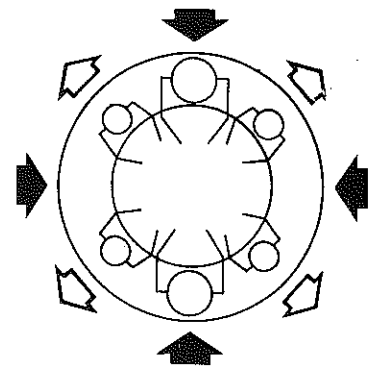
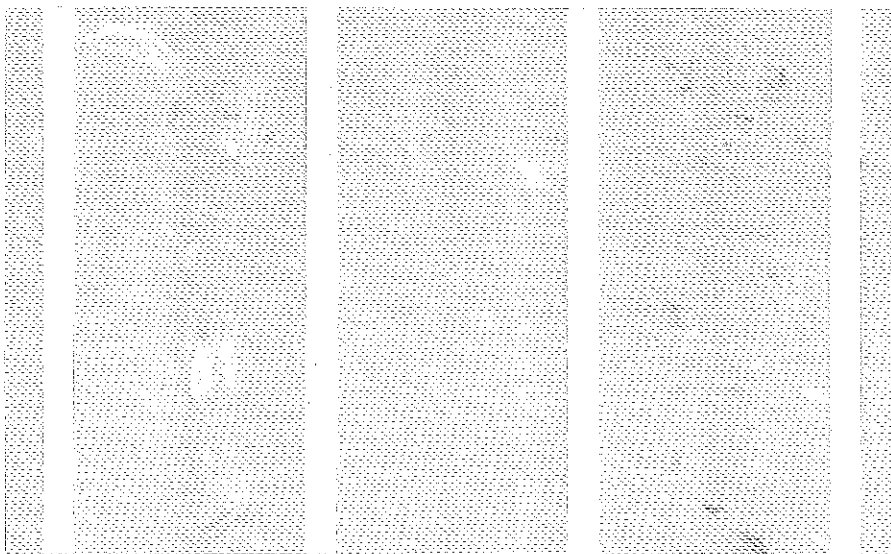


# HOW FARM FAMILIES MAKE DECISIONS



**An interdisciplinary project: Departments of  
Rural Sociology, Agricultural Economics,  
and Manuscripts and University Archives.  
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 14853**

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THE JARSONS

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Family No. 7

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## HOW FARM FAMILIES MAKE DECISIONS

### THE JARSONS

"If the boys want to do it we will start tomorrow."

Tom Jarson

Thomas and Samantha Jarson operate a 200 acre dairy farm in partnership with their youngest son Brian and his wife Debbie. Their operation, located in Ontario County, New York, is organized around a herd of 80 Holsteins. Tom and Samantha derive all their support from the farm. Debbie and Brian obtain additional income from Debbie's full time position as a registered nurse. The Jarsons' oldest sons, Albert and Ricky, have jobs unrelated to agriculture.

Tom, an only child, was born on the present farm in 1919. From a boyhood which included a 4-H livestock project, he made a smooth transition to taking over the family business. After graduating from high school in 1936, he began full time work on the farm. At this time Tom's father suffered from severe arthritis, a debility which had the effect of giving Tom an incentive and opportunity to develop his labor and management skills at an early age.

Clarity  
concerning  
values

Samantha Jarson grew up on a dairy farm located three miles away. During her first interview in 1968, she was definite about what she valued and what she wanted. "As far back as I can remember," she said, "[nursing] was something I was interested in. That's why I went in." Samantha graduated from high school in 1940 and then enrolled in a nursing school for a year and a half. On completing her training, she worked for a year as a nurse and then returned home to work in a nearby defense plant. Asked why she took this job, Mrs. Jarson replied that factory work paid more and that the money was needed because she and Tom were planning on marriage.

Collecting  
relevant  
information

The Jarsons had a long acquaintance. They met at a church function and dated for 5 years before they married in 1944. This lengthy courtship reflects a basic characteristic of their decision making; they make commitments only after

being satisfied that they have the relevant information. In marrying Tom, Samantha expected to be involved in farming for the rest of her life. Reflecting on this commitment in 1968, she emphasized her ability to cope: "It was easier to think about than being most anything else because I understood the hardships of farming. My folks were farmers."

#### FIRST STAGE

After the wedding, the Jarsons moved into a tenant house located on the farm, where they resided as long as Tom's parents lived in the main house. Both generations wanted to increase farm income. With this purpose in mind, they purchased an adjacent 50 acres in 1955, thereby expanding the land resource to 200 acres. By this time, the health of Tom's father had declined to the point that he was incapable of doing farm work. His withdrawal left his son and daughter-in-law in charge of the day to day business.

#### The Wife: resource utilization

Tom and Samantha recall that they worked very hard while they lived in the tenant house as they divided their time between maintaining the farm operation and raising three children (Albert was born in 1946; Ricky in 1950; and Brian in 1952). Samantha also worked part time as a private nurse. Even when she had this off-farm job, she managed to work on the farm. In 1968, she said, "Well, Tom's father suddenly didn't do . . . use the tractor at all. There were two tractors. And it seemed a shame to see one tractor setting idle. So I did a lot of fitting one year, and still worked nights, three and four nights a week, and would come home and go out on a tractor and take a little boy with me, to either play in the field, and then I'd come in and grab a sandwich and go to bed for four hours and get up and meet the school bus . . ."

For Tom and Samantha, the transition to ownership occurred much more slowly than the transition to managerial responsibility. It was not until 1959, fifteen years after their marriage, that they were admitted to partial ownership. A joint deed put them in position to obtain long term financing which they used to adapt the cow barn to hold 34 stanchions. The following year, the elder Jarsons recognized the younger generation's increasing involvement in the farm by exchanging houses.

#### MANAGEMENT STYLES

The Jarsons' business management technique involves a cautious movement from one level of development to another, followed by fine

Costs and  
benefits of  
change and  
stability

tuning the details at the new level. Their approach to change combines caution and thorough investigation. For example, in 1965, after reading farm publications and talking to friends and Extension agents, they bought a used chopper and self unloading wagon. Two years later, they purchased a used windrower. These acquisitions upgraded the family's haying operation which has previously utilized a mower and rake, but Tom and Samantha did not instigate these improvements until their old machinery was completely depreciated. The new system had already been proven on other farms. As Tom said in 1968, "By putting in windrows, it seems to work out pretty good. This isn't a speedy operation we have for hay, but it is easy and I think we're putting out some good quality hay."

The fact that the Jarsons did not adopt the most recent haying methods points out another aspect of their management. They are wary of ventures that may jeopardize the benefits of stability. Asked in 1970 whether she considered herself to be an early or late adopter of new technology, Samantha replied, "Oh late. . . first appearances aren't usually too good or too welcome." Few changes occurred in the dairy operation between 1958, the time stanchions were added, and 1971; it was not clear that resources were becoming available which would offset the risks associated with increased debt and the stress involved in reorganizing management to accommodate to change. Alterations that were made were adjustments to circumstance.

Accommodating  
to forces of  
circumstance

For example, in 1969, the plant where the family had delivered milk would no longer accept milk in cans. Although a nearby plant still accepted cans, Tom realized that this would be only a temporary solution. "It was either find another market for milk or put [a] bulk tank in. . . because most producers are going tank now." He bought a vacuum bulk tank with double the needed capacity so that "if we do add on, why, we're all set as far as the tank." Tom also investigated the long term benefit of his purchase. "When you go into a vacuum tank you spend more money for your tank, but it's about the same price in the long run because you don't have to buy a vacuum releaser and pumps that some of them use in order to put the milk into an atmospheric tank."

Guidelines for  
farm family  
education

The Jarsons emphasize long range planning. By basing farm decisions on their family situation, they have developed a dairy operation which has met their needs for over 30 years. Tom and Samantha realized

that the effective running of the farm would require their children's labor and management. They sought to develop relevant skills in their children and hoped that at least one of their sons would eventually decide to continue on the farm. On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Jarson wanted to give the boys latitude to pursue other careers. For this reason, they did not push them into doing chores. They paid them for their work, let them spend their earnings as they pleased, and accepted their off-farm involvements. They did not condemn their performances. Samantha said in 1968, "Maybe they see they've done a pretty bum job. But when things don't get planted straight or plowed straight or something, my husband just says, 'Well, I've got cheap help.' And it's true. We have some acquaintances that don't think like that. Everything has to be right or it's dragged up, you know, sort of no goof show. And their children don't . . . don't appreciate it." With this combination of parental guidance, self motivation, and freedom to make mistakes, the boys mastered many aspects of the farm operation. They learned to plant and harvest hay and corn, clean the barn, and feed the animals. They also learned how to milk cows. By 1960, they were able to greet their father on his 41st birthday with a sign which read: "Happy Birthday. Go Back to Bed, Dad." Beginning that day, the boys assumed responsibility for the farm on Sunday mornings.

Use of  
external  
educational  
services

The effective use of organizations also served to sharpen the children's skills. All of the Jarson boys were active in 4-H projects. Albert and Ricky raised beef cattle. Brian tended sheep. He also participated in Future Farmers of America. Unlike his brothers, he met the majority of his friends through these groups. Brian began raising Southdowns when he was 8 years old. Later, he switched to Oxfords. Tom and Samantha were eager to support his efforts.

Parents  
as  
Teachers

They became involved with the sheep and gradually incorporated the project into the family routine. Mr. Jarson helped Brian handle the flock and provided the rations. Mrs. Jarson supplied managerial assistance. In 1968, she said, "He and I [are] in half and half, so to speak . . . And we keep books on it as a separate project, but gradually, he's taking over the business, and can't wait to get it all his." Samantha taught Brian to keep breeding and feeding records, how to select quality animals and register them, and when to buy and sell. Working with sheep gave Brian a basic introduction to animal husbandry; it also gave him the opportunity to take responsibility for a farm operation in a sheltered situation.

### DIFFERENCES IN MANAGEMENT

In general, Tom and Samantha agreed about their aspirations and what would be required to achieve their goals. However, there are several differences between Mr. and Mrs. Jarson's management styles. Tom was content to maintain a holding operation - one that was constant through time. Although he felt that the retention of legal ownership by his parents prevented Samantha and him from making desirable changes, unlike his wife, he felt secure on the farm. He had lived there all his life and was confident that he and Samantha would eventually inherit the farm. He was willing to defer some of the economic rewards until then. Mr. Jarson enjoys solving problems associated with a small business and does not strive to be the best or to have the most attractive dairy. He values relaxation. Tom knows that leaving a few acres of corn unharvested or taking months to repair something in the barn are not good farming practices but he doesn't get particularly upset about it. Repeatedly during interviews, Tom referred to himself as being "old fashioned." In 1974, he said, "I can see in the past, I've been a little bit easy going probably. Maybe haven't pushed myself as much as I could." He does not seem to be given to regrets. When asked if given the opportunity, would he do things differently, he replied, "I don't know, I'm not sure." In 1977, he again acknowledged that it was his style to move slowly. "As far as I'm concerned," he said, "I probably make less mistakes that way."

Organizational  
responsiveness  
to individual  
needs

Samantha's keen awareness of her position as an outsider on the farm left her less satisfied than her husband. She had married into a family which had been farming the same land for three generations, and she had married an only child. The symbolic significance of living in a tenant house away from the center of activity did not escape her. She and Tom were excluded from land ownership even though they were responsible for the operation of the farm. Hence, for many years, two distinct families directed the utilization of resources; Tom's parents exercised long term financial control through property ownership. Tom and Samantha were in charge of running the farm within that limit. There was some integration, however, between these two networks; Tom's labor and management skills were shared in common. Even though they had limited financial leverage, Tom and the children were accepted by Tom's parents and therefore able to participate in both systems. Samantha believed that she was denied this flexibility. She felt that Tom's parents did not consider her as an equal member of the family. She felt restricted to the position of tenant, and she disapproved of the effect this exclusion had on the farm operation.



It made her and her children into under utilized resources. Because Mrs. Jarson felt that she was working on somebody's else's farm, she was not anxious for her children to work in the barns. She did not want them to provide free labor for somebody else's business. Because she felt like an outsider, Mrs. Jarson took an off-farm job.

Samantha agrees with her husband that caution is a necessary prerequisite to instigating change, but she is more inclined than Tom to take into account the risk involved in passing up opportunity. She would have preferred a faster development of farm resources during the first fifteen years. She believed that the attitudes of Tom's parents encumbered them from remaining competitive in the midst of agricultural modernization.

Needs,  
values and  
resource  
utilization

Mrs. Jarson insists on finishing tasks she has started. She once commented, "I'm pretty apt to think quite a while before I do something. I decide that's it, and then, I just do it." In this fashion, she determined to go to work. Samantha did not especially enjoy her job; and resented taking off-farm employment because she did not have sufficient credibility to obtain changes that might have increased farm income. Nevertheless, she did not withdraw her energy and interest from the farm. She accepted the fact that her efforts were still needed, so she continued to work in the barns and fields and to contribute her managerial expertise.

Reward  
management

Given this situation, the off-farm work was beneficial to the family. Samantha derived a sense of independence and adequacy from having her own income. Although she used most of her salary for medical and dental services, furniture and other home improvements, she enjoyed exercising this discretion. Mrs. Jarson placed her earnings in a joint account, but, as she said in 1968, "I have his name on the account, and he has an account with his name and my name on. But we recognize where the money came from, whose it is. And he wouldn't think for a minute, I'm sure, of going out and getting . . . anything out of my account without asking."

Values as  
guide in  
resource  
allocation

One of Mrs. Jarson's chief priorities is the maintenance of order in house, farm, and family; an acceptable home is part of a well managed farm. In 1970, she said, "Well, I think your family is far more important to you than prosperity . . . but you're miserable without comforts too . . . I

think a half way decent run home is a very important thing, or should be, to a family . . ." Samantha did not like corn left in the field or machinery lying on the lawn. She believed it was dangerous and inefficient to be living in a tenant house where it was impossible to keep an eye on the stock or be immediately available in an emergency.

Samantha had other reasons for being dissatisfied during the 1950's and 1960's. Besides being less efficient than she desired, the farm looked inefficient. Mrs. Jarson notes that appearances are important to her. She says, "I crave a neat place." In 1968, she implied that she did not respect some people who were commonly viewed as successes. "I'd see some of the people getting ahead, not just in farming but in the world, who are going on and getting their good education, putting that terribly first, oh just terribly. And their homes are unkempt." When Samantha was asked that same year to discuss other people's evaluations of herself, she replied, "Oh, I never give it a thought," but she went on to say, "I think it hurts terribly to be disliked, if you recognize that you are disliked or not respected. I think that it would hurt terribly . . ." Consistent with this view, when she went back to work when Brian was 4, Mrs. Jarson chose night shifts. "I don't want the children to think that oh here's another mother, you know, and everybody thinks oh, she shouldn't be working. The children need her." Samantha was embarrassed to be seen on a sloppy farm just as she would be embarrassed by the arrival of unexpected visitors if the house were disorganized.

#### SECOND STAGE

When members of the Farm Family Project first met the Jarsons in 1967, some of the farm practices suggested that the family was on the way out of farming. Machinery was outdated; land was under utilized. The dairy operation seemed to be on a downward spiral, and it appeared that Mrs. and Mr. Jarson lacked the will to reverse this trend. At the same time, it was clear that soil and topography were not limiting factors; most of the 190 acres of tillable land are Honeoye soil well suited for corn and hay production. It was also obvious that the Jarsons were not limited by insufficient information concerning current practices in dairy farming. Although they had been considering possibilities for expansion, the family seemed unable to agree about direction or timing.

Identifying the critical components in decisions

Examination of the situation six years later revealed that the Jarsons were well aware in 1968 of alternatives for increasing productivity and had developed a long range management plan.

However, they were unwilling to execute the plan because of uncertainty about the human resources which would be available for the expanded operation. In effect, the Jarsons decided in 1968 to delay adoption until this uncertainty was eliminated, either by the children deciding to take up other work or by one of them acquiring the necessary skills and making a commitment to join with the parents in farming. There proved to be no reason for a fast decision. There were no imposing debts or pressing problems. Production was sufficient to meet family needs and finance the alterations already made. The principal risk in maintaining a holding operation, of particular concern to Mr. Jarson, was the limited potential it offered for attracting any of the children into continuity on the farm.

In 1968, Mr. Jarson said, "Oh yeah, I've been figuring [how to expand] for six years. Four years ago, I was about ready to dive in. Only the oldest boy don't care about farming, and I don't know as I want to be spending the next fifty years paying off something like that. If the boys want to do it, we'll start tomorrow . . ." Mr. Jarson might have begun changing over the barn, in the hope that a new operation would attract one of his sons, but Mrs. Jarson emphasized a counter risk--being stuck with a level of operation she and Tom would not want to sustain by themselves. Unless one of the boys was going to continue on the farm, she preferred to limit changes to perfecting the current system. "And it just seemed as though that was something we should have done twenty years ago, not now," she said in 1968, "And if there wasn't ingenuity enough to do it then, why get all stormed up now, you know, when you don't even know what your children want to do . . ." In 1970, she reiterated, "Well, there was a barn on paper at one time. A new barn that sort of blew up because I just couldn't see a new barn at the time. . . At least we weren't. . .to full capacity in the barn we had which seemed ridiculous to put a new one. . ."

### THIRD STAGE: UNIFICATION AND EXPANSION

Creating individual  
and system opportunities  
at limited risk

By 1971, Albert had moved to Florida and was working as a mechanic; Ricky had become a lineman for the local electric company. Brian had decided to stay in dairy farming. At this time, the Jarsons constructed a new milk house that could accommodate their old tank, added a free stall barn for 80 cows, and purchased about 40 head of cattle, bringing their milking herd to 80. Although Brian's interest in continuity provided the impetus for expansion, Tom and Samantha did not expect a long term commitment from him. They were willing to act on the basis of shared interests, family trust and affection, and the knowledge that they would have to

update their operation in any event in order to stay in farming. In 1978, Tom said, "Well, we had that idea [Brian's coming into partnership], and if he did, that [expanding] was what we should do and if he didn't, why I figured I could handle it for a while anyway." Although he and Samantha were "quite sure" that Brian would stay on the farm, they were prepared to provide the labor and management if he decided to do something else. The fact that Tom's parents agreed at this time to relinquish their ownership in the farm and accept a monthly income from the gross earnings facilitated this step. The deed to the farm was changed. As sole owners, Tom and Samantha borrowed \$55,000 from a local bank to finance expansion.

Accommodations  
on objectives  
and procedures

In planning the modernization, the Jarsons were able to compromise when they differed about details. Tom and Brian consulted magazines and other farmers and talked to extension agents. The system they developed was a synthesis of their thinking, and was notably cost efficient.

The family was proud of their accomplishment. Tom and Brian cut expenses by avoiding automation and equipment where status was part of the benefit. They used a trench type self-feeding silo and surfaced the free stalls with indoor-outdoor carpeting. "This cost me about five dollars to install and rubber would cost me about thirty . . .", Tom explained, "They're using artificial turf and they're using cow mats and so far, they've decided that their indoor-outdoor carpets are working as well as do any of them." The Jarsons also saved on construction by contracting with friends. They used an acquaintance, the same man who had modified their barn in 1959, to construct their free stalls. Since this was the first set up of this type that he had built, the Jarsons obtained a substantial discount.

Priority of  
internal  
resources

The Jarsons' organization of their farm operation around the values and needs of family members gives them a basis for evaluating the relevance of services provided by suppliers. Once the resources for expansion were in place, they were willing to turn to credit agencies for a long term loan, yet they did not increase their fire or life insurance coverage to compensate for the increased value of their buildings and labor. In 1978, Tom said, "I always figured. . . what we invested was investing in the farm and that was just as good as putting it in an insurance policy." The family, however, does not risk the cost of medical care. Tom, Samantha, and Brian have Blue Cross and Blue Shield. They took out these policies through the Dairymen's League, the organization through which they market their milk.

Impact of son's  
increasing ability  
and credibility

Brian's decision to work in partnership with his parents unified the management of the farm. The pace has changed. Brian likes to solve problems and adopt solutions as soon as possible. Mr. and Mrs. Jarson try to accommodate their son's desire both out of affection and respect for his growing management skills. In 1978, Tom said, "You talk to Brian, you know, he says well, things will be higher next year so you might as well do them this year. That's the difference between his thoughts and mine maybe." Under this impetus, Tom and Samantha have adopted changes more quickly. On the other hand, Mr. Jarson's caution has moderated his son's initial enthusiasm, giving everybody time and incentive to search for the best solution. Samantha appreciates what is essentially a system of checks and balances. "It's good to have an older person that's been around," she commented, "I wouldn't want to see Tom give up total reins to this operation now.. ."

Since Brian came into partnership, Samantha has become a common reference point between her husband and son. Like Brian, she likes to finish projects as quickly as possible. Like Tom, she is a deliberate decision maker. Her management style is adapted to the business approach of her husband and son. Samantha points out that she is less directly involved in the details of decisions.

Providing "space"  
for son's further  
development

In 1978, she said, "I think all the management decisions and everything that goes on at the barn is between the two men and I never get mixed up in it, I think from now on all that stuff is theirs to do you know. I'll fit in and get parts. I'll do anything that if there's someone sick I'll work - do their job, if I can, the best I can, but as for me saying 'this is right' or 'no to this' or take a part in those decisions in the farm, I think I'm out of place." Samantha's account of her decision making reflects her sense of the socially approved role of the farm wife. It also reflects her general satisfaction with the way the business is functioning. Samantha knows that the business is operating cohesively and efficiently because she handles the bookkeeping. She no longer feels pressured to earn money off the farm. Now, she devotes her time to activities she enjoys. She sews for her granddaughter (Albert's child born in 1977), keeps the house in order, and tends the garden. Mrs. Jarson is surprised at how content she is. In 1978, she commented, "I never thought I'd be this happy home." Although she is less involved in the range of management decisions, her interest, if anything, has increased. Samantha is informed about what is happening and what is planned.

Like her mother-in-law, Debbie supports Tom's and Brian's efforts to improve the operation. She too was born on a farm (in 1956), but her parents subsequently took up other work. Debbie was introduced to Brian by her brother. She married him in 1976 after dating him for several years and then moved into a trailer located on the farm which had been occupied by Ricky. Asked in 1978 how she felt about her husband's vocation, Debbie replied, "I always liked farming. . .It's exciting. . .I love animals very much." In a comment reminiscent of her mother-in-law, she noted that working on a dairy farm requires long, irregular hours.

Developing  
options for  
resource use

After graduating from high school, Debbie enrolled for nurses training at a community college located an hour from home. She boarded in a student dormitory during the week and returned to the farm on weekends. Although Brian and she found this separation difficult, they accommodated to the situation. In 1977, Brian said, "I can't say as we like it but she's not about to quit, and I guess I'm not interested in her quitting."

Becoming integrated  
into family system

Because she was away most of the week and new to the family, Debbie was not familiar with what was happening on the farm the first year she was married. She understood the basic situation but could not discuss specific problems or goals. Now that she lives on the farm, her awareness in these matters is increasing. In 1978, she talked about her husband's interest in breeding. She also discussed direct farm experiences. Debbie sometimes accompanies Brian to the milking parlor, and helps with chores when Tom and Samantha are away. Last spring, she rode on the tractor while Brian plowed and planted. She has picked up machinery parts and run errands ever since she started dating Brian. Although Debbie is interested in the farm, she does not expect that involvement in the farm will replace nursing. She enjoys her job and obtains satisfaction from helping people.

Management  
strategy

Brian's growing participation in farm decisions has contributed to the increase in his wife's knowledge of the operation. When he first entered into partnership, he wanted to increase the number of cows, but taking an artificial insemination course in 1973 changed his thinking. Through experience as an inseminator, Brian became a distributor for Curtiss Breeding Service. In this work, he has visited other farms and observed different methods of farming. He has come to appreciate the benefits of registered animals.

Brian now thinks that breeding is the best route to improving herd efficiency. In 1978, he said, "I'm not very keen on looking just at production." He contends that dairymen pay for high production by reducing the number of productive years. He feels that good management involves lowering replacement costs by concentrating on registered cows that have been bred for overall excellence and constant, above average production.

Division of  
responsibility

Stemming from his interest in husbandry and breeding, Brian manages the herd. He does the stud selection, inseminating, milking, and culling. Tom handles the crops and barn maintenance. Within this overall division of management responsibility, each enjoys considerable freedom about details. Brian says, "The work I do, I guess, I do it my way, and the work he does, he does his way. . ." Father and son have confidence in each other. At one point, Brian switched the cows onto a 1 a.m. and 1 p.m. milking regime. Mr. Jarson never liked the idea, but he acknowledged that since his son was doing the milking, he should set the schedule.

FOURTH STAGE: FURTHER EXPANSION

Utilizing labor -  
management surplus

Brian's influence is clearly evident in the most recent developments on the farm. When the Jarsons switched to free stalls in 1971, they created a long term option by leaving room for additional housing. In 1977, they brought the barns into phase with the expanded management resource which resulted from Brian's growing skills and the capacity of the two generations to cooperate. They built a roof over the holding area previously open to the weather, constructed another set of free stalls in an area used only for storage, added another feed bunk, and bought a mixer wagon. They then separated the herd into two groups for feeding purposes. They further subdivided the high producers by means of a magnet operated feeder which allows the best milkers to obtain additional rations. The Jarsons then adopted DHIA testing. This service became a useful management tool once the herd was divided. As Brian said a few months before the change, "As far as going on tests, it wouldn't help us a great deal at this point because we can't really find the way to get the most out of that kind of service." In what is now a pattern of their management, the Jarsons allowed for the possibility of further growth.

Mr. Jarson planned to finance the most recent expansion through the local commercial bank he had been using for years. Characteristically,

he chose to stick with a local service which he had proved useful. Less characteristically, he was unaware that another organization was better suited to his needs. The local bank agreed to the loan, but suggested he try the Farmer's Home Administration which offered lower interest rates. Tom eventually obtained the loan from F.H.A.

#### LABOR AND MANAGEMENT REORGANIZED

Satisfaction with  
new management  
methods

The Jarsons' current emphasis on upgrading the level of care for their animals has entailed revising other facets of farm management. Before 1978, they practiced low cost farming. Now, they are increasing their investment in expectation of greater returns. This shift reflects Brian's input, for Tom has guarded against the possibility of becoming over equipped. He once commented when discussing plans for the farm, "And I think this is one thing that we want to steer away from is so much equipment. Kill you." Mr. Jarson has become a party to increasing the amount of equipment. He shares Brian's desire to have a modern and competitive dairy farm and acknowledges that he will have to rely more heavily on machinery in order to achieve this goal.

In getting equipped, Tom and Brian have demonstrated a capacity for accommodation. If they don't agree, they usually resolve their differences to everybody's satisfaction. For example, Brian wanted to install cow immobilizers, called lockups, between the new stalls and the feed bunk to facilitate antibiotic treatment, trimming feet, and providing aid during pregnancy. Tom wanted a manure lagoon. In 1978, he observed, "I don't like drawing manure every day and some of our equipment was getting pretty well ready to retire, and if we do add on more cows, the more cows you put on, why the bigger job it is to draw out everyday, especially in the winter. . .We got a good set up out here for it. . .It's pretty near a perfect place to build a lagoon. . .It's probably the most economical way to go. . ." Brian thought that the lagoon would have to be agitated and spread at a time that would conflict with plowing and planting. Tom doubted that lock ups would be worth the expense.

Increased  
resources aid  
accommodation

Given the assets available, Tom and Brian were not forced to choose; each got what he wanted. In 1977, the immobilizers were installed, and a lagoon large enough to handle the manure from 125 cows was dug. The Jarsons purchased a 3,000 gallon slurry spreader and a manure agitator. They bought this equipment, like the mixer wagon, at dealership price



when Tom agreed to become a salesman for these machines.

Accommodation  
on major and  
satellite decisions

The purchase of tractors also demonstrates how Tom and Brian cooperate. In 1972, Tom bought a used 80 horsepower Cockshutt which he had been renting from a friend. He mulled over this purchase for a year before he concluded that he needed the extra power and dual wheels to fill his silo. Before this, the Jarsons had been using tractors which Tom called "antiques", the newest one being a 1958 model. In 1976, the family bought a new Case 970, a five plow tractor. Father and son felt they needed the additional power to spread manure, fill the trench silo and do the plowing. They had expected to buy a used model, but, as Tom said in 1977, "There just didn't seem to be any good buys in used tractors." To reduce cost, the family purchased a demonstrator. Although Mr. Jarson was originally opposed to a cab, he gave way to Brian's desire to have one and now thinks the \$2,000 was well spent. He commented that having a cab made it much more pleasant to work in the winter.

The Jarsons' efforts have resulted in an impressive increase in milk production. Between 1974 and 1979, the herd average rose from 12,000 to approximately 16,000 lbs. of milk per cow annually. The family is now obtaining more milk from fewer cows. Over the past year, they reduced their number of milkers from 90 to 80. They have maintained a steady income despite increased overhead. Between 1973 and 1974, their labor income per man, allowing 7% interest on investment, rose from \$17,000 annually to \$19,000. The new worth of the operation during this same period increased from \$185,000 to \$275,000.

#### SATISFACTIONS

Values  
and  
rewards

The Jarsons enjoy their family business. They appreciate the flexibility that working with family members offers. Brian's job with Curtiss takes him on the road about 4 days a month. Although he tries to go between milkings, his father does the milking if he is late in returning. Tom and Samantha travel to Florida every March to visit Albert and his family and to see Samantha's mother. While they are away, Brian takes care of the farm. The Jarsons know that they can depend on each other's cooperation and competence. When Brian and Debbie were planning to attend an artificial insemination conference in the mid-west in the autumn of 1978, they knew Tom and Samantha would cover their farm duties.

The Jarsons prefer to limit their labor force to family members, but they do not strive for autonomy. They hire an accountant to calculate the income tax, and they sometimes employ help to do plowing. When the Jarsons need the services of people who are not family members, they give the work to friends. They hired the son of the man who built the free stalls to change over the barn in 1977. Until recently, they contracted with a friend to raise heifers. Although the Jarsons were satisfied with this arrangement, they discontinued using his service. It had become too expensive, and they were able to raise some calves in their expanded barn. They were also able to involve another family member in this aspect of the business. In 1976, Ricky bought a 60 acre farm about 20 miles from his parents which he operates for recreation. He now raises some heifers for the family.

Ricky's farm and the family's working vacations illustrate another important characteristic of the Jarsons; they combine business and pleasure. The Jarsons enjoy animals. They raise about 8 pigs a year which they feed with milk that is unsuited for sale because it contains antibiotics. They care for these pigs to utilize what would otherwise be wasted, and because they think it is fun. Similarly, the Jarsons enjoyed Brian's sheep. In 1969, Tom and Samantha travelled to Michigan to look at Oxfords and returned with a ram. When Brian began to shift his interest to cows, Tom started to look after the flock. He observed, "I've always liked to fool around with sheep a little." The entire family was sad in 1976 when they sold the Oxfords. That decision was prompted by a very good offer and by Brian's feeling that he could not devote enough time to them.

Tom and Brian like working the land and caring for animals more than their wives do, but Samantha and Debbie enjoy living in the country. They find recreation in home related activities. In 1979, Debbie mentioned that she thought living on a farm provided a secure and healthy environment for a family. "He'll [Brian] never get laid off. . . I think it's the best place to raise kids, you've got all this land and there's no close neighbors. You're not gonna have all those little cliques as you do in the cities. Who's gonna compete against who, you know. Well I've gotta do this because my friend does this." Occasionally, both families visit friends. Debbie sees her family frequently. She also belongs to a bowling league. None of the Jarsons are involved in community groups or church organizations, with one important exception: Tom and Brian are volunteer firemen.

#### CONFIRMING THE PARTNERSHIP

Tom and Samantha are now transferring ownership to

Ambiguity  
about place  
of "outsider"  
in system

the younger generation. Debbie's role on the farm remains uncertain. She and Brian are expecting their first child, and the presence of a baby may affect her career. Currently, she plans to take three months' maternity leave and then return to work half-time. She hopes that her family will help babysit so she can return to nursing. At this point, it is not clear how Brian would react in the event his wife desired a very active part on the farm. The evidence is mixed. Although the family pattern is one of accommodation, Brian commented in past interviews that it was important to separate business considerations from one's personal feelings. He mentioned that he thought that women were more emotional than men. Brian seems to categorize some work along sexual lines, but it is not clear to what extent he considers farm tasks to be in the male domain.

Another reason why Debbie's future role is uncertain is because her incorporation into the family system is not yet complete. This is somewhat ironic because Tom and Samantha seem determined not to repeat their own experience. They have already used Cooperative Extension's estate planning service to draw up legal arrangements for the partnership. Tom and Brian each own half of the equipment and half of the herd, and they both draw the same amount each month from the gross farm earnings. Consistent with their view about the integration of family and business relationships, Tom and Samantha do not believe that Brian should have to buy his way into the partnership. They have given him his share outright. In 1977, Mr. Jarson said, "I can't see any reason for his having to go to a bank and borrowing several thousand dollars and paying the bank interest for the rest of his life." Legal arrangements have been easier to establish than family ties. Although the relationship between Debbie and her in-laws is friendly and accepting, it is not yet totally comfortable. Debbie is still the new comer. However, after the baby is born, she will no longer be the newest Jarson.

Transition:  
affection as  
facilitator and  
constraint

The entire family is excited about the baby's arrival. Already, Brian is thinking of family continuity. He mentioned that he was hoping for a son who would take an interest in dairy farming. Tom and Samantha want to facilitate this transition. They expect to move out of the main house so Debbie and Brian can have more room and be closer to the center of action. Samantha said in 1978,

"I think that the young people should be near the barn where they can see things as they gradually step out. . .this is the home base. And if he's eventually going to take over, then this is where he should be." That same year, Mr. Jarson said, "If I could afford it today, I'd go hire me somebody to build me a house somewheres on this place right quick. I'd move right out tomorrow if I could."

Mr. and Mrs. Jarson remember how they disliked living away from the heart of the farm, but they are finding withdrawal to be difficult. They have worked hard to create a home that is comfortable and attractive. They have papered and painted walls, sanded floors and remodeled rooms. Samantha planned and supervised the construction of a modern kitchen which has subsequently become one of her greatest joys. Tom converted the basement into a pool room. Brian and Debbie would welcome living in the main house. It would be more convenient and make it easier to incorporate a small child into the farm routine. On the other hand, they understand that it is hard for Tom and Samantha to leave a place where they have invested so much of their lives. They realize that making arrangements for a new home might take several years.

Mr. and Mrs. Jarson do not plan on changing the deed to the farm in the immediate future. They want Brian to gain a little more managerial expertise before doing this, and they have not decided how they will divide their estate among their sons. They want to be fair to everybody. On the other hand, they realize that Brian will need the financial leverage of owning the land just as they did. As Samantha said in 1978, "We want him to be up equal to us; we don't want to put him down, you know brow-beat him down as the little man, you know. We want him to grow up fast and. . .I guess it takes time to develop your management mind. . .I know how he feels, you know. . .If you're worth your salt, you're worth being able to think and run something on your own. . .you can't just stay that way, waiting for somebody to die and leave it to you. . ."

SUMMARY

The Jarson family business is organized around the needs and abilities of family members. Making management decisions, therefore, begins with assessing the family's human resource. The willingness and ability of family members to commit their labor and management skills to achieving particular objectives determines how other resources are utilized. Given the aspirations and values in the Jarson family, organizing the business around the human resource has involved long-range planning in order to match changing needs and abilities of family members, as children and adults grow older, with other resources. Information has been collected, most notably by Mr. Jarson, tested for reliability and assembled into management options well in advance of the need to choose between these options. Consequently, the process of evaluating human resources and acquiring other resources which are complementary seems to have been relaxed. Stress in the Jarson family has been associated with different evaluations of the human resource.

In developing management options, the Jarsons have been skillful users of educational services: 4-H, other Cooperative Extension programs, other farmers, suppliers of credit and other farm services, and of each other. They have kept themselves informed about the state of the art of dairy farming but have been guided by their assessment of their internal resources in selecting external resources and timing adoption. The Jarsons are cautious decision makers in the sense that they are not pushing the limits of their knowledge.

The method of decision making, basically by consensus, is well adapted to one of the principal sources of satisfaction for family members: working with other family members in farm related activity. Perhaps it is because the major decisions are taken with such deliberation in matching family needs and abilities with other resources that it has not been difficult for family members to validate decisions - that is, to behave in ways consistent with the content of decisions.

The method of decision making is also compatible with the personalities of Tom and Samantha Jarson. Tom contributes flexibility to decision making. Satisfaction in farming has not depended upon having things his way. He seemed to find enjoyment when the farm operation was much less successful, judged by economic criteria. Mrs. Jarson contributes an insistence upon calling things what they are. That quality has served to eliminate illusion from decisions which require specificity. Although trust, based upon affection and long acquaintance, has sustained the Jarsons' method of making major decisions, thanks to Mrs. Jarson, the capacity of trust as a foundation for decisions has not been exceeded.

The study leaves the authors wondering about what might have been at an earlier stage in the Jarson family. Of course, it is pure speculation, but just suppose that Mrs. Jarson had felt that she was welcomed by Tom's parents.