The Winter Shows began as the service and educational arm of Minnesota's Land Grant University. The University was beginning to reach out into the countryside in northwestern Minnesota in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The people on the land were struggling to make a living and a satisfying life. The best established educational arm about 1910 was the one-room country school, readily available to most farm families. Farmers and others who came to the first Winter Shows programs were lonely for fellowship, eager to hear about the new "experiment farm," and ready to listen to outsiders. Music, singing, pageants, educational contests, all added a special quality of experience for the early visitors of the Winter Shows. People on the land were longing to hear the voices of knowledge, of investigation, of experience to speak to them, talk with them, to answer questions.

For the most part, it was the community leaders and innovators who came to those early short courses. Such a trend continued even as the Winter Shows changed program ideas to fit the shifting scene from horsepower to tractor, from walking to the mailbox to the modern three-wheeler, from almost no communication with the outside world to so much that sorting out what is fact and what isn't becomes a daily challenge.

The individual members of the board of managers, of course, have changed with time. An estimated 300 men and women have served on the board during the 75-year history. Some have served over 40 years -- a generation of time. Generally, tenure on the board extends several years. This longer tenure, yet with the constant infusion of new people, provides stability of purpose and the creative challenge of new ideas.

A study of the program booklets finds a recurring theme which gives emphasis to speakers, events and activities that extended the quality of life. The major projects or activities which are particularly designed to enhance the quality of living are explained in this chapter.

**YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

A natural and immediate happening in the early Winter Shows was the emphasis given to the human family, out there working with the soil and water to produce crops and livestock. All hands in the family were organized to survive in the setting chosen by the pioneer farmers of the Valley. It wasn't surprising, therefore, that leadership of the Winter Shows included youth very early in the 75 years.

Interestingly enough, the earliest youth contests were related to that very prominent institution out in the country, the one-room country school. Spelling contests were popular and continued as long as the country schools were on the scene. Declamatory, posture, essay, and one-act play contests were programmed for nearly two decades beginning about 1915. Vocal and instrumental music by youth groups in those early years provided entertainment at programs. The music department of the Northwest School of Agriculture and their students probably sang and played at more Winter Shows programs than any other single group of Red River Valley youth up until 1968, when the N.W. School phased out to make room for the Technical College. In the late 1950s, and through most of the 70's, high school bands were bused in during the day to play and to see the show.

A Talent Show now known as the "Talent Festival" was developed by the board of managers, with the Crookston Jaycees initially cooperating to start the project. This talent contest provided an opportunity for young people to compete in drama, dance, voice, and instrumental. The 75th year, 1985, will be the 26th consecutive Talent Festival to attract amateur youth as individuals or groups. Currently, the music department of the Technical College organizes the Talent Festival each year as a service to the Winter Shows exposition. As many as 50 auditions have been held each year, from which approximately a dozen top numbers are selected for an evening of final competition in Kiehle Auditorium at the University of Minnesota Technical College. Expert judges select the top three numbers, and cash prizes are awarded by the Winter Shows board of managers. Weather permitting, the
The area Bremer Banks have been serving the needs of the people in the Red River Valley for decades. During this time, we have been proud of our association with the Red River Valley Winter Shows and the innovative programs that are conveyed through it.

We congratulate the Winter Shows on their 75th Anniversary serving the Red River Valley.
The Bremer Banks Listed Below Salute The Red River Valley Winter Shows:

First American Bank of Crookston

First American Bank of Grafton

First American Bank of Larimore

First American Bank of Warren

First National Bank of Crookston

State Bank of Shelly

Members Bremer Financial Corporation
Kiehle Auditorium is filled to capacity, as many people enjoy amateur entertainment by young people.

The vocational agriculture department of high schools and the boys and girls 4-H clubs in the region have integrated the Winter Shows into their youth programs. For over 20 years, the first Saturday of the ten-day show has been set aside as Youth Day. More than a thousand 4-H’ers, FFA’ers, and others from the entire northwestern Minnesota and even from North Dakota gather to compete in a wide variety of educational contests, demonstrations, and clinics.

An opportunity to see young farm animals just born or being born and a chance to ride on a pony are provided by the Crookston and Climax Future Farmers of America chapters each year. Preschool children from surrounding communities find this a very special day, which ends up with tired parents and tired ponies but happy kids.

To summarize, the youth events in today's Winter Shows are stronger than ever. The lives of youth are enriched and strengthened. Among today's strong families living in the Red River Valley many speak with pride about the ribbons, the championships won, the wholesome experiences, the fun, and chuckle over some of their mistakes at the Winter Shows.

VALLEY FARMER AND HOME-MAKER HONORS BANQUET

The Red River Valley Development Association was looking for ways in the 1930's to generate respect and pride into the farming scene during those difficult depression years. Under the leadership of Supt. Tom McCall, who at that time was also president of the Red River Valley board of managers and the Red River Valley Livestock Association, the leaders traveled the countryside and consulted with extension workers and other rural groups, asking how can we demonstrate to the public at large the kind of attitudes and values which really are the building blocks of communities at the grassroots level in good years as well as in poor times? How can we find them? Should we just have a top farmer and his wife honored for the entire Red River Valley or one for each county?

Out of these discussions developed a plan to honor a farm couple from each county for the good example they set with their family life, their community service, their farming operation, and their concern for conserving the natural resources of soil and water. To serve on a selection committee in each county, the group invited the county agent, the leaders of the various farm organizations, a Vo-Ag instructor if available, the director of the Red River Valley Development Association in the county, and a member of the county board. This must have been a reasonably good plan, for since 1938 it is still used in approximately its original form.

Has the program been successful? One county extension director writes:

The Valley Farmer and Homemaker committee in the county is always an exciting committee to work with. They seem so willing to come to a meeting to search out a deserving couple to receive the honor at the Winter Shows. I have helped select 26 couples. I sense the real honor these couples experience and probably because they know they have been selected by a cross section of their peers and neighbors. I make it a point to visit with them immediately after the selection has been completed and usually they say it must have been a mistake that they were actually chosen. The committee should really find someone who is more outstanding. Seeing them early gives the honored couple time to find someone to milk the cows or do the chores while they attend the honors banquet and the Winter Shows.

The extension director goes on to point out that this is a very worthwhile program because:

“These people are without a doubt deserving and something special. The honors banquet is a topnotch event and the beautiful presentation of the plaque leaves lasting memories. I find these plaques always in a very prominent place in the homes of honored couples. Our local newspapers are very helpful and give front page space for the write-up sent in by the county extension director, pictures and the like. Over the years, I have attended several of the banquets and find all most meaningful. The program has always been appropriate and succeeds in featuring the importance of the kind of leadership and the kind of values, the kind of attitudes that these people maintain in their communities. The Valley Farmer and Homemaker Honors Banquet is the finest program at the Winter Shows and let's hope it can continue for many more years.”

Another quotation from another county:

“Seldom is there an event or activity that cannot be improved. For this year’s Valley Farmer and Homemaker Banquet, however, I am hard pressed to think of a suggestion. The keynote speaker was missed, but the special award given to the Builder of the Valley used that time well and really augmented the honors given to the Valley Farmer and Homemakers. I was so pleased to feel that the addition of a new award in no way complicated the honoring of the Valley Farmer and Homemakers for 1984.”

Over a 46-year period more than 700 couples (usually a farm couple) have been honored in the 14 county
The Red River Valley Development Association has presented two "Builder of the Valley" awards in recent years. Mr. Edgar Hetteen (left), Thief River Falls, developer of the snowmobile, inventor of the straw chopper for modern grain combines, among many accomplishments, was honored with his wife, Hannah. Mr. Melvin Ouse, Rothsay, MN, farmer, REA leader, flying farmer, strong family leader among many other leadership roles and his wife, Celia, were the most recent so honored. Both recipients received a personalized plaque memorializing their contributions and grassroots leadership as Builders of the Red River Valley.

area. Keynote speakers include industrial leaders, university presidents, governors, senators, congressmen, authors, state legislators, and farmers. A complete banquet is tastefully and efficiently served, and a beautiful, personally engraved plaque is presented by the Red River Valley Development Association.

Here again, the service leadership of University personnel must be noted. The superintendent and staff of the Northwest School and Experiment Station have, under the Development Association committee, looked after the legwork and details of arranging the banquet affair year after year. This University group adds permanence and smoothness of operation to the event. The leadership of the extension director in each county adds that necessary expertise, stability, and respect to the yearly selection process and is certainly one of the continuing factors insuring the success of the program.

To summarize, the Valley Farmer and Homemakers Banquet is a high point at each Red River Valley Winter Show. The board of the Minnesota Red River Valley Development Association, cooperating with the Winter Shows board of managers, takes a great deal of pride in this activity. Without question the people who have been honored through the years are recognized by their neighbors as having enhanced the quality of life for themselves as well as for all their neighbors here in the Red River Basin.

**BUILDER OF THE VALLEY AWARD**

The Winter Shows has always been characterized by an element of vitality, a sort of a forceful aggressiveness throughout its history, despite the loosely structured organization. New ideas are tried. Some fail and others continue. In more recent years a deliberate effort has been made to seek public opinion and reactions during the ten-day show. The "Red Jacket Boys", the board members, circulate among the crowd of visitors, listening and questioning. Planning committees and a variety of cooperating organization boards are doing more evaluating each year. Emerging from such dialogue comes the remodeling of old ideas and the trying of new ideas. In such an evaluation session by the board of the Red River Development Association about four years ago was born the Builder of the Valley honors idea. It took about two years to develop and adopt the Builder of the Valley Award project. As a reminder to the reader, the Minnesota Red River Valley Development Association is a nonprofit corporation representing the 14 counties in northwestern Minnesota. Their major purpose is to encour-

age resource development through the Winter Shows. The Builder of the Valley Award was developed to recognize unusual grassroots leadership and creativity which have contributed significantly to the quality of life on land in the Red River Basin and beyond.

The award is intended to be among the top honors given at the Winter Shows. It recognizes people who work quietly, and through their steadiness, creativity, and community involvement do build the quality of life economically, socially, and spiritually. The honor is awarded to farmers or those who provide services and who live in northwestern Minnesota. It is the policy of the board of directors to give the award from time to time and not necessarily annually. A project committee from the board studies all the recommendations for this award in detail. Recommendations of the project committee are then acted on by the full board of the Minnesota Red River Valley Development Association for final decision. So far two such awards have been given.

**KING AGASSIZ PROJECT**

During the late 1950's the quiet but forceful enthusiasm of the board of managers and fund-raising task forces (all volunteers) out in each county
went beyond the planning and funding of a building and a facility for the next 40 or 50 years. They searched for a symbol of emerging leadership in agriculture. A "princess" was suggested as was a "snowman". A 150’ long by 25’ high Red River Valley panorama painted on the front of the new Winter Shows building wasn’t practical. A farm animal mascot was impossible because of its care and upkeep. This brainstorming among the Winter Shows board was finally placed in the hands of a committee who were to search for a symbol that would reach out into every county annually and could develop into something that would be maintained by people out in each county, yet focused on the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The King Agassiz project was born.

The first committee meeting was held December 12, 1960, at 3:30 p.m. at the Northwest School of Agriculture. The board of managers appointed George Nornes as chairman, and he gathered the following committee around him for this meeting: Mrs. Sonja Knapp, Marlin Johnson (Asst. County Agent, West Polk County), John Drake and Fred Schulzke (Advisory from the fund-raising campaign office). Mr. Ray Eggert (Beltrami) was added to the committee. The committee minutes record suggestions for added committee membership.

The idea of finding a county representative in each county to be honored continued to grow. The involvement of county agents and Vo-Ag instructors to select the initial county candidates was discussed because a name for the county representative didn’t come easy. Titles from "atomic age farmer" to "Agassiz Farm King" were developed. Finally from a list of 18, King Agassiz for the Winter Shows region and County King Agassiz for the county representative were picked.

The County Kings are chosen locally in each county, and the King Agassiz is selected by expert judges at the Winter Shows. Deadlines were set. Machinery was established out in the county for the selection of candidates. The following rules applied: The first selection committees in the county were made up of the county extension agent and Vo-Ag instructors. Local newspapers cooperated by writing a story on the project requesting nominations be sent to the county agent, the final selection in time to be honored, announced and publicized prior to the Winter Shows.

Choosing these candidates is not a beauty or popularity contest. The person chosen must have qualities of leadership needed to reach the rich potential of farming and related living in the Red River Basin. The candidate must be 25 to 39 years of age. The person is judged chiefly on what he does with what he has. His basic farming progress is demonstration of his talent as a developing, farm businessperson. The way he overcomes obstacles is important as are his general community reputation, and his personality to represent the Winter Shows before the public in an adequate manner. The committee met several times and by early January cleared the hurdles for the King Agassiz idea. Information went out to the counties. The counties produced nine County Kings for the 1961 Winter Shows. It was a very creditable beginning. The committee was enlarged to make the final plans, with George Nornes as chairman, Mrs. Sonja Knapp (FHA, Climax), Marlin Johnson (Asst. County Agent, West Polk County), Ray Eggert (Beltrami), Mrs. Gilman Hanson (Crookston), T.W.
Thorson (Crookston), Jean Solheim (Crookston), Bertha Ross (Fisher), and Mrs. Andy Dragseth (Eldred).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Without a doubt, the free will service of hundreds of citizens is what produces the Winter Shows each year. The many who give a few minutes to a few hours of time and energy are led by other volunteers who provide days and weeks of leadership service. The board of managers wondered whether there might not be some way to honor such dedicated leadership. In the early 1960's the group suggested that any person having given long-time and unusual service to the Winter Shows should be recognized with due explanation at an appropriate meeting or banquet at the Shows. A personally engraved plaque would be presented. Framed and dated pictures would be hung in the permanent Hall of Fame gallery located in the Winter Shows Arena.

A total of 54 citizen-leader-servants have been honored to date. A list is provided in the appendix.

The Winter Shows without question has something for everyone, and senior citizens are not overlooked. They are included in the programming and the service activity of the women's division. They come in by the busload from all parts of the region. The board of managers reduces the price of their tickets at the door, and the women's division committee always has something interesting for those who want to visit together and tour the show.

HORSEBREEDER'S HALL OF FAME

The Red River Valley Horsebreeders established a program honoring those who provide planning and various other activities. They have done a good job of recognizing volunteer service. Plaque presentations are made at suitable ceremonies, and a gallery of pictures of people so honored is maintained in the Winter Shows Arena by the Association.

TO SUMMARIZE

The quality of life in the Red River Basin depends much on the values, activities, and stewardship of people who live on the land here. The Red River Valley Winter Shows board of managers places highest priority on those programs of the midwinter shows which recognize and encourage the kind of human resources which enhance the quality of life in northwestern Minnesota and beyond.

The late Carl Ash was a leader in extension education for the Red River Valley, a respected friend of the farmer and a trusted leader among leaders. He is an example of the solid foundations undergirding the 75-year-old Winter Shows.