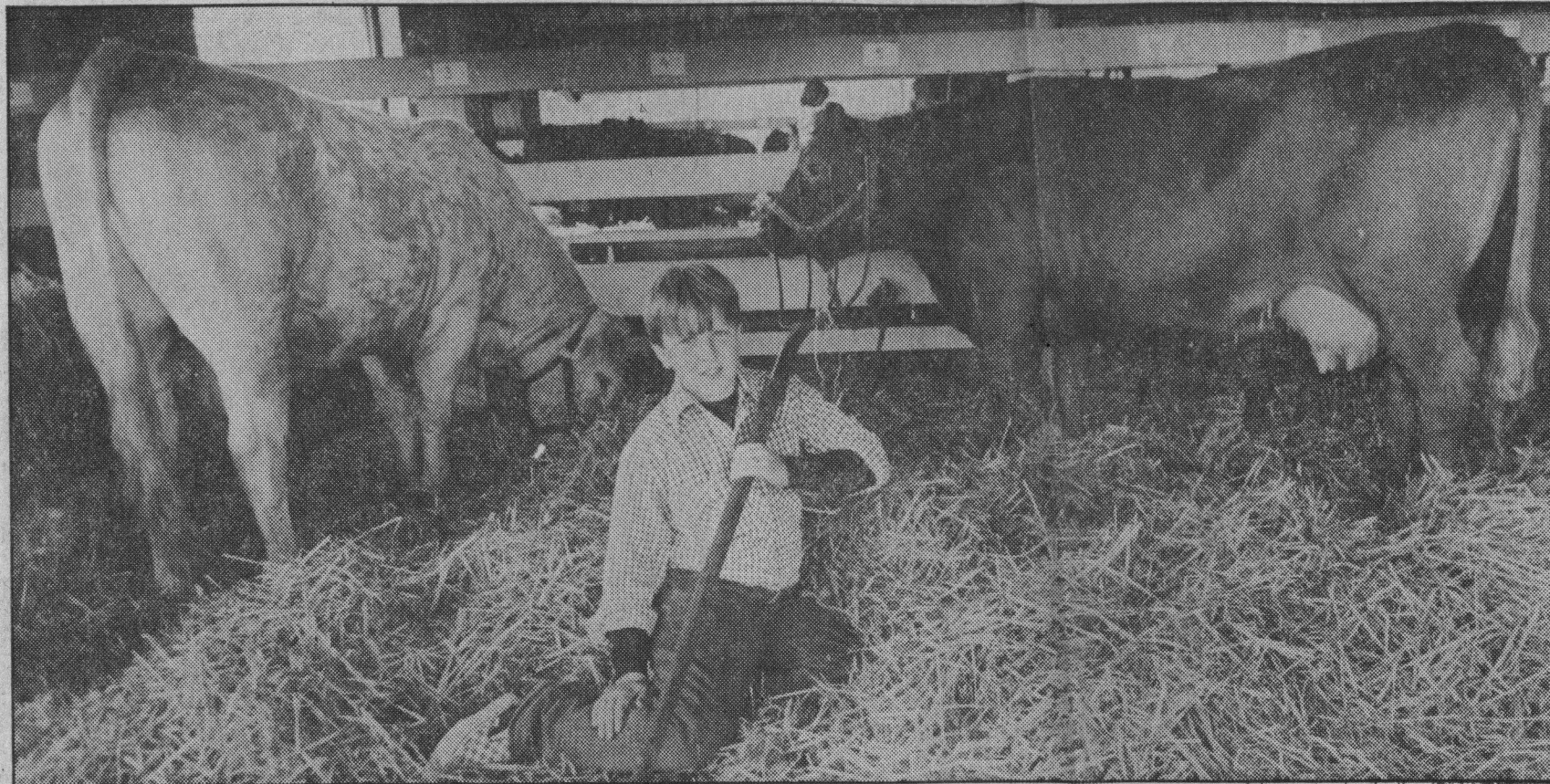


Tree 'n Sea Living

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The face of farming's future shines brightly at the fair





Photos by Bill Lovejoy



THE FOOD CHAIN AS we moderns know it is somewhat removed from our forebearers' experience of chasing down small animals and foraging for berries.

We rely on a specific group of people to provide us with our daily bread — not to mention our daily sirloin, our daily cottage cheese or our daily lamb chop.

Farming. Like the bumper sticker says, it's everybody's bread and butter. And unlike data technicians or orthodontists, farmers grow into their work at a young age.

The Santa Cruz County Fair is their coming-out party — a chance for the 4-H clubs and Future Farmers of America to show their stuff.

These youngsters have been toiling for months on their animals, making sure they meet top agricultural standards, lavishing them with attention — all so they can be sold at the Junior Livestock Auction today and shipped to the slaughterhouse next week.

"We call it Sob Day," says Stacey Dolan of Castroville as she washed and prepared her steer. "Everybody cries when their animal is sold."

There's money in it for them if they succeed, and a chance to learn the responsibilities of the trade.

Let's hope they learn their lessons well, because unless these future farmers take up where their parents left off, we're all going to be hungry.