the Winter Shows studied the actions taken by the Livestock Association, and the board of managers were advised they could legally move on accepting custody of the buildings and land. Four places on the new board of managers from the Livestock Association were duly elected at a subsequent meeting.

Action went ahead immediately to enlarge the board of managers to include additional organizations. Currently, there are 24 members authorized by the bylaws representing 21 different organizations. Some organizations, of course, are more active than others. It is interesting to note, however, that the three original strong leadership organizations which really provided the key governing minds and guides for the Winter Shows are largely the same: the Red River Valley Livestock Association, the Red River Valley Development Association and the University of Minnesota, now including the Technical College, the Northwest Experiment Station and the Extension Service out in the 14 counties. These three have now been joined by 16 other farm or farm-related organizations. The trend of too much involvement by University-based leadership was thereby reversed. This may well be the most significant governance change in the history of the shows.

The board has been reorganized into a strong regional committee structure and the idea of the managership responsibility of each board member is stronger than ever at this time in history. With attendance growth from a few thousand people to nearly 40,000 and ownership of property in excess of three million dollars, however, the details of accounting and leg work in between board meetings are such that full-time help is needed for accomplishing details in an orderly manner. An interesting note is that the superintendents of the Agricultural Experiment Station have been president of the board of managers for 72 years! President Youngquist began working on the change in that format about three years before retirement, and one year prior to his retirement the presidency of the board of managers changed after appropriate revision of the bylaws. Currently, the president can serve two years and must come up through the ranks of vice presidency and have the personal qualifications of leadership and experience. A full-time manager was hired July 1, 1983. A complete list of the board of managers members, with organizations they represent, is found in the appendix, together with the officers at the time this history was written.

In summary, the government of the Winter Shows has gone from a very loose kind of grass roots cooperative effort to a more sophisticated non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota and broadly represented by the major agricultural organizations in northwestern Minnesota. The corporation is a nonprofit charitable and educational organization formed for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life as lived on the land and on the urban scene in northwestern Minnesota. It engages in educational activities which today complement but not duplicate those carried on by other organizations, agencies, and individuals here in the Red River Basin. It is a membership corporation and operates under rather strict articles and bylaws. If any organization ceases to provide any real ongoing usefulness in northwestern Minnesota or fails to do its part in the governing leadership it can be dropped from a membership role.

Of course, it’s impossible for a board of managers of 24 members to be part of the everyday management. A strong executive committee has been formed of members of rather longtime tenure who are able to handle the details of planning that go with each show. Every board member is included on one or more committees and has responsibility for his or her particular sector.

At best, it’s still a rather loose aggregation for planning the exposition looked forward to by a lot of people in the middle of a long winter. The Winter Shows hasn’t lost one year in a 75-year span. Partial cancellation took place at the time of the flu epidemic in 1919 and during the war effort in 1939. Meetings were called off both times, but the crops, livestock, and industrial show were held.

Selected lists of officers, board members and committees are included in the appendix. There is a set of closely guarded bound volumes of all of the premium books and program books since 1910 in safe storage. These volumes include the list of directors and committees for any year about which the reader might have a question.

Someone raised the question, “What’s the secret of the Red River Valley Winter Shows?” It’s a grass roots organization. It has never asked for a cent of Uncle Sam’s government money to build new buildings and buy land. How can they keep going 75 years and stay afloat when one sees volunteer organizations start and stop several times during even one lifetime? Other parts of this historical writing have made reference to the volunteer board of managers who plan and operate the Show each year. These volunteers represent the front-line organizations and institutions in northwest Minnesota. This group of 24 people is undergirded by about 300 additional volunteers organized into committees out in the 14 counties. New board members are added as new organizations petition for and are granted membership.

An interesting development currently is the growth of a new organization known as the County King Agassiz Association. Again, it’s a loosely organized association of young couples who have been elected as county kings and gone through the King Agassiz coronation ceremony. Because they have developed a sense of belonging to each other, of having a common interest, they like to get together. That doesn’t mean that every county king is gung-ho and active, but enough of them are so that it’s a growing organization, and it may well be that some day as a group they’ll take on other interests besides the Red River Valley Winter Shows King Agassiz activity.

The land grant University of Minnesota leadership for service and education, of course, is the ongoing stabilizing leadership, always there to provide expertise as needed.

In the years ahead, the government of the Winter Shows will be especially challenged to maintain the kind of membership that is responsive to what’s happening among organizations in northwestern Minnesota. Special attention will need to be given to the maintenance of a strong volunteer corps of planners, doers, and participants in this mid-winter agricultural exposition. The process of new membership election to the board of managers must always be a careful procedure of communication. No organization should have a membership on the board of managers if it can’t meet the commitments for the cooperative undertaking each year. Also, no person should be a member of the board of managers unless there is a commitment of time, energy, and substance to the ongoing effort. They must be people respected in their communities.