CHAPTER XI

Letters, Interviews and Telephone Calls

Early in 1984 letters were sent to 68 individuals inviting opinions and observations about the 75-year old Red River Valley Winter Shows. An item was also placed in the quarterly Northwest Agricultural Experiment Station News published in early April of 1984, announcing the Winter Shows history writing project and inviting contributions. More than 60 responses were received via letter and telephone and have been included throughout the book. This chapter, however, records a number of letters and quotations from the interview process, all of which capture in their own way the consistent spirit of the volunteers who have been part of the 75-year history. Each letter or quotation will be introduced with the person's name and a few words about his or her connection with the show.

C.J. (Rudy) Gustafson of Route 2, Underwood, Minnesota, was a county extension agent for five years in West Ottertail County and a leader of the fund raising taskforce to construct facilities in 1960. Later he directed the Farm Service Department for the Ottertail Power Company and retired recently as vice president for development. He has one of the long-time records of volunteer service to the Winter Shows.

I began attending the Red River Valley Winter Shows in 1946 when I was West Ottertail County extension agent. I was the coach of the 4-H judging team and escort for the farm couple from West Ottertail County selected to receive the Valley Farmer and Homemaker Award from the Development Association. I continued to attend each year until about 1980. I left the Extension Service in 1951 and established the Farm Service Department for the Ottertail Power Company but continued attending the Winter Shows as a commercial exhibitor and as a volunteer helper in conducting various events at the show.

My job for many years was superintendent of the livestock judging contest, working with O.M. Kiser and later others instructing the participants in the mechanics of the contest and organizing the listening to oral reasons. While with Ottertail Power Company, I spent the entire week at the show. Now as I reflect on those years, my most vivid memories are of several very severe cold and stormy days that somehow seemed to occur the week of the Winter Shows. This convinces me that there had to be great educational value to make it worthwhile for farmers to leave home and drive to Crookston and they did, in ever increasing numbers year after year.

As for the judging contests in the years following World War II, participants, including 4-H and FFA members, the subcollegiate teams from the Minnesota Agriculture Schools and the Park River North Dakota Aggies as well as great numbers of young farmer teams coached by the Veteran's Agricultural Instructors working in the region for several years after World War II.

The reason for farmers coming to the shows were the educational benefits they received from studying the commercial exhibits. The exhibits usually featured new products and ideas. The chance to see and to study high-quality livestock, poultry, crops exhibits, and talk with agriculture extension specialists who were always at the show, and finally for the knowledge they could obtain by attending the broad scope of seminars and lectures conducted by University of Minnesota staff members as well as other recognized experts. This was true for the farmer's wife, for there were annual sessions planned for the ladies.

As a professional person working in agricultural education, the Winter Shows had great value for me. It put me in close contact for a whole week with fellow workers and specialists so that I had a chance to ask questions and to get answers to things that were bothering me.

The building of a new arena located on the site north of Crookston was a great undertaking and a tribute to the leadership of Bill Strickler, Bernie Youngquist, Harold Thomforde, and the leadership of many others. It changed the character of the show. Instead of the events being scattered in many locations, it brought everyone and everything together. In a way that was kind of sad because there was a certain romance and excitement in having many things going on at the Methodist Church, Presbyterian

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Church, the high school auditorium, out at the agriculture school, at the Chevrolet garage, at the old armory, at the Grand Theatre, and like places. But it was very fortunate that no major catastrophe occurred in the old location with the big wood heating stoves and the overloaded electrical circuits.

I think of Mr. Townsend, a concessioner from Fergus Falls, who sold balloons and ice cream and the like to show visitors. Every time he used his ice crusher, he'd blow a fuse. I know that Chauncey Carlson, who was the local manager for the Ottertail Power Office at Crookston, insisted that his service representative be close during the entire show. It was truly an accident waiting to happen. With so many people crowded inside you could barely move.

The timing of the show was perfect. In the dead of winter, people were looking for an excuse to get off of the farms or out of their businessplace for even a day. They were in a receptive mood and a good frame of mind. There have been great changes in the past 75 years in agriculture and I'm sure that the Red River Valley Winter Shows can lay claim to its history. People crowded inside you could barely move.

I was active in the horse show from the beginning. I remember when Gene Miller of the Northwest Experiment Station provided leadership for the first three-day winter show. He invited a group of horse breeders to get together and suggested that we form a Red River Valley Horse Breeders Association and provide the leadership for the horse show portion of the Winter Shows in the future. Actually, this is where the Red River Valley Horse Breeders Association commenced with the objective in mind to have a winter show at the Valley City Winter Show as well as the Red River Valley Winter Shows at Crookston. It has been a very great experience. I don't regret the time and effort and money I've spent. The greatest value I've received is working with a lot of fine people, making many friends that I would never have known without the Winter Shows.

Frank Forbes, Vocational Agriculture Instructor, County Agent and Agricultural Extension Administrator, and member of the board of managers for a number of years.

I've observed the Red River Valley Winter Shows for 45 years and I see it as a focal point for various educational programs during its 75-year history. During that time the Red River Valley region evolved from the horse and buggy time society to a high developed agricultural-industrial complex society equal to that of any in the world.

The emphasis on youth educational programs through 4-H, FFA, and FHA judging demonstration activities has had a great influence in developing leadership skills among the farm families from one generation to the next. There's a continuing need for these types of activities in the future.

The Valley Farmer and Homemaker Award where an outstanding farm couple from each county is selected by their peers as an example of top farming and homemaking expertise and service to the community and care for the soil and water has brought honors to many in every county. The crowning of the King Agassiz each year from a group of county kings selected by their peers out in the counties on an annual basis recognizes outstanding young men and of course they are usually young couples coming up the ladder of leadership ability and service to their community. It is in itself one of the outstanding projects of the Red River Valley Development Association.

The Agricultural Extension Service in each county has played a major role in the continuing success of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Several county agents, men and women, have served on various committees and boards during the 75 years. The county extension staff have assisted in the planning and carrying out of the adult and youth educational activities. Agents for years have served and yet today serve as superintendents of livestock and crops exhibits. Those experienced leaders, working with the best livestock and crop producers in the region, added a valuable dimension to the Winter Shows. I remember the contributions to the swine industry by the purebred swine breeders from various parts of the Valley. Swine would be housed on the second floor above the cattle. When the floor leaked, one would hear some rather loud grumbling from Howard Balk, who was the county agent from Clearwater County and superintendent of the cattle exhibitors below for more than a 20 year period.

I participated actively in the Winter Shows for over 20 years beginning about 1936. At that time I had FFA, 4-H and young farmer judging teams participating in the shows. I was superintendent of the swine department for over 10 years. During the post-war years, I served as a member of the Winter Shows board of managers. That was a time when tremen-
dous change was taking place in agriculture. Agri-educational program and exhibits focused on new crops and crop varieties with herbicides, insecticides, fertilizers, farm machinery and equipment, farm storage, grain drying, livestock feeding and breeding, and overall management. As I look back over the history of the past 75 years, it would be hard to visualize a February in the Red River Valley without people making plans to participate in this very worthwhile event which even though led by volunteers has met the challenges of the changes over time.

Juel and Leona Torvi. Juel Torvi was a farm foreman at the Northwest Experiment Station for some 35 years and was one of the Station staff members who did a lot of legwork getting things ready for the show each year.

My first show was the winter of 1926. Our work then as well as for many years was to move all necessary equipment and supplies for running the show including chairs, cabinets, typewriters, files, and the like to downtown Crookston for the full week of the show and then move it all back to the Experiment Station. Many of the meetings were held out at the School of Agriculture and another job was to keep the entrance open which was quite a challenge in stormy weather. In those days we used a team of horses and an eight foot wooden scraper made in the carpenter shop. One man would hold the scraper and the other man would drive the team. There were evening meetings and the snow-removal days sometimes were sixteen hours of wading around in the deep snow. If a real big storm came along, the Highway Department would help open the entrance. Later a caterpillar was purchased and then in the 50's a snowblower was added on the John Deere R tractor and we thought we were in heaven. A large surplus airport type snowblower was acquired and used to clear snow on the Winter Shows ground after the new buildings were built.

In the early 1920's, the Northwest Experiment Station dairy herdsmen would always show dairy cattle at the show. This was discontinued in the 1930's. Mrs. Torvi worked with the Trinity Lutheran Church Ladies Aid. These church ladies did an outstanding job of serving food at the Winter Shows, serving from 6 in the morning until 10 in the evening. They served coffee, donuts, pies, cookies, and the best hamburgers and baked beans. The story is told that the new Trinity Lutheran Church mortgage had a large portion paid off with money earned at the Red River Valley Winter Shows food concession by the Trinity Lutheran Church Ladies Aid.

The Station farm crew did a lot of legwork; meeting trains in the earlier years and planes in the later years, assisting with holding of livestock for judging contests and the other chores necessary for the show to go on in good shape. In 1927, farmers brought in horses to be judged in the show for draft horses. None of the horses from the Station were entered in the horse show. The Percheron mares from the Experiment Station were brought in for judging contests, however. Room for livestock was at a premium. There wasn't any place to house the horses inside, so we had to keep them out in the street and tie them up on a hayrack. This was a problem in below zero and stormy weather. They were restless and hard to control. One person from the Experiment Station farm crew had to stay on hand and keep the horses under control. In 1928 I helped put on a big hitch demonstration by a horse judge from Canada. We used four stubtailed Percheron mares tandem on a heavy sled. They wrapped log chains around the back runners to keep it from sliding too easy.

The increasing dependence on the foreign export of food and fiber to maintain the financial vitality of agriculture in the Valley requires new approaches of communicating to the political representatives the needs of the agricultural community. There needs to be more emphasis placed on the importance of international trade and in providing high quality educational services in the elementary through post-secondary areas in our sparsely populated Valley. More program time needs to be devoted to the environment of the Red River Valley, including the effects of using large quantities of chemical, bare land farming systems and how these relate to the soil movement, human health and so forth. Specialty crops and agricultural financing need increased attention.

Dr. Gary C. McVey, Head of the Division of Agriculture for the University of Minnesota Technical College, and member of the board of managers.

Dr. McVey suggests that as the Red River Valley-Winter Shows looks down the road, the program emphasis needs to continue strong in the area of crop and soil technology, livestock production, chemical fertilizer use, and farm management. For the future we need to be more concerned with how life is lived in the Red River Valley Basin. We have a decreasing number of people actually living on farms and a slightly increasing number of people living in towns but dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.
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 grass-roots 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
corn in the 4-H division. Since that time I have not missed very many shows until the last few years when professional meetings conflict with the dates.

The Winter Shows has changed very greatly over the years in many respects. But the one thing that has not changed is the numbers of people who come to the shows. They increase in number each year. Before the new building was built, the crowds of people had to wind their way through halls and corridors in the old buildings. At that time there were many farm families in attendance with quite a few small children being carried by their parents. The older children had a wonderful time running around to all those corridors in spite of the congestion. When anyone talked about the Winter Shows during the 40's, it was usually about all the storms that seemed to plague the annual event.

My personal experience was of many trips when visibility was poor and almost impossible at times. During all this the Winter Shows was a major factor in speeding the process of changing the Red River Valley from a horsepowered agriculture to a fuel-powered agriculture. Even more important, the Winter Shows provided a forum where farm families could come to learn new farming practices and cultural methods. This was particularly important in the late 30's after the long years of farm depression changed to new hope for farming. It was equally important following World War II when the enormous changes prompted by war were shifted from making guns to making plowshares. Much of the strength of the Winter Shows has been its many volunteers.

Without the volunteers in the past and in the future, the special flavor of the Winter Shows would be lost. First of all, financial resources will always limit the show in expenditures so too great an overhead would force the show to charge higher admissions, resulting in lower attendance and a show with much less appeal to the general farm public.

Agriculture will never remain static. The exciting future of agriculture will be to those who respond to the changes that will surely occur. The world is the competitor for Red River Valley Farmers. The long history of the Red River Valley Winter Shows indicates farmers here are ready and willing to adopt new ideas to stay competitive. Tomorrow will be no different. Competition will be greater and total farm numbers will likely be smaller. All the more reason for the Winter Shows to continue to look ahead as it has always done. With careful management and boldness in programming, the Winter Shows can continue to be a leader enhancing the quality of life in the Red River Basin for the next 75 years.

Benton Rindahl, Barnesville, Minnesota, farmer, member of the Livestock Association board of directors, and member of the board of managers.

The Winter Shows over 50 years ago to the Rindahl family was a place to purchase purebred cattle and hogs. I think the first hog we purchased was about 1931. Later I sold my own hogs and cattle besides showing our dairy cattle.

After serving on several boards connected with the Winter Shows and when I was vice-president, I had to take over the meeting for the president when he was called away for an emergency. That was an experience I won't forget. Another event to remember was when some people from Valley City came over to our meeting to get some ideas on how to start their own show and look how they are today each with the thousands of people who come to each of their wintertime expositions. Another thing to remember was the futurity show. It has been fun to see the younger generation learning at the Futurity Show and taking over as board members of the Winter Shows. Probably the greatest value and the thing looked forward to each by people is meeting and making friends, getting to know some of the breeders that put themselves out to start the show like Mr. Finkenbinder of Crookston. I think maybe the third generation from that family is helping now, of Mr. Lerud (Roy Lerud's father), and of Mr. Sargeant (who sold our first bred gilt in the early 30's).

One of the nicest men we got acquainted with was Mr. Pfughoeft, a district 4-H leader at the Northwest School of Agriculture. That was before we had a county agent in Clay County. We put up with the storms and with the hard work, bringing our livestock to the show, getting them ready for competition, but all of that was paid off when we met our friends again and all of it really was an experience that I will always cherish and I know that life is better in the Valley for a lot of people because of the Winter Shows.
Ted Peet, retired farmer from Wolverton, who led the fundraising forces in Wilkin County for the new facilities and served on the Winter Shows board of managers.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows surely has an interesting history surviving a fire in 1935, blizzards, depression of the 1930's, and two world wars, but still the show never missed a year.

The Winter Shows is unique in that it encompasses a large relatively rich agricultural area which was once nothing but a big lake. It gives the people there a chance to think of this area as a whole and discuss the success of agriculture in the past as well as to look to new challenges in the future. It is good to look to the past to learn from experiences. The most exciting challenge though is in the future. The thought on most people's minds is where do we go from here. People attend the Winter Shows for many reasons. The most important, however, is that it is a place to go to find new ideas. People of the Valley have always been looking for ways to better their way of life. The shows of the past 75 years have provided such an opportunity. I'd like to share an outline looking to the future.

1. Short-term objectives of one to five years.
   A. Changes needed next year.
   B. Changes necessary during the next five years (this may include facilities and other immediate changes that should be made.

2. Long-term objectives (more indefinite but looking 10 to 20 years) but is one that is a great challenge.

3. A. Genetics -- impact on agriculture.
   B. Space age -- impact on agriculture.
   C. Computers -- impact on agriculture.
   D. Implications of world trade.
   E. Conservation of our soil resource.
   F. Marketing agricultural products -- should the local elevators join others to provide more clout?
   G. Recreations -- The Winter Shows is an excellent place to focus on new concepts and the emphasis on the front line cutting edge idea should continue in the future.

Marvin R. Campbell, retired banker and member of the board of managers during those difficult years of financing new buildings, land, and facilities.

I came to Crookston in 1955 as president of the First National Bank and it wasn't long after arriving that I realized the importance of the Red River Valley Winter Shows to the community and to the area which it serves. Since plans were already in progress for the next show to be held in February of the year I arrived, I'll never forget the crowded corners, the limited space, the poor air conditions that existed in the buildings on Main Street utilized for the show for many years. It was at that time I became aware that something had to happen with the Winter Shows facility.

I also recall the fund drive which was begun to raise funds in the very early 60's. The short Swede, Bernie Youngquist, came on the scene and it was good to have him aboard. The Crookston community and the regions served by the Winter Shows were generous with their contributions and financial support. The new facility was built and ready for use in 1962. It's hard to believe that nearly 40,000 people go through that place now in ten days.

I was elected to the board about the time that the problem began to be identified with financing the project. New management had been acquired in an attempt to develop more income during the periods of time when the building was not in use. These efforts not only failed but they complicated the existing financial problems to the point where foreclosure by the Omaha Bank holding the mortgage was threatened, with the other communities vying for the Winter Shows because of our vexing problems. We owed about $143,000 on the building and that was accumulating interest at 12 percent. Financial obligations developed with our local merchants. Current bills were past due. The buildings downtown were sold but the income was a lot less than anticipated. When the future looked about as bleak as we had seen it for many months and years, the board wisely selected Paul Brekke to be their manager. Commencing with this action, the board suggested that the loan to the Omaha Bank, together with the outstanding current short-term debt, be refinanced by a cooperative participation of area banks and other financial institutions. My first reaction to the idea was negative. I didn't realize that the shows would continue to be supported under the circumstances which existed at the time. Loan documents were prepared by legal counsel, Leonard Erickson, with the help of Harold Thomforde and others on the board, I was able to sell the program of participating loans based on each individual financial institution's assets. After much effort and a little arm twisting, the entire loan participation was committed.
It was at this time that the finances of the shows, despite its past problems, turned around under the new management. In fact, payments to the financial institutions were always made promptly and by the time the balance of the loan was due in 1978, reserve had been established for debt service by the board of directors. It was about this time that I was informed that I would be leaving Crookston to assume the presidency of the Citizen's Bank in Brainerd. Realizing that the loan was due and that some attention would be given to this, I committed myself to obtaining renewals on the part of the financial institutions at the rate of seven percent over a term of five years. This was accomplished just prior to my departure for Brainerd. I am told the repayment of this was three years ahead on the principal by the time that the five year term was up.

This success and contribution to the general welfare of life in northwestern Minnesota is history. And it's a history of which many hard working volunteers of the Valley can be justly proud. I was glad to be part of it.

Dr. S.D. Sahlstrom, provost, University of Minnesota Technical College. Dr. Sahlstrom heads one of the cooperating institutions in northwestern Minnesota. Without the continuing help of institutions like the College, the Red River Valley Winter Shows would soon lose its vitality.

The legislature provided funds for the development of college programs at the University of Minnesota, Crookston in 1965. Since that time various offices and departments of the College have contributed freely of their time and effort to assist in supporting the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Individuals have done so because of their commitment as citizens of northwestern Minnesota to this important educational function. The Red River Valley Winter Shows is a volunteer organization and administrators and faculty have felt an obligation to provide their personal support. In addition, the College as a good citizen of the community has felt that it was important to be active in the support of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. It has always been felt that bringing people onto the campus was an important contribution to the educational process as well as a valuable asset to the College in acquainting people with the facilities for technical collegiate education. Through the support of various seminars and special educational events, the College has made a substantial contribution to the Winter Shows and in turn the Winter Shows has contributed valuable information that could be used to enhance the quality of life in northwestern Minnesota. The following is a list of special events that have been particularly the responsibility of the College:

1. Education Day -- Beginning in 1966, the College has planned and promoted Education Day. A committee of superintendents works with the College administration in planning this special event. Attendance has always been high and topics relative to public education have been discussed each year.

2. Talent Contest -- The Talent Festival responsibility was accepted by the College in 1967. During the early years the event was assigned to the University relations department. In the recent years, the department of music has had the responsibility for the Talent Festival. From every indication that event has been a remarkable success each year.

3. Youth Day -- The entire faculty in the Division of Agriculture has been involved with the activities of Youth Day. In addition to the College faculty, staff members have been involved in arranging space needs on the campus and preparing facilities for that event.

4. Contributions from Other Department -- The audio visual department has been involved with special events. They assist with arrangements for the King Agassiz banquet, especially, the audio-visual equipment needs and other items throughout the entire Winter Shows.

5. Food Service -- The food service department and the hospitality division have both been involved with many events each year.

6. Rural Communications Department -- Students from the rural communications department have been involved each year in preparing pre-show advertising. The Winter Shows provides an "on-the-job-experience" for communications students as they organize to operate a service to the radio, newspaper, and TV media including news coverage and photography. The Winter Shows provides scholarship awards to the outstanding student reporters.

7. Horse Activity -- The Division of Agriculture has been involved in providing leadership for the horse
pulling contest as well as making arrangements for the horse show each year.

8. Service on the Winter Shows Board -- The provost recommended that the assistant provost for academic affairs serve on the board in the early years of College. Recently, the chairman of the Division of Agriculture has been recommended as a replacement. The College has made provision for a board member since the beginning of the collegiate program.

9. Scheduling -- In order to provide greater service, the College changed its scheduling in order that the winter quarter would be completed during the week of Winter Shows. Additional facilities could thus be made available for the activities of the show.

In essence, the College is committed to the concept of a viable, successful Winter Shows each year that can effectively serve the people in northwestern Minnesota. That commitment will continue in the future and is based on the philosophy that the University is here to serve people as well as to provide programs of formal instruction. In addition, individuals within the community college are encouraged to contribute as good citizens of northwestern Minnesota.

Lyle Kiel, Crookston, farmer and former member of the board of managers and member of the fund-raising team in 1960.

The Winter Shows has been one of those causes for good for the advancement of agriculture and certainly the quality of life is better because the Winter Shows is part of that life. I've only heard one criticism and that is that some think the trend of the Farm Service Show is going a little bit heavy toward wearing apparel, organizations, knicknacks and not enough farm machinery. I've been glad to be part of the fund raising crew for the building facilities and I look with pride on the days which I spent on the board of managers. Keep up the good work.

James R. Lofgren, past president, Red River Valley Winter Shows, former secretary-treasurer of the board of managers and plant breeder for Dahlgrens, Inc.

It was during my first year as agronomist at the Northwest Experiment Station that I became involved in the Winter Shows. I arranged for the Crops and Soils seminar program and worked with the barley show samples that were judged as malting or feed barley. I'll have to admit I only understood a very small portion of the Winter Shows at that time. I knew what I was doing and its importance but I did not see the large picture.

My first experience in arranging the Crops and Soils program was on the whole, very satisfying. The program usually didn't take shape until shortly before the deadline for program printing. During the seminar I got the feeling that the speakers were coming across as anticipated. Afterward I was happy with the acceptance by the audience and the timely information beyond the normal county extension meeting information. The barley show had 75 exhibits. This was an improvement over the 30 in the year just previous.

The Winter Shows remains a leading force in the Valley. The broad and varied program reaches young and old, adding to their educational and spiritual needs. There is a strong challenge each year to have seminars that keep up with fast-changing innovations of this computer age. Managing the shows within the financial framework is a major challenge. Attracting new people to the Winter Shows needs to be a high priority.

The people of northwestern Minnesota have a feeling of loyalty and pride in the Winter Shows. There is a strong comradeship existing among the various cooperating organizations and individuals who plan the show yearly. The future will bring new leaders with new ideas. Consequently, the show will continue to evolve. Some building expansion and replacement, particularly the cattle barns, will be necessary in the future. A new wing on the south side would complete the dream of the people who gave funds in the early 1960's.

Charles and Patti Swanson, Kittson County. Charles was elected King Agassiz XXII.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows is one of those leading edge organizations in the thick of new developments encouraging the fellowship among farm producers and the sharing of ideas and planning. The Winter Shows is important to life in the Red River Valley and particularly to the family farm structure.

The King Agassiz project is an exciting and very useful experience in human resource development in the Red River Basin. It gives young people the chance for greater experiences as they travel up the ladder of leadership and responsibility. It is important for the future strength of farming team up with agri-business in the Red River Valley. We have been impressed with the high quality of programs involved since our first association with the Winter Shows. We were very honored to be a family awarded the King Agassiz crown. The King Agassiz experience was certainly one of our great family experiences and a highlight of our lives.

Dr. Laddie J. Elling, Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Crops judge at the Winter Shows.

I have judged the crops show for about the last five years. I sincerely believe that since a high percentage of the agricultural income from the Valley is crops, that this emphasis is appropriate to the Winter Shows. Year in and year out, the quality observed in the crops is excellent. But of course some years produce better crops than others. I like the idea of the crops show surrounding the main entrance to the show. The farming panorama in the background gives credence that crops are the most important to the area, and people observe them as they enter the show.

I was a participant on the program when the shows were held downtown Crookston. The new buildings and facilities are a tremendous improvement and a real feather in the cap of the people in northwestern Minnesota and they keep the show moving.

You will recall that Professor Dunham, Otto Swenson, Dr. Al Schmidt and others cooperated with the show in the crops contest for many years. Some of us newcomers work only with the judging but we respect very much the leadership of Professor Dunham and others.

George Nornes, one of the two senior members on the 24-person board of managers, long-time vo ag instructor from Climax, Minnesota, now working
as business administrator for Agri-
Energy, Inc., George serves as presi-
dent of the board of managers and is
chairman of the special events com-
mittee. Few volunteers have such a
distinguished record of long-time and
outstanding service to the Winter
Shows.

The early years of the Winter Shows
brought together people from the Red
River Valley for educational meetings,
for fellowship, for a chance to ex-
change their pioneer experiences.
They came to make family life more
meaningful. Basically, this has not
changed greatly in 75 years. The
change to the advanced technology of
today and the idea that agriculture is
more than farming has added to the
scope; yet the reason for existence of
the Winter Shows remains the same.

Probably the most important aspect of
life in the Red River Valley as encour-
aged by the Winter Shows is the
family unit. Those early communities
held together by close ties of families,
community activities and their church
made small settlements in the Valley
and look with pride on their home-
town. The Red River Valley Winter
Shows gave these small groups an
opportunity to expand their horizon.
They had a place to go once each year
to meet new friends and to visit old
and to actually enjoy many family
reunions. The Red River Valley Winter
Shows then became a community
away from home that they could take
pride in being part of the mutual
respect and faith which grew out of
the activities of the Winter Shows.

The Winter Shows has always kept up
with the changing times and it will do
the same in the future. Nearly 40,000
people look to the ten-day event for
opportunity to learn, to making the
best even better. They expect some-
thing new, and the Winter Shows
seminars, programs and shows and
exhibits will need to continue to pro-
vide that for them. The board of ma-
agers will need to look toward more
and/or improved space or more effi-
cient use of the present space in order
to get the total program under one
roof. Really we cannot look to a much
greater attendance at the shows in
terms of the number of different
people attending but we will need to
provide the kind of environment that
will cause people to come to the show
daily for most of the ten-day expo-
sition so they don't miss out on the

chance to upgrade knowledge and to
enhance their way of living, mentally,
physically, and spiritually.

The King Agassiz program started
with the idea of having a young agri-
culturalist, farmer or one who services
farmers, of the Valley region reign for
one year as an ambassadorial symbol
for the Winter Shows. Too, the person
named is one who symbolizes the
modern complex agricultural business
of northwestern Minnesota. The a-
bove objective has not changed since
those early days. The procedures have
changed over the past 25 years includ-
ing the upgrading of the selection
procedures, the inception of the
County King Agassiz Association,
which is comprised of all the past
county kings, and the schedule of
commitments necessary for the kings
in the local counties, Red River Valley
and state to meet increasing interest
and demand for these young men to
appear at fairs, banquets, parades and
the like. The King Agassiz program
has changed its procedures, but its
original objective remains that of rec-
ognizing young citizens coming up the
ladder of leadership here in north-
western Minnesota and providing op-
portunities for them to grow and de-
velop.

Vocational agriculture and the Future
Farmers of America have been a bene-
factor and a beneficiary of the Red
River Valley Winter Shows. Some of
the high schools that offered vo-ag
and FFA in the 1930's such as Warren,
Climax, Fertile and McIntosh, partici-
pated in Winter Shows activities. Vo-
cational agriculture programs as an
integral part of the curriculum re-
quired learning by doing, lab types of
experiences on their home farm and
educational experiences such as were
provided by the Winter Shows. Judg-
ing contests in livestock were the first
opportunities at the Winter Shows. Later, crops judging and identification
were added.

As ideas progressed and the curri-
culum changed, opportunities such as
cow clipping demonstrations, public
speaking, meats judging and identi-
fication, potato judging, livestock
futurity shows, poultry and horse
judging, were made available to FFA
members. Adult and young farmer
education classes are also an integral
part of the total vocational agriculture
programs of the area high schools.
And these classes often had livestock
judging teams entered in competition.
These adult farmer classes and/or
farm management classes often came
by bus to the shows during these
events to further their education by
attending seminars, meetings, and
the shows other activities. Many of the
adult livestock and crop exhibitors got
started showing in the youth division
of the shows and have built successful
farming operations from the experi-
ences they had as youth exhibitors at
the show.

Vocational agriculture instructors
from many towns in Minnesota bus

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their entire FFA chapters to the show as an annual educational experience. Some of the schools, such as Fisher and Climax, bused their entire student body to the show for a day. The progressiveness of school administrators and teachers play an important part in providing the ongoing interest in the Red River Valley Winter Shows.

Marlin O. Johnson, county extension agent and area crops and soils agent with the agricultural extension service, long-time cooperator with Winter Shows planning, chairman of a very key committee arranging the Crops and Soils seminar as well as active on other planning groups from time to time.

My first visit to the Winter Shows was back in the mid-forties as a young man growing up in Kittson County. Since 1957, I’ve been with the agricultural extension service here in Crookston, first as an associate agent for West Polk County, and since 1970 as regional area crops and soils agent stationed at the Northwest Station. The major interest and involvement with Winter Shows has been the crops and soils seminar. I’ve also from time to time provided leadership to the sunflower and some of the more specialized seminars. My interests have also been in what’s happening in the sugarbeets, water resources, and potato seminars. From 1957 to 1964, I was heavily involved in youth program and special events of the shows. The first Talent Festival was sponsored by the Crookston Jr. Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Winter Shows.

Tom Cochrane and Marlin Johnson, who were Jaycee’s at the time, were co-chairman of this activity. The talent show was a success from the start and has continued annually since. It is one of the very fine youth programs supported by the Winter Shows board of managers. West Polk County was pilot project for the horse project in this end of the state. The first 4-H show was held at the Red River Valley Winter Shows in 1958. I recall about eight or nine 4-H horses that entered the show. People like the Charles Malarecks and Vern Hagens were instrumental in getting the show off to a good start. The first year I rode herd on the 4-H horse show and after that year, it was blessed with bountiful leadership. Winter Shows meetings have brought together people from this end of the state that have a common interest in problems as well as developments in agriculture. When these meetings were started, as is true today, there was need for a regional forum for discussion and dialogue. The Winter Shows has provided this opportunity. Many developments in agriculture, whether it be in sugarbeets, sunflower, era wheat, or the dairy industry, relate back to initial meetings at the Red River Valley Winter Shows. A number of these meetings were pivotal in sanctioning what was to take place in the future. The philosophy of the Winter Shows seminars was to focus on the cutting edge of these topics that can mean significant changes to Valley agriculture. Attempts are made to bring in leading authorities as speakers and resource people. The programs are often of futuristic scope but also always carry updated information that is of value and interest to the farm producer for the current year.

The crops and soils seminar through the years has tried to focus on topics that are in the forefront of change. An example of significant change was the semi-dwarf wheats and their introduction into Valley agriculture. From the period of 1970 through 1974, semi-dwarf wheats were a part of every crops and soils seminar. Some authorities and farmers were greatly concerned that these wheats were not of sufficient quality and would be damaging to the image of Valley spring wheat production. Others were concerned about problems at harvest or control of weeds because of the short growth stature of these wheats. An overriding strength, however, of the semi-dwarf wheats are their increased yield potential and profitability to the farmer. Leading scientists and marketing experts from the University of Minnesota, the United States Department of Agriculture and industry are invited to take part in these seminars. There were sometimes heated discussion and questioning from leading farmers across the Valley area. Finally, the acreage of semi-dwarf wheats increased from less than one percent in 1970 to 90 percent in 1975. The sunflower crop was pioneered through research conducted at the Northwest Experiment Station in Minnesota. The initial educational efforts on producing sunflower crops became part of the Winter Shows seminar series. Seminars were conducted for about a ten-year period. Coming to these seminars in the early years of the sunflower industry were people that now are leaders in the development of the industry and became leaders in the development of that industry that followed. As the industry developed, it became viable on its own and at that point the Winter Shows and the Experiment Station had less direct involvement than when it was in the developmental stage. The course of the sugarbeet industry relates back heavily to the meetings at the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Key people from the Valley met and discussed the future of sugarbeets as well as the technical developments at the time. The significant beginnings that originated from the educational meetings early on should not be underestimated. For instance, the initial extension meetings for sugarbeets were paramount in those early years of the industry. Drainage and water management have been a key to the development of the Red River Basin since its development over a hundred years ago. The early meetings that took place at the Winter Shows and at the Experiment Station related to drainage. Drainage focus changed to water management in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Today the major focus is on water management for reduced flooding as well as conserving moisture for irrigation, as well as a concern for the quality of underground water. As one looks to the future, irrigation will probably become developed with a great deal of sophistication. Water resource seminars have brought together people that are concerned about water and are in a leadership position to do something about it.

Walter Ross, former member of the board of managers, retired farmer from Fisher, MN.

Walter remembers the Winter Shows as a child of 10 when his father, Fred Ross, suggested that the family get dressed up and they were going to take the team and go to the Winter Shows. It was a ten mile ride with the team and sled, with hay and blankets and warm bricks to keep the feet warm. The Winter Shows at that time was in downtown Crookston. By the time you’d heard the speakers and did a lot of visiting, it was long into the darkness of the night before the Ross family got back to their home near Fisher. Travel, at best, took time and effort. Those who were lucky enough to be located near the railroad, could get on some special trains that came
and returned in the same day. Walter and Bertha Ross were elected Valley Farmer and Homemakers. They recall with a great deal of satisfaction the women’s meetings, the lectures, the meetings for the men, seeing new ideas, and visiting with people you hadn’t seen for quite a while.

Albert Kopecky, farmer, Angus, MN.

Albert remembers coming to the show in 1921. They would get on the train at Angus and come to the show and go back in the evening. At first, the trains went back a little too early and the crowd couldn’t stay for the evening lecture. The show leadership prevailed on the railroads to change their schedule so that people who were able to get to the train would come early in the morning and leave after the evening lectures and programs were over and even the furthest away people in the Valley could get home by about midnight and hitch up their teams at the livery barn and make their way back to their home farms. Albert says he remembers the early Winter Shows as being such an important influence in helping with the introduction of certified seeds and other crop improvement practices and especially to see what others were doing. Albert Kopecky’s boyhood was spent on one of the self-supporting farms where the milk and butter and cream and meat and vegetables, potatoes were produced sufficiently so that none of this had to be bought in the grocery store. He says the Winter Shows helped them understand how to produce more of these commodities, some of which could be offered for sale in the marketplace. Albert has a box of literally dozens and dozens of ribbons he won as a crops exhibitor at the Crops Show over a 40 year span of time.

William Strickler, Euclid, MN. Bill Strickler is a farmer operating a cash crop-livestock farm located between Euclid and Angus, MN. Bill’s early experiences in the livestock business had its beginnings at the Winter Shows. He served as president of the Red River Valley Livestock Association for an extended period of time. He is one of the long-time (32 years) members of the Winter Shows board of managers. He also serves as secretary-treasurer of the Red River Valley Winter Shows Foundation.

I first visited the Winter Shows as a youngster in the mid-1920’s. My first participation was showing Angus in 1935. I joined the Livestock Association as an active member in 1938. I became president of the Red River Valley Livestock Association in 1944 and served until 1983. I was elected to the Red River Valley Winter Shows board of managers in 1952 and have served continuously since.

The Winter Shows buildings on Main Street in Crookston were built using the corporate umbrella of the Red River Valley Livestock Association. The board of managers planned and executed the show each year although the Livestock Association was more active in the planning in those early years than they are today. Money to operate the show was always very short. Tom McCall and Olaf Soine went to the bank and signed a note for $1,000 or so in about November of each year to get the show rolling. Money to maintain the buildings was always short. Too, it wasn’t always clear who was to pay for the maintenance, the Livestock Association or the board of managers. Consequently, the general maintenance level of the buildings kind of went downhill and repairs tended to be too much on an emergency basis. Some people out in the counties didn’t understand how the Winter Shows operated and over time this resulted in the lawsuit filed in the early 1950’s. A thirty-year charter for the Red River Valley Livestock Association ran out in 1948 and a suit was filed which suggested that the charter ran out and consequently the assets should be returned to the stockholders. This may well have happened and the Winter Shows would have died at that point, if the plaintiff had prevailed in the suit. A district court ruled in favor of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The plaintiff appealed the Minnesota Supreme Court and the court ruled again in the favor of the Winter Shows.

One result of the misunderstanding was to tighten up the operation of the Winter Shows. The show had gone on for 40 years as a loosely organized group of volunteers working together to promote and develop agricultural enterprise and strengthen the quality of life on the land in northwestern Minnesota.

The show had grown considerably during these 40 years and it was impossible to keep all people informed on all details of who was doing what and where. Too, some stockholders felt their shares should be worth something as they owned the buildings. Actually the shares were contributions to a cause but this wasn’t understood by all who purchased shares to build the first set of buildings downtown in Crookston. Too, the law suit experience prompted the board of managers and the cooperating organizations to take a good look at their corporate structure. As a result the board of managers incorporated as a nonprofit membership corporation under Minnesota law. This action set up a well defined body which clarified who does what. This body was representative of all cooperating organizations in northwestern Minnesota who expressed an interest in the Winter Shows. From then on understandings were clarified and the Winter Shows continued its mission. It also affirmed the title to the buildings as the Red River Valley Livestock Association.

In the mid-1950’s, the crowds at the Winter Shows were continuing to grow. Safety of the public was a concern. Lack of space for farm service concessioners, lack of parking space for visitors, and lack of room for appropriate additional building downtown added up to a problem. These problems suggested relocation and rebuilding. The Red River Valley Livestock Association shifted the title of the buildings over to the Red River Valley Winter Shows board of managers for the purpose of supporting a rebuilding project providing that four Livestock Association members would be on the board of managers in the future.

I served as co-chairman of the Valley-wide task force to raise the funds to acquire land, to build a building, and to provide facilities. The fund raising went good but was short of providing all the needed space. Consequently, the Livestock Association agreed to cooperate in building a livestock housing barn west of the arena. Bernie Youngquist and myself went to the Valley Bank at Grand Forks and Mr. Holmquist, the bank president, agreed to loan the funds. The note was signed by both of us on behalf of the Red River Valley Livestock Association and the Red River Valley Winter Shows board of managers. The Livestock Association agreed to provide $3,000 in cash.
from the sales account immediately plus $1,000 a year to help on the payments to the bank.

The Winter Shows built a temporary alley between the west barn and the arena. Two years later, the board of managers built an additional barn replacing the alley and providing more housing for the livestock. Again, Mr. Holmquist of the Valley Bank loaned the money to build the connecting pole barn. The debt on the arena and on the barns was refinanced in 1967. Payments on the mortgage were then assumed entirely by the Winter Shows from the sales account immediately.

It is a pleasure for me to share some thoughts about the Red River Valley Winter Shows from the perspective of a County Agent in a neighboring county. The first thing that comes to mind is the tremendous effort on the part of local leaders from the host city of Crookston. To initiate, promote and follow through with an agricultural exposition of this size requires an uncommon commitment and vision on the part of countless volunteers on the local scene. While this is in many ways a year round effort, the bulk of the work takes place during the peak of some of the most adverse weather in the nation. Just another example of the kind of people that settled in the Red River Valley and continue to make it a dynamic and productive place to live.

The pride and dedication of local citizens which drives them to stand up and be noticed by putting their agricultural enterprise on parade radiates throughout the far reaches of this fertile valley. This fact is manifested by the long-term support that has been generated among agricultural and local government leaders in surrounding counties. As I reflect on who it is over the years that "talks up" the Winter Shows, attends it regularly and exhibits their finest products, I soon recognize that they are the same people that make this county of Pennington and the cities of Thief River Falls, Goodridge and St. Hilaire function effectively as a quality place to live. One only has to scan the list of Valley Farmer Homemaker award recipients from Pennington County over the years and without exception they are pillars on which this rural community has been built and to a great extent still rests. They stand shoulder to shoulder with their nonfarm peers who develop and lead our rural towns to weave a fabric which engulfs this productive land, overcomes its adversity and brings it to flower and fruition. Yes indeed, to the extent that it stands out in a global sense as a food basket region of the world. These are the people who see fit to join their neighbors from the host city of Crookston and county of Polk in an exposition that says to all citizens of the Valley "look at what we have done, and it is good."

A special dimension of this great show is the youth activity which it fosters. As county agent, I can see the impact it has on our youth. In particular, the 4-H and FFA members who participate in the numerous contests and learning exercises the show provides are the benefactors of a learning and growing experience. The bits of knowledge and experience they gain as they prepare for and participate in the Winter Show are evident to me as I work with these young people over time. The pride of team membership on a winning judging team or exhibition of a champion animal is a growth experience which parallels that of winning a hockey tournament or a 100 yard dash. In addition, it builds support for the Winter Shows in the years ahead.

The esteem in which this show is held and the important role it plays as part of the Valley subculture in the Upper Midwest is evident by the fact that scarcely anyone I talk to during the month of February fails to comment on involvement in the Winter Shows. It is taken for granted that county extension agents, involved in the lives of people as an extender of the knowledge of the Land Grant College and Agricultural Experiment Station, will be an integral part of this sizeable learning, doing and showing effort we call the Red River Valley Winter Shows.

Harry Nelson, Kittson County, retired dairy farmer and once had the top dairy herd in northwestern Minnesota.
Haven't missed a Winter Shows in 60 years. I look forward to seeing friends, meeting new people, and especially to see the dairy cattle. I used to stay here the whole week at the Commercial Hotel. Besides visiting, I'd learn new ideas and have some fun. I liked meeting the people from the University -- the county agents, A.M. Pilkey, O.M. Kiser, and others. The Experiment Station has always had good people who were willing to help us farmers. I liked meeting new people, and especially to the whole week at the Commercial Hotel. Besides visiting, the University on the Red River Experiment Station has always had good ideas and have some fun. I liked those short course classes at the Northwest School and Experiment Station as I learned new ideas and got acquainted with the experts. I think the Winter Shows is needed for a long time in the future. People who live here look forward to the show with great anticipation every year.

Harold Thomforde, Crookston. Long-time businessperson, former mayor, international poultry judge. He has the longest continuous record of service on the Red River Valley Winter Shows board of managers. He was elected to the board in 1936 and served until 1981 representing the Northern Minnesota Poultry Association. Harold writes:

Due to my long-time connection with both the poultry and combined Winter Shows, I would like to express a personal observation. It is my opinion that the combined Red River Valley Winter Shows has been a dominant factor with the overall advancement of agriculture in the Red River Valley. It is my candid opinion that a good share of the success is due to the leadership the organization has had. I have worked with all of the presidents of the organization; Conrad Selvig, Austin Dowell, Tom McCall, Bernie Youngquist, and Jim Lofgren. All have been tremendously effective leaders. However, the most progress was made under the dedicated leadership of Dr. Youngquist. Since 1956 when he became president, he has led us from the small, old, cramped quarters in downtown Crookston to our large complex of new buildings located on the outskirts of our city. The field of agriculture activities tripled. The meetings and seminars have quadrupled and the people taking a part have increased at least ten-fold. The financial standing is now on a firm foundation and the future is assured. Our thanks go to all of these leaders and to the many volunteers up and down the Valley. We hope this kind of broad- visioned leadership continues in the future.

Ann Simley, Associate Professor Emeritus, Hamline University, St. Paul, Ninety-three years old and now living in Madison, Wisconsin. She was a Northwest School of Agriculture teaching staff member in 1922-1930.

Not long after I arrived at the N.W.S.A. in October of 1922, I heard about the Winter Shows. Mr. Selvig had made it very clear to me that part of my job there was to get every student on his feet before an audience at least twice a year. He felt that these young people were the potential leaders of the 30's and 40's. We accomplished this objective by demonstrations, speeches, plays, poetry reading, short story telling and any form of public address. We had a debate coach who had that work.

Winter Shows was a busy time. Our students and faculty were involved in various ways. I remember one year Mr. Selvig wrote a pageant script which was an ambitious undertaking. About 50 students took part and the music department also. We had to plan and execute our costumes and what scenery and props we needed. As I remember it, the audience enjoyed the show and the experience for the student was valuable.

Many of the students also had the opportunity to exhibit their produce or animals. I know there was judging experience also.

Outstanding speakers and entertainers were brought to Crookston for this cold and often stormy, but exciting week. I was there when radio was in its infancy and not so much more than a playing. So the live talent was of great interest to the community as well as the school. There were political speakers from the Twin Cities and Chicago, and inspirational and humorous speakers. I remember an author of some popular novels of that time. Even after 60 years, I remember a woman whose subject was how to hang pictures. The decor in many homes took a new turn after that.

Of course we were interested in the prizes our students won. Wallace Miller, former manager of Minnesota Valley Breeders Association, had a display of russet potatoes that took first prize. After the show, he gave them to me. I took them to Wisconsin where my father planted them in our garden. For years we had the best baking potatoes in town.

During the short school year, we were too busy with the academic program to find out what was happening in the animal division. But at the Winter Shows we saw these prize animals. I was surprised even though I had lived on a farm until I was 18 years old. The sheep impressed me. I knew where we got the expression "pull the wool
over his eyes”. I couldn’t see their eyes at all. I learned much about the science by listening to student demonstrations and talks.

My childhood years on a Wisconsin farm taught me little about the profit and loss part of farming. But one farm taught me little about the profit. My childhood years on a Wisconsin farm taught me little about the profit.

One, the bus driver, was a very busy man during Winter Show week. He was on the road hauling faculty and students all day and into the night.

I felt greatly honored after I had been at Hamline for three years, to be invited to come back as an entertainer for one of the programs. On the return trip, I woke up the next day, still in Fergus Falls where the train was stuck in a snowdrift most of the night.

In my 40 years of teaching, I have never experienced a school like N.W.S.A. Conrad Selvig had a vision for the Red River Valley which he was able to develop and bring to reality through the students who attended that school. Knowing so many of them through those eight years, I feel his dream came true.

In six months, the students easily did what takes nine months in public schools. With 24 months in all rather than 36, I saw them competing in colleges and universities very favorably. Three who went to Carleton graduated Phi Beta Kappa. I have noted with great pride the successful lives these men and women have led. In addition to all they have done for themselves, they have given us some great families. They gave much to their children.

Canadians frequently attended our Winter Shows. I recall having a part in a program by our faculty, given at a dinner at which the mayor of Winnipeg was present. He spoke to us and said, “if you come to Winnipeg and need help, call me.”

So the Winter Shows were good for the school, community and for the many guests from far away places. It was a great place for getting together and getting acquainted. One can’t recall each event but the whole experience was enriching.

The experience of 8 years at the N.W.S.A. is something I treasure.

Born on a farm near Crookston, Edith Carlson, teacher and Crookston resident now 101 years young, taught in one-room country schools near Beltrami and Fisher. She remembers the School of Agriculture as the “Cow School”. Horses were very helpful under blizzard conditions as they could find the way home. She remembers the early Winter Shows leaders from Crookston, including C.G. Selvig, P.M. Finkenbinder, Senator Stephens, John Saugstad, W.E. McKenzie, Joseph Ball, Lee R. Boyd, S.M. Swenson, and J.H. Sargent.

The new livestock building had space for coffee, pie, and hamburger service. The ladies aid served for several years and the food service to the public was good and the project was a good moneymaker. Mr. Saugstad thought the food service should be passed around to other churches. The Trinity Lutheran Church ladies aid served for many years. It was a good moneymaker but very tiring for the ladies.

More people came every year to the Winter Shows in spite of the winter weather so it must be good even today.

Sam Bigger, West Polk County Extension Director, long-time member of the board of managers, trustee of the Winter Shows Foundation, key cooperator and expert for educational programming where use of Winter Shows facilities is involved.

My first contact with the Red River Valley Winter Shows was back in the late 1940’s when I was a high school student at Frazee High School. Roy Johnson, who was the Vo-Ag instructor, brought myself, Don Greaser (farmer at Audubon, MN), Duane Shafer (farmer at Frazee), and Bobby Hendrickson (in business for himself in Minneapolis) to Crookston as the General Livestock Judging Team from Frazee. We didn’t win the contest that year, but we were the top sheep judging team. Too, Don Greaser ended up being the top farm youth judge for the Winter Shows that year. This was our first experience at a regional judging contest. We grew as a team and eventually won the state judging contest, and went to the national judging contest in Kansas City, MO. The Winter Shows started us on our way to greater accomplishments.

I became interested in sheep production. I saw an ad in the Winter
show premium book where Carl G. Ash and Sons from Crookston, MN had some pure-bred Shropshire sheep for sale along with other breeders. I went to the show and saw Mr. Thune's very good Hampshires. Other sheep producers there were Oliver Lein from Oklee, Alvin Field from Oklee, and there were a few pure-bred sheep producers from Roseau County. I did buy some pure-bred Hampshire sheep, and got into the Hampshire sheep breeding business before 1953. The Bigger family has had pure-bred Hampshire sheep up until selling out in 1983.

I have attended most of the Red River Valley Winter Shows in one capacity or another since the late 1940's. I missed a couple years when I was in the Service about 1955 and followed by school at NDSU. After graduation I taught Vo-Ag in Frazee, MN and had judging teams and FFA and 4-H exhibits at the Winter Shows starting at about 1960. Dennis Palmer exhibited sheep and now is a dairy farmer in the Evergreen area, east of Frazee. In the early 60's, I became the Extension Agent in Norman County, bringing 4-H judges and livestock exhibitors to the Winter Shows from that area. In 1964, I became the acting County Agent in Kittson County, and one of my responsibilities in taking over that was to be sheep superintendent at the Red River Valley Winter Shows that year. Dr. D. Riemer was the general livestock superintendent in about the middle 60's. In Kittson County, we also brought along a lot of crop samples to the Winter Shows, as we had our own Crop Show in Kittson County and all the samples from there were brought down to the Winter Shows. That is about the time I got involved in the crop show. Ozie Dahlenbach, the county agent from Clay County, was very prominent in the crop show at that time. Carl Ash was a great promoter of the Red River Valley Crop Show. In fact, he was a great producer for a lot of things in the Red River Valley when he was county agent in West Polk County.

I became involved in the King Agassiz committee early in the 1960's. I was a member of the crop show committee in those years. I was involved in the planning and putting on of some of the Winter Shows extension meetings in the 60's and early 70's. We didn't have quite as large a meeting schedule in those years as we do now. We de-

signated some days for dairy, some days for crop production, and had educational meetings to correspond.

There seemed to always be a willingness to change in the Winter Shows. It was a great "Red River Valley get together", meeting some of the people you hadn't seen for a year, and there was always opportunity to pick up new ideas. I remember visiting with an elderly farmer from Pembina County in North Dakota at one Winter Show. After visiting with him, and finding out who he was and where he was from, he said he made every one of them. I said, "Why do you come to the Winter Shows?" His remarks were that we never make a change in our farming operation that we don't come down here and see what's new and if we are going to buy a piece of equipment, we can come down here and maybe look at several brands of the same kind of equipment in one day that would take us a couple of weeks to run around the country and to different dealers to see.

As we moved along in the 70's, there was a decision to build a new addition onto the Winter Shows building. I was happy to be a part of that and to be on the finance committee for the new building. In fact, along with Dr. Youngquist, I was one of the fund raisers, and I remember visiting with people in every county from Fergus Falls to Roseau, and Bemidji, and the excellent response I got from the co-ops I was contacting and people sitting on the co-op boards. I don't think I ever had a negative response the whole time I was trying to raise money for this new building. We were very successful at raising money because of the good image the Red River Valley Winter Shows had projected throughout the years. I became a Winter Shows board member in 1972 and also a member of the executive committee of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The year the North wing was planned, built, and money raised, I kept track of the Winter Shows related meetings, and I had over 50 meetings in one year either with the board, the finance committee, the building committee, or some other committee that year. It was a big step in those days to acquire the funds necessary to build that addition.

I think it has been a great asset to the Red River Valley to have the Winter Shows. I can remember county agents and groups of farmers coming here from various counties in the southern part of the state, and wanting to know how we got funds to build and how could they have a Winter Shows in their area. When we told them there were no Federal or State funds involved and this was all done with local money, they were surprised. They never did build a Winter Shows in other parts of Minnesota. I think it is a unique and positive thing for the people of the Red River Valley and Northern Minnesota to have the initiative to help themselves, and I think that is what the Red River Valley Winter Shows is all about. It gave people a
chance in the early days to exchange ideas on farming; it gave them a chance to see the new crops that were being introduced and a place to find out where the quality seed was being produced. They could buy the new varieties of good seed to take back to their area. They were the leadership kind that came to the Winter Shows in those years and they still are.

The Winter Shows is not as important today for finding the new varieties and new farming methods, but it is still an unusual opportunity to see the innovations, new machinery, and new techniques. Too, the Winter Shows produces a view of the kinds of things that are on the horizon and may not be recommended practices yet today. It provides an opportunity to see some of the research that is ongoing before it becomes new practices on the farm. These innovative farmers are the ones that will look at a particular practice and if it looks like it is going to work on their operation, they will take it back and try it out in their own experimentation.

The first place that some farmers of the Red River Basin saw computers was at the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Computers are new in agriculture and they are being accepted very rapidly, as farmers take this new tool and adapt it to their business. The kinds of programs farmers are developing to use on the computer to help them do a better job of farming are fantastic.

I see the Red River Valley Winter Shows of the future being the kind of organization that will bring to a modern agriculture the evolving techniques and ideas that are up on the front line-cutting edge of agriculture. It may not be the place to look for new seedstock, though these opportunities will still exist. It may not be the place to come and look at machinery, but those opportunities still exist. I think as we look down the road, we are going to see more kinds of information in the area of marketing, new methods of marketing, new methods of market development, and maybe even some new crops as we evolve toward the year 2000.

I see a potential for the Red River Valley for being one of the greatest vegetable-producing areas of the world. We have a tremendous capacity here for the production of vegetable crops, like the cole crops, cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. We also have a great potential for green snap beans, green peas, and carrot production, with a capacity to produce a tremendous tonnage of these crops in our heavy soils in the Red River Valley with their efficient water utilization. Our problems are going to be harvesting techniques and as we develop the kind of machinery that does not require footing in this heavy muck-clay when it gets wet, some method of propelling and controlling the height above ground that does not depend on contacting wet soil. We have a potential to become a real important vegetable growing area. It may not happen for ten or twenty years.

The 30 years of association with the Red River Valley Winter Shows have been rich and rewarding: the things I have seen happening over the last 30 years have been positive. It has made a difference. The future of the Red River Valley Winter Shows is going to be just as important as the lay citizen leadership of the Red River Valley wants it to be. Hats are off to the board of managers of the Red River Valley Winter Shows and the 300 volunteer committee persons out in the 14 counties. My congratulations to them in their 75th year.

Dr. Larry J. Smith, of Crookston, MN is the sixth and current superintendent of the University of Minnesota, Northwest Experiment Station. He came to the Station as the agronomist for general crop research. Later he shifted to the agronomic position created for sugarbeet research. He has been active with the Barley Show, the Sugarbeet Growers Institute, and other crop activity. Currently, Dr. Smith is chairman of the planning group for the educational seminar series at the Winter Shows and represents the Northwest Experiment Station on the board of managers.

The University of Minnesota, Northwest Experiment Station has been involved with and supported the various functions and organizations of the Red River Valley Winter Shows since its inception 75 years ago. The degree of support has been multifaceted. Four superintendents of the Northwest Experiment Station have served terms as president of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. All have served on the board of managers. The livestock and crop scientists and their technicians have served on various commodity boards, which develop individual programs to make the Red River Valley Winter Shows the success it has been over the years in these areas. The secretarial, maintenance and farm departments of the Station have willingly given of their time and talent to help insure the smooth operation of all phases of the Show.

The Red River Valley Winter Shows provides a forum for the exchange of innovative ideas, information, and fellowship. Many of the friendships and research ideas I have had over the past 13 years started in 1971 when I arrived in Crookston, Minnesota, just in time for the opening ceremony of that year’s Red River Valley Winter Shows.

The Northwest Experiment Station and its staff, along with the citizens of northwestern Minnesota, will continue to serve on the various volunteer organizations that have made the Red River Valley Winter Shows what it is today and to the improvements to the quality of life they will make during the next 75 years.