

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Canfield Fair Project

Fair Board Experience

O. H. 318

ROY BOWMAN

Interviewed

by

Carrie Stanton

on

May 11, 1983

ROY J. BOWMAN

Roy J. Bowman was born in Ellsworth, Ohio, on September 20, 1930, the son of Ethel and Hugh Bowman. He and his wife Verna M. Zimmerman (maiden name), are the parents of three children and reside in Beaver Township, Ohio.

Mr. Bowman attended Canfield High School and was a graduate of the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers in 1968. He has been employed at the Mahoning National Bank since 1949.

He is not only a member of the Canfield Fair Board and a past president but a member of the Ohio Fair Managers Associations. His father was previously a member of the Board.

Mr. Bowman enjoys gardening, golf and traveling.

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INTERVIEWEE: ROY BOWMAN

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SUBJECT: Fair Board Experience, Fair Growth

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S: This is an interview with Roy Bowman for the Youngstown State University Canfield Fair Project by Carrie Stanton, at the Mahoning Bank, on May 11, 1983, at approximately 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Bowman, do you want to tell me about your own personal background, where you were born and that type of thing?

B: Okay. I was born in Ellsworth on a farm. My father was a farmer. We lived on the farm until I was married. Then I went to work at the bank here in Youngstown and have been in the bank ever since. But, my roots were in farming. I married a girl who moved out from Youngstown. We kind of live out in the country now, in Beaver Township. We have about eighteen acres out there now and we have a couple beef cattle. I still kind of enjoy the farming. I was involved in 4-H for eleven or twelve years when I was home on the farm and growing up as a teenager and became involved in the fair.

Actually, fair activities have always been very important to our family. My father was involved in being a 4-H advisor for a number of years. He used to show cattle at various fairs. My mother was a 4-H advisor. It's just one of those things that every year at fair time we would go to the fair and set up the 4-H booth and exhibits. I just kind of always have been involved in the fair. I like to say that I've been to every fair except one, and that year I was in the hospital. I had blood poisoning and couldn't make it. But fair activities have always been an important part of our lives. My

father was on the fair board. He served on the fair board for about twenty-two years. When he passed away, I was appointed to fill his term. I actually served on the Junior Fair Board for a couple of years. It was at this time I became involved with Mr. Kilcawley. He was the director and treasurer of the fair. Mr. Kilcawley had an idea that a fair our size should provide some form of banking facilities on the fairgrounds. So in 1949 or 1950, he started working on this idea. At that time I was working at the bank here in Youngstown. Mr. Kilcawley went to the presidents of the banks in Youngstown and asked them if each would assign one person to go out and set up this bank and work the bank at the fairground. The president of the bank came to me and asked me if I would go do it. It was great, I enjoyed going back to the fair.

S: Were you already on the board then?

B: No, This was way before then; this was about 1949 or 1950. I worked under Mr. Kilcawley with the bank on the fairgrounds and then also took over the admission gate detail. When Mr. Kilcawley passed away, my father, who was on the board, was appointed the treasurer of the fair. I just continued those activities under my father's directions as the director. After my father passed away, the fair board appointed me and I just stayed on. Actually, I have been handling the gate admission and handling the bank on the fairgrounds since probably 1950. So I've been doing it for a couple of years. But it has been a lot of fun.

My father was also involved with the cattle department when he was on the fair board. So, we've had a lot of different experiences.

S: Do you remember any stories that he told you?

B: Oh, not too much in particular. The thing that probably I'm impressed with as much as anything is the fair board, the members, have always been a very compatible group and they've always been foresighted enough to acquire land when land was available so that they didn't get landlocked. I remember some of the stories that my dad used to tell me about back when the fair operation was not near the scope then as it is now. I recall that when dad was president in 1956 and 1957, they set a record attendance at that time for the five day fair of 155 thousand people. Generally, their budget for the fair at that time was \$120 thousand to \$130 thousand a year. The fair had some rough times back in 1946, 1947, 1948,

and 1949, right after the war. One of the things that was very instrumental in the fair being able to succeed was the stock car racing that came into the fair. They reached an agreement with Charlie Findlay. They started having stock car racing every Saturday night. We used to go, of course, as a family and watch.

S: I used to go too. (Laughter)

B: They had the midgets and they had the stock cars. The additional revenue that was generated by the stock car races and the midget auto races was probably one of the key things that permitted the fair to be able to keep their buildings up and keep the grounds up and keep them going through this kind of rough period in the history of the fair. I know Pop always used to tell me that we owed a great debt of gratitude to Charlie Findlay, not only from the fact that it generated additional revenue, but the fact that it brought people to the fairgrounds and everybody knew where the fairgrounds were. It involved a lot of people maybe who wouldn't normally go to the fair, but came out to the midget auto races and stock car races. So it has just been some strange and interesting set of circumstances that have brought the fairgrounds to where it is today.

S: Yes, Mr. Kohler had said something about Charlie Findlay. He didn't have any figures to back it up, but he said that he thought that . . .

B: Yes, just kind of a turning point. There were times then, I know, that they would go through a whole fair season and end up just showing less than a thousand dollars loss or maybe they would make eight thousand dollars. When Mr. Findlay started with the auto races, it generated enough revenue at a very critical time and helped the fair carry on.

S: I remember one other thing Pop told me. This was when they used to have grandstand entertainment, not at the level we do now. There was considerable talk; I don't know whether it was 1955, 1956, or 1957, but back in that period of time, sometime when the Lennon Sisters were a very popular group, the fair had always had thrill shows and they had had rodeos and low budget type of grandstand shows. They thought that it would be good to promote and to have a show of higher talent as their main attraction. At that particular time they didn't really have the revenue to guarantee a main star to come in.

S: Do they have to put the money up front?

B: They don't always, but at that time the fair circuit was not as prosperous as the fair circuit is now, so some of these entertainers at that time wanted a guarantee up front. I know when they made the arrangement to get the Lennon Sisters in--and this was really the first big name act that they had ever had--Mr. Kilcawley personally guaranteed that if the fair was not successful that he would personally come up with the guarantee. Ever since then it has been a big hit. And ever since then we have followed the philosophy of trying to provide big name entertainment. It's a lot harder now because of the talent on radio and television.

S: Do you mean it's harder to get?

B: It's harder to get and it's harder to get the people to come. It's like a game of can you top this. When you have people like Johnny Cash and Bob Hope, what are you going to do next year? The public can sit at home in front of their televisions and see the top stars of the country free. Sometimes it's difficult to get people to come out to see these name entertainers that maybe cost you \$35 thousand, \$40 thousand, or \$50 thousand for a one night show.

S: I never realized that. Have we had problems like this recently?

B: I shouldn't maybe use the term problem. It's a different type of an entertainment atmosphere. The fees that they are charging almost price them out of the fair circuit. There are a number of stars that just refuse to work the fair circuit. They can go to the Coliseum in Cleveland or they can go to the Front Row, and they know they have an air conditioned atmosphere to perform in and they don't have to worry about rain, dust, or crowds. To get stars in and out of the fairgrounds, it's a little extra work and then you have a tent facility or a trailer for them to dress in and they are used to nice dressing rooms and accommodations. Also, some of the entertainers have strange and unusual demands.

S: Like what?

B: If they do two shows, you have to serve them a sit down meal. They give you the menu. They have a list of things that they want, certain beverages that they want. They have so many towels that you have to provide. You have to have so many security people. There's just a list as long as your arm of special and unusual requests and it's all a part of the contract. If you miss one

of those requests and if they want to break the contract, they can break their contract and there is nothing you can do about it. They are more temperamental, maybe that isn't a good word, but they are harder to work with. They're more of a prima donna type of a person.

S: You have a professional handle them now, don't you?

B: We use a booking agent, which is Klein's Attraction, Bob and Peggy Kaltenbaugh. Peggy was a Klein and she's originally from New Waterford. They have their headquarters in Palatine, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, a suburb of Chicago. We started booking with them a number of years ago and there is an advantage. Some of the fairs like to book directly, but you run risks in doing that. And the risks are you have a higher risk of no show, where the star, if he doesn't feel like performing, he becomes sick and and he can't perform and cancels out. When you book through a booking agent, they're less apt to walk out on the booking agent and have a no show. We pay a booking agent fee, and it's a little bit of an insurance policy that the star is more apt to show and put on a performance.

S: Didn't you have last year, was it Marie Osmond that didn't show, she was sick?

B: Yes. The Osmond Family and Marie couldn't make it.

S: They just covered for her though?

B: Yes, Donny and the rest of the family were there and they covered. They probably did about as well. It didn't make too much difference. But if you would pull in a name star like, well, we're having Englebert Humperdink this year, it would be much easier for him to cancel if we had booked him direct, than a booking agent who may be putting him on a circuit with ten different places to perform. We might have to pay a few dollars more for the star through the booking agent because you have double agent fee, but it's a little extra insurance for us that he's going to show.

We've had some pretty top-notch stars and it becomes increasingly difficult each year to come up with what we think will be a balanced entertainment. We don't always get balanced entertainment for the family. We like to have a popular star, and maybe a country star to reach different segments of our market that we're marketing entertainment to at the fair.

S: And they pull a lot of people from other fairs?

B: Yes. We pull very well from Western Pennsylvania. Western Pennsylvania is very Canfield Fair oriented. In the days when we used to charge admission at the gate, we used to be able to provide what we called a Pennsylvania Day, because you could check their license plate and you know they're really from Pennsylvania. We used to let them in free on Pennsylvania Day. It's a little harder now since we've moved the fence in, but moving the fence in has been the best thing that has ever occurred. We've gone through a series of transitions in trying to handle the crowds that we have now. We get over 500 thousand people. We handle as many on one day as when Pop set the record back in the 1950's.

S: You said that kind of in cheek.

B: Yes. Right. We've been very fortunate. My dad was president for two years, in 1956 and 1957. He set an attendance record when he was president. I was president in 1978 and 1979 and in 1979 we set an attendance record which still holds.

S: Really? How much?

B: There were 538 thousand people there.

S: Oh, that's a lot of people to handle.

B: Yes, it is. Also I should say that isn't because of the person who happens to be president. Really, everything ties together, but the biggest thing is the weather. Elden Groves, I had a lot of sympathy for him the two years that he was president, because we had probably the worst two years weather wise that we ever had had back to back. And it was frustrating. There's just not much you can do about your weather. I was very fortunate the two years that I was president. We just had beautiful weather, and it was a fun experience. It kind of gets in your blood, I guess. I've been raised in the fair atmosphere and have been in it all my life.

S: Do you think that cooperation is what makes the Canfield Fair so special?

B: It makes it unique. Our fair board travels a lot on their own expense.

S: Oh really?



B: I've been down to the Virginia Fair, North Carolina Fair, state fairs. We've had people go to the Texas Fair, and the Calgary Stampede. We try to hit all the bigger fairs. Our directors do a lot of traveling at their own expense to try to get ideas from some of the biggest fairs on the continent. It's really the dedicated interest of these fair board members that makes it unique. You know the ones you've talked to; you can sense it I'm sure.

S: Yes.

B: With this feeling of dedication, they all have things to contribute and they're all uniquely different. It's this cooperativeness and the sense of dedication that they all have, that the fair comes before any of the personal satisfaction that they might get out of it. They work as a body, and as long as I can remember, when I was involved in the Junior Fair and when my pop was a director and since I've been a director, this atmosphere has always prevailed. When we go to the Ohio State Fair Manager's Association meeting in Columbus maybe sixteen or seventeen directors will go. We see other fair boards in the state of Ohio and they have friction. Somebody is trying to run it as their plaything so to speak. Or there are power struggles and prestige struggles with some fairs; the directors are on the fair board for whatever ego trip it brings and they really don't work. We have seventeen directors who do their thing. We always sit back on opening day and say, "Well, we did it again." I do what I'm supposed to do, Bob Rose does what he's supposed to do, John Holowach does his thing. I don't have to worry that their jobs aren't going to be done. It isn't a case of one person trying to run the whole show. Everybody does their part and it just always fits together and it comes off. We have an International Fairs and Exhibition Association Conference that some of us go to once a year and it's held in Las Vegas. I go every two or three years. Some of them go almost every year, because we have one of the largest fairs on the North American Continent.

S: How does it compare in size?

B: Their main comparison of size of fairs is on attendance, and the last time I checked we were about twenty-sixth in attendance on the North American Continent.

S: That's Canada, everyone?

B: Yes. It's a little deceiving because we are the largest five day fair. We draw more attendance in five days than any fair on the North American Continent. That takes into consideration the Toronto Canadian National, that's the big one. The thing that's deceiving and makes it hard to compare is that included in the Canadian National Exhibition is a series of home baseball games for the Toronto team. And if you buy a ticket to the baseball game you can go to the Canadian National Exhibition.

The Texas State Fair includes a football game. It may not be a bowl game, but it's a game between Texas and Oklahoma. It's a real sellout; if you buy a ticket to the football game, you get to go to the fair.

The Los Angeles County Fair now runs twenty-one days, but fourteen days of that is a race horse meet, and the attendance of the race horse meet is counted in the fair attendance. So it's hard to compare.

We have one of the largest fairgrounds. We have about 350 acres now.

S: Have you acquired quite a bit recently?

B: We acquired some in the last ten years due in part to the generosity of Chester Long and Bob Heaver. They owned a 130-acre parcel of ground next to the fair. I went to see Chet and he thought that the fair ought to have this ground. This 130 acres was between the fairgrounds and Route 11. Some of the fair board members and I had thought that at some point in time if the fair continues to grow that maybe we could get an access off of Route 11, which would tremendously alleviate some of our traffic situations. The ground that Chet and Bob had would provide better than a quarter of a mile access on Route 11. We would have that much frontage, which would be enough ground that if we could get it worked out with the state and they would permit us and funds being available, we could put an access off of Route 11. Chet and I and Elbert Agnew were involved in it; we decided that if we could, we would acquire the ground. Chet made the terms so reasonable for us that it gave us the opportunity to acquire the ground. We bought it in two parcels. We picked up an eighty acre parcel first and he would let us pay so much a year after the fair. We would make annual payments plus interest at a nominal rate. A couple of years after we had acquired the eighty acres, several of us on the board got together and approached him again and he held the other fifty acres for us. They could have sold it for a housing

development, but Chet and Bob always had a little vision that this should be tied into the fair. They were interested in the fair and didn't want to see us get landlocked like so many fairs do.

This is one of the unfortunate things that has happened to the Trumbull County Fair. They were in the city of Warren and the city just grew around the fairgrounds. They had twenty or thirty acres in the city of Warren. It just became impossible. You can't buy a house and a lot and tear the house down to use the ground for fair activity once a year. They were faced with a terrible decision and that was to give up all the buildings that they had on the land in the city and go further out in the country to pick up larger acreage and start all over again. It has just been a tremendous burden and a struggle for them. I think they also have some friction on the board, which doesn't help. They've had a little bit of politics, maybe, involved in it, and that's bad. You have to keep politics out of the fair board.

S: Yes. That's what Mr. Schaeffer said, "We don't have politics and that's what makes it."

B: That's right. We just have to keep politics out of there. I certainly have a lot of feeling for the board up in Trumbull County going through these trying times. Due to the foresight of our members in years gone by, we did not have that problem. But you have to make the decision to buy the ground when it's available, not necessarily when it's convenient, because it's really almost never convenient. But when it's available, you have to do it. You have to have a board that's compatible and has vision, and our board members have for years and years and years.

S: How are you elected to the board?

B: The fair is actually operated by the Mahoning County Agricultural Society. The Society is a group of people-- and any adult in Mahoning County can join the Mahoning County Agricultural Society. Membership is fifty cents a year--that gives you a voting right to vote for a director on the fair. Terms are three years. The day after the general election in the fall, we have an election to the fair board. The directors are on staggered terms. About one-third of the board's terms expire every year so that you have continuity on the board. You can file a petition if you are a member and get ten members to sign a petition to run as a director on the board. Then you are elected by the

members of the Agricultural Society, and you serve for a three-year term.

S: And then you are up for reelection?

B: Then when you come up for reelection, you have to be reelected again by the members of the Society.

S: Are you usually reelected?

B: Usually, yes. If you do a reasonable job, you would be reelected. You're only permitted two members from any one township. This is to give the board a cross section throughout the county. There has to be an opening in that township if you want to run. But the normal thing is that we don't have a lot of turnover on the fair board. We don't anyway, because the people that get involved in it are willing to take the time and really take an interest in it. Most of the members of this society realize that and they will reelect them.

S: Have you ever had people that are in there for the glory and don't get reelected?

B: Not really, as long as I remember. This is one of the things that I think goes back to the fact that the people that have run, they have really been sincerely interested in it. I think we've had some people try to get on that maybe would fit into that category, not too many though. But the members didn't elect them because I think they really knew what the situation was. There's kind of a dedication by the people that work at the fair. Last night, we had our board meeting at the fair and we honored a fellow who had worked not as a director, but I think his official title is superintendent; he works in the race horse area with Harold Brown, the director. His name is Earl Roudenbush and he was the former mayor of Canfield. He became involved in the racing 36 years ago. As I recall Earl saying last night, the director that got him involved in racing was Bert Millikin, who was involved in the racing. Earl didn't know anything about horse racing at the time, and Bert asked Earl if he would work in the horse racing. Earl said that he didn't know anything about it, and Bert said, "Well, you can learn. You're smart enough, you can learn." So Earl has been involved in handling the horse racing for various directors for the last 36 years. It's this type of dedication of the people that really makes the fair go, the people that help us do our work.

I'm in charge of gates and admission; I hire the ticket sellers, the ticket takers, the gate police, and I

coordinate the traffic police. I work closely with the Highway Patrol and the Sheriff's Department. I hire probably fifty gate policemen, and we probably have as many as forty or fifty ticket sellers, ticket takers, and people who stamp you for reentry when you go out. That's my responsibility, in addition to handling the bank on the fairgrounds.

S: You have a big job.

B: Yes, it is. I've been fortunate. I've grown with it as a young man so I'm used to it. It's easier for me because I've been able to work with a number of people that have this same dedication. As an example, Al Matasy, a vice-president at Bank One, comes out and works every year at the fair. My brother works, he's the vice-president at Bank One in Salem. We have people from the Dollar Bank, John Ballen. Fred Myerhoefer, who was with the Farmers Bank in Canfield, comes out and works with me every year.

S: Volunteer?

B: They get paid a token. Everybody who works for the fair at fair time gets paid; we say it's token wage because compared with what they earn on their regular job or what they could earn outside, they really are doing it because they like to do it. The money is secondary. That helps keep expenses low. But nobody gets paid at what we call a going rate, so to speak. These people will take their vacation and come out, and sell tickets. Most of the fellows selling tickets are people that work in the banks. This was something that was Mr. Kilcawley's idea; I can't take credit for it. It was his idea to utilize people in their area of expertise that they work with daily. Bankers have been working with money and handling money, so the handling of money in the fairgrounds should be handled by people who are used to doing it. It was his idea and I have always just carried this on. After Mr. Kilcawley died, we kept the same philosophy when my dad directed the department, and we still do now. We have people who are vice-presidents of banks out there on the gates selling the tickets, and you know they are not doing it for the money. They are people that are in trusted positions and they're bonded positions. Their honesty is above reproach; they are not going to steal a couple of dollars and jeopardize the positions that they have. We feel that we have one of the best systems in the state of Ohio and in the nation in handling admission and providing change and banking facilities on the grounds for concession needs.

S: Did you ever have any problems with people that want to rob the fair or that type of thing?

B: We've always had the threat of it, so to speak. This is something, of course, that bankers are used to working with. We are under the threat of robbery at any time. We never know when somebody's out there watching us, trying to figure out how to steal the money. We have had tips from informants through the Highway Patrol, through the Sheriff's Office, and through the Canfield Police time and time again over the years that somebody is going to try to rob the fairgrounds or the bank at the fairgrounds. So we have always lived under this threat of robbery. This is another reason why I like to have banking people involved with it, because this is not new to them. They're used to this every day. For somebody who is not used to that threat and has not conditioned themselves to it, it can be an emotional strain on them. Psychologically it can be very bad if they feel that they're going to walk out of the fair office some day and somebody is going to stick a gun in their face. We have been very fortunate; we try to take every precaution that's possible. We have guards, and used armored trucks on some occasions. We try never to establish a set pattern. There are a number of things that we do to try to prevent a robbery from occurring. We've been very fortunate. We have not had that occur and we hope we continue this good fortune. We do handle large sums of money. Do you have a copy of our premium book?

S: Yes, I do.

B: I don't know whether you've realized that there's a financial report in the front of the premium book. It's no big secret that we handle now in excess of one million dollars through the course of a five day fair. Unfortunately, there are people in the world who would kill another for a hundred dollars. So we just take every kind of precaution possible and hope that we're as fortunate in the future as we have been in the past.

S: You must put hours in. How is your family? Does your family take part too? It would take a lot of understanding for a family.

B: (Laughter) This is another thing about our fair, the wives of our directors are involved.

S: Oh, are they?

B: Oh yes, putting on all our activities. Like our meeting last night, we had a dinner meeting with the International Group at the fairgrounds. It was a covered dish affair and most of the wives came with the directors. Over the years, the Domestic Arts and Crafts Department has had, in a sense, a director in charge. But it has been a tradition that the wives of the directors serve on the women's committee, and coordinate the activities of the Domestic Arts and Crafts Department. My mother was very much involved in that, and a good number of the wives. It's an option; it isn't mandatory. If the wives want to, they serve on this committee. It's a voluntary thing. In addition to the admissions, and the police, and the traffic, and the bank, I also had the Domestic Arts and Crafts, and now another director has that department. In fact, four or five years ago--time flies so maybe it has been about six years ago--when I was director in charge of that department, the tradition was that the president's wife was the chairman of the women's committee for the Domestic Arts and Crafts. It was, I think, looked at at the time as an honorary type of thing. But as the fair continued to grow, it became difficult in operation because the director who was president of the board had a lot of additional activities to do. It was a tremendous strain at fair time for his wife to be immensely involved in the women's committee and participate in activities with her husband. Also at that time the activities in the Domestic Arts and Crafts did a resurgence of a few years back. Canning and home preparation of foods became more popular again. Sewing and crafts and this sort of thing became more popular. What we did at that time was to establish a paid superintendent to coordinate the activities so that the wives would not be so totally involved at fair time and they could do other things with their husbands in husband and wife affairs at the fair. The wives still serve on the committee. The superintendent, Esther Stewart, a former 4-H'er, was on the Junior Fair Board at the same time I was and has been involved in 4-H and teaches school over in Poland. She is now superintendent of the women's building and she works with the women's committee in coordinating those activities. But when we go to these conventions, like Columbus, the wives always go. We also have district meetings. We had one up at Akron, three or four years ago. It was a husband and wife affair. This is the way it is throughout the state and throughout the country; but our board is more active that way. It just happens

that pretty near all the wives are just as involved and interested in the fair as their husbands are. If they weren't, it would be bad. I think this is the problem with some of the fairs. It has always been a husband and wife situation. So the wives understand it, because they're interested and involved too.

S: You can't have one pulling this way and one pulling that way.

B: The wives work with them.

S: When do you start getting ready for the fair?

B: During the previous fair.

S: Oh, during the fair.

B: Our fair board meets every day during the fair, and we discuss things that we want to change for the coming fair. We, in a sense, start planning next year's fair at fair time. We start getting involved; perhaps this should be changed or that should be changed, and this could be better and we have a problem area here. With the activities of the fair going on, it is the best time to see where your improvements need to be and where your problem areas are and what's working and what isn't; and then it just continues on after the fair. We meet at least once a month as a board. Our committees meet more frequently than that.

We have a long range planning committee. I think it was Harold Brown, who was president before I was, that established a long range committee. We started trying to take a longer look at the fairgrounds and where we were going to be twenty years from now. You can't really define what you're going to be twenty years from now, but you can do some speculating as to where you want to be and what the actual role of the fair should be under your constitution and under the rules of the state of Ohio. We instituted a long range committee; I was chairman of it for a while, Hugh Stacy was chairman of it for a while, and Bob Wiley is chairman of it now. We put some ideas and some thoughts together and we decided that maybe we need to collect these and organize them a little bit better. As a result, we engaged a fair consultant from Texas, who was the manager of the Texas State Fair for years. We worked with him for a while and helped him to develop, in conjunction with the board and with his ideas, where we should be heading, land wise, land use, building use, and how to keep a balance in the fair.



We now have a general master plan, and we follow that general master plan. As we continue to grow, we run into growing pains with electricity and water and sewer. Due to the size of the fairgrounds and the number of people that come there, the EPA Environmental Protection Agency has certain things that they want us to do through the Health Department in handling water and waste water and cleanliness for all the concession stands. We're in the process now of developing a five year program for the improvement of sewer work on the fairgrounds. We have to put in a lift station. The first phase of that will go in this year. We make priorities of the things that we are going to be doing. We purchased ground and we are scheduling stages of improvement to the ground. We did the improvements to the grandstand in two stages. We are going through an electrical phase right now starting this year. We're doing a test pattern for a better way of hooking up the electrical service for the concession people. Up until this year, we had a system where the electricians have to run up the poles and tie in the electric to a concession stand.

S: To every concession?

B: To every concession, rain or shine. It was a hazard with these electricians up there working in the rain. We've been fortunate that nobody has gotten electrocuted. It's just not an adequate system. It's too dangerous and time consuming. But the danger is the part that scares us. We don't want anybody to get hurt. So the electricians are taking a certain block of ground and they're setting poles and they're bringing electrical drops down and making junction boxes so that when the concessionaire comes in, all he has to do is go to the box and plug in. Then we check it over and make sure it's grounded and everything is all right. It's difficult to develop that system and still allow flexibility, because nothing is static on the ground. The concessionaire isn't always going to be at this very same spot every year. You can have a twenty foot stand, or you can have a ten foot stand, or you can have a forty foot stand, and so you have to keep a certain amount of flexibility, because you can't redo it every year.

Also, our fair keeps growing. I should point out that the consultant from Texas was totally amazed at our fair. He came here and we explained to him what we did. He went around and talked to every director to get their thoughts and ideas and how they operated.

We wanted him here to see our fair in operation and he wanted to see it in operation. I remember him coming into the meeting and saying, "Your fair should not work. You do things different. You're different from nearly every fair that I've ever seen, and according to theory and philosophy your fair will not succeed." (Laughter)

S: Now what did he mean by that?

B: We mix, we have exhibits, concession space, commercial, eating space, and we have rides blended together. This, according to all traditional fair planning, will not work. According to traditional fair planning and successful fairs, the exhibits are in one area, the rides all in one area, the commercial space in one area. Then they have the eating space basically in one area. He said, "Yours works; it shouldn't, but it works." And so he said, "I won't recommend a change." What he did was capitalize on how our fair works and we modified our long range plan so that in the future we're working toward a perimeter road around the main part of the grounds. We have our exhibits around our main part of the ground with some scattered in through. He referred to it as a casbah affect, where you have your perimeter access, with your people movers, with wide rows for your people to move around. The center part is like a casbah where you would have your carnival, with your eating stands, and where you would have some of your rides. Certain people who go to the fair, for example the older people that want to see certain exhibits and don't care about the carnival part of the fair, can make the perimeter trip around the fair and stop off and see all these main exhibit areas without having to wind in to what he refers as the casbah. This is kind of the approach we're taking; we're going to capitalize on what works best for us and try to improve upon it, and this is incorporated into our long range plan. We can't have a long range plan for this and have a long range plan for that when they basically all tie together.

One of the things that I think has been one of the biggest improvements in crowd handling at the fair, which I've always been involved in, was one of Mr. Kilcawley's ideas incorporated with modifications by some other people. That was to remove the admission ticket taking and selling from the road gates and flow your traffic through the gates, get them on the grounds and parked, and then let them walk through a gate at a perimeter fence. It was a big expense at that time to build that fence around the main part of the grounds, and it did put certain limitations that if you want

to expand the grounds, you have to move your fence; but it has had a tremendous effect in the moving of people and in getting them in.

S: There were some real traffic jams there for a while.

B: Oh, they were horrendous.

S: Sundays, didn't the fair open at twelve o'clock for a long time?

B: Yes. The fair opened at noon on Sundays, and Sunday was always a big day. For years we wanted to try to change the opening time to 7:00 a.m. Our board members are all Christian board members and could understand the feeling of the people who thought that we shouldn't run the fair during church. They arrived at a solution--and this was done years ago, I think when Pop was on the board--to provide church services on the grounds. Let the gates open at 7:00 a.m. like they do the other days, and have church services on the grounds, but don't open the carnivals and the rides until after the church services. This lets people come and avoid the rush, get there and get settled. This permits us to accommodate a much larger crowd and still handle the religious ceremonies as they should be handled.

S: Grace told me that a long time ago they didn't have the fair on Sunday. There was no fair on Sunday.

B: That probably is true. It's interesting when you get back into the history of fairs. Fairs are unique to Ohio, the way we have them here. I don't know whether you've studied that at all.

S: No.

B: A number of years ago, way back in the 1800's, the Ohio Legislature set up laws governing fairs. They felt that they should encourage industrial and agricultural excellence in Ohio. They established laws governing county fairs and in establishing county fairs. Not all the states have that. As a result, county fairs flourished in the state of Ohio. At the present time we have ninety some fairs. Most of the counties have their own fairs and then there are a few independent fairs and the state fair. We have more fairs than any other state in the United States and it's because of the act of legislature. I think it was before our first fair, and we started in 1847. When you go back into the history of the

fair it was primarily . . . And the objective of the fair really has not changed, for the improvement and the betterment of industrial agricultural and domestic activity. Some things about the fair have changed. When it first started it was on the square in Canfield.

S: Oh, was it?

B: Yes, and only men went. It was more like a festival where they had horse racing and things like that. It continued to develop and they gave awards for improved breeding and things like this in livestock. This provided an opportunity for the people to get together and talk about how they could improve these things. The fundamental objective for the fair has never changed, and that's why we have the involvement of the 4-H activities and the showing of livestock and various products. The purpose and objective has never changed, and that's why fairs are so strong in Ohio. But you go outside of Ohio and there are some states that maybe only have a state fair. Some states have a few 4-H fairs where the 4-H people will come in and exhibit their exhibits. But there are not many county fairs as we know it here.

S: And then Ohio originated it, do you think?

B: I don't know whether they originated it. I've never gotten back into that. They were one of the first ones, I know that, and it was due to the legislation that was passed. We still come under that same legislation. We are governed by the state laws of Ohio as it pertains to county fairs. We are audited by the state, and we come under the direction of the director of agriculture of the state of Ohio. We have very strict rules and regulations. The games that come on the fairgrounds now are not the same games that play at carnivals.

S: No.

B: No. Every game that plays at fairs in the state of Ohio has to meet certain rigid specifications. It has to truly be a game of chance. The person who's playing must have a chance to win. Take the baseball pitch, where they throw the baseball at the bottles, that's an old-time game. The state specifications go to the point where it puts a specific weight on the bottle and it puts a certain weight and density on the ball. So what the carnival people do is that they have two

sets of bottles and two sets of balls. At the fair they use the lighter bottles and heavier balls and at the carnival and festivals they use the heavy bottles and the light balls. This is why the director of agriculture inspects every game. We have three to four state inspectors on our ground during the Fair every year. They go around and inspect every game, every ride, and they inspect every concession stand; they must have a license to sell and must meet the health requirements. Other states don't have this. This is one of the reasons that the fairs in Ohio have been so successful, because there has been a quality guideline that they have to follow.

S: Well, is there anything else that you would like to add?

B: No, I've kind of rambled on.

S: Oh, no. This is great. I just love it. (Laughter)  
All right, then, I'd like to thank you very much.

B: You're welcome.

S: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW