CHAPTER XII

The Future

The Red River Valley Winter Shows began as a service and research reporting outreach of the Land Grant University of Minnesota through its Experiment Station and School of Agriculture located at Crookston. The educational and service objective has continued, adapting to the changing scene of three-fourths of a century of living-on-the-land in the Red River Basin. The changes which will be faced in the next 75 years are likely to be just as numerous and far-reaching as in the last 75 years. Certainly a lot of refinement and sophistication is appearing on the food and fiber production scene. The number of people living on the land is going to be smaller; however, these people will still have their homes anywhere from 250 to 400 miles away from the seat of state government and of the Land Grant University.

The government of the Winter Shows will probably continue to be a nonprofit service and educational corporation. The Land Grant University will continue to provide expertise and leadership for some 21 or more similar regional or statewide organizations chartered under the nonprofit corporate laws of Minnesota. The Winter Shows will continue to improve the quality of life as long as there are volunteers out in the 14-county area who consider the Winter Shows a worthy investment of their personal time, effort, energy and money.

Agriculture will still be the foundation for the economy of this section of the state.

A MID-WINTER BREAK

Considering the capriciousness of weather, we will continue to experience a long and rather lonesome winter in the Red River Basin. The midwinter break will always be welcome. If for nothing else, it’s a chance to have a change of pace, to get away, to renew friendships, and have a little fun. Too, and probably more important for most visitors to the Shows, there is an opportunity to pick up new or check out evolving ideas.

FINANCING THE WINTER SHOWS OPERATIONS

There will never be enough money to do all the things the board of managers would like to do and that people out in the region would like to have done. The individual board members need to continue being actively involved in management. The routine of day-to-day affairs will be in the hands of a capable and service-minded office staff and manager. An undue overhead of paid staff must be avoided. The example of deficit spending by the federal government has most citizens worried and must be avoided for the Show’s ongoing operations. The management has usually operated in the black. This prudent fiscal policy must be pursued if the faith and trust of the public are to be maintained.

STRENGTHENING TIES OUT IN THE COUNTIES

The grassroots leadership needs to be maintained and strengthened wherever necessary. The more interest created among those who produce crops and pure seeds in the Crops Show, the better the Crops Show will be -- likewise for livestock and other farming enterprises.

The Valley Farmer and Homemaker award identifies the real builders of grassroots leadership who have risen to their golden years and are still respected leaders in each county. The Livestock and the Dairymen’s Associations each have a continuing role to play.

The King Agassiz project probably has unusual potential for the continuing grassroots support and patronage of Winter Shows. Northwestern Minnesota has always produced more than its share of leadership at the state and national levels. The Agassiz project can insure a unique system of doing that job on a continuing basis and doing it even better in the future.

It’s just possible that the youth programming needs a youth committee including FFA and 4-H expertise and lay persons to make evaluations yearly and to provide the coordinating role with youth programs.

The involvement of the weekly press has lagged in recent years. There has been advertising in local weeklies -- yes. But that feeling by the weeklies of being among the cooperators who arrange this show each year needs more involvement.

THE RED RIVER VALLEY WINTER SHOWS FOUNDATION

A group of leaders have completed establishing a nonprofit, tax exempt foundation as a subsidiary corporation to work hand in hand with the Winter Shows. Starting such a foundation today is a meticulous process because of the precise and exact nature of setting up nonprofit, tax exempt corporations under the current federal laws. The purpose of the foundation is to assist the Winter Shows board of managers with appropriate projects. The foundation recognizes that the Winter Shows will carry on routine operations of the show. The foundation, however, will be an arm of the Winter Shows. It will continually look toward strengthening educational programs and provide leadership assistance in unusual major building projects.

The first project of the new foundation was to establish a permanent endowment entitled “The Program Fund”. Already over $20,000 has been pledged or paid in cash toward the initial $100,000 goal. The aim is to complete this goal within the next three years. Once the permanent endowment has been established, the funds therein will be invested in safe income-producing securities. The income from the program endowment will be used entirely by the Winter Shows for program expenses such as seminars, speakers, and youth activities. The Winter Shows foundation will in time provide opportunities where grassroots citizens may wish to will a quarter section of land or other asset to be used in the mission of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Machinery is now established to make such a gift possible.
The Women's Division at this time is better organized than ever. Funding for their activities has always been very short, and this sector will need greater attention in the years ahead.

SEMINAR PROGRAMMING

The Minnesota Land Grant University, through the Northwest Experiment Station at this time, coordinates this section of the Winter Shows. The Technical College and the Agricultural Extension Service will also continue to provide organizational leadership. At present there is an abundance of adult education for production agriculture and for those who service the industry. The Winter Shows seminars will need to seek out and select those educational topics which are on the cutting edge of technology and those which are not being assumed by other arms of the adult education services. The long-time leading edge of educational expertise of the Land Grant University remains primary in this facet of the Red River Valley Winter Shows.

COMMUNICATION IN THE FARM SERVICE SHOW

There is so much communication today that it's very easy to get lost in the blizzard of words and the cacaphony of sound. Yet, the ongoing programming efforts of the Winter Shows need to deal with the reality of a profitable farm production industry and the continuing improvement of the quality of life. For instance, farmers want to see a good display of the latest farm equipment at the show as well as a number of concessioners not quite so directly related to growing the crops and raising the livestock. Somehow we must insure that the up-to-date smaller farm equipment and the large farm equipment are both on display. The large commercial farmer, the small farmer, the hobby farmer, and the resident of the town and city need to be able to see what is available today, and they'd like to see it at the Winter Shows.

GOVERNMENT

The Red River Valley Winter Shows Board of Managers, Inc. is a well-conceived legal entity to carry on the Winter Shows. The membership corporation is established with sufficient latitude and restrictions so that the mission of the board can be accomplished over time.

Yet, there is an informal cooperative effort outside the board which must not be lost. There will be times when a cooperating group with a new idea is seemingly going off on its own without the sufficient knowledge of the board of managers. Full and continuing communication will avoid misunderstandings and inspire valuable individual effort. The creativity of individuals and groups has always been encouraged and improved by the informal relationship that is working toward a Winter Show exposition each year.

The "too loose organization" was corrected in the early 1950's. The groundwork is now laid for strong corporate leadership; yet just as important, the presence of a variety of organizational and individual ideas in the broad volunteer service thrust must be nurtured and encouraged for all time.

HIRING UNDER THE BUSHEL

The hustle and bustle of organizing thousands of details for the ten-day show and the concern for stretching pennies can result in losing the attention of the public to the what, how, and who of the Winter Shows. The premium book is now the only mailing going out to a few hundred people, compared to the more than 30,000 who attend. The majority who attend do not have ready information which lists all cooperating organizations, their purpose, and the citizens who represent them on the board of managers. These organizations who cooperate each year in a substantive manner have board members and officers. Who are they? Some way needs to be found to make this information more readily available to a broader range of people.

BUILDING NEEDS

There is no question about the convenience of having another wing on the south side, with the kind of facilities where many of the educational meetings could take place and where livestock facilities could be improved. With access to meeting space on the campus of the University, at the Northland Lodge, and at other places in Crookston, however, the Winter Shows can continue to provide good banquet meetings and seminar space for some time to come. Once the present building debt of about half million dollars is substantially reduced, it will be time to plan another addition. In the meantime, the board of managers must protect and preserve the current building, which can last another 50 years if the maintenance policies are aggressive and forward looking.

A WINTER SHOWS BOARD MANAGER

Yes, accepting a membership on the board of managers is an honor. It is also a trust and a responsibility requiring some priority on an individual's time, energy, and substance. Of course, the amount of effort expended by individual board members will vary as personalities are different. One characteristic must be somewhat the same for all board members -- a belief that the Winter Shows is a useful force and demands rather high priority on the service output of a board member.

The logistics of executive committee operations unfortunately place steady demands on officers and other executive committee members. Due to distance of travel, weekly planning meetings for several months in themselves limit those who can serve on the executive committee.

The board of managers may well need to discuss this problem more carefully with future prospective board members. Understanding responsibilities ahead of time and accepting same should help insure teamwork and creativity within the board of managers -- a distinguished, frontline, group of public servants.

COOPERATING GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

As in the past 75 years, the volunteer efforts of many people reaching into every county, plus the helpful spirit of cooperating organizations and agencies organized under the Red River Valley Winter Shows Board of Managers, Inc., will meet the challenges of service to life in the Red River Basin for the coming decades.
The Winter Shows parking lot a day or so after a winter storm and typical of a day when three to four thousand people visit the Show.

Friendly, but serious competition at the "draft-horse-pull" fills the seating space.