Dr. Olaf C. Soine, Professor Emeritus, long-time member of the Northwest Agricultural Experiment, president of the Red River Valley Development Association, and secretary-treasurer of the Winter Shows board of managers for an extended period of years, now retired. Dr. Soine served on the Crookston City Council, also as mayor, and is a deeply loved and respected man.

Ask any citizen of Northwest Minnesota this question and I'm sure you would get a variety of answers, all of them positive. Perhaps a little review of the early beginning and constant growth of the Winter Shows would be helpful. What the early pioneers started has been carried on by their children. Little did those early pioneers who settled in the Red River Basin of Minnesota realize that this region would one day blossom into the greatest small grain, forage, sugarbeet, sunflower, and potato producing area in the state of Minnesota. However, there were problems in those early days with adequate drainage, little knowledge of crop varieties adaptable to the area, lack of capital for machinery, and the like.

Perhaps the most serious problem at this early stage was the lack of information and supply of seed for recommended crop varieties. The Red River Valley Winter Shows was the major influence in providing this kind of information as outstanding speakers were brought in from all over the nation to challenge Valley residents with new ideas. Farmers were given the latest agricultural information early enough in the year to plan for the coming crop season. Very stimulating programs were arranged for the farmers' wives with emphasis on the home and homemaking.

The attendance has increased every year which in one way testifies to the quality and value of the Winter Shows. Economically, the city of Crookston surely benefited from the large influx of people during this one week.

The winters tend to be long and at times dreary in the Valley and the Winter Shows is a welcome midwinter change of pace. Aside from intellectual stimulation, farmers and their wives found a welcome opportunity to socialize, to learn new tricks, and to have some fun in the process.

Paul Visser, long-time member of the board for the Red River Valley Livestock Association, as well as a member of the board of managers, and a farmer from Ada, Minnesota.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows has promoted education for adults and especially for youth. It has also been good for related industries. It has been a place to meet people and exchange ideas. It has been a great help to livestock producers to exhibit and sell breeding stock and to make contact with future buyers. I consider my service and work with Winter Shows and the Livestock Association one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences of my life for myself and my family for the last 40 years.

Melvin Ouse, Rothsay, Minnesota, long-time member of the Red River Valley Development Association, a member of the fund raising task force for the new facility, and one of the long-time livestock showmen at the Winter Shows. Melvin and his wife Celia were honored with the "Builder of the Valley" award in 1984.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows has meant a great deal to Northwestern Minnesota and its people. From its small beginnings to what it is today, it has been a significant factor involving people and the information of needed organizations. I like the way that the Winter Shows has made it a point to demonstrate the kind of grassroots leadership that really builds Northwestern Minnesota. I think of the Hall of Fame, King Agassiz program, Valley Farmer and Homemaker program, the Builder of the Valley awards, all which recognize people and their efforts to make this area and country a better place to live. The hundreds of people who have been recognized during the past 75 years could not have been accomplished without a show of this nature.

We who live in the Red River Basin are fortunate to have the Northwest Experiment Station and the College just next to it to provide the ongoing leadership for a show of this kind. The experimental research farm has given farmers an opportunity to see and select good practices in crop production for the region. The shows have given farmers an opportunity to see and learn the latest and to exchange experiences. The livestock industry has benefited from having all kinds of livestock displayed and by having livestock sales of the top animals for breeding purposes which has improved the herds and flocks in the Red River Valley. The Winter Shows have been held in midwinter when the people are the least busy and have time to attend. Last but not least, it gives people an opportunity to fellowship with each other and that may be just as important as the educational program.

Mr. Howard Balk, Ortonville, Minnesota, long-time agricultural extension agent in Northwestern Minnesota and superintendent of cattle at the Winter Shows for over 20 years.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows has been one of the greatest educational organizations with very little cost to the taxpayer. The importance of the Winter Shows has been outstanding in the fields of livestock improvement, crop improvement, farm management, home program, 4-H club work, and other activities for the good of farming. The farmers exhibiting livestock at the Winter Shows were innovators in their home communities causing friends and neighbors to improve their herds by the use of better sires and superior females. The same can be said about the crop improvement program. These programs plus others made the farms in the Red River Valley a better place to live. While acting as superintendent of cattle at the Winter Shows between 1937 and 1957, I saw a marked improvement in the quality of livestock and crops in the educational programming especially in the youth programming in the Winter Shows.

Richard W. Fitzsimons, Executive Director, Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association, was named King Agassiz I back when that program first began about 25 years ago. Dick Fitzsimons was a farmer from Argyle, Minnesota. He has a distinguished record in the Minnesota Legislature. He also was a long time director of the Red River Valley Development Association board.

My first experience in attending the Winter Shows in Crookston was in 1937 when I showed an exhibit of