



## **Farm Boys: Lives of Gay Men from the Rural Midwest**

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Homosexuality is often seen as a purely urban experience, far removed from rural and small-town life. *Farm Boys* undermines that cliché by telling the stories of more than three dozen gay men, ranging in age from 24 to 84, who grew up in farm families in the midwestern United States. Whether painful, funny, or matter-of-fact, these plain-spoken accounts will move and educate any reader, gay or not, from farm or city.

“When I was fifteen, the milkman who came to get our milk was beautiful. This is when I was really getting horny to do something with another guy. I waited every day for him to come. I couldn’t even talk to him, couldn’t think of anything to say. I just stood there, watching him, wondering if he knew why.”—Henry Bauer, Minnesota

“When I go back home, I feel a real connection with the land—a tremendous feeling, spiritual in a way. It makes me want to go out into a field and take my shoes off and put my feet right on the dirt, establish a real physical connection with that place. I get homesick a lot, but I don’t know if I could ever go back there and live. It’s not the kind of place that would welcome me if I lived openly, the way that I would like to live. I would be shunned.”—Martin Scherz, Nebraska

“If there is a checklist to see if your kid is queer, I must have hit every one of them—all sorts of big warning signs. I was always interested in a lot of the traditional queen things—clothes, cooking, academics, music, theater. A farm boy listening to show tunes? My parents must have seen it coming.”—Joe Shulka, Wisconsin

“My favorite show when I was growing up was ‘The Waltons’. The show’s values comforted me, and I identified with John-Boy, the sensitive son who wanted to be a writer. He belonged there on the mountain with his family, yet he sensed that he was different and that he was often misunderstood. Sometimes I still feel like a misfit, even with gay people.”—Connie Sanders, Illinois

“Agriculture is my life. I like working with farm people, although they don’t really understand me. When I retire I want the word to get out [that I’m gay] to the people I’ve worked with—the dairy producers, the veterinarians, the feed salesmen, the guys at the co-ops. They’re going to be shocked, but their eyes are going to be opened.”—James Heckman, Indiana

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