Northwest Experiment Station superintendent and staff until about 1981. The board of managers did provide a publicity office and engage volunteers and some part-time paid people beginning in the 1960s when the new building was built north of Crookston. This system has continued to grow in capability. The most exciting thing happening with publicity is that the rural communications department of the Division of Agriculture of the Technical College has provided media service as an “on the job training” laboratory exercise for the rural communication classes, another example of a unique educational experience available because there is a Winter Shows. Also this group has begun to take on some preshow planning for advertising the show. Preshow publicity now is handled by the Winter Shows board of managers through the growing strength of the Winter Shows office.

When the new building was in the “talking” stage in the late 1950s and the decision was made to move ahead, there was just more frontline leadership needed than the superintendent and staff of the Northwest School and Experiment Station had available. Consequently, a full-time Winter Shows manager by the name of Victor Hodgson, former City Clerk from the City of Crookston, was hired to take over follow-up and coordination and management of activities, beginning with the financial campaign and the building process, and for some time thereafter. Hope was that enough income could be generated so this full-time manager could be on the scene permanently. However, about two years after the building was built, it became quite clear to the board that they’d have to let this capable person go to another job. Mr. Hodgson carried the Red River Valley Winter Shows management through one of its difficult periods. The board was sold on trying again with a full-time manager; however, this, too, didn’t generate the projected earnings because the second full-time manager had to be released to other job opportunities.

A part-time manager was then hired in 1966. Paul Brekken, though a full-time farmer, was willing to provide leadership for the Winter Shows beginning in November of each year and continuing through March. Under Brekken’s management the board of managers was able to turn things around financially. The payments on the building were refinanced, details of which are mentioned in another section of this book. The building payments were met each year. In fact, when Mr. Brekken resigned, the managers were several years ahead on the remaining mortgage, with very little left to pay off. A nephew of Paul Brekken, Larry Brekken, was hired in 1979 to provide the same kind of part-time managership until July, 1983. Previous to that time the board had again been evaluating the need for a full-time manager for several months. With Mr. Brekken’s resignation, they hired such a manager, commencing July 1, 1983, Phil Miller. While a full-time manager is hired to coordinate and generally manage day to day affairs under the policies of the shows board, the Winter Shows is still a volunteer operation. This is one of the major strengths of the institution known as the Winter Shows. The board of managers are elected because they are the kind of people who will give of their time and energy and substance in planning and managing this exposition for northwestern Minnesota.

The concept of volunteerism in the planning and management is a very important part of the history of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The appendix section of this history has a complete listing of all the committees which now are active in planning and managing show affairs each year. There are many committees out in the counties which aren’t listed. Among these volunteers is a committee of financial consultants from banks and savings and loan associations. This group is called upon whenever any unusual capital improvement is being considered or when refinancing of capital debt becomes an option. This committee has been very helpful to busy members of the board of managers, as they have managed fiscal matters through the past 30 years.

The full-time manager is on a salary. The board members, continue, however, to serve without pay. They may collect expenses for mileage and meals while on Winter Shows work. In a society where one can see the concept of volunteerism dying out in the country, one has to raise the question of how long volunteerism will be a viable force in the Red River Valley Shows? Without doubt, volunteer committees and ideas from the 14-county area in northwestern Minnesota have built, maintained, and strengthened the Winter Shows decade after decade. The idea is still alive and important in this part of the U.S.A.

Finally, it appears that with all the ongoing details, a combination of good strong volunteerism with a modest amount of paid management and a lean but capable clerical staff will be needed to maintain the thrust of the Winter Shows mission in the decades ahead.

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**SALUTES THE Red River Valley Winter Shows ON THEIR 75TH ANNIVERSARY!**