

***“MEET ME AT THE FAIR!”***  
**THE JACKSON COUNTY FAIR**



**Falls History Project 2008**

# THE FALLS HISTORY PROJECT

## **INTRODUCTION**

How do we actively engage students in the study of history? This is the ongoing challenge that history teachers must face at the secondary level. Historian David Blight of Amherst College suggests that “all historical experience . . . must be imagined before it can be understood.” One way to engage students and their imaginations more fully is to connect them to the actual process of “doing” history and relate that process to an increased understanding of their local environment. Indeed, the story of Black River Falls and the surrounding area provides a rich and diverse landscape for historical research.

## **OVERVIEW**

As a symbolic beginning for this project in 2000, we established a permanent display at BRFHS related to Corporal Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr., a graduate who received the Medal of Honor for heroism in the Korean War. His life story offers a compelling example of the power of memory in our community. The Falls History Project research was initiated during the 2001-02 school year with the intention of connecting our students more authentically to the history of our region. From the start our hope has been that the project would involve a number of teachers and students. We introduce our students to the project through various classes within our department and much of the work involves the gathering of oral history. Our 2008 project is the 7th in the series.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT**

### **ORAL HISTORY WORK**

Students who are enrolled in any of our history courses will have the opportunity to become involved in oral history work. The focus of the interviews will depend on the particular aspect of local history that we are dealing with at the time. Our first efforts will be aimed at compiling research related to veterans of the Second World War and the Korean Conflict. We will be working with students on skills related to interviewing, including videotaping and transcribing.

### **RESEARCHING LOCAL DOCUMENTARY SOURCES**

Students will be introduced to the sources of history available at the “History Room” of the BRF Public Library, particularly the microfilm archives of local newspapers. In addition, students with a special interest in HoChunk history will be introduced to the archives of the Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources of the HoChunk Nation located at the Executive Building of the tribe.

### **INDEPENDENT STUDY OFFERING FOR SENIORS**

Since 2001-02 we have had several interns who work exclusively on the project during their senior year. Interns are advanced history students who design a project related to local history and carry it out under the guidance of the FHP advisor.

### **INTERNSHIPS/VOLUNTEER WORK**

We have spoken with Mary Lent and Mary Woods at the Public Library concerning the possibility of summer internships or volunteer work for students at the History Room. We envision this as a possibility for students who may be contemplating studying history beyond high school and have a special interest in learning more about the actual work of historians. We

will also be exploring the possibility of working with the Jackson County Historical Society as we proceed with the project.

#### **DEVELOPING A PERMANENT ARCHIVE AT BRFHS**

Beginning in 2002-03, we established a permanent archive at BRFHS related to the Falls History Project. It is located in the LMC and houses the various research that is compiled through the project.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The Falls History Project offers great potential for furthering history education in our school. We believe that it provides an excellent opportunity for developing connections between the community and the school related to local history.

**Paul S Rykken/ Falls History Project Advisor**

**May 2008**

# FALLS HISTORY PROJECT 2008

IN OUR 2008 PROJECT WE ARE TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE JACKSON COUNTY FAIR. WE HAVE NOT HIGHLIGHTED THE RURAL ASPECT OF OUR LOCAL HISTORY WITH ANY DEPTH, EXCEPT WHEN WE EXAMINED BLACK RIVER FALLS IN THE 1930s. COUNTY FAIRS PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN RURAL LIFE AND OUR FOCUS HERE WAS TO LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF PEOPLE WHO HAD A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO THE FAIR AND THE RURAL LIFE OF OUR REGION.



Max Hart was our 2007-08 intern. Max established himself as an outstanding social studies student throughout his four years at BRFHS. He completed AP US History in his junior year and was involved in many of our electives since his sophomore year as well as the Student Senate. Max also was very active in the FFA organization and served as President during his senior year. He will be attending UW-River Falls in the fall of 2008 and plans to pursue a degree in an Agriculture-related field.

## THIS YEAR'S INTERVIEWEES

Norman and Margie Johnson: Interviewed November 13, 2007

Lillian Hart: Interviewed November 19, 2007

Bob and Jeannine Capaul: Interviewed December 12, 2007

Jerome Laufenberg: Interviewed January 10, 2008

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO OUR PROJECT!

## 2008 Falls History Project: Bob and Jeannine Capual

Interviewer: Max Hart

December 12, 2007



“I guess that’s where I got my start in showing cattle. I started at the small fair and the years go by and your stuff gets better and you think you can go to bigger shows.”

- Bob Capual

Max: It’s December 12, 2007. It’s Wednesday afternoon at about 3:30 P.M. I’m interviewing Bob and Jeannine Capual for the Jackson County Fair for my Black River Falls History project. And Jeannine would you please state your name, your age and the place you were born.

Jeannine: I’m Jeannine Capual. I was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and I’m 72.

Max: Ok. Then your name, age, and place you were born.

Bob: I’m Robert Capual. I’m 82 and I was born on the farm where we live.

Max: Ok. And that’s in Alma Center, Wisconsin?

Bob: Right.

Max: All right I guess I’ll start off the interview with what was the first year you showed at the Jackson County Fair?

Bob: 1935, my first year in 4-H.

Max: How about you Jeannine, did you show anything at the Jackson County Fair?



Bob with his cow in front of the Junior Dairy barn.

Jeannine: Not until the kids were out of 4-H and married and he retired so then I started showing crocheting and that. Otherwise I was behind the scenes help.

Max: Ok. I read that in one of the articles here how you would always stay home and milk cows while Bob would go to the fair with the kids.

Jeannine: That's right.

Max: I was looking at that picture.

Bob: See what good of shape that barn was in back in 35.

Max: I really like this picture right here with all the old cars, you really get the year of that.

Bob: That was when I was ten years old.

Max: Ok. So you showed knitting and crocheting at the fair?

Jeannine: Right I do.

Max: Did you show any animals?

Jeannine: Only if I had to help out in a group showing but otherwise I didn't show anything. I was a city girl.

Max: Oh. So did you grow up in Eau Claire then?

Jeannine: Yes.

Bob: I made a farmer out of her.

Jeannine: I didn't go to a farm until we were married.

Max: How about you. You showed Brown Swiss at the fair?

Bob: Yup.

Max: Did you show anything else at the fair?

Bob: Nope. First we should mention that we've been married for 53 years.

Jeannine: We use to show pigs to though at one time.

Bob: We showed hogs in earlier years. We went out of the pigs and went to breeding good Brown Swiss cattle.

Max: How did your cattle do at the fair?

Bob: Well they did pretty good. We started to show here in Black River at the county fair first. Then the cattle kind of get used to going to fairs and then we'd show them at the bigger fairs. We went to the Minnesota State fair and the Chippewa fair at Marshfield.



Bob on the left his first place yearling standing in front of the Junior Dairy Barn.

Max: That's cool. How old were you when you started showing at the county fair here.

Bob: I was ten years old.

Max: Ok. Then you stopped showing in 1990.

Jeannine: Well he showed for 55 years.

Max: Yup. So I think it was 1990 when you last showed. 55 years that's a long time. The fairgrounds must have changed in the 55 years that you were there?

Bob: It changed a lot. There are only two buildings there now that were there when I started showing. I can remember the cattle barn and the cement block building.

Max: Ok. How about the grand stands? Was it there in 1935 the same one that is there today?

Bob: There was a little red one there before. And the WPA built this one.

Max: What year was the current grandstands build?

Bob: I think it was about 32 or 33. It was in the early 30's anyways.

Max: What were your first memories of the Jackson County fair when you started showing? Something that really sticks out when you were ten years old or eight years old when you went to the fair.

Bob: When I was 11. This picture here was all senior yearlings, all breeds showed in one class and I stood first and there was only one blue ribbon in them days.

Max: Ok. What were your first memories of the county fair when you went there?

Jeannine: I can remember when we first went down there the first fair I went to. They had a dairy parade, where they had floats, different floats and it went around in front of the grandstands. Now they do it with the champions, the grand champions. But this was actually a dairy parade where they had different dairy float and Ludeman's had a dairy float. And my dad was down and he took moving pictures of it on his old 8mm camera with no sound. That was the first thing I remember about the fair. Then the idea of seeing all of the different kinds of cattle. When you are a city girl you don't a lot of cattle. I mean I knew Holsteins and I knew Guernsey's but I hadn't heard about the other kinds.

Bob: There use to be a race track to.

Max: Yup! I interviewed Norman and Margie Johnson, they said the race track would go where the current arena is and then go back out by the baseball fields. It was a half mile race track. Do you remember anything, like the chariot races?

Bob: They had horse races. I remember that.

Max: How would they do those?

Bob: Well they had a two wheel cart.

Jeannine: Like a felky race.

Bob: With a trotting horse or something like the Amish drive.

Jeannine: They still have it at the Marshfield fair, or at least they did a couple years ago.

Max: So would they go around and see who would go the fastest?

Bob: Right.

Max: I read somewhere that they had to unhook the horse from the chariot, ride the horse around the track, come back and hook the wagon back up to the horse.

Bob: No they didn't do that.

Max: Ok. Now how about the Pavilion? I know that was a big thing back in the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's.

Bob: Oh yea they use to have a dance every night of the fair there.

Max: Did you and Jeannine ever go to it after you got married?

Jeannine: I think we went once and that was about the last year they had it, then after that they started using it for commercial exhibits. That was about the end of the Pavilion as far as using it for dances. They tried having teenage dances in there, but I don't know how well that went over.

Max: Ok, I got a picture here with Norman Johnson, and in the background is the crops building, where about was that on the fairgrounds?

Jeannine: That was gone by the time we got here, but there's the grandstands back there so that would be right out in front of the 4-H buildings.

Bob: I think this is where they kept the chickens in. Yea they had the crops in the round building.

Max: Did you ever show any crops at the fair?

Bob: My dad did, but I never got into that.

Max: Ok. Here's one for you Jeannine. What's up with the quilt here?

Jeannine: Well when we got married his grandmother had made a quilt of ribbons that his dad had won. Only she had sewed all the ribbons by hand and made a quilt out of it. And he had boxes and drawers of ribbons that I just decided that I would do the same thing, only I kind of cheated I used my zigzag sewing machine to sew them together. I picked out the red and the blue ones and some of the purple ones, and the ribbons are from our fair, the Clark County fair, Marshfield county fair, and some from Kentucky, there's some from the Kentucky National show in there. It's all ribbons that he won, not all of them, that's as far as I went with them.

Bob: We got a box at home that has enough for another one.

Jeannine: No! I don't think so.

Max: So was this finished in 1980, or

that's the date on the picture.

Jeannine: I finished it just probably a year before that.

Max: Ok. That's quite a quilt. You don't see one of those very often. I got some A part of Jeannine's quilt made of ribbons. more pictures here. I got some more pictures here. This must

be the Junior Dairy Barn right now.

Jeannine: No that's in the open class. That was the last year that Bob Wyss and Bob Capaul showed cattle together.

Bob: We each had a heifer and we put them together.

Jeannine: And I and Bob Wyss's wife made up a name and called them B & B enterprises, because they were both Bob's. Our kids made them each a hat that said working from 9 to 5. So they each had one animal at the fair.

Max: I know Norman Johnson said that you use to be able to stay in dorms at the fair.

Bob: Yea we had the dormitory.

Max: Where were they placed?

Bob: About where the goats are now. We use to sleep in the barns to. Because in these barns there use to be a second floor on each end by the windows and you could sleep up there.

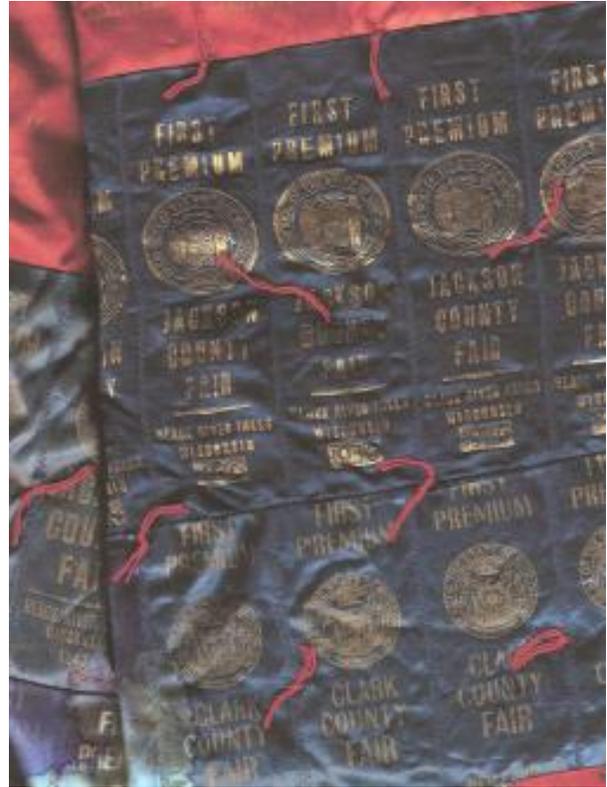
Max: About how long were the dorms there? When was sleeping at the fair ended?

Bob: Well they took those second floors out when they decided to get a dormitory. The dormitory came from camp McCoy.

Max: So before WWII, the only place you could sleep on the fairgrounds was the second story of the barn.



Bob Wyss and Bob Capaul



A part of Jeannine's quilt made of ribbons

Bob: Yup!

Max: Oh ok. I didn't know that. I knew they had the dorms but not the second floor. So when did they take out the second floor of the Junior Dairy Barn?

Bob: I'm not sure. I suppose it was quite a few years ago.

Jeannine: It has to be quite a few because I don't remember that up there.

Max: Ok.

Jeannine: I've been going to the fair ever since we got married, for fifty years, so it's been a while since that's been out of there.

Max: Another question. Was there a consignment auction at the fair for selling bulls?

Bob: Yup! Bulls. They had the sale in the county shop. I think they had it for three to four years. That was before they had artificial breeding.

Max: Ok. I got a paper that is from 1940 and they had a whole article for the consignment auction in there. I saw that you were in there and Russell Stetzer was in there. Willard Hart was in there. I remember he said that when he was taking his bull up to the county show he said his bull had jumped out of the ton truck and broke its leg.

Bob: I kind of remember that now.

Max: He didn't like that. So did you sell a bull there every year?

Bob: Well when they had it. I think they had it for only four years. Then artificial breeding started so that kind of took over.

Max: When you sold your bulls at the auction, did you get more money than market price?

Bob: I remember that one I had, of course this was big money back in them days, it went for \$135.

Max: Would that have been more than a regular one?

Bob: Oh yea.

Max: What did a regular bull go for?

Bob: Back in them days at auctions we could buy cows for under \$100 a piece.

Max: That's kind of nice. I know now days they're a lot of money. So they must have stopped the consignment auction in about 1940 because of artificial breeding?

Bob: Yea something like that.

Max: I got some pictures here. These pictures must be from your later days of showing.

Bob: Yea this was that good heifer I had. She was reserve All American.

Max: In the Kentucky show.

Bob: In the United States.

Max: Oh really!

Bob: We had 12 or 13 different All Americans.

Max: That's cool. Here's a picture of you, Hoyt Strandberg and Dennis Rand. Did the Strandberg's give you much competition in the Brown Swiss category.



Dennis Rand, Bob Capaul, and Hoyt Strandberg

Jeannine: They mostly had Jerseys.

Max: Ok. What were the big names in the Brown Swiss breeds at the county fair. I know now days we got the Petersons and the Schmidt's in the Holsteins.

Bob: Well Wally Pfaff. He was there.

Max: Was he from Melrose?

Bob: Yea.

Jeannine: Then Ed and Glen Gearing had some there for a few years. They lived up by Merrilan.

Max: Yea. I know where they live. Well here's a question for Bob here. Did you chase any pretty girls at the fair?

Bob: Do I have to tell that.

Jeannine: You might as well, I know it anyways. You can tell about your poor dad how he ran out of gas because of you. He took a girl home over to City Point and when he got back to the fairgrounds, his dad took the truck the next morning to go home and he ran out of gas. He didn't fill the truck up with gas.

Bob: It was further out there than I thought. 54 was pretty rough.

Jeannine: We get such a kick out of that. He use to laugh about that with his dad all the time.

Max: Ok. So what did you guys do at the night time? Back before electricity came, before the war. What did you do at the night time when the rides weren't up or there wasn't any lights in the barn?

Bob: There was always electricity.

Max: Ok. So what did you guys do at night when you weren't showing?

Bob: Goofed around I guess.

Jeannine: I was usually home after doing chores, so I don't know what he was doing at night.

Bob: We use to go to the dance, that's before you come along.

Jeannine: I know.

Max: How about the carnival, what kind of rides did they have back then? And were they better or worse than they are today?

Bob: About the same as now.

Max: Was the carnival in the same place as it is now?

Jeannine: One time they had it right out in front of the grandstands, off the race track but in the middle field for a while.

Bob: Yea. But that didn't work out to well.

Jeannie: Our kids and with all the cattle they showed and the fairs that they went to, they hardly went on a ride.

Bob: Yea, that's one thing, they didn't interest me any and they didn't interest our kids any.

Jeannine: They would come to the fair with two or three dollars to spend and they would come home with two or three dollars, because they would always help somebody do chores and when they helped somebody do their chores and this person would buy them breakfast and stuff. So they came home with more money than what they went with usually.

Max: Was the fair more friendly back in your days? I know now days the beef and the swine, I know with the market sale it gets to be very competitive, but back in your days was it more of a holly jolly and more of a family thing and come and meet up with your neighbors you don't see too often?

Bob: I'd believe that it was more of a fun thing. When my dad first started showing at the fair he led the cattle to the fair, then he bought a 1929 Chevrolet ton truck, so then he used that to haul them down. We would try to have fresh cows, and we would milk them and then you could go to the food stand and sell your milk for a nickel a quart.

Max: Really. That was back in the 30's when you did that?

Bob: Yup.

Max: I know you can't do that today.

Bob: We would come home with more money in our pocket than what we went with. A nickel a quart and if you had 3 to 4 cows milking and Melrose Ladies had a stand and lots of food stands and church groups.

Max: So did you guys milk them and put it in quarts or did they milk them for you.

Bob: No. We milked the cows and we had a shot gun can, then we had a quart measurer and we would go from stand to stand, we had made out with them that day and they would buy our milk.

Max: Were you guys the only ones that it or did the Strandbergs do it to?

Bob: That was before their time.

Max: Ok.

Jeannine: By the time we got married in the 50's that was all done with.

Max: Ok. That's really cool. Well another question here. What is one of your favorite memories of the fair that comes to mind?

Bob: I guess that's where I got my start in showing cattle. I started at small fair and the years go by and your stuff gets better and you think you can go to bigger shows.

Jeannine: There's one particular one. We had three boys and one girl, and she always got the last to pick of the animals for showing, the boys always got first. I told them one year that we going to pick one for her first, we got first choice at it. So we picked the one that we thought would be the best animal. Of course he and the three boys stood back and laughed at us because we picked that animal, but if that's what you want go ahead and do it. But she turned out to be All American for the year. So guess who was bloating for a couple of years. My daughter never let them forget that either. My most fun memory of it. It's always fun when I could stand back in the barn and watch, because I didn't dare stand out where the kids were showing and that, because I would be telling them in my mind what they were supposed to be doing and I'm not supposed to do that, they were supposed to do their own work, so I usually worked in the barn and got the cattle ready while the rest were showing. That was my favorite spot.

Max: So what did you have to do back then to get your cattle ready? I know now days with the steers, you got to put adhesives on them. I even see the Petersons' and the Schmidts with their uniforms on and they got their little brushes and stuff.

Jeannine: It was mostly just getting them brushed and curried.

Bob: It was different back then. You didn't have to clip as much.

Jeannine: When he did clip they were always ready before we came to the fair.

Bob: Our first clipper was one you cranked by hand.

Jeannine: Yea different.

Bob: You didn't clip as much as you do now.

Max: I went to a show, Badger Kick-Off with my steer and I and my uncle worked on him with a clippers for six hours. It was a lot of work, but the steer did pretty good. Another question, you took cows and calves to the fair. Which did better?

Bob: Back them days we could show a lot of bulls, different ages and I always did good with the bulls. It got to the point that others at the fair always called me the bull man.

Max: That would do it of you got Grand Champion bull at the World Dairy Expo. That's quite an accomplishment to have that happen.

Bob: Well we had quite a few others that were reserves to.

Jeannine: He also had a bull and a heifer calf that both took first place and champions in their groups. We have pictures of them at home and they look beautiful.

Max: What were the main people that showed in the dairy back then? Were the Hoffman's, the Harts, or the Stetzer's big into it.

Bob: Well Duane Hoffman, he lived north of Alma Center. He had a nice set of Holstein cattle and that one picture there.



Max: Yea! I've seen that picture. That's the picture of you and David with those big bulls that weighed about 2,600 pounds. Just looking at that picture, I've never seen a bull that big. I know we've had 1,800 pound bulls and I thought they were big, but when I see those 2,600 pound bulls and they're big.

Jeannine: Yea they were big.

Max: How did you train them so good to have them so nice? I know our bulls usually get mean as they get bigger. Did you work with them since day one?

Jeannine: Oh yes. He had them out every day leading them around from the time they were small to the time they got bigger, they pretty much knew what they were supposed to do, with the ring in their nose and all.

Max: Was he scared that when he was showing them that they would take off?

Jeannine: I don't think he ever go that worried. The one time you almost got pinned by one.

Bob: Yea you did to.

Jeannine: Yea one jumped on me at the State show and broke some bones in my elbow. It knocked me out, and some guys tried to grab halter the to get the bull away from me and I was out and I wouldn't let go of the rope, I had the halter so tight that they couldn't pry my hand apart. They finally got it loose and I came out of it and I took the bull back to the barn and tied it up. The bull was kind of touchy for different people, he was used to me.

Max: So was your vacation going to different shows?

Bob: Mostly.

Max: Was the Jackson County fair a vacation for you guys?

Jeannine: It was for our kids. They always liked to come down to the fair. They took turns going to different cattle shows with their dad. The daughter was the only one that didn't get to go.

Max: Did your kids have to come home and help with chores at night?

Jeannine: Nope! They got to stay at the fair. Chores were my job.

Bob: She got stuck with that.

Max: I know I never had to go home and do chores at night.

Jeannine: They didn't either. I remember one year they had a half an acre of cucumbers and I picked them instead of coming to the fair so I could get them picked for them besides doing their chores for them.

Max: Wow! That's nice.

Jeannine: But they always paid me back. They would help me do something.

Max: I suppose. So now was it you Jeannine that always helped out the 4-H kids after your kids had grown up from showing?

Max: So you practically did work shops for the 4-H kids then?

Jeannine: Yea like that.

Bob: We did that for the high school kids, because they came out. When the World Dairy Expo was on, a judge from South Dakota and Minnesota would stop in and look at the cattle while on their way down to Madison.

Jeannine: When the Dairy Expo was on they brought people from Switzerland up to the farm, because they wanted to see a small dairy farm, similar to what they have in Switzerland because they didn't have the huge dairy farms like they we do around here now and we were the only small Swiss farm around and they would bring them from Madison. I could remember how we worked one time for two to three days getting everything spick and span in the barn and nothing get done in the house, we just left that because we were out in the barn. The first thing they said is they asked me if they could go into my house because they wanted to look at my dish washer. And I'm thinking my house is a mess and they want to come in. But I took them in and I told them the barn was a priority so this is what my house looks like when I work outside. We had the upstairs and they had to look upstairs because it's more similar to their farms over there compared to the bigger farms around here. They were just amazed because the most of them had never seen a dishwasher. I thought you got to see a dish washer and a sink full of dishes also. Bob: They had to go back and check the garden out.

Jeannine: Our daughter had a horse and this one guy, they called him little Joe because he was crazy about horses and he started to talk to our daughter and wanted to know if he could ride the horse and if she can show him how to ride the horse. She was kind of shy and she said I don't think so. Bob had showed at the Minnesota State fair and my daughter and I got to go up there on show day and we decided to take in the show in the Coliseum. We went to that and here Ken Curtis, who played Festus on Gunsmoke was there. He had his mule. He was terrific. My daughter and I were sitting in the front row and we were laughing at the things that he was doing and all of a sudden he comes up to my daughter and he says how about a kiss. She looked at him and she said no. Well Ruth will give you a kiss. Ruth was his mule and she said no way. I said geez if he would have asked me for a kiss I would have. We got such a kick out of that because she wouldn't have anything to do it. It was funny. We had a lot fun showing cattle. We had a lot of different things we could do.

Bob: I showed 11 years down there in Kentucky.

Max: How did you get your cattle down there? Did you take a truck and trailer?

Bob: Wally Pfaff and I went down together.

Max: Just you and Wally or did you take your kids along also?

Bob: Yea we took Larry our second son a couple times and we took Bobby a couple times.

Jeannine: He is our youngest son.

Max: So Jeannine and the rest would stay home and do chores then?

Bob: She even went one year.

Jeannine: Yea I got to go one year. The show was always in early December and they always told me about the beautiful roses down at Louisville and around the race track. They said they

were such beautiful roses and I think that I get to see all these beautiful flowers and I get down there and what do they have? A snow storm. I thought well I could have stayed back in Wisconsin for that. But I still had a good time. So we had a lot fun. There was a lot of work but a lot of fun. It all started with the small county fair.

Bob: That one building down to Louisville it was 13 to 14 acres under one building.

Max: If they still have the same buildings down there, I know I went down there for the National FFA Convention and I've seen them and been in it.

Bob: I know one time we went down there we were one end of the building and they had the curtain down and on the other side they had a big cat show. One year they had a pigeon show. So one year Wally had to take some pigeons home. They were so darn tame that Wally's cat got of hold of them.

Max: So you and Wally must have been pretty good friends then?

Bob: Oh yea.

Max: Bob Wyss and you were pretty good friends also?

Bob: Oh yea.

Max: So when you showed pigs, where did the pigs stay at the fair?

Bob: Well you know the fence on the North side of the fairgrounds where the chicken house is now. There use to be a row of pig pens along there.

Max: Were they covered with a roof?

Bob: Just a slant roof. So they had pigs in there. So then they decided to build the new pig barn and my dad helped build that pig barn.

Max: When was that about?

Bob: I couldn't tell you right off but its been there a long time. My dad was in pretty good shape then. Him and Bill Busse. I think the Sawyers from Melrose helped some.

Max: Ok. Another question here. Do you still come to the fair once in a while to look at the exhibits that are there?

Bob: Oh sure we do.

Jeannine: I've been showing every year since he quit showing. Then I started.

Max: Ok. I see you got some pictures here. Here's a quilt, here's the dolls, then we got a sweater.

Jeannine: The sweater was about two years ago.

This is my afghan here. There's a picture here with the afghan that I made. That came from a book that my grandmother had back in 1942 and when she passed on I got all of her crochet



Jeannine's Afghan

books. I always told myself that I was going to make that afghan and about three years ago I finally did and it's all crochet and it's all embroidered with the cross stitch after words.

Max: How long did that take you?

Jeannine: That one took me about two or three months.

Max: How about this picture. Where was it taken?

Jeannine: That's the meeting of the minds I called it when I took the picture. That was taken right inside the open class barn. They always got together and sat and talked so I called it the meeting of the minds when I took the picture.

Max: When did the Standbergs start to get big in the fair?



Bob: Well when Doc moved here when he graduated from Vet school. The meeting of the minds

The meeting of the minds

Jeannine: And he started with his Jersey cattle. I don't know how long ago that was. He had some beautiful Jersey cattle though.

Max: You guys also hosted the dairy breakfast one year.

Bob: Yea we had the dairy breakfast for one year.

Jeannine: We had it in 1985 or 86,

Max: So 1990 was your last year you showed. So what made you put an end to it?

Bob: I was just getting old.

Jeannine: Just decided to retire.

Bob: I'm 82 now and when I was 65 and I said that was it.

Max: Do you wish that you could show if you were able bodied?

Bob: Oh I love to show cattle.

Max: What about showing do you like? The competition or the vacationing with showing?

Bob: Well it was fun getting them ready. At Jackson county fair I wasn't as nervous but when you start showing at the State fair I did get nervous. Because one year at the Dairy Expo and I was first to go out and 32 followed me.

Max: That's a lot.

Bob: She was reserve All American that year.

Max: That's quite an accomplishment. Another question I got for you is what are some of the major changes you've seen in the fair since 1935? The buildings or the way it's run?

Bob: The buildings mostly. Because they did one thing at a time. They would get that one paid for and straighten out then they would build something else. Now you got these barns with cement walks and one year they would put in a cement walk to get rid of the dust. Then they decided to get rid of that round crop building there. That would have been something to keep.

Max: I thought that it was kind of interesting. You don't see those too often. In this picture leaning up against this door right there and sitting down is my Great grandma Adah Hart and standing is my great aunt Margaret Stetzer. So did you ever show with Norman Johnson?

Bob: Just look at how cattle have improved now day. Just look at that udder.

Max: Better not tell Norman that one.

Jeannine: That probably was a nice udder back in those days though.

Max: So before they had the current arena they must have had the open arena by the dairy barn where it is now?

Bob: We just showed out in the open.

Max: Where did you show the pigs at?

Jeannine: Bob has a picture at home of his dad and two of his sisters and they were showing the pigs and there was a great big snow fence and they were inside that snow fence.

Max: I know when I show pigs at the fair and if there isn't a fence there they're going to go.

Jeannine: Yup! Well even when our kids were showing in 4-H and stuff they showed where the ice cream stand is. They all showed out in the open like that. The only bad thing about that is if you had someone more interested in the rides going around out there, they weren't watching their cattle, they were watching the rides, and many of the young kids that were showing in 4-H got knocked back, because they weren't showing their cattle.

Bob: Then those steel buildings. The 4-H put them up one at a time. They didn't build them both at once. Then where the open class cattle is in that barn that use to be used for horses. Back in my younger days, there were a lot of work horses in the county, and that was all horse stalls and that was full of horses.

Max: Were they for show?

Bob: Yea they showed them. Before they built that they had some old shacks for the horses.



Max: I think Norman was saying that they always had a lot of dairy back in the 40's and the 50's and they would put up tents outside to accommodate for all the dairy cattle because they didn't have enough room in the barn.

Bob and his trophies

Bob: Yea. A few times they did that. But I can remember that I was showing my first year that we didn't even have the first 4-H barn full. But it kept on getting bigger and bigger Bob and his trophies then we put up tents, then the horse business died out and they made the open class barn into a cattle barn. Where the steers are they built that on later.

Max: I'm not sure when that was built but I know that it wasn't built too long ago. Here's a picture of Bob with all of his ribbons and trophies. Where was that taken at?

Jeannine: That's at the fair. It was set up right next to the milk house.

Max: Wow! You got a lot of trophies there.

Bob: Yup! They're all sitting at home.

Jeannine: We had a big picnic for him. We celebrated his 50 years of showing.

Max: Well a little off topic here but I'm curious that when you brought your cattle to the fair, how did you wash them?

Bob: We didn't really wash too much.

Jeannine: We washed them before we left the farm and then we just touched them up at the fair. Because that was always a job before they were even loaded.

Max: I know now days the dairy people wash their cattle about twice a day. I'm glad I don't have dairy.

Bob: Now days they're doing a lot more work than what we did.

Jeannine: We didn't have wash racks back in our days.

Bob: You had to wash in the dirt and pretty soon that was all mud.

Max: I know one of the major things of the fair is the grandstands because they are such a monument of the fair. With how they were built back in the 30's and all. Do you have any good memories with you and the grandstands or the events at the grandstands? Did they every have any music stars come in and sing?

Bob: Oh yea. They had some of them come in. Years ago when I was a kid they'd always have entertainment come in.

Max: Where they pretty big ones?

Bob: Well they had one where they would have girls swing their legs around.

Jeannine: One year they had Jeanie C. Riley come in, she's an older star now, but I think the biggest drawing they had was the year when they had the Kids from Wisconsin come.

Max: Who are they?

Jeannine: It's a group of kids from all over the state of Wisconsin. They played music, they sing, they dance. They still go around to different shows. I think there was one or two kids from Black River that were in the group. They're mostly high school aged kids. They were a big draw because they were young kids, there were not stars. They put on a terrific show. They did

patriotic songs, they did modern songs. It like the dancing choirs like they have now days. They are still around.

Max: What year did they come?

Jeannine: It was probably in the 80's or 90's. It's not that long ago. They're still going strong. It seems like they don't draw a lot of people to this grandstands when they bring in a country show. At Marshfield there is standing room only and they're standing on the race track if they have to. Like they had Sunny James, Garth Brooks was up there. Garth was there a year before he was famous. Down here they have something. The city people in Black River have to interest in the fair what so ever. I'm not afraid to say it because it's a shame. Because there are so many things that people in the city can learn about the country, the farmers and the kids and that. If they would go a fair and take it in and see what's going on. They just don't want to do it. I don't know why.

Max: I know I had a conversation at the fair with somebody, this dads kid plays baseball and this kid was talking to his friends about how he's going to be at the fair with his pigs, they said that they would be there, but they never showed up. They never took the time to come out.

Jeannine: It's really an educational thing. Kids that are in 4-H that have showed at the fair. Not just 4-H but like Boy Scouts and that can show now at the fair. Any youth group can show at the fair now. It's a learning experience for anybody. I learned a lot. I was grown up and I learned a lot.

Max: I have to say that people like to come to the Jackson County fair because it's the old time fair. It's nothing big.

Jeannine: A few years ago I helped judge herdmanship at the fair. I had comments from different people at different fairs that we've gone to. They just can't imagine a fair where the kids would keep their barns as clean and as neat. We went to Clark County and that was the poorest fair I've ever seen for 4-H animals and keeping the animals clean and their alleys clean. When go through the Jackson County fair, it's just like these animals are almost in Heaven because these animals are as neat and as clean as could be. I heard different people tell me about that and they told me how fun it is to go and see something like that.

Max: Well I can tell you that Butch Kinning keeps us in line.

Jeannine: I've worked with Butch on the fair board for quite a few years.

Max: If we really mess up we'll get a talking.

Bob: You said you seen that picture with all those old cars. That would be back in the 30's. On a Sunday morning the cars would be backed up to barely crawling, there would be that many cars coming.

Max: Was Sunday that last day of the fair?

Bob: Sunday was the last day of that fair then.

Jeannine: Also back in them days they had a County Agent, he was the County Agent, he was the 4-H Agent, he was the Home exc. Agent. There was one person that took care of all that.

Bob: That was Walter Boehm.

Jeannine: He did everything. They didn't have one for every group.

Max: I know now days we got the Home exc. agent, the Ag agent, and the 4-H agent.

Jeannine: But he did it all.

Max: Well I guess if there is anything else left that you guys think you should say I guess go ahead.

Jeannine: Well it's been enjoyable talking to you about it. I hope you learned something about it.

Max: I'd have to say milking the cow and selling it at the fair is something I never knew.

Bob: We all sold the milk by the quart. All the churches had a food stand there. That was their money and people came to the fair and ate.

Max: I know Norman said that church groups always had very good food.

Jeannine: The Melrose church group I think was the best one.

Bob: They were about the last ones.

Jeannine: I remember working in the old 4-H food stand and we were busy. There was standing room only. Sure it's busy now. It was so different. Everybody volunteered. You didn't have to beg people to come and work. They were there. You had more help than you really needed.

Max: I know now days the 4-H food is ok, but I always go to the L&M Chuckwagon.

Jeannine: We ate there a lot in our last years. Well a lot of them old cattle showman are passing away now and it's kind of nice to get this on tape.

Bob: Like in the Brown Swiss Association a lot of the old breeders are gone

Max: Well thanks for the interview.

## 2008 Falls History Project: Jerome Laufenberg

Interviewer: Max Hart

January 10, 2008



Jerome Laufenberg

I just think that fair is really an important part of the community. There seems to be a lot of commitment with businesses to support and meet donations and commitment and involvement. That fair seems to be a real good community involvement and I really hope that keeps going because it goes right back to kids showing.

- Jerome Laufenberg

Max Hart: It's January 10, 2008. I'm interviewing Jerome Laufenberg for the Falls History Project that has to do with the Jackson County fair. I'll start off with having Jerome answer me your name, place you were born and your year you were born.

Jerome Laufenberg: My name is Jerome Laufenberg. I was born in Black River Falls. I was born in 1952.

Max: Did you ever show any exhibits at the Jackson County fair?

Jerome: I did show one year, I think I was a sophomore in high school. A beef project.

Max: Oh a steer. Did they have a market sale back what ever year that was?

Jerome: No they did not.

Max: What year was that?

Jerome: It was probably 1967 or 68.

Max: So 67-or 68 was the first and only year you showed at the fair. Oh I thought you showed every year there.

Jerome: No. We were pretty busy on the farm and I just never had the time was probably the biggest.

Max: So you were a sophomore when you started showing at the fair and a sophomore when you ended showing at the fair. What were your first memories of the fair?

Jerome: That's a long time ago. It was just a good experience. I guess that about all I can say.

Max: What's your favorite memory that comes to mind?

Jerome: It was just fun to show with other kids and have a project.

Max: Do you have any memories with being the superintendent of the beef or since you been going to the fair or however long, or do you have any memories that just stick out?

Jerome: Our kids have been showing since or probably 14 or 15 years. It started off really on a good FFA project and it's been really good memories ever since that. We've met a lot of good people, a lot of quality people, and a lot of education that goes with it. My experience from the fair is a lot more from our kids side than a personal side. I guess we're still involved in it very pretty heavily, through livestock and sale committee. We created an executive team last year that's going to take care of a lot of any situations that arise so the livestock committee can keep focus on educational part like they should be. It's why it was established was for livestock for the educational part. So this team is going to take care of that and the situations between that and the fair board. So it should really be a good team. The team consists of all the superintendents, all six and one fair board member, one livestock chair at the time, one executive, one extension person. So it's a well rounded team that way.

Max: Ok. So what does the fair mean to you? When somebody asks you about the Jackson County fair and what does it mean what would you come back with?

Jerome: Well, it's a combination of a lot of things. There's to me the biggest thing is you see kids that show, grow, they grow from the responsibility side of the project, definitely the educational side of its part of it also. It's a real good community involvement. I know some kids look forward to it all year long, and a lot of projects are year round projects. And they kind of got the opportunity to put as much or as little sometime as they want into it. But the most of them put quite a bit into it. It's really satisfying to see kids grow. Of course we need new kids all the time because for some reason the kids grow up and move on. But I think it really creates a lot of maturity. I think that's what we really get pride of. Putting in effort. We've really seen some kids come around in situations. They really take respect and have respect and effort in most everything they do from the maturity they learn from the project. It's a huge deal and it is really community oriented situation when you bring a lot of people. It defiantly isn't just from the farm anymore. It's a lot of non farm kids and hobby farms or what ever you want to call it. You worry about having a decent amount of kids showing every year. I think with the commitment and enthusiasm you bring into it we've been pretty fortunate that way. A big part of it is the parents also. Parents get a lot out of it. They see working together and it's competitive and that's somewhat good. You do get what you put into it effort wise. It's a long story.

Max: I guess maybe we'll come back to what the current situation on what the fair is. We'll try to get these questions out of the way. When you showed your animal your steer at the fair did you show it through 4-H or FFA?

Jerome: I'm sure it was FFA. No rhyme or reason that's just what it was.

Max: Ok. What made you want to be the beef superintendent?

Jerome: I feel there are times when people have to step ahead and put the effort, commitment into it. I'm probably going back to the statement I said before. That was the commitment and the enjoyment that we see kids grow. Also it keeps us involved in fair because our kids are pretty much all grown up and are done showing for the junior fair. We defiantly want to put the effort into it to keep as many families involved with the fair as we can. But I do enjoy working with the cattle. Seeing good quality cattle fed right. I was asked for quite a few years, but I didn't really want to commit to it until our kids were close to being done showing. I got asked again so I thought I'd try it. I enjoy it

Max: How long have you been the beef superintendent?

Jerome: About three years.

Max: Oh is that all. Bill Friese was the one before you right?

Jerome: Yes! Bill Friese basically who's place I took.

Max: Oh I thought you were in there longer than that?

Jerome: Yea! We've helped out for years indirectly. Bill was excellent to work with. So that's kind of the spot I took.

Max: Then do you enjoy being superintendent? You kind of answered that with the commitment but why don't you elaborate on the maybe.

Jerome: The superintendent's job is important. We utilize a lot of different parents and a lot of ex-showing kids or whatever happen to be handy. I really enjoy it because most of the time they step forward. There's commitment there to and involvement and it really makes it a fun project and that's what we've got to take into the years to come.

Max: Ok. Just out of the blue do you know any old history about the fair or the fair buildings, or is there any buildings you read a story about and like to tell about?

Jerome: There has been quite a bit of history even since we've been at the fair. When I was a kid I know there was an old pavilion, and I don't remember if they had dances in there to. I know there were some fun times. The grandstands of course always had the tractor pull. The tractor pull went all the way back to when I was a kid. Once in a while when they had the stone boat and that would go by and you'd step on it. That was a neat deal. A little dangerous maybe.

Max: What's a stone boat? Is that what they pulled with the tractors?

Jerome: They pulled it with a tractor and they had people lined up on both sides.

Max: Oh! That was kind of the old fashioned eliminator.

Jerome: When it went by you'd step on it. Then the tractor would still go as far as it could that way. The more people it got on it eventually it got harder and quite pulling. It's kind of a neat old eliminator. I'm sure your dad still remembers it.

Max: I'll have to ask him about that tonight. You still help out a lot with 4-H and FFA members at the fair. Do you do anything with the 4-H or the FFA? Do you do much with any 4-H clubs or Alma Center FFA chapter?

Jerome: There are some youth groups that are getting pretty big. 4-H for some reason the numbers have been dwindling. I think it's a combination of reasons. And that's part of the commitment of each club you know to get members and keep them and keep the enthusiasm. The youth clubs have kind of taken over some. One way or another. We don't work with a particular one. We kind of help all of them. We spend a lot of time on the livestock committee through the 4-H and the FFA instructors. So we kind of work with all of them. But we don't have any particular one that we work with. Our kids showed under Lincoln FFA and I know they showed under some 4-H. One or two different clubs over the years. I think it was Northfield Go-getters. So they're both very important.

Max: I know you mentioned there a lot of individual clubs are coming in. What are these youth clubs?

Jerome: There more on an independent type club. They can be ran similar to 4-H only they don't have the 4-H emblem or the rules and regulations that go with the 4-H clubs.

Max: It's more on an independent membership then?

Jerome: Yes! So they can show under that also.

Max: I'm in 4-H so I get to show at the fair but you also got to go to the meetings. You got to do what the 4-H wants to do. Like if they want to do road pick-up, roadside clean-up or sell brats for fundraisers. It's good to have relationships with other people and I know people don't have time for this, but it's good for them to take a couple hours out of their day, maybe once a month and just go and have a community meeting. I know tonight we have our 4-H meeting in Irving and it's nice to go down there sometimes and see what's going on here in Irving. We have our little meeting and discuss it. It's nice. But I noticed that the 4-H is dwindling. I know we didn't have 4-H camp last year. A lot of things are just going down the drain and I'm not sure where it's going, but then the fair is getting bigger and bigger. I was thinking where are all of these kids showing through? I know the FFA has a couple here and a couple there, but where are all these kids?

Jerome: I agree and I think it really can come back, but I think it's going to take the right leadership and the combination of the different leaders to go after it. You know I'm happy they're showing under the groups. They're good groups to but I'm not sure what their meaning is. Obviously there has been some controversy in this way or not way. Valid or not. We do need defiantly more commitment and involvement with FFA and 4-H. It has dwindled and you can't put your finger on a particular thing. Thanks goodness we have the youth groups that we are picking up. Hopefully we can turn this around and I really think we can. It takes commitment.

Max: Our FFA has actually been getting bigger. I'm the President this year of our FFA Chapter. It's actually growing. I know you lose the seniors and all that but I think we pick up more 8th and 7th graders and people coming into the high school that what we actually loose. But you say commitment, you know they'll sign up and pay their dues and all that but do they participate and do they do the responsibility as a member. I know a lot of people are in it to show at the fair for the livestock auction. Well 4-H and FFA are more than the livestock action at the fair. It's the experiences that you have and the livestock auction is a token for your responsibilities that you did throughout the year. I kind of feel the same way I don't know how you feel on that?

Jerome: I feel a 100% on that. It's like a pat on the back, good job for your efforts. And it brings in community. I'm more into the educational and that means more to me, but it's still a pat on the

We are starting to work on it a little ways. Our kids show a lot through FFA. One of my daughters was an FFA officer for the state. That was just a tremendous experience. My other daughter ran twice but made second both times. But it was a good experience that way to where they do all the criteria and it's a year long commitment. She took a year off from college, because of this and she went around to a lot of schools. That's an experience that you can't put a value on. It was a huge experience.

Max: I plan on going to college for my freshman year and after that I plan on running for state office. I know our state officer last year told me how great it was and our state officer this year is telling me how great it is. I thought well and he said I got the speaking material for it and he said run for it. I think it's a good thing we got those sort of clubs out there.

Jerome: Absolutely.

Max: What is your favorite part of the current fair? Like when you go there is there a certain day you look forward to?

Jerome: I think every day is almost the same. Show day is fine but every day is almost as busy as show day. You have a lot of different things that are going on. Of course our fairgrounds is an older fairgrounds, we put a lot of effort into it over the years and make it simple. Make traffic flow for the animals as simple as we can. So really everyday has things going on that are pretty important. We try to keep everyday fulfilled. The superintendents most of the time help each other out. Even if it's pigs and there is a lot to do show day. A lot of times we are helping back and forth and we need more people on show day to run the traffic for the animals and the kids and just to help out with a lot of different things you need for the show. Show day is special but it really isn't one day better than the other in my opinion. They're all pretty enjoyable.

Max: I kind of like Wednesday. You got the whole fair to look forward to and stuff.

Jerome: And probably Wednesday would be a good day. You see the people that you might not have seen since initial weigh in or from the year before. Some of that's fun to.

Max: There's nothing like the Wednesday of the fair.

Jerome: No.

Max: The main point of this interview is going to come up here. What do you think the future of the fairgrounds and the fair are?

Jerome: Well I am on the fair parks board and I'm representing the livestock. I've only been on it for a year or a year and a half or so. I know it's been going on before that. We had commitment back then to. But we need representation from the dairy and the livestock and a few other entities. We've went to meetings and it was about the renovation of the fairgrounds. They shot around a lot of ideas and we're always coming up a little short on the money to. It wasn't really moving. About a month or two ago, I'd say about six weeks ago we had a meeting and they changed some things around and the commitment was to have less money for the hockey building. That kind of got things going. We've been through the planning phase. We have fundraising efforts going on. We're setting up a committee. We have a lot of the money and I think there will be a lot of people that will want to jump on board to get this thing put together. We have the buildings established. Last Monday night we had a meeting and had to change some of the building locations. That was kind of an effort that we all put into it to get them

arranged for the traffic flow and the cattle and the pigs and sheep and dairy and horses and small animals and all the works but yet to have them close enough for them to have an arena building to show in. But yet a lot of different things that go on. Manure storage and everything and try to put some long term stuff in. I really think it's a 95% go. This year it's going to be the same. As far as the buildings, but we should have all the plans done ahead of time. The hockey building the hockey area could basically being worked on before that. I think it really will be. As far as long term commitment maybe I'm talking on the buildings more than I should. It's a long term plan that could be beneficial for not just the fair but long term opportunities to have different shows during the year. But it will be still set up, the buildings for livestock especially be set up for livestock kids. It should make it very enjoyable space wise. I really think if we all put effort into it and work together turn to the 4-H, Youth clubs, and the FFA. I think if anything we should be able to grow. We have been growing. Last year we were almost to full. But we always find a place for them one way or another and make it work. That's a real good problem to have. So I do think that with people working together, but it does take effort and commitment and FFA instructors, 4-H and other good people in the area keep it going and keep the enthusiasm. Without the enthusiasm we wouldn't have much of a livestock fair. I see it being real good. I think we can improve the FFA and the 4-H. It will happen. How ever you feel.

Max: Well how do you feel on the topic? I've asked all my interviewees about how they feel about the new renovation and the fairgrounds. Two were against it and one was for it.

Jerome: Well on the livestock side we're almost adequate the way we are space size. The renovation of the fairgrounds, there is some politics on it but there is defiantly some valid situations where you have to look to the benefit for the future generations. Just from a fair side of it, four days a year I guess it is adequate. Some of the buildings defiantly need renovating. That's kind of an ongoing thing because we have been renovating for years. The city owns the grounds. There have been times where who keeps up the fairgrounds who pays for it and this and that? The last few years it been very difficult to make sure the water is kept up and the electricity systems and all the maintenance that goes with it. There really hasn't been money for that. It's been kind of a challenge because nobody has the authority to do this and not to do this and this and that. This renovation should help. I think it defiantly always brings in money to enhance the businesses and a lot of different shows between horse shows, cattle shows, dairy shows, and a lot of car shows and everything. Our facility has been dwindling. But it defiantly with the new hockey building they'll be able to keep their ice so much more efficient. They have been loosing a lot of commitment in the hockey situation to, which I don't know anything about. It will also open up the old arena during fair so it's not so congested so hard to communicate between all the different things that are going on. So it actually should enhance the opportunity of different things going on. There are always pluses and minuses. There's a lot of history going back. I guess I'm for it. I defiantly see the other side also, but I defiantly am for it. I have to be at this point and move forward. I do want to get it done though. This has been hanging around to long. I think we're on the right track at this point. It is going to get done. We thought some last year and ran into a few headaches, but a lot of things, stipulations and the stuff and the areas that we hit a wall on are pretty well taken care of. I hope everybody gets behind it though. But defiantly there are some things that you would like to leave the same. But sometimes when you do a project you have to do a total project. If anything it should make it better. But I do the side of it of the old buildings. I'm use to going to that barn and this barn. I defiantly can see that and I feel that same way that I'll loose a lot of memories when they leave. But we're going to have to

make the commodore and stuff that go with the families, but we're just going to have to make the new barns friendly and make the memories in those to. I think it can be done.

Max: How about the grandstands? Are you feeling the same about that building?

Jerome: Yea! That grandstands are an issue through this commitment. I for one would like to keep it. Once you build the other buildings it is in middle of some of the renovation and things that go with it. I could live with keeping the grandstands were it is. But it does go with the wishes of some of the contributors. It's going to probably be moved. Is it going to be the same? We don't even know. It depends on the money situation. We don't have a real commitment, a building plan on a grandstand. It will be some type of a grandstand that we can add to and make somewhat the same. I really do like the grandstand with the roof and everything. That's going to open up a lot of area to. Where it's sitting isn't quite nice. It's kind of in the middle of things. The grandstands looking at it itself is all of our favorite buildings. It's kind of a neat old structure. The location isn't quite right. I wish we could just move it and leave it together. But that's not practical or feasible.

Max: I know I've been talking to some people at the Trempealeau County fair and they got that thing of a grandstand over there and they've been telling me don't tear down your grandstands. We've done that and that's the worst thing we've done in our life is to tear down that grandstand.

Jerome: We have had a lot of talk about it. I can definitely take that side of it to. Because that was one of my things you know because of the huge cost that goes with it and that's something that the infrastructure underneath that didn't have to be torn down to get the infrastructure for the rest of the buildings that we're putting up. But I guess at this time it's more than likely going to be torn down. Unless something else comes up. And I'm not necessarily for tearing it down. I can see if you're going to have some of the other buildings and how the traffic flow and the parking it is in a bad spot. It's not as attractive as if it was in a different spot. I'm not sure how that situation is going to go. We have been concentrating a little more on the other things. Especially when things come up. We have a spot where it can go. But definitely what size it's going to be and all that is not determined yet. I think that's going to be an ongoing process.

Max: I once heard that there were going to put bleachers out there. On Sunday afternoon, you're going to get pretty hot when you watching the demolition derby.

Jerome: I agree completely. Hopefully there are enough funds available to build what will be appropriate for that type of space. It will probably be a different type of structure I am guessing. Probably would be more of a less maintenance structure. The grandstand has been an expense. It has been a lot of experience the last ten years. But there is still always more to go with it because it is a structure that's old. It's built so it will weather. But a new one would probably less erode able and last longer. But defiantly the heat and stuff. I hate sitting out in the sun to and it will hurt attendance to that way to for a few things. So hopefully we can put a roof on it.



Gaier Construction working on the grandstands.

Max: I know I talked to a person here this morning at the school and we were talking about the fairgrounds and he said that if you tear down the buildings, the building are not just buildings there were built by volunteer labor. They weren't built by Nordstrom construction or Sholzes or La Crosse Buildings. There were built by the volunteer labor and the amount of work and effort that was put into it. And just to see all that just torn down and whatever contracting guys come in and just do it their selves. The memories are within the wood and not just in there. He thinks the commodore will be lost. But we'll see what happens with the new buildings over there. But he didn't think to highly of it.

Jerome: No! I agree completely that the commodore is going to be a little tougher. Hopefully you look at the opportunities also. Definitely I remember pounding nails at midnight and putting up stuff. We've always put in so much effort per year. The last couple years we haven't because of this talk. Plus some of the buildings were kept up pretty good. We finally put enough effort into it. We did just a little every year to make it better. And like I said when we first stated the traffic flow of animals and stuff we put it. In the sheep and the hog building that split half way through that was kind of an idea I couldn't see the kids going back and forth that far in that long alley. That worked out very well. There are a lot of things that you can do with old building and make them work. That's kind of fun. We've cemented a lot of runways and we added on to the goat barn because we had an overrun of beef cattle. No absolutely there are a lot of memories and a lot of fun and jokes and we'd bring equipment down to work on stuff. We just went to it to make it better. Some that's going to be gone. And I know some of the friendships that you built over the years. I'm going to miss that part of it to. I'm sure there's going to be things to do in the new buildings. Hopefully we can make them homey to. Make it work. I think the attitude needs to be it is progress. I don't think we can keep going the way we are. According to stories on who has control. But somebody has to make the decisions and ultimately the city does own the ground and they can make the decisions. But the board that we have will be very strong that way and make sure things happen. Possibly make it better like I said. It should really open up the opportunity of a lot more shows and things coming into town for fun and showing animals, vehicles. The parking is always an issue. This whole renovation should really help that a lot. But defiantly the memories and it will be hard to watch it go. I think the attitude's going to be really forward now.



Working on the Goat Barn

Max: I guess mostly the main part of the interview was to talk about the future of the fair. I'm out of questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add just out of blue?

Jerome: I just think that fair is really an important part of the community. There seems to be a lot of commitment with businesses to support and meet donations and commitment and involvement. That fair seems to be a real good community involvement and I really hope that keeps going because it goes right back to kids showing. We need to eventually replace you down the line. We just need these kids to keep coming. We need active people with positive

ahead. But it is all commitment and we have friends, life time friends that show and you can't really put a value on. And those memories are still there even if the buildings aren't there. There is opportunity here and I think that's the way we got to look at it in our opinion. But I defiantly can see that the commodore is the biggest issue I had with the situation. Because we pounded a lot of nails and poured a lot of concrete.

Max: I remember I even helped out with the concrete in the goat barn when we added on. I remember helping dad pour cement.

Jerome: Yup! There are people that brought posts in and you bring this in, and you donate this and you donate that. And you always have some B.S. that this is my post and that kind of thing. That is some fun that goes with it. There are things that work every year and that you got to fix every year. But there really should be some positive things opening up the arena. There should be more room for more. During the showing there should be more room for people to sit. We'll organize that a little bit better, because the horse stalls will not be in there. I really feel it's a positive thing and it's going to be a huge transition over two or three years. I guess if you look forward to it we'll make it work. About it!

Max: Thanks a lot for the interview.

## 2008 Falls History Project: Norman and Margie Johnson

Interviewer: Max Hart

November 13, 2007



Norman and Margie Johnson

There were two years back in the nineteen hundreds that the fair grounds were used as a training camp for soldiers in WWI. And the cement block building that we used for a storage building now, was a headquarters building.

- Norman Johnson

Max: It's November 13, 2007. I am interviewing Norman and Margie Johnson here. We are going to be talking about the Jackson County fair and personal experiences and some of the history of what they know about the fair. If we would have Margie Johnson tell us where you were born.

Margie: I was born in Irving

Max: Ok and in what year?

Margie: 1929.

Max: Norman where were you born?

Norman: I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1927.

Max: Is that where your parents lived?

Norman: Nope! That's where my mother happened to be when I was born.

Max: Oh that's interesting. Ok well first off I'll start with Margie and did you show any exhibits at the fair?



Norman with his cow.

Margie: I have.

Max: Ok what were they?

Margie: I was in 4-H, I suppose it would have been in the late thirties or early forties anyway. I was in 4-H though.

Max: Did you show any cattle?

Margie: I showed calves. I also showed food nutrition's.

Max: How bout you. Did you show anything at the fair?

Norman: Yes!

Max: Did you show animals?

Norman: Showed animals.

Max: Steers or dairy cattle?

Norman: Well there's that one picture there.

Max: This one?

Norman: And that's me.

Max: What years did you show about?

Norman: That picture was taken in 1954. And I started showing in 1942. So I was in the Shake Hollow Hustlers 4-H Club.

Margie: I was in the Irving Stickights

Max: Ya! That's what I thought. And what was the first year you showed at the fair?

Margie: Oh goodness. I suppose I was ten anyways and in the early forties.

Max: Did you have to be ten in order to show at the fair?

Norman: We moved from living in Black River here down to into the town of Franklin into what they call Shake hollow now. The first year I joined 4-H I was 14 years old. So that was the first year that I showed. We had a just a very small herd of grade cattle of course. We just show calves.

Max: Ok. How many did you show a year?

Norman: Well my brother and I were pretty close to the same age and we each showed one.

Max: Ok.

Margie: That's the same with me. I showed two different times. One each time.

Norman: And then we also showed chickens.

Max: Oh really. Just regular farm chickens then?

Norman: Just regular farm chickens.

Max: Now back in the forties what were the premiums? Like what did you receive for first place or second place? And were the ribbons all the same?

Margie: I got a blue ribbon and that was great.

Norman: I don't know if I ever got a blue ribbon when it was way back then. We just had grade cattle and we just took what we had. And that was the way with most of the members because registered cattle were few and far between.

Margie: My dad that's all he ever had were registered Holsteins.

Max: So did you receive a lot of blues?

Margie: Just that one for that one.

Max: You guys both showed dairy cattle. Were there a lot of other competitors? Like who were the big names for Holstein's cattle? Like Heller's, Hoffman's, or Janke's?

Margie: Hoffman's probably.

Norman: There wasn't any Heller's then.

Margie: No there wasn't any Heller's back then. Probably the Hoffman's and Patterson's from North Bend.

Max: When was the last year you guys were able to show in the junior show? Like you guys would have had to been 18 or how old could you show?

Margie: I think it was 18.

Max: Ok! What were your first memories of the fair?

Margie: Probably when I was a little girl I was like oh my goodness there is a lot of people here. And I guess that's about it. Everything was so different then. Like we were talking today like where the cement toilets are now by the front gate there. From there to back where the kitty barn is there was a pig and sheep pens.

Max: Oh that's where the pigs and sheep were rather than where they are right now.

Margie: So that was kind of interesting. Then beyond that where like the kitty barn is now that was where they started bringing young pets and that kind of thing and they called it a kitty barn. But they had it in a tent. Norman can add to that.

Norman: Well that's where the Cloverdale club instigated the kitty barn and solicited funds to have it built. All by donations. They named it the kitty barn, because it was for kids and there wasn't poultry in it to start with. There was another building way down on the end of what is now the open class dairy cattle barn where the chickens were in a small chicken coop.

Max: How about the dairy barns? I know there are a Junior dairy barn and an open dairy barn. Which barn is older? The open class or junior?

Norman: The Junior dairy barn is older. But that use to be where the open class show would be in there to and when it got to full for the all the 4-H kids they put up tents and a lot of the cattle were housed out in tents. And in 1939 what is now the open class dairy barn was built and it

was built strictly for horses. And each one of the four corners there was a great big pen where they kept stallions. I can still remember when I was 11 or 12 years old when we lived in town here and going in there and see all of these old horsemen sitting on bales of hay or sacks of feed smoking their pipe and visiting and now that would be an absolute no. Especially to be smoking in the barns.

Max: What year was the Junior dairy barn built do you think?

Norman: Oh the Junior dairy barn. I don't know way before I can remember anything about it. But it was back, I'm sure it was back in the early twenties.

Max: What were your first memories of the fair?

Norman: Well I know that when we lived here in town we never missed the fair you know. Then when we moved out into the country which was in 1940, we were there all the time. At that time when you were in 4-H and if you had livestock here you stayed here. Because one of the building which is now the antique building was a dormitory building. And there was two of them in fact there was three on them. One was for the boys and one was for the girls. And there was a third one where they use to keep sheep and goats in. And they were back by where the goat barn now is. Back way on the back end.



This is the antique building, which use to be a dormitory.

Max: Ok! So one of the antique buildings now was the dormitory. The red one?

Norman: Was the dormitory. They were the same type building. Because they were moved in here from what was known as the CCC camp. Which was the Civilian Conservation Corps at that time.

Max: They were moved from the Irving CCC camp right?

Norman: The one that's the antique building was moved from the Irving CCC camp. Two on them came from the Irving one. And that was back in 1940 when them dormitories were built. That's what they were dormitories at the CCC camps to for the men that were working there.

Max: When was the last year that they used the dormitories?

Norman: It got to the point where there was a lot of trouble with leaving the kids here during the fair and back then to the fair went on in early September so it was school time to.

Margie: We use to get off from school.

Norman: So any number of kids would take anything they could possibly think of as a project so they would be automatically be excused from school for the duration of the fair. But then the school kind of frowned on that. And I'm not sure which year it was but anyway it got to the point that they made a big fuss about letting kids stay there. And not being in school and the fair board decided to change the dates of the fair and move it up. And now it has been primarily where it is now the last week in July or the very first part of August for quite a number of years.

Max: I think my dad remembers when he showed for a while the fair was in September and he would always get out of school.

Margie: Mondays and Tuesdays

Norman: The fair ended on Tuesday.

Max: Oh ok.

Margie: It was Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Yea! Four days.

Max: Ok! That's kind of different. I know now it ends on a Sunday but back then it ended on a Tuesday. What was the grand finale? I know now days we got the demolition derby for the finale of the fair.

Norman: They use to have car races and horse races with carts. What kind of ended the race part of it is that's where the present day hockey arena is located. It shut off the race track. That use to go all the way around. It use to be a half mile track. But they didn't have anything like a demolition derby or didn't have anything like tractor pulls. Tractor pulling has been here for about in the neighborhood of forty years. A good one to ask about that is ask Dave Holcomb when he first came here as club agent and eventually as county agent you see, because the first year he was here was the first year we had tractor pulling. We didn't have a hard surface in front of the grandstands and you know the ground over there is nothing but sand and the tractors would dig such big holes it was almost like in a hole you know. It's so different now than what it use to be. There wasn't any real high performance or high power then. It was just straight farm tractors.

Max: Ok! When was the pig and the sheep barn built?

Norman: The pig and the sheep barn was built in where they are now they were built back in the early fifties.

Max: Were they built together or were they in two parts?

Norman: No they were built in two different times. You can really tell when you look down through them you can see the first one and the second that was built on has a turn on it.

Max: I thought they were two different times. I can tell.

Norman: And then what is now the outside sheep barn or pens I should say was the stage in front of the grandstands. And we moved it from in front of the grandstands, just the roof, just the roof, that roof that is there use to cover a double wide stage and we moved that over there, just the fair board moved it, just fair board members. It took a lot of engineering to get it done and made it a sheep barn.

Max: When was that? Back in the nineties?

Norman: Yea! That probably was in the nineties. It's probably been there eighteen to twenty years.

Max: How about when you went to the fair back then did you make any lifelong friendships that still last today? Is it because of the fair you have these friends that lasted for your whole entire life.

Norman: Oh yes! When we were in 4-H and then they use to have a competition in 4-H where they had different baseball teams and we played one another around the county. And there's fellow that I got to know then that I still know. They're getting to be quite elderly now and there's some of them I have know for many years that have passed on. You said that you had Bob Capual in here. I got to know him way back then and I didn't know that there was a Bob Capual you know. It was probably fifty to sixty years ago that I got to know him and we got to be real good friends to.

Max: How about you Margie? Did you make any lifelong friends?

Margie: Oh yes! I just can't name off certain one. There was Doris Odeen, Doris Wensel now. She and I went to 4-H camp together.

Max: I know the 4-H has been slowing down. I know we didn't have 4-H camp this past year. I use to play in 4-H softball. That was a lot of fun. You go out there and tried to see how far you can hit the ball. But that's not there anymore. I don't know what's going on. People are getting busier, but the fair is getting bigger. I was talking to Jerome Laufenberg and he was saying that the people that are showing steers keeps on going up. So I know if they're showing through 4-H and have nothing to do with the 4-H.

Norman: It's the auction that has brought them. There never use to be beef cattle at the fair.

Max: When was the first year beef cattle came?

Norman: I never was involved in that so I really can't say for sure. But I'm sure it's in the last thirty years or in that area. And these sales are promoting interest well of course stands the reason. Well you've been in that. And if you can sell an animal for several hundred dollars and that much over market price. It's an incentive.

Max: Yea. This year I think I got a dime over market price for my steer and then I had grand champion pig and where a pig would usually go for eighty to a hundred bucks at the sale barn I got nine hundred bucks for this pig. So I got nine times the money than what's it's worth.

Norman: I had the grand champion pig at the northwest livestock show in 1945. And that was up at Eau Claire. And there was a ceiling price on it because of the war and the ceiling price was 21 cents a pound, but the government released the ceiling price and so it could go as high as it wanted to go, and I had the grand champion pig at the show and I got 53 cents a pound. I don't know how you would convert 53 cents back then into what the value of what it would be today, but it would be no where's near. Then it was a lot more, because the dollar was worth more.

Max: How about do you have any favorite memories when you were showing at the fair?

Norman: Well one thing about it when they're showing now they got the indoor arena and when they're showing beef cattle they got a gate system that is so good that nothing can get away. If younger kids lose control of their animal, it just can't get any place because they're gated off no matter which way they go you. When I showed and everybody else that was showing in that era it was right out in the open.

Margie: Just right about where the ice cream stand is over by the barn.

Max: Oh over there. That's where the arena was?

Norman: That's where the arena was.

Max: Then those two 4-H building, those two steel buildings they were not there then?

Norman: They weren't there. That one picture that I got there.

Max: This one right here.

Norman: That one right there. You see that big red building.

Max: The round one.

Norman: No, no. The round one was the crops building. And the one right where your thumb is that was a big wooden building that was built right where the two metal buildings are standing now.



Norman standing in front of the crops building with his cow.

Max: Ok. What was that used for?

Norman: That was used for all schools and school projects and flowers and sewing and everything like that.

Max: Ok. And then the round building was for crops?

Norman: The round building was for crops. And that round building is sitting right now would be on the end of where is now the pig barn.

Max: Ok! Was the round building built there?

Norman: I don't know. That was built at around the turn of the century.

Max: I was talking to Margaret Stetezer and she was saying that the round building came from somewhere over by City Point maybe.

Norman: Margaret Stetzer is on that picture. She's standing by the steps going into that building and that's her mother sitting down.

Margie: Your grandma.

Norman: Which would be your great grandma.

Max: Wow! That's interesting. So this right here is would be the arena where you would be showing.

Norman: The arena would be right behind that. The old showing arena would be right on the back end of that cow. Right out in the open.

Max: Where the current arena is right now what was that?

Norman: That was the race track.

Max: Oh that was where the race track come around?

Norman: There use to be quite an elevation there. And that's where the race track come around.

Max: So the grandstands, were they the center of the race track?

Norman: The grandstands were right where they are now.

Max: Ok. But then did the race track go back by the baseball fields or anything like that.

Norman: It went right through there. It went all the way around. It went all the way around the perimeter of the fairgrounds.

Max: Ok. I never knew that. I knew there was a racetrack but I thought it was just small.

Norman: No it was a half mile track.

Margie: It went around where the pavilion was to.

Norman: It went around behind it.

Paul Rykken: Did they ever do different kind of racing on there? Did they do horse racing?

Norman: Sure yea. They use to do horse and cart racing.

Rykken: Kind of like down in Viroqua?

Norman: Yup! Same thing.

Rykken: Do you know when that stopped?

Norman: Well it started, I'll use the term petering out, they weren't getting enough contestants to really keep it going and make it pay off and then at the time the arena was built right over the race track that totally eliminated that.

Max: What year was the arena built?

Norman: Why don't you ask me some of that stuff that I actually know.

Max: Yea.

Norman: I think it's close to 25 to 30 years ago.

Max: Moving on a little bit here. So your dad, Harvey Gilbertson I hear he has quite an interesting fair story to go with him.

Margie: Oh yea. And I couldn't find that particular thing and I might find it yet.

Norman: I'll bet you that you can find that thing down at the library.

Max: I read some stuff about him and how he came to the fair for how many consecutive years?

Margie: It was many years.

Max: I think it was 70 some or 80 some years except for 1959.

Margie: The one year there wasn't a fair.

Max: The polio epidemic?

Norman: Because of the Polio epidemic.

Max: Now you started on the fair board in 1954.

Norman: Yup!

Max: Was the Polio epidemic in 1949 or 59.

Norman: Oh gracious. You see fair board members were quite insignificant back then. We only would meet two or three times a year. And most everything was taken place at the extension office or at the Court House. And so the fair board didn't play a very big role as they do now.

Max: Now I hear the Pavilion has quite a story with it also. I read some stuff on how the wood came from the old county court house and they built Gambles general store or shed and then they tore that down and they brought it up here for the Pavilion. That's quite something to reuse the wood so much. Did you guys ever go to dances in it?

Margie: Oh yea. Lots of them.

Max: I know they always had the firemen's dance on the 4th of July. Then I read a story that they had a glass ball that would switch slides for different colors.

Norman: The local jeweler Henry Bird made it. I don't know what it was on but it was on something so it turned all the time. That was really something.

Max: So did they have a band there in the Pavilion?

Norman: They use to have dances there. Lots of times two dances a week. On Wednesday night and Saturday nights.

Max: Oh really. So it was like the dance hall for Black River then?

Norman: Oh yea. That was the main dance hall.

Max: Ok. Was it used a lot during the fair?

Norman: Oh sure oh yea.

Max: So pretty much the Pavilion back then kind of serves as the beer garden now during the fair?

Norman: Yup! That was mostly the center of attraction back there years ago during the fair. But then the carnival moved out of there and down in front and that took all the traffic away from back there.

Max: Oh! So the carnival was back where the baseball fields and the Pavilion use to be?

Norman: Yup! Use to be back in that area over there.

Max: So as long as you were there you might as well stop in there and dance?

Norman: Yea! If you worked up a sweat you know or something or if your throat got dry why it was right there so you could stop in.

Max: So then do you know anymore interesting history stories about the fairgrounds or just stuff?

Margie: What was that building that the Melrose Methodist use to serve dinners?

Norman: Why that was right next to the 4-H building.

Margie: Yea then there was the 4-H food stand.

Norman: You see the Melrose Methodist church use to have a building on the fairgrounds to. Which is right in the proximity of where the first metal building is next to the parking lot. And why people would just wait one year to the next to eat there because they served everything family style.

Max: What do you mean by family style?

Norman: Well they had a certain menu every day and they passed the plates around. They passed a bowl of meat or bowl of potatoes or a bowl of coleslaw a dish of cucumbers. Well everything was passed around.

Max: Did you have to pay to get in there?

Norman: Oh absolutely.

Max: Ok. I know there's the old 4-H food stand.

Margie: That was the little wooden one that sat right next to it.

Max: Did you guys ever go there much or have much to do with it?

Norman: Oh sure.

Margie: Well we had our boys in 4-H and that and the clubs had to offer their help.

Norman: Well each 4-H club was assigned a certain working time. Are they now?

Max: Yup. We still get assigned and Irving usually works on Saturdays.

Margie: That kitchen part for that was so small.

Max: I know my mom said she liked the old 4-H food stand because you didn't have to go get the food like at the new one, but at the old one you just sat down and they brought it to you. Have you guys been the La Crosse Interstate fair? Down in West Salem.

Norman: Not for quite a while.

Max: I know they got the food stand that Black River use to have. They come out and they wait on you. I think that's nice rather than have to go up and get your food.

Margie: You bet. I do to.

Max: The old dairy building, was there an old wash rack. I had a picture from Bob Capual that showed him standing outside of the Junior Dairy barn. Where was the wash racks for the dairy cattle or was there any?

Norman: There was a wash rack so to speak. It was between the two barns. The open class barn and the 4-H barn. Because you probably noticed to where there's a bank of faucets on the wall there. Well they use to run hoses from there in all directions from both sides and they washed the cattle right there.

Max: Ok. Where did they store their feed? Did they have show boxes back then?

Norman: They had show boxes back then. In fact I got one that's in the machine shed over there that I think has been to the fair probably 50 to 75 years. In fact it was made with the old fashioned square nails.

Max: That's a long time ago then. How about what did you have to do to prep your cattle for show day? I know now days you got Schmidt's and Janke's and they got their brushes getting their dairy cattle all prepped up. Back then did you just take them out?

Norman: Nothing like now. Well people just didn't have real good facilities and they brought what ever they thought looked half way decent to the fair and some of the stuff really should have been left home. But it was just the science of the times back then. The different breeds have improved over the years and there was so much crossbred stuff that come.

Max: Oh ok. So there were not many purebreds?

Norman: Very few purebreds. It was all half breed stuff. Guernsey's and Holsteins and Brown Swiss and Milking Shorthorns and a lot of this stuff was half and half. In fact it was hard to tell what it was really supposed or what class to put it in.

Max: I know the beef cattle now they're so crossbred between the Angus and Semimetal. Probably back then they had the Guernsey's and Jersey's and Holsteins crossed.

Norman: Oh yea.

Max: Was there a lot of exhibitors back then? Where the barns full?

Norman: Oh yes. Oh graciously. More exhibitors than now. Because there were so many more 4-H clubs than there is now.

Max: Was there enough room for all the cattle?

Norman: No. When the barn got full, they would put up tents and have them outside in tents.

Max: Did they drive a post into the ground to keep them in place and tie them to.

Norman: Yup!

Max: Was dairy cattle the biggest thing back then? I know now days dairy is still big but beef is bigger with the current fair. Was dairy cattle the big thing of the fair?

Norman: Well not so much dairy cattle. It was Junior fair. Like all the way from your Senior yearlings on down and you got above that then there wasn't quite so much. There wasn't that many milking cows brought in. And they always use to be big bulls, mature bulls.

Max: I know. Bob Capual brought in a picture of him with a Brown Swiss bull and David Hoffman had a bull I think it was in 1962 and that bull weighed 2,600 pounds. Do you remember that bull there?



Norman: His name was George.

Max: That is the biggest bull I've ever seen. I know my dad has these bulls and he sells them at 1800 pounds and I think there the biggest animal I've ever seen and this 2,600 pound bull and he was sitting there holding on to it like I would hold on to a little heifer calf. I was thinking oh my God. It was like holding onto a Buffalo there. But he must have been tame.

Norman: Well they were use to being led is what it amounted to. And they always had a ring in their nose.

Max: Now Hoffman's were big names back then?

Margie: They had registered Holsteins.

Max: I know now day you say Schmitt and you think dairy cattle.

Margie: Then there were Curran's out in Taylor and they had Guernsey's didn't they?

Norman: Yup. And there was Capaul's and Pfaff's, Wally Pfaff.

Max: Down by Melrose?

Norman: Down by Melrose.

Max: Did he show Holsteins?

Norman: No he was Brown Swiss. There were Patterns from North Bend. They had Holsteins.

Max: How about Strandberg's?

Norman: Standberg's. There were no Standberg's around here yet. This was before Strandberg's came into the picture. But they had Jerseys. Another one was Tom Bible. You probably don't know Tom Bible.

Max: I know Jim Bible.

Norman: Ok. Well this would be his dad.

Max: Ok. Out there by Disco.

Norman: Out by Disco. They had registered Jerseys.

Max: Were they pretty good competition? Verses other county fairs did Jackson County had a pretty good dairy show?

Norman: They had a good dairy show.

Max: Ok. I know like now days with the market animals the judges are always saying that we are above other county fairs that border us that they don't have the competition like we do. A lot of people come to the Jackson County fair just to judge these fine animals. Was it that way back then that people come from different counties just to watch the dairy cattle?

Norman: Well of course transportation wasn't then like it is now, but the competition way back when I was first in 4-H, there was very few purebreds. There were a lot of crossbreeds. But then it got to the point where there was a time when most of the stuff was purebred. I mean you had

to show papers on it to bring it, but now it's reverted back again now and it either is or it isn't. But you got the purebreds that are judged separate from the grades to.

Max: How about when people brought milk cows to the fair, did they milk them by hand and store it in milk cans?

Norman: They milked them by hand.

Max: Did they ever have milking machines there in the sixties?

Norman: Somebody had, but they didn't have not near as much sophisticated equipment than as it is now.

Max: Ok. I know now they got the milk-house with the pipeline.

Norman: The parlor set-up.

Max: In 1954 you came onto the fair board. Were there different offices or were you just on the fair board?

Norman: No there was officers.

Max: What were you in 1954?

Norman: I was just a director.

Max: Ok you were a director. When was the first year you were the co-president of the fair?

Norman: That's been quite a few years ago. Merlin Peterson was president for a couple years. That would be Judy Olson's dad. But like I said back then we met so few times. We didn't hardly know what was going on. The county agent and the club agent took care of everything. Now they don't really take care of anything really.

Max: I know the FFA started here in Black River Falls in the 1940's. Were you able to show animals through the Black River Falls FFA at the fair also?

Norman: No. I was in the 6th grade when we moved from Black River down to there. So I went to country school for two years down there. Where we lived and then I went to Melrose for high school.

Max: Were you ever in FFA?

Norman: No.

Max: When was the first year the FFA was able to show at the county fair?

Norman: Max you're getting to deep into this.

Max: I know, but I'm the President of the FFA so I'm just wondering how early they were able to show.

Norman: I think Allan was in FFA. My brother Allan. I had a younger brother, he's been dead for many years now, but I'm sure he was in FFA. Yea. I think we got a jacket some place in our stuff that he had. I know that he had one Guernsey heifer that he started showing when it was

just a junior calf and he showed it for seven years every year. When it came to showmanship all he would do is put the rope over its neck and it would follow him every place he went.

Max: Now was showmanship a big deal back then? I know now days showmanship is not such a big deal with the market animals. We have to do it in order to be in the sale.

Norman: It was just junior and senior. It wasn't broke down like it is now.

Max: I know now days they got junior, immediate, and senior. It's broke into three classes.

Norman: It wasn't that. You were either in the older class or the younger class.

Max: Did you guys do pretty good in showmanship?

Norman: I never was in it. We weren't in showmanship when I was in 4-H.

Max: Did do any showmanship?

Margie: No.

Max: Ok. Do you guys currently help out 4-H members or FFA members? I know Capual's after they got done showing their junior show. I know Jeannine started up a 4-H club. Do you guys have much to do with 4-H clubs?

Margie: Just when our boys were in.

Max: What did your boys show at the fair?

Norman: They showed cattle.

Max: What year were they about? Sixties or Seventies?

Margie: It would be in the seventies. Allan he just turned 40.

Max: Oh yea. That probably would have been in the seventies or the eighties. When you guys were showing at the fair did you enjoy it or did you wish you would have showed something else along with it to? I know my dad always wanted to show market animals. But do you guys with you would have showed a pig or a sheep?

Norman: I showed pigs.

Max: The pigs that you showed how big were they? How much do you think they weighed?

Norman: 220 pounds.

Max: Ok. So about the same size as is which is showed today. I know today they are about 250 pounds or so. How about the transportation? Did you guys have big ton trucks with racks on the back or trailers? I know your dad I read in the paper would walk his cattle to the fair.

Margie: He did that, I guess a long time ago. Before I ever was around.

Max: I read in the paper that he had walked his cattle ten miles to the fair just to show.

Norman: Oh yea. A lot of them did.

Max: Was the fair the big thing for the rural people?

Norman: Oh yea.

Max: I know now days people look forward to Christmas, but back then was the fair bigger than Christmas?

Norman: A lot of people would come to the fair. The whole family would bring picnic baskets.

Margie: Yea. When I first met him I was invited to come and eat noon lunch with him. His mother fixed a whole picnic lunch and brought it along. We sat under the tress where the trailers are parked.

Max: So did you and Norman meet at the fair then?

Norman: We met at the Pavilion.

Max: How old were you guys when you met?

Margie: I think I was a senior in high school.

Norman: I was a little bit older.

Margie: Then he went into the service, and when he finished his tour of duty, he came home and then we got married.

Max: Ok. So did you guys look forward to going to the fair to hang out? And what were the carnival rides like back then to? Did they have the Ferris Wheel and the tilt-a-whirl?

Margie: Well they had the Ferris Wheel and all that.

Norman: They had the merry go round that played music.

Max: What were the other rides like. Did they have pony rides or something.

Margie: They had live ponies and little kids could ride them.

Max: Was the carnival as big to day as it was back then?

Norman: No it's bigger now. There are more kids rides for little kids. They didn't lean so heavy towards that back then. When you got beyond the Ferris Wheel and the merry go round and the tilt-a-while you just about had it.

Margie: Oh they had the swings. They were behind the grand stands. They were a little chair type thing.

Max: Yup! I've rode on them once before. I always think the chains are going to break on me.

Norman: I know when ever we contract for carnival why it has to be X number of major rides and X number of junior rides. So it makes it acceptable for all ages.

Max: Ok. Now how about the grand stands. That's quite and interesting topic. I read in the paper there were three grand stands. The first one was just a platform with a roof. I think the second one was built around 1900 or somewhere around then.

Norman: It was built between 1929 and 1930.

Max: The one that's currently standing now?

timbers and stuff that are in it, but when it came in on the rail road over to the railroad depot and I know that the timbers were so long that they run them past the cap to keep them on the truck. When they went up the hill past the Catholic church the front wheels would come up off the ground. It wasn't the present Catholic church it was the one that was there before this one. But he said that was in 1929 and they started it in one year and finished it the next year.

Max: Ok. Now the Great Depression was going when it was built. Did that have any effect on how it was built.

Margie: I don't remember because that was the year I was born.

Norman: Yea and me. I don't remember that.

Max: Ok. Now were the grandstands a big monument when you come to the fair? Would you just be awed by how big the structure was?

Norman: Oh sure.

Max: I think it's still quite a monument for it to be built in that time period with all the labor and the big structures and the timbers still a monument when you come in there on 54 and you see it there.

Norman: And now there has been so much work done on it and it's been updated so much over the last ten years, and to think that they think this it's sitting in the wrong place so it's got to be torn down. It doesn't add up.

Max: Yea. That's quite an interesting topic there. I could have a whole another interview on that. It would be interesting to interview different people from different parts of the county with different lives, between the rural and the urban, the livestock and the hockey. It would be interesting to see their sides of view. Ok. Now I was reading in the paper that the white brick building what built in 1911 with money that the students had raised.

Norman: From the rural schools.

Max: Yea. And they built it for school exhibits. Do you know much about that?

Norman: Yes. Well it was way before my time. But from hearing old veterans talk, you see And that was used for two years as headquarters offices for the training that was going on there. And there use to be some of the local veterans that could remember being what they called mustard out. In other words they went to war. They got their orders out of which is now that storage building and went off to war. So there is a lot of history, but yet it's to bad that it isn't on the history, antique list, historical buildings.



Cement Block Building

Max: Yea that's quite an interesting building I guess. I know the grand stands, the basement of that was kitchens, that was what Margaret Stetzer was telling me. They would feed the CCC people out of that. There's quite a bit of history with the grandstands also.

Norman: Yea. It's too bad that some of this stuff so to speak is on the chopping block, because there is a lot of history behind it.

Max: Especially the grandstands, it's going to be when they go.

Norman: I really haven't to anybody, other than one or two people that is really in favor of all of this that they are intending to do.

Max: What did you think about the first time you saw the grandstands?

Margie: Big!

Max: Did you go on to them and race up the stairs?

Margie: Yea we raced up the stairs.

Norman: Just like any kid. Race up and down the stairs and look out the back.

Max: I always did that.

Norman: Drop pop bottle down on them piers and break them. It's still a solid line with glass all along behind it there.

Max: What were all the events they had at the fair? I know one year they had an airplane come in, in about the early 1900's. I know one year they had Dr. Khron dress his car up with vegetable, it must have been during a drought, because it had a sign saying, Jackson County has never had a crop disaster. One thing I noticed is that more of the community was involved in it that what it is now. Now day it's more of a rural, the people that bring in exhibits are involved with it. Where back then you had Krohn and a lot of the community that came. It was such a big community and county thing. Where now it's just the rural farm kids and the exhibitors. Was there a lot of people back then, like friends from school, doctors, and teachers come to it?

Norman: Oh yea. Because it was the high light of the year. Now there so many things going on all the time, the fair kind of gets over looked. Back then that was it for the year. So it was really a big deal.

Max: What did you do for fun when you were 17 or 18 if they just had the Ferris Wheel, because you can only have just so much fun on that. Did you guys go to the Pavilion and dance?

Norman: Oh yea. The Pavilion was a lively place.

Max: Did they have local bands come in?

Norman: Oh yea. There were bands from all over in there.

Margie: Elmo Johnson would always play there.

Max: Ok. What was the main band that they would always have come and play?

Norman: There were all kinds of different ones.

Max: If you had to pay to get into the Pavilion, who was the person who got the cover charge.

Norman: I think it was the fair board.

Norman: Yea. I know the admission at the pavilion use to be way up to a quarter.

Max: What was the admission to get into the fairgrounds?

Norman: I don't really remember that. I don't think it was much less that it is right now. We charge a dollar daily admission now. We're about the cheapest fair going, as far as daily admission to the grounds. Some of them charge 6, 7, 8, 10 dollars, but that includes going into the grandstands to. So that deters a lot of people, because if there's someone that is not interested in what's going on in the grandstands, they particularly don't care to pay 6,7, or 8 dollars just to walk in on the grounds.

Max: Ok. Another question here. What day were the dairy cattle showed?

Norman: I think they were Sunday and Monday, because Saturday was entry day, and Tuesday was the end of the fair. The end of the fair then, you want to know what time they released the exhibits?

Max: Six or so?

Norman: Eight 'o' clock at night.

Max: That's pretty late.

Norman: A lot of the exhibits weren't taken out until the next day, because there wasn't near as many trucks then as there is now and people that did commercial trucking, they had to make so many trips that they could only make so many. Every farmer then milked cows, which is different now, so a lot of them were held over until the next day.

Max: I know with us we get released at 4:30 and we got to be out of there by 5 and that. Then I got to go home for chores, because I always got to help dad milk cows on Sunday nights. I'm always hoping to get that night off, but that doesn't happen.

Norman: It was a lot different then. The transportation part was a lot different. I know when Lorence my brother and I would bring calves, our neighbor had a little half ton Ford pick-up, with a high rack on it. Probably 1935, 36 Ford. We put two three calves in there, what ever it was and boy he had a load.

Max: How did you guys get your cattle up to the fair?

Margie: It was just Gilbertson Brothers. It was Gilbertson Brothers trucking, they had the great big trucks with the high sides. They were the ones that hauled dads.

Max: Ok. Did the Gilbertson Brothers do a lot of commercial trucking?

Margie: Yea.

Max: Was there a loading ramp there. I know Blaken's still have that big truck with a box on it. Did they have loading ramp there to take all the cattle off?

Norman: They had chutes. Portable chutes and we drug then around to where ever we need them.

Max: Yesterday I was looking at a picture, on the junior dairy barn they use to have a copula but it ran the whole length of the barn, but now it's just a peak. Bob Capual had a picture in front of the barn with it.

Norman: It sat on both of them. They got them ventilators and all now. And of course the sides always use to be closed, now they are all open. They got that paneling on the sides. They had doors that dropped down on hinges. And at night or during the off season the building was closed up tight. You couldn't see in there.

Max: When was the VFW building built.

Norman: Oh man. That's old. That goes way back into the 1800's.

Max: Do you know what that was used for before they had it.

Norman: They built it and they own it.

Max: Ok. I know we go there once in a while to eat at the fair.

Margie: That's a good place to eat. They got the best hamburgers.

Max: Some more building questions here. How about those cement bathrooms? Were they always there?

Norman: They were built about thirty years ago for bathrooms.

Max: When was the current kitty barn built?

Norman: Well Ron Wyss could tell you. Because he was in 4-H at the time it was built. He said that he helped solicit to get funds to help build it.

Margie: He was in the Cloverdale Club then.

Max: Another question. Do you guys still wish you were still showing cattle at the fair? I know Bob Capual stopped showing cattle back in 1990 and he stopped showing because he got to old. But I think he still wants to do it.

Norman: It's a good experience.

Max: Yea it is. I've always been at the fair since I could walk. I know I would always be with my mom and my sister when my sister was showing pigs. I don't know what I would do with out the fair. That makes my hold year. Well I guess we'll start wrapping up this interview. Is there anything else you want to add? We talked about the buildings and the experience at the fair.

Margie: I know I have worked in the home executive building and people come in there from Trempealeau county Buffalo County, they're visiting the fair and they think this is the nicest fair there is around.

Max: I know I've talked to a lot of people and they like the old fashioned fair.

Margie: Yup. They like it this way.

Max: I haven't talked to anybody that would like to see the fair grounds go. They just like coming here to see the old fashioned fair and the buildings. I have to say my favorite building on the whole fairgrounds would be the pig barn.

Margie: Oh yes. When you work with pigs you like it.

Max: Yea. There is nothing like that pig barn. Another interesting thing is my show box. My show box happens to be the right height to where no matter if you're 4 foot tall or 6 foot 7 inches, your feet are somehow off the ground. And people just like to sit on my show box, dangle their feet and tap my show box. I don't know what it is. There are other show boxes at different heights, but mine is just the right height that when I come into the barn there is usually about five little kids piled on my show box. I think it's almost more comfortable than those fold out chairs.

Norman: Oh yes.

Margie: Another thing there use to be at the fairgrounds was the Evangelical Church had a food stand where the antique building sits now.

Max: Did they have good food out of there?

Margie: Oh yes!

Norman: But it got to the point where they couldn't get help to run it, so they just abandoned it.

Max: Ok.

Norman: Nope. It's too bad that all of this hullabaloo is going on about changing everything over there. I've only talked to a couple of people who said "oh that's progress".

Margie: It is but.

Max: Well my dad, he's not totally against it because there is nothing wrong with having new buildings, but the fair has been around since about 1859 and it started over on the Mills Farm over on 8th street. But it's been where it is now for well over a hundred years. And Jerome Laufenberg said that you lose the camaraderie of the decades of the fair and how it's been in the same vicinity of the place, but you might lose the camaraderie of what is all ready there. Thank you for the interview.

## 2008 Falls History Project: Lillian Hart

Interviewer: Max Hart

November 19, 2007

“I think we have had wonderful ones and we will continue to have them. Who knows in the future with a new arena how it will go. But you know it’s just the change of time. It’s just like tearing down that Pavilion, you hated to see it go, but it was time that we have to move on I guess.”

- Lillian Hart



Lillian Hart

Max: It’s November 19, 2007. I’m interviewing Lillian Hart about the Jackson County Fair for the Falls History Project. The first question here is would you please state your name and the place you were born and the year you were born.

Lillian Hart: I’m Lillian Hart. I was born in Caledonia, Minnesota in December of 1927. So that means I’m going to be 80 years old in another month. Can you believe that?

Max: Ok. To kick off this interview I’ll ask you what was the first year you showed anything at the fair?

Lillian: Oh my. I joined 4-H when I was nine years old. That was when you could become a member of a 4-H club. I joined the Spring Creek 4-H club. I was a 4-H member all through the years. I then became a general leader. When I was married I moved to Irving so I became an Irving Sticktight. Our Eugene was a member and went along with him and the next thing I knew I was a general leader and I was a general leader for ten years. We had a large club. The Irving Sticktights were very active in many things. They won many things in the district. They also went to state with our production of Black River Anthology, which was written by Ruth Zielsdorf. It was an original. That was a big highlight for the Irving Sticktights.

Max: Wow! I didn’t know that. What did you show at the Jackson County Fair?

Lillian: My sister and I, when we were about nine or ten, my dad had sheep. So we had to pick out a lamb from the herd. You didn't go to some special place to pick out a purebred or something special like that. You just picked out a lamb and you went to the fair. This was the same way with a heifer calf; you just picked out one from the herd. My dad just had grade cattle. We always got a place. I remember the one year that I was going to take baking. I made baking powder biscuits. My sister had the sheep and what do you do when you don't have a pick-up to haul the sheep? You take out the back seat of the car and you put the sheep in back of the car. So my sister was sitting in the back with these two sheep. I was sitting in front with my dad, holding my baking powder biscuits. What did the sheep do? They were not used to being confined in the back seat of a car. Leaped over, right into my baking powder biscuits. So needless to say I didn't take baking powder biscuits to the fair that year.

Max: Ok. So did Billy or Jack show anything at the fair?

Lillian: Oh sure. They did back then.

Max: Did they ever show any heifer calves?

Lillian: Oh sure. But just grade. Like I said you just chose what ever from the herd. You thought that calf looked fairly good. You'd lead that around and you would take that.

Max: Where did you show them at? Where on the fairgrounds I should ask?

Lillian: Where the Junior Dairy barn is, but outside you just walked around in the ring outside there. It didn't make a difference if there was a downpour. When it was your turn to show, you showed no matter what type of weather. I can remember walking around in that circle in the rain. Max: Ok. So was that arena used for sheep?

Lillian: Well there was the sheep barn.

Max: Where was that at?

Lillian: It right along there by the hog barn. There was a sheep barn around there somewhere. I remember when Willard was in 4-H, he took a pig and that was in where the hog barn is now. He always complained because they had more pigs than what they had allowed for. They had to put a gate and he got a pen that had a big stump in it. He didn't like that. But he had to take it because that was all that was left. There were always a lot of exhibits in the livestock.

Max: What were your first memories of the fair?

Lillian: Oh my first memories. I remember taking a dress, I remember making the dress, and in style review, and the style review was held over in the Pavilion. You would show off your dress there. Where we had to keep our things was under the grandstands. There were no metal buildings; your exhibits were under the grandstands, such as canning and a lot of stuff. Now I'm talking about back in the 40's. There have been a lot of changes since then. Each of the 4-H clubs had a booth, like they do now in the 4-H buildings. You really aimed to make a nice booth. Of course they were judged. I guess those are kind of the memories of showing in the rain, and my sisters sheep, I just don't remember where they showed the sheep. I don't even know if they took them out. Maybe they just kept them in pens. I do know that when we didn't have them metal building, there were buildings that were moved up to the fairgrounds from the CCC camp in Irving. That is where they used a display area. One whole building was full of school exhibits. That was when all the county schools, they entered in different areas. That was at the fair and

that building was full of school exhibits. They were judged and they were given ribbons just like anything else.

Max: Where were those buildings placed at?

Lillian: Pretty much along where they are now. I know the Methodist Ladies Aid had one of them. They served meals. They served breakfast, dinner, supper. They had the full course meals. Then kind of along in there, maybe in the 50's when the 4-H built their food stand. It had benches along the outside, a kitchen in the back. You would order, after the arena was built, the 4-H was over in the food stand there in the arena. Then for a few years we played Bingo in the old food stand.

Max: Has there been any major changes that you've seen since you started showing and up to present day? I know you've been Secretary for about 50 years or so.

Lillian: Yes! The arena is such a wonderful place to show things. Jackson County is very fortunate to have a nice place. You can have two things going on at the same time. That is really nice. I think that is maybe the biggest thing. The building, we got the kitty barn, which we never had. You can have the small animals in there. Years ago I can remember there was a round building, I don't know where that really came from, but that is where they had the flowers and the crops, the corn and the oats and that. That was where those exhibits were. That was neat. That was a round one. I always liked that one. That I'm sure was tore down or hauled away. Max: I know I interviewed Norman and Margie Johnson last week and they gave me a picture of Norman showing a calf and the round building was in the background. Sitting on the stairs was my Great Grandma Adah Hart and Margaret was leaning against the door.

Lillian: Willard brought a bull to the fair and he has a picture of quite a few of them standing there with the bulls. I think he had the misfortune and they were going to take it where ever and the bull jumped up out of the truck and broke its leg. So he didn't get to take it where ever he was going to take it to. He still talks about that today, about how his prized bull jumped out of the truck and broke its leg and he couldn't go any further.

Max: That's a bad deal. Was it in 1949 or 59 when the Polio epidemic come out and shut down the fair?

Lillian: That was in 49. 49 to 50 I remember. We didn't have the fair. I was just married, We were married in 49 and I remember canceling out. We use to go up to the fairs in couples up in Chippewa Falls or go to La Crosse fair, but you didn't really want to go anyplace because that was the fear of contracting Polio.

Max: So that's why the fair was canceled in 49 to have less contact between people.

Lillian: Right. You didn't want to get exposed.

Max: It must have been something big for the fair to get cancelled?

Lillian: Yea for that reason.

Max: I know the fair was held at the Miller farm in 1859 and 60. Do you know much about that?

Lillian: No. I suppose I've read about it but I've also forgot about it. The years I was involved in the fair were in the 70's. In the 80's, not so much because then I was in the extension office. But then after I retired from the extension office I became the secretary/treasurer for 13 years. When

I started in the extension office in 1960. The extension office is highly involved in the fair and you knew who the president was and the secretary was and Gene Savage who was the Agricultural agent and he was the secretary of the fair. Our office was again involved a little more there.

Max: Did you ever do anything with the Pavilion? Did you and Willard go up there for dances?

Lillian: Oh yes. That Pavilion was the main thing. We had crowds there. It was filled. It had a wonderful floor. It had lights, different colored lights, lattice ceiling. That was a beautiful building. It had lattice fence as you walked in. The lights would be low, with these different colored lights. Oh my. They had good bands there. But people danced then. People don't dance anymore. I know we use to get big name bands. I suppose it would be in the 70's, but there weren't many people there. It cost to have them, so we cut that out. But for years a dance was a big thing. You hated to see it burnt down. The fire department burnt it down and I know many of the fair board members stood there and watched it. You knew a lot of memories. But I know when I graduated from high school, what did you do? You went to the Pavilion to the dance. The firemen's dance then. Many good times.

Max: When did the Pavilion start to taper off?

Lillian: I suppose in the late 70's.

Max: When did the dances start going? I'm not sure when it was built. I think it was built back in the 30's.

Lillian: Yea way back in the 30's. That was a popular place. I remember the 4-H, they had Bermuda shorts that came to the knees and everybody was supposed to wear these Bermuda shorts. That's what you were supposed to wear, but Eugene wouldn't go, because he didn't like those Bermuda shorts. Now look today. Look how you wear shorts a lot in the summer time. But that's just how time changes.

Max: Yea. So did you and Willard go to the Pavilion a lot?

Lillian: A lot. That's what you did back then.

Max: During the fair did the biggest dance go on of the year?

Lillian: I think the Saturday night was the big night. Then when Al Larson was chair of Miss Jackson County, Miss Jackson County plays a big part of the fair, and Al Larson was a wonderful promoter of the fair. The results of the Miss Jackson County were not announced until Sunday night. That was a big crowd. Now look at Sunday night by six o' clock, the exhibits are released at 4:30. At six o' clock they're taking down the rides and you wouldn't even know there had been a fair. But Sunday night was always a big night. The grandstand was full. That was a big attraction.

Max: Norman was saying the fair use to last Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Was that the dates it use to be?

Lillian: When I've been involved in the 60's I don't remember that. I remember walking to the fair when they would let school out. Then it didn't cost hardly anything to get into the fair. It always had lots of good rides. The merry go round, I remember the merry go round and the music

roller coaster one year. That was along by where the restrooms and the kitty barn are now. That was there before those buildings were built there. One of my favorite memories was on a Sunday night and after the fair was over with, and you give a sigh of relief that another good fair is done. The fair board members would be around the Secretary's building, and the owners of the rides would let the board members ride any ride. I remember Gile Iliff sitting on the horse on the merry go round. Or on the roller coaster was the other one remember and Gene Savage sat up in the front and the rest of us board members were in the back.

Max: What were the attractions for the grandstands?

Lillian: They had horse pulls. I don't remember it but they use to have horses going around the track with a buggy. Some doctor had a horse. I think it was Dr. Krohn that had a horse that would trot around. Horses would come in from different places. It would be a race, but you were in a buggy or a cart. There were cart races with these beautiful black horses. I remember my brother and I were in the freckle contest. My brother beat me out. He had more. You had to go up on the stage, they would say any kid such and such an age, they'd make you come up there and we'd be standing up there on the stage and they would go down through to see which kid had the most freckles. Brother Bill and I were picked out as some of the ones that had the most. Then I remember they had a hog calling contest. You had to call the hogs. I remember having a milking contest one time. Nyla Musser was one of the ones and Gene Savage and another one, and Nyla got the most milk. The judges had to see which one had the most milk and Nyla was the one the one that had the most milk. Of course Nyla was use to milking cows because she had to milk cows.

Max: What were the premiums back in those days?

Lillian: Premiums I don't think was really changed all that much. 25 cents, 50 cents, a dollar, and you know premiums are not all the much today either. But you got to go by the state with state aid and all that. But the premiums haven't changed all that much in all that time. So I think you say which has changed the most, and I'd say the buildings have changed the most. You know you've got a new Secretary's building. I loved that old Secretary's building. Do you remember that old red one that kind of leaned?



The old Secretary's building

Max: Yup.

Lillian: But I still liked it. It was hot and they'd comment but I enjoyed it. I remember when the treasurer had a brooder coop and that was set right next to the Secretary's building. Then that is where the treasurer was and you know when you needed extra cash or when someone came and paid for a booth or what ever. They always went into this brooder coop. Of course in later years, when Gile Iliff was president, he would bring his little trailer and we were in that. Then Kinning rented a bigger one. You could be in there away from having the money right out there in front.

Max: I know Norman Johnson was saying that they brought some buildings up from the CCC camp in Irving that they used at dorms that were placed over by the pine trees. Would you tell me about those?

Lillian: I just know that that is where they were set. They were dorms for the ones that stayed overnight.

Max: Did you stay overnight in them?

Lillian: No we never did. We always had to go home and help do the chores. We didn't get a chance to stay there.

Max: Where did you grow up at?

Lillian: Do you know where brother Bill lives?

Max: Yup.

Lillian: That is where I grew up.

Max: Oh so that's the home farm.

Lillian: Yup. My dad moved there in 29. They say that he just bought the farm and the Depression came about that time and that was pretty hard for many people. When he moved there and brother Bill was a baby, so he had three girls and there was brother Bill. So he had four little kids when he moved there.

Max: Do you remember Bob Capual much?

Lillian: Yup. I remember that he sold for many years.

Max: He had the Brown Swiss.

Lillian: I think that if anybody would have fair written across them is the Kinning family. I have never seen any other family that is so involved and so supportive of the fair. You know what is the fair? It's an educational event for kids to bring their whatever it is for competition. Show off their work. You know you grow by that. I just pat all those families, the mothers and the dads. They are supportive. I just think that fair people, the ones that exhibit or have exhibited are just the greatest, because you don't hear about any trouble. You got all of these volunteers and you got a lot of work. But I just think that they all work together and if you didn't have volunteers and if you didn't have those working mothers and dads, you wouldn't have a fair. That's what makes a fair.

Max: I know I had read an article written back in the 90's and it had a picture of a person sweeping in the dairy barn and it had a caption, as with out the parents, the mothers and the fathers, the kids and the grandparents that always come the Wednesday, the week before the fair and clean up there wouldn't be a fair without these people.

Lillian: My grandson Tony was always with me at the fair. He got really involved with the fair and I always say that he has never missed a fair. I remember the flag pole right out by the front was dedicated, and I remember holding him when they did that. He's been to the fair ever since. He's been co-secretary / treasurer with me. He really helped me a lot from when I took over again in 90 and I retired in 2003.

Max: Did Eugene show any cattle at the fair when he was in 4-H?

Lillian: Oh yes. He showed dairy cattle. A couple weeks before the fair you would go and tour the exhibits that were to be showed at the fair. Do you do that now?

Max: No so much.

Lillian: That was a must that you had to do. On one Sunday I remember Eugene had to get his heifer out of the barn to lead it around and here we all stood around to see. Does he know how to lead it? Does the calf lead right? Is the calf clipped right? Then he took wood working also. Then Tony was a great 4-H member also. I kind of got him involved in that because he was with me a lot. He did demonstrations. He would win in the county and then he would go to the districts. He did well in demonstrations. He made Peanut Butter Cookies one time. He had that big bakers cap on. Then he sent that recipe to Mr. Food. Mr. Food used that recipe on his show.

Max: Wow! That's interesting. Anything else you would like to talk about. I got some questions here, but I'll let you talk about anything.

Lillian: Well you ask me a question and I'll go on from there.

Max: Ok. After you got done showing and got married and all that, were you highly involved in the 4-H? I know you said that you were a general leader. Did you help the kids get the animals ready?

Lillian: I didn't as much because I was in extension then and I had to be over in the office. The dads were pretty much always over there. I was usually busy on check in day because someone would loose a tag on an animal and they would come over and have to get it changed over to another one. So I was involved that way, rather than over in the barn.

Max: Ok. So what does the fair mean to you?

Lillian: What it means to me is I just think that it's a big educational event. It is kind of the biggest event of the county. It use to be just Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Now we start it on a Wednesday night. Then you think of the grandstands and the money that has been put into it and the work that has been put into it. But you know only five days out of the year that grandstand is used. It sits out in all kinds of weather. It's only used five days. I think that that is sad, but I guess that is a grandstand. Someone was saying a grandstand like that, you don't hardly have them like that in the state of Wisconsin. I know Trempealeau County tore theirs down a few years ago and they say don't tear down that grandstand. But if the developers, whatever they got developed, I know it would be years down the road to do what they want to do, but I think that grandstands will be around a few years yet. That's my feeling.

Max: That grandstand it's the biggest part of the fair for me. I know the Pavilion was the biggest part for you. But the grandstand is where all the action is.

Lillian: It holds many memories. Now the area under the grandstand is kind of dead. There isn't much going on under there. But it used to be under the grandstand, you could go out the door and come around. But now it's blocked off because of the track. You use to walk that way and walk to the Pavilion and then there was a beer stand. Then you could just go around in a circle. That kind of changed it when you couldn't go out that end of the grandstand.

Max: Do you still come a lot to the fair?

Lillian: Oh certainly. I helped out with the bake off on Saturday this past year. I partake in that bake off. I've been a judge a few years ago when there were 29 Blueberry desserts. Then you

have to come up with one winner. They had this year maybe 13 to 14 participants in Blueberry. Then everybody gets to sample it afterwards. Kinning has ice cream there and everybody samples this and this and then you get some ice cream. It's nice.

Max: So what do you think about the fair now days? Do you think it's as big and alive as it was back in your days?

Lillian: I think they have nice crowds. Here again it depends on the weather. We've had some hot weather. They don't even put the rides on when there's hot weather. They do that more at night.

Max: I know Norman was saying that there were so many animals for dairy, that they'd had to put up tents to accommodate for the dairy. He said there were more exhibits back in the 50's than now.

Lillian: Of course there was more farms. There's so many less. Then I think with the meat animal sale. I don't know how long that has been going on. But that was a thing to start for the fair. Where you sell your prized ones.

Max: I've been in that every year.

Lillian: That's wonderful. You have to be up at a certain weight to get in. I'm sure there are a lot of kids that want to be in that to. A person has to work for that. You have to have it gain.

Max: I know the market sale is a big thing. But the competition is a lot. People spend way too much on a steer. Even if you receive grand champion with it you still don't make anything and you have probably lost money. I think it is blown way out of proportion. I know when I started showing I just got a steer off the feed lot and I received a red ribbon with him. Now days I wouldn't want to bring him. In the past five years the competition has really increased.

Lillian: That is their goal. You know there are two sides to that.

Max: Did you make any lifelong friendships because of going to the fair?

Lillian: I guess the Kinnings. Butch's mother Anita is a good friend. The Kinnings are all good friends. I guess little Gile Patterson and Gile Iliff and John Curran. I think of many of those that I've worked with, Max, and they're not here anymore. I've worked with Merlin Peterson, worked with a lot of those presidents of the fair. I remember one of the presidents didn't even come to the fair the first day because he was home combining. Well that was his responsibility to come to the fair. Well then a lot of the responsibilities of the fairgrounds were laid onto us. I remember one time the president resigned about a month before the fair. So little Gile Patterson was the vice president then and he and I took over. He was older then. I always remember that we had outdoor toilets then and they were over along by the antique building is, and then we had a girl come crying saying that she had dropped her purse down in the toilet. Little Gile was there trying to retrieve that purse. This president resigned and I remember this one because he never went to the bank with the money. He kept it in the trunk of his car. At the end of the fair he would take that money down to the bank and he had the bank count the money. We didn't do any of the counting. He just worked out of the trunk of his car. Today you know are a little leery. When I'd go to the bank with a bag of money, why Willard was always very cautious. You'd always have to keep some money over for the next day. It was a responsibility. But I'd have to say that I was never really afraid. Sometimes when you had a lot of money the cops would take me down so I

could put it in the night deposit. Storms would come up and they'd call up to the Secretary's office and say that there were tornado warnings out, well what do you do? You don't like to get onto the loud speaker and say there is a tornado warning out. That would scare people. I remember one time it was quite windy and I remember John Marg coming into the trailer house and he told me to get out of there. I took the checkbook and the money I had and I went home. Then Tony called and said that we need the checkbook for what ever show was going on then. You had to pay them when they were done and I had the checkbook, so they had to come out and get the checkbook. Well I told them that John Marg told me to get out of there, so I left. In the early days I remember they had a ball game behind the grandstand and cars would come in full of people going to the ball game, well you didn't really know for sure if they were coming to the fair or if they were going to the ball game because they didn't want to pay anything to get in. So having to argue with them a little bit. I kind of liked having a man at the front gate. We had to have a few times that we had to put a stop to it. I remember on time that there was a pick pocket and I remember that president getting on the loud speaker saying there's a pick pocket person on the grounds, so protect your stuff. That kind of scares people.

Max: I know that when that fair is done with on Sunday I always go into the arena for the Herdsmanship awards and the parade of champions. I think that's the saddest part of the fair.

Lillian: Yes, because it's the end.

Max: Wednesday nights my favorite because you got the whole five days to look forward to. Then Sunday after the demolition derby and sitting there in the arena.

Lillian: You'll have those memories for the rest of your life. Years ago they would have the parade of champions. You would come out of the barn and come out in front of the grandstands and come all that way around. I remember this one 4-H agent would announce then as the kids came along and I remember he got mixed up on some names. You can't expect him to remember all the names and what they showed. Well he said something a little wrong and the parent of this kid got kind of irate with him because he didn't announce that right.

Max: I know Deb Jones does it now. We go to the arena with our stuff and she announces. Then they announce the herdsmanhip awards. Did you have them back then?

Lillian: Oh yes. Irving Stickights for years they had those plaques on the Irving Town Hall. They always got a plaque for being one of the top ones. I think they still do today?

Max: Oh yes. We still do at least get one. What is it like on Sunday when the fair was done for you?

Lillian: You felt sad. But then again I remember Kinning would give me a hug and he would say we did it again. You were just glad that nobody got hurt. There are so many things that could happen. We had a good fair and good crowds. It was a success and you knew that when it ended on a Sunday night. Then counting the ribbons, it doesn't end as soon as the fair is over with, then you order the ribbons for the next year. When I was the Secretary, we always counted those ribbons and they knew how many red, white, and blue ones we had. Then you knew what to order for the next year instead of waiting until the next year when the fair is upon us and then wondering how many to order. Ribbons are a big thing. Then lining up judges. There is a responsibility in getting ready ahead of time. It takes a lot of people to make a good fair. I think we have had wonderful ones and we will continue to have them. Who knows in the future with a

new arena how it will go. But you know it's just the change of time. It's just like tearing down that Pavilion, you hated to see it go, but it was time that we have to move on I guess.