Thorson (Crookston), Jean Solheim (Crookston), Bertha Ross (Fisher), and Mrs. Andy Dragseth (Eldred).

An interesting description of the first coronation is described by Mr. Marlin Johnson, a committee member.

"Richard Fitzsimmons, farmer, legislator, from Argyle, MN was named King Agassiz I. During the coronation at the Central High Auditorium, with a packed house, the trumpeters did not get the prearranged signal from T.W. Thorson to sound the trumpets at the right moment. Finally, Mr. Thorson spoke out very loudly to "blow the trumpets." The Grand Forks television station was on hand to record the event. On the television news that evening, we saw the trumpeters and in the background we heard T.W. Thorson's voice say blow the trumpets and the appropriate flourishes then came forth."

So a new idea was born rather quickly. It grew fast! Within a couple of years, every county had a County King Agassiz with two in each of Polk County and Ottertail County because of their very large size. This process produces 16 County Kings each year, and it is rare that the slate isn’t full. The original committee must be given great credit for their foresight and their long-time interest. New committee members have been added as replacements for retirees. The former County Kings now exceed 300 in number. King Agassiz XXIV was elected in February of 1984. The program has succeeded in identifying the young leadership coming up the ladder. The early County Kings are now found in local, regional, and national positions of responsibility. The majority of the County Kings still live in the northwestern scene. They have formed a County King Agassiz Association, and this group is now beginning to assume responsibility for planning Kings Agassiz activities at the Winter Shows. They petitioned successfully to have a person on the board of managers. Mr. Karol Berglund of Ada was elected their first representative on the board.

At present, the King Agassiz planning committee is changing to include the immediate past king, the board of managers representative, chairperson of the King Agassiz Association, along with other former County King personnel. Mr. Nornes is still active on the committee. Out in the counties the selection of the County King has also changed. The previous year County King puts together a committee of previous County Kings and makes this selection in the spring of each year. The person selected is then crowned at the county fair or before some other suitable audience in the summer. The reigning King Agassiz and family are usually on the scene to help with the crowning.

This King Agassiz group is a growing force for leadership development in northwestern Minnesota. The system works now because it really does identify the high-quality leadership at present.

This activity developed somewhat differently from a number of major events at the Winter Shows because it had no initial frontline leadership from the University of Minnesota. Rather, the University cooperated. The leader who has given years of stability and leadership has been George Nornes, former Vo-Ag instructor from Climax, Minnesota, who himself was King Agassiz III. Erman Ueland, another King Agassiz and Vo-Ag instructor from Fertile, served on the committee for many years and provided steady, forward-looking leadership. The guidance of women on the original committee must not be overlooked. Without the ladies many of the ideas involving the family of the King probably would have been overlooked. The Red River Valley King Agassizes have established friendships that reach into their homes from time to time, building a relationship which has to be a plus in northwestern Minnesota.

The County King Agassiz Association is traveling toward the point where it can operate under its own steam as part of the Winter Shows human resource development activity. In its early stages of organizational life it has prepared a constitution and by-laws. The men and their wives gather at Winter Shows time for fellowship and welcoming the new crop of kings each year. The number of former kings attending the coronation ceremonies is growing.

The coronation ceremony has developed into one of the finely-tuned, exciting, well-conceived events of the Winter Shows week. Without a doubt it’s an experience that the young couples or singles involved will long remember. There is increasing emphasis on involvement of the County Kings’ family. This is a most desirable and a very healthy trend and needs further encouragement.

There is also a current development today where the University of Minnesota extension service is providing emerging leadership training experience for individuals like the County Kings. This trend could develop into an exciting and useful experience as these young citizens have an opportunity to broaden their sphere of understanding and experience. Each group of County Kings will have the opportunity to grow and develop in a program over which they have some control of the purpose and content.