

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Canfield Fair Project

Fair Board Experience

O.H 220

Robert Hammett

Interviewed

by

Carrie A. Stanton

on

April 22, 1983

ROBERT R. HAMMETT

Robert R. Hammett was born in Fontana, California, on July 31, 1916, the son of Gail and Nelle Hammett. He is married to the late Dorothy J. Altaffer and they have one son, R. Frederick.

Mr. Hammett received his B.S. in Agriculture from the Ohio State University in June 1940. After graduation he taught vocational agriculture in Ashland County at Nova and Ruggles High School. He served in the US Navy from January 1944 until March 1946. In April of 1946 he became the Assistant Agricultural Agent in Mahoning County, an extension service of the Ohio State University. He continued with this service of the university until 1950, when he went to work for the Carbon Limestone Company until his retirement in July 1971.

Mr. Hammett has been a member of the Canfield Fair Board for a number of years, both as a director, vice-president, and president. His departments have been in Junior Fair, Draft Horse and Pony Show, and presently the Pig Iron Derby, Steam Engine, and Antique Machinery Show.

His special interests include travel, golf, fishing, and hunting.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Canfield Fair Project

INTERVIEWEE: Robert Hammett

INTERVIEWER: Carrie A. Stanton

SUBJECT: Mr. Hammett's role on the fair board, growth of fair, pig iron, derby, steam engines, junior fair

DATE: April 22, 1983

S: This is an interview with Robert Hammett for the Youngstown State University Canfield Fair Project by Carrie Stanton at 7376 Yellow Creek Drive in Poland, Ohio, on April 22, 1983, at 1:15 a.m. Mr. Hammett is a member of the Canfield Fair Board.

Mr. Hammett, can you first tell me a little bit about your background, where you were born, your parents, and early years?

H: All right. I was born in 1916 in Fontana, California. My parents had originally come from Mansfield, Ohio, but had moved to California. I had gone for most of my elementary school in California, but in the late 1920's we moved back to the home farm near Mansfield, Ohio, and there I graduated from high school in 1933, Weller Township High School. That pretty much is through high school. I attended a small, rural high school, Weller Township, Richland County.

S: Who were your parents?

H: My parents were Nelle Stevenson Hammett and my father was Gail Hammett. Both of them had originated in the Mansfield area. They were natives. The farm we lived on and still have was in my mother's family. That was a grant to one of her ancestors as a result of his separation from the service in 1816. Our family farm goes back in that area for quite a while.

S: Was it because of fighting in the War of 1812?

H: The War of 1812 and he was in a military unit from Beaver County, Pennsylvania. This quarter sectional land was granted as his separation award for service. They moved out there and took over the farm in 1816.

S: Really? Marvelous. Were you a child during the Depression?

H: I graduated from high school in 1933.

S: Do you remember anything about it?

H: Considerable, yes.

S: Do you?

H: In fact, in the beginning of the Depression we were living in California. It was hard times and everybody was trying to make ends meet and so on. When I graduated, of course, some of the early government programs were just coming in, relief programs. In fact, that's probably how I became interested in going on for further agricultural training. I had been in the 4H Club for several years in Richland County. The county agent for that county had a competitive test and was selected . . .

S: In California?

H: No, this is in Ohio. The start of the early agricultural program was authorized through the county agent's office in Richland County. I became well acquainted with the county agent at that time and worked in that office and some of the original government programs, relief programs and agricultural adjustment programs. He's the guy that nudged me to go on to college, which I started at Ohio State in 1935. I was out of high school for two years. I studied in the College of Agriculture and graduated in 1940. I had the good fortune of the same former County Agent being at the University. Again, I worked in the office of the same department that he was associated with. This helped pay my way through college in addition to having a meal job, waiting tables, and washing dishes, and that sort of thing. It took me a little longer to make a normal four year college term, but it was all paid for when I finished. It was all mine, which was kind of a satisfaction as you look back over it.

S: What was your degree?

H: A Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, but I had a dual

major in Vocational Agriculture and what they offered in agriculture extension at that time was county agent work.

Finances and opportunities being what they were when I graduated, I started a new department of vocational agriculture in high school in Ashland County. I taught almost four years until I went into the service in the Navy. Peculiarly enough, I was on the Ashland County Fair Board for two of those four years because I had been associated with fairs and club work. Of course, in the vocational agriculture I had direct connections with the Ashland County Fair. When they had an opening in the conduct of the Junior Fair Livestock Program, I had the good fortune of serving on that board. I then went into the Navy during the war so that everything came to a change of position.

S: What area did you serve in?

H: I was in the Navy and served in the Southwest Pacific. I was in New Guinea and the Philippines. I had enough time in the service that I was due for rotation so I didn't get to go to China or Japan. I came home then at the conclusion of the war, from the Philippines. I was in two places in the Philippines. I was in Leyte for a period of time. I was attached, at that point, with the Army Headquarters, GHO, doing communication work, joint communication work, between the Army and the Navy. I had the privilege of seeing, and on one occasion meeting, General MacArthur. I was right in his GHO setup. Then we moved to Manilla and that's where I came home from, Manilla, in early 1946.

S: You were married to Mrs. Hammett before that?

H: Yes, we were married in 1941, right after I graduated from college and got established as a teacher.

S: Freddy must have been born around then too?

H: Yes.

S: Where did you work before you retired?

H: When I came out of the service I went into the county agent's office just to renew acquaintances and one of the fellows that had been in the department, the Rural Economics Department at Ohio State, was there on a special project. While in college I had worked in that particular department. He insisted that if I was interested in extension work to get down to Columbus as soon as

possible. He truly opened the doors and made an appointment for me, so I went to work. That's when I started agriculture extension work for Ohio State University. I was assigned to Mahoning County in the spring of 1946. I came here as what they called, at that time, an assistant county agent. I worked in that line, in the extension service office, for six years. I learned they were changing the agricultural emphasis at Carbon Limestone. A fellow by the name of Phil Heim called me and later hired me to head up their agricultural department at Carbon in 1952.

Later I was appointed on the Canfield Fair Board to fill a vacancy and then I was regularly elected. Phil Heim was on the fair board when I was hired at Carbon. Phil Heim was instrumental in getting the street signs, plotting the fairgrounds, naming the streets, and setting up like that. He was the head of that special project. In addition to that he was the advertising or public relations man. He set up a lot of the news stories and special events. He could have been the one that started Pennsylvania Day. I know he was instrumental early in the Pennsylvania Day Program of having the Secretary of Agriculture for Pennsylvania and the Director of Agriculture from Ohio to the fairgrounds for a dedication ceremony. Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture presented a Pennsylvania state flag. I don't know whether it's the same flag, but we still fly the Pennsylvania flag on Pennsylvania Day, which has traditionally come to be on Saturday now. This is a little sidelight about my association with Phil Heim, the Canfield Fair, and being hired to work for him at Carbon Limestone.

Anyhow, in 1952 I started to work for Carbon as an extension agent, and then got very interested in working with the fair. My first year here, 1946, was the 100th Anniversary of the Canfield Fair. It was a ten-day fair at that time. It's the longest fair I ever attended and I think the longest fair a lot of natives had ever attended, but it was good experience and we profited from it.

The Junior Fair Program has always been a good part of any county fair. I think Mahoning County had been particularly strong in their support of the Junior Fair and all youth work. It's kind of a privilege for me to see several of the present fair board members of the Mahoning County Agricultural Society that were good Junior Fair members back when I first came into the county. They have taken their challenge and have become really good fair board members. I'm proud to name some of them.

MS: This is your job on the fair board, the Junior Fair?

H: No, when I first came on the fair board in 1959 that was true, but as openings were made by moving or natural retirement or whatever, I became interested in the Draft Horse and Pony Show and was assigned to that department. Then Hugh Stacy Jr. came on the fair board.

S: From Poland?

H: Yes. He, of course, had been involved with Junior Fair. He had been a club member and a good farm person, active in the extension program. His wife was active in the rural program through the Farm Bureau. Hugh had taken over the Junior Fair and I had the Draft Horses and Pony Show. Then work at Carbon changed and I felt like I was getting a little pushed to do everything so I had about a five year period as an honorary director with the fair. Four years ago I came back active on the fair board rather than being honorary. Now I have the Steam Engine Show, Antique Engines, and the Pig Iron Derby. The Pig Iron Derby had been supervised by Eldon Groves. The Steam Engine Show was started and handled by Homer Schaeffer. Homer had a lot of ambition and keeps starting new projects. He kind of broke me in for a couple of years to find out, and get to know the people in the Steam Engine, Antique, and Small Engines Threshing Shows.

S: There seems to be a big interest in this. I always see tons of people there.

H: That has grown and it's part of the history of our way of life. From the more hand-operated equipment, older equipment, we even plant wheat, cut in by an old binder, shock it, and load it on wagons for curing and storage until fair time.

S: At the fair you do this?

H: It's cut and shocked and loaded on wagons for storage in July. There's a group of volunteers that come in, young and old, and they do this "chore". It is threshed at the fair. Again, volunteers come in and do this on a regular daily schedule. It's not a continuous thing. I think they work about twenty, thirty minutes threshing some wheat, and they go through and bale the straw, and clean the wheat and store it. Then they move on to the sawmill and the shingle-cutting machine. It's a kind of a rotating-action educational event. There's about six acres of wheat involved that we plant each fall and then thresh for the grain at the fair. There is threshing going on several times each day at the fair. About

a wagon or so a day is threshed, cleaned, and handled.

S: How old are some of those machines there, do you know?

H: Some of them go back into the early 1900's. The threshing machine, I have to get out some of my numbers, but I think the thresher is an Altman-Taylor that was built in Mansfield, Ohio, and I believe the date on that particular machine is 1915.

S: And that's still in good working order?

H: These fellows restore them and make repair parts if needed. Yes, they are in excellent shape. There are some older tractors than that, and then there are some that are discontinued models of tractors. This past year we had close to thirty old tractors that hobbyists and farmers purchased. They restored them mechanically and painted them with all the original decals and colors. There is a shingle-making machine, but I'm not sure of the date on that. There are some steam engines that go back in the early 1900's as far as origin. The sawmill, I don't think the sawmill is that old, but to see an operating sawmill run by a steam engine is unique, and it's interesting.

A sidelight on the sawmill is that we have worked out a real good relationship with Mill Creek Park. They get windfalls, trees that are blown down or they may have to cut down. They have been providing most of the raw logs for our sawmill. We've done this for three years now. Mill Creek has a planning mill and a carpenter shop. They use a lot of this rough lumber, finish it themselves, and use it for repairs, new buildings, tables, and stuff like that. I've been really pleased. Of course, I've known Chuck Wedekend for many years through the park, and then got to know Bill Schollaert, the present superintendent. Bill is a forester by training and he loves this fair sawmill thing, plus the good lumber they get. I was amused when he first came out there. He was a little hesitant about this roughsawed lumber and brought some good logs. After the sawyer had finished, Glen Fullerton is the fellow who has the sawmill, after he finished and Bill had taken the lumber back to the park, he remarked to me, saying, "You know, that fellow's saw is in pretty doggone good repair. I was a little suspicious that I might



have a board that would be an inch and a half on one end and a half an inch on the other, but they're all true. I'm real pleased with this program. If we can, we would like to make some kind of arrangement so that we can continue." I'm really pleased because I think Mill Creek is one of our super attractions. If all of the fine people associated with it can make use of this lumber, it saves them money and it's making good use of their own product. It also gives us a really fine feed for our show at the fair. Glen Fullerton, the sawyer, likes it because they supply good, clean trees and he is not likely to run into a nail or a spike as he would from a tree along a line fence where he would dull his saw. That would be a day wasted in trying to resharpen the saw.

To kind of jump up to modern times, the Junior Fair is, I suppose, a first love of mine because of my background and so on. Mahoning County, at the Canfield Fair, has been extremely strong in their support moneywise, facilities, and so on like that. Several buildings that house the Junior Fair exhibits are probably the finest of any you would find in the state. Having traveled to other fairs and come here from another area I can say this because this was evident back in 1946 when I first came here. The Canfield Fair has not changed its philosophy as far as doing things for the Junior Fair, including the educational exhibits and some of the other places where you are fostered and rewarded. Boy Scouts have had an encampment on the fairgrounds for years. Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls have also been active participants during the fair for many years.

S: Would that all be included in the Junior Fair?

H: These are all part of the Junior Fair, including the 4H Club work, the Future Farmers of America Vocational Agriculture, the homemakers through the various high school departments that have vocational home economics, the Juvenile Granges, and the Farm Bureau Youth Council. The Canfield Fair has provided a place for all of these groups to show their wares, talents, skills, and projects. They not only provide the facilities, but they give them monies in forms of trips, tours, ribbons, and premiums. They are very solidly behind the youth program. Buildingwise all you have to do is travel over to the fairgrounds and see all of the groups and all of the things that have been added. The Canfield Fair is probably the largest real estate holder for a fairground. They have about 350 plus acres at the present location. Some of the earlier fair board members were wise and prudent and when land was available adjacent to the original

fairgrounds, they purchased it seeing the potential growth and need for space, elbow room if you want. Fortunately, we can now enjoy those earlier decisions by having the needed grounds.

S: Wasn't the grandstand built by the Works Progress Administration?

H: Yes. That was part of the relief projects in the 1930's.

S: Tell me what would be a typical day for you during the fair. You were probably just pulling your hair out.

H: No. Each day falls into a routine. Each department may have one, two, or three key workers.

S: What do you mean by departments?

H: There are seventeen directors and each director is involved with a specific department, activity, or event. Presently I'm involved with the Pig Iron Derby because the original pulling contest started many years ago using pig iron, a local product, as weight. Rather than stones or whatever or pulling logs like they did with horses, they would throw more pig iron into the sled for the teams to attempt pulling. That's one show, and then I had the Steam Engine Show, Threshing, Antique Machinery, and Tractors and Engines.

S: The Pig Iron, is there still a lot of interest in that?

H: Oh, very much. Unfortunately, it happens in the mornings because that's about the only time slot they were able to be scheduled. It has been a morning event ever since I can remember. It's held in front of the grandstand. On Friday we have the draft horse pony pull and on Saturday the local draft horse pull. These are regular working horses. They have to be from Mahoning County, an adjoining county, or a member of the Northeast Ohio Horse Puller Association. On Monday morning we have the open contest and anybody from anywhere is eligible for this pulling contest.

When I mentioned the key people for the Pig Iron Derby, I've had four people that helped me. We have three men that are acquainted with this program. In fact, two of them were former pullers. One of them had had a pulling team and the other fellow had been associated with horses and the third fellow, more or less. The fellow that served as an announcer had been a horseman for many years and had been associated with horses and ponies. These are what I mean by key people, and they help!

S: All volunteers?

H: No, they are paid. For the steam engine show we had a husband and wife that had been with that event for many years. Because of the value of the equipment, even with our own security, we felt better to have somebody right there on the grounds at all times for special supervision.

S: To keep the equipment there?

H: No, just to watch it, but we do keep it there. A lot of the owners have their campers and they stay right on the spot, plus we have security. If anybody gets into a problem, there's somebody there. They are paid a modest amount. They are paid people, as well as the other departments that have night people and day people that are working in a variety of duties.

Take the Pig Iron Derby, at 7:30 in the morning at least two of us, myself and one or two of the other helpers, will be at the scales. The ponies or horses are divided into two weight classes. If they are close to the weight limits they have to go over to the scales. If they say they are in the light class they have to go over to the scales and we take a weight of them that morning. When they come in and register for entry, if they say that they are in the heavy class we believe them. The only reason that we weigh them is if they are curious to see actually how much the ponies or horses do weigh. At 9:00 we start the contest. This event is in front of the grandstand. They pull a flatboat type sled filled with pig iron. As they all complete a minimum distance there's more weight, pig iron, added. We keep adding weight until the strongest puller at that particular day exceeds everybody else in the distance the sled was pulled.

S: Did you ever have a pony drop over?

H: No. They have stumbled though. This is what they are selected and bred for. Draft horses are selected and grown for pulling heavy things. Some of them, in fact a lot of them, are field, logging, or working teams. A lot of people use these horses for pulling logs in the woods and other heavy work like that. They are much more adept and able to get around under more difficult conditions than a tractor, for instance.

S: Do they do that around here?

H: Yes. Of course there are associations of pullers and

there are pulling events going on at all times. In fact, I had a card from our local association. They were sponsoring a pull at the recent Maple Festival in Chardon. This, again, reflects the interest in the old way of doing things. In Chardon there are a lot of draft horses associated with the Dutch and Amish farmers. They would probably participate if there's an open class. They're probably not a member of the association, but would participate in an open pull. My duties would go on. For a normal morning and by the time they are through we'll have 20 to 25 entries in the total of the two weight classes. This past year in the Saturday pull, which is local, we had 27 or 28 entries. In the open class, which was on Monday morning, we had 22 or 23 entries. We had a super, good pull on both days. I think the one on Monday was one of the finest I've ever seen. They had a team from out in mid-central Ohio that weighed close to 4800 pounds and they were probably as well a trained pulling team as you would want to see. They were matched in color, just massive, and far exceeded anybody that we had and so they easily won the contest. It was interesting and it was a nice clean contest. When I say clean, any competitive animal in this kind of act or show can be subject to drugs.

S: Oh really?

H: Race horses or any kind is a possibility. The Canfield Fair has enjoyed an exceptionally good record. They know when they come into Canfield that anyone could be subject to a test by a state veterinarian. The judges, at random, not necessarily the winner, but at random, when they make their entries, pull several numbers before the contest is concluded and they have to submit a blood sample. We have a veterinarian on the ground and this is prearranged. We withhold premiums until these tests come back from the veterinary laboratory stating they are clean. I'm glad to say that we've enjoyed a very good record. Entrants know that we are going to do this so we have enjoyed a fine relationship with these horse pullers for several years.

We have already made up our rules for 1983. The people that were participants in 1982 and 1981 will be sent our new rules as soon as the premium list comes from the printer, and they will be invited to come back for this year's pull. Some of them let us know ahead, but this is not necessary. They may enter the day of the contest by checking in at our scales.

S: Do you usually get a lot of people that are repeats?

H: Yes. As our premium list goes out there are some others on that particular day that will make entry.

S: Your premiums are not just a ribbon, you pay?

H: These are, I would say, reasonably attractive premiums. For instance, this past year in the pony contest we paid six places; ribbons go with these, but the money is also in there. The first place paid \$55 and the sixth place paid \$14.50. In the horse contest, that's the local draft horse contest, again there are two classes; a lightweight and a heavyweight. The first place paid \$85 and the sixth place paid \$27.50.

S: By heavyweight do you mean draft horses?

H: Yes. Even the ponies have a weight break. The ponies break at 1300 pounds. Anything 1300 pounds or less is in the lightweight draft pony class; over 1300 is in the heavy class. In the horses, these are draft horses, the light class is 3200 pounds or less and the heavy would be 3201 and more for the combined, team weight. The same weight classes hold good for the Monday pull, which is what we call our open draft horse contest.

S: What do you mean by "open?"

H: Well, this is open to anybody. Remember, the one on Saturday is local. That's for people from Mahoning County or adjoining counties, which would be Columbiana, Stark, Portage, Trumbull, and Lawrence, or members of the Northeast Ohio Puller's Association. That also covers pretty much the same counties, maybe a little farther away, but we call that our local contest. Monday, the same people that were there on Saturday may come back on Monday, but there is no limit where they are from on Monday. We've had teams from West Virginia, far out in Western Ohio, and several counties in Pennsylvania, as well as local. On Monday's contest last year, the heavy class first place paid \$175, and for the light, the first place paid \$155 down to \$40 and \$32.50 for the sixth. There are trophies for the first place in each of these classes. It is a paying thing, particularly if you get first place, which is true, I guess, with any contest.

A day in the Steam Engine, Threshing, and Antique Engine Shows becomes kind of routine because most of that work has already been done by fair time. For instance, we already have our wheat planted. We planted

our wheat on the experimental farm last fall. We've made the contract with the people putting on the antique engines, bringing in the threshing machines, sawmill, shingle machine, and the old steam engines, and have that already worked out. We'll be meeting with some of the small antique engine people here in the near future. They will be contacted by card or letter in the near future to signify whether the dates this year fit their schedule, if they will be coming back, what type of engine or equipment they have, and their estimate of space needed. By the time the fair rolls around, it's just a matter of putting them in their spot. They conduct the show, we merely become supervisors and see that everything runs smoothly. If we do our groundwork early, well, then the show runs better. Mill Creek Park has already assured me that they have sufficient logs to keep the sawmill busy.

S: Whotakes them out? Do they take them out?

H: They take them out, yes, with their truck. They bring them to the fairgrounds.

S: How many trees do they go through?

H: To keep the saw busy we have close to forty logs, eight to ten feet long and anywhere from 24 to 44 or 48 inches in diameter. It's a real lumber shop. The sawyer, like the threshing machine, doesn't saw logs continually. When they get a crowd they start the show and then move around from the shingle machine to the sawmill to the straw baler. They also have an old steam, skimmer shovel. This tour will take an hour and half to two hours to spend in total operating time with each of these machines. In the early part of the day he may square up some logs or get the base cuts made, but in the course of the day he'll saw eight to ten logs. In five days we need about forty logs just to keep him busy.

S: What do you do with the wooden shingles? They're wooden, right? Do people buy them?

H: Ninety-eight of those cut are handed out as souvenirs.

S: Really.

H: As he is making them he just hands them out. Youngsters, oldsters, and middle aged, everybody likes to take a wooden shingle. There are very few of them left.

S: Do you want to tell me anything more about your typical day at that fair? Most everything is prepared before the fair, right?

H: We try to, yes. I think traditionally or historically this fair board, and this goes back to my association with it in 1946 when I first came here, impressed me with the fact that when the last day of the fair is over, they don't stop. They start immediately thinking of what they are going to do next year to improve. In fact, each of us are invited to mark down, either during the fair, immediately after, or at a meeting some-time after, things that we want to change or things that we see would help. I believe this has been the strength of the Canfield Fair's livelihood, the reason they have become one of the better fairs.

We have some really dedicated workers. We have been fortunate in our personnel in this respect. Grace Williams, who will probably give you a wealth of information, has been associated with fairs for many years. Our former ground superintendent, a full-time employee, Homer Miller, was one of the most dedicated fairgrounds maintenance people that you would ever want to find.

S: Is he retired now?

H: Yes, Homer retired three years ago. Fortunately, we were able to get a young man that worked with Homer and Homer taught him very well. Paul Moracco, our present grounds superintendent has picked up, maybe not all of the pieces because everybody must learn as you grow, but Paul has done a really good job of picking up and maintaining the standard of excellence that Homer was accustomed to. His right hand man, Duke Snavely, is a really good worker. We're fortunate in having people of this caliber to take care of the grounds. They take pride in it. Our grounds and buildings are maintained and watched year-round. In addition to a typical day, these things are put down no later than the end of September of what we would like to do for improvement, what we need in a department, or what the whole fair-ground needs. If time and whatever permits, quite often we'll take a tour of the grounds while the fair is on. It starts out that we'll meet for an early breakfast, followed by a ride around on a hay wagon or something of this sort and jot down things. As you go through various parts of the fair, the person in charge of that area, building, or event, will say, "Here's what we are doing. Here's what we need." I think this has prospered the fair in that it's a growing thing.

We meet at least once a month and, by committees, maybe more often, year-round. In other words, it's not the end of September and we're getting ready for 1984.

S: You're very professional?

H: We've had a good working group, a fine bunch of people on the fair board from many different avenues and abilities. There's enough legitimate farmers on the board that we have maintained a strong agricultural flavor in the fair. We have some people that are knowledgeable with the fun end of the thing, the games and the rides, and they've kept these departments and these activities within bounds. Some say that we can have some improvement there, but this sector generates a lot of income for the fair.

S: What kind of improvement?

H: More agricultural or more craft or more livestock. We've tried to keep a reasonable balance between the so-called game and concession area. As I say, they contribute a lot of money to the fair. This of course, is spent to do the things in the way of improvements and new buildings. Pioneer Village is a non-revenue sort of exhibit, but it is expensive to move these buildings in, to reconstruct them or remodel them, to get craftsmen and equipment, and so on.

S: Did they ever open that up during the year?

H: That's open all of the time.

S: Is there somebody there?

H: By arrangement, yes. We have tours, oh yes. Pioneer is now called Western Reserve Village, as you probably have noted. That is available. Individual directors, if they have a particular group, can take them through or arrangements can be made. A lot of school groups clubs, and other organized parties tour the village.

S: It's a marvelous place. It would be a shame if it was only open during the fair.

H: There's so many beautiful things there and they are authentic. They're not reproductions. A number of so-called historical villages are reproductions and not the authentic. The buildings, equipment, and displays in there are authentic and they've been restored to as near their original frame or design as humanly possible, including coloring, decals, et cetera.



S: When did they first start that, do you know?

H: Off hand I can't tell you. It was started with the Elijah Whittley Law Office. It was going to be discarded in Canfield because of growth and modernization. I'm going to say the Women's Club of Canfield was meeting there. They gave it to the fair board so that it could be saved as well as maintained. That was the first move. We put it down there primarily as a storage thing. There were other things that became available: the railroad station, the school house, the store, the library, the log cabin.

S: Where was that library from?

H: North Lima. It was the branch library that was located in North Lima. The store was from North Jackson. The schoolhouse was from out on Leffingwell Road. That area was called Knaufville, a little community out there, there's a Knauf Road out there. The schoolhouse came from what is presently Leffingwell Hills Country Club. It was getting in their way so we moved it to the fairgrounds. The store, I said, came from North Jackson. That's an original and authentic thing. That's been there since 1973 because I was president when the Medical Society dedicated it to the fairground. Parts of the village must have been there twenty or more years. The entryway was part of a bridge structure that they made into an entryway.

S: Is that original?

H: The lumber is original, but they just crafted it as a design for an entryway. The Carriage Museum was a constructed building. That's just a constructed building, but all the carriages are authentic. Anyhow, that's how things keep growing in our programs.

Early in January each year we have an exhibitor's meeting, an advertised, public meeting in which anybody, particularly exhibitors or participants, may attend. Groups or individuals can lodge their criticisms and their suggestions for the improvements. Basically, it's to go over the premium list, and to make any suggestions or changes in rules, regulations, classes, or classifications for the coming year. After the board, by department, considers these changes, the new premium list for the year is submitted to the printer, usually in March, and hopefully we'll get that back for proofing by the end of April or early May. The new premium book is mailed to previous exhibitors, hopefully, by the first part of June.

S: I was going to ask you when people filled out their entries?

H: The books go out, hopefully, as I said, in early June. The classes that require early entry, I think along about the tenth or fifteenth of August they have to be received for recording. These are mostly live-stock classes so that they can arrange housing. The building or stall spaces are limited as to how many they can safely house. If the building is full this year, and all the people that exhibited this year want to come back next year, they will have priority or seniority for entry and exhibiting.

S: You probably get the same people coming back?

H: Pretty much, yes.

S: I always remember those black and white cows there in that one barn.

H: Yes, I guess like anybody else, exhibitors are creatures of habit and they have an infinity, a love, or an identification with an area and they like to be in the same place. People that come and visit them go to the same place and want to see them. This is true all over the fairground, especially the concession people.

S: They're usually at the same place?

H: The barbecued chicken places, rides, special attractions, and rental locations are pretty much in the same location year after year.

S: Do they set first bids?

H: Yes. If you've been there in 1982 you'll have first right of refusal for an area in 1983 unless you've broken some rules or been guilty of some neglect of contract.

S: You're pretty objective about that?

H: We try to be. We try to be fair, but there are certain limitations of conduct in all departments. If you don't have rules and you don't live by them, then you will get a breakdown of the whole program.

This is a little late to be included, but another interesting part of the fair, and I've been privileged to be a part of it, is the Township Exhibit. Workwise and so

on like that, I don't have a whole lot to do with that, but when they had the 125th celebration, which would have been 1971, we worked with the townships to stimulate something a little different. That's when they started and originated the township flags. Each township was invited to participate in that 125th fair. When the townships came up with the final design, the fair board had two flags made, one for the township and one for our own display, which is on the concourse. The flags are displayed around that big light pole in the center of the concourse. The township trustees and clerks associations have had an exhibit ever since that 125th fair. This past fair, 136th, they've been there eleven years. We provide the tent, lighting, and the space for the township trustees free because of my association with the trustees association as a representative from Carbon. I'm privileged to meet and work with them for whatever their needs and wants may be over the years.

I think it's been a good addition to have the trustees there. They've put up a nice exhibit. They visit with a lot of people and show what trustees are about. I know that they get questioned because some of them say, "We maybe see more of our constituents here at the fair than we do at home. At least they come up and make themselves known to see what we're doing." That's not one of the big jobs because the trustees have their own committee and set up their exhibit. I've been privileged to meet with them and help them over the years in that regard. I think the township flag thing is a little unique. I've never seen anything like them at any other fair that we've attended.

S: I wanted to ask you if you've noticed a big change in the fair goers, especially the kids? Have you noticed, through the years, a big change?

H: I think fairs and kids kind of go together.

S: Yes.

H: For years I think our biggest day was youth day, when they made special invitations for the children to come. The ride people gave them more spins for their money or whatever, at reduced rates. The biggest thing in terms of change, I would have to say, is how much of a better job the children do in all respects.

S: Do you really think so?

H: I really do. I think their livestock comes to the

fair better prepared, better conditioned. I think their handicraft, I'm going to put handicraft in a generalization, dresses, cooking, craftwork, woodworking, metalwork, or whatever, look better and they have better quality.

S: I always admired the kids that grew the steers.

H: Yes, raised and fed the steers.

S: That's a real job. I never could understand how they could let them go.

H: It's not easy. In fact, a good friend of ours, I think their son had his first steer this past year in the fair. The last night of the fair he stayed with the steer all night because he knew the next day he was off to other lands.

S: You never had any kids that reneged on the deal and said, "No, you're not going to take him?"

H: Oh, yes, yes. This hasn't changed. I'll never forget a youngster we had. Our first advisor was a great pig man; he had a lot of good pigs. Market pigs was our first-year project. We had a Market Pig Club. This first year fellow had a nice market pig and had gone to the fair. We didn't have a sale to sell it like we do here at Canfield, but as most market pigs it only has one destiny. This young fellow's dad trucked livestock to Cleveland for the community. That was one of his extra duties; he trucked cattle, pigs, and poultry, and whatever to Cleveland, to the stockyard. He made the mistake, I say mistake, of taking this young fellow to the stockyards on one of his trips and showing him the whole procedure. They had a pig get to be the biggest, most useless thing around the farm that you would ever want to see. He was in no way going to have his pig go through what he saw up in Cleveland. (Laughter) I've seen it, but a lot of them now look at it more realistically, I guess.

Perhaps over the years they have been conditioned by a friend, brother, or sister. This has been a device by which they can go to college or get some purebreed stock of their first choice, maybe a beef animal, dairy animal, sheep, or whatever. They rationalize out the ultimate, the natural way of things in spite of the fact that there are some tears and some wailing. I suspect, even though they may not show it, many of them have considerable second thoughts that last day of the fair, or even at the sale when they relinquish the title to that animal even though it doesn't take place until Tuesday after the fair.

The wheels are already moving because there has been a buyer for the market animal.

S: I know they get top price?

H: Oh, they get a good price.

S: That's really good eating. My husband bought one, and oh my . . . really good.

H: That's right. The Steer Club was started when I was still in the extension program. The first year or two it was a little uphill because it was a new venture and a new thing. It was surprising how many groceries, and meat markets, after they witnessed and had their customers testify as to the quality, flavor, and tenderness of this kind of beef, became more willing to buy the beef and attend the sale.

S: I think they've learned how it's good advertising if you buy a steer from the fair. It's good advertising.

H: Right.

S: Those steers have been babied, and fed nothing but the finest.

H: A fellow that I worked for at Carbon, we had bought steers there and if the timing wasn't right we bought them elsewhere. He said something about buying beef and I said, "Well, you just don't go up and down the road and stop in and buy a beef. There are some people that do a better job of feeding beef, as there are some people that do a better job of raising eggs, poultry, milk, or whatever." He just shook his head and said, "In other words, if he doesn't get up to the kitchen table, you don't want to eat with him either." There is a knack and a skill involved with it and a lot of good training, businesswise and meeting people and competition.

S: Didn't you try a six day fair?

H: That was the 125th.

S: Which was a special one?

H: A special event. They were all agreed that they didn't want to go ten days like they did in 1946, even though not too many of them were on the board at that time. Our time of the year lends itself, ideally, to five days. Our six day fair, even with all the extras that we did

and tried to do for the celebration of the 125th year, it just wasn't a normal trend of things. In spite of our paid workers that we have around the ground, there's still a lot of volunteers. Most of your Junior Fair activities, I say most because I don't know about all of them, but I would say the majority of your Junior Fair activities are volunteers. For the school work, of course, you have teachers that do and see that this is exhibited, but strictly for our Junior Fair a large portion of that is volunteer. What you're doing is encroaching another day on a lot of volunteers and it becomes a matter of scheduling and so on like that.

- S: Did you ever take a tally of how many volunteers and workers you have?
- H: No, we haven't, but it would be a lot. Just the part-time paid employees like ticket takers, ushers, clean-up crew, and so forth like that adds up to a lot of people. You see a lot of our maintenance crew that we have as maintenance during the year in mowing, painting, and repair work and so on like that are college students or older high school students because to work for us they have to be eighteen or more. A lot of them are college students so at the conclusion of the fair they are, if not already, back in school, or will be going back to school. They are acquainted with the machinery and the equipment and where we handle the refuse and so on. Yes, there would be a lot of people. You look at the medical exhibits, there are some paid people down there, some of the societies, but there are a lot of volunteers in there. Probably the biggest volunteer program and the most vital is the Red Cross first-aid tent there. They're just a great crew.
- S: Are they volunteers?
- H: Yes. There's some expenses involved with it, but I know Jack Schreiber has been their chief medical advisor. He has been very active. Joe Pitts and his wife, of course we lost Mrs. Pitts; she died this past fall, but the Pitts from down here in New Middletown have been really strong workers in the first-aid building.
- S: Do you have a lot of trouble with bees out there?
- H: Some years and some years not so much. They said last year there weren't so many.
- S: Do they spray for them?

- H: No, they migrate. We spray, spot-spray, yes. We use up several cartons of wasp and bee spray during the fair.
- S: They are the kind of bees that get in the ground, aren't they?
- H: Yes. They also like sweet things like . . .
- S: Cotton candy.
- H: Cotton candy and garbage pails where they dump ice cream and pop containers and stuff like that. If your weather is modest and mild, your bees are modest. You get bad weather and they get angry too. They're a lot like people.
- S: The weather is a big thing at the fair, right?
- H: Right.
- S: Rain?
- H: Or lack of it.
- S: Oh, lack of it too. If you didn't get water supplies?
- H: It's not nice and green and pretty if it's dried out and burnt. We do have beautiful grounds that should be green.
- S: It always seems as though it rains a couple of days.
- H: We had a big rain this past first day of the fair.
- S: I don't think it had rained before that and then it rained during the fair. That's just part of the fair though.
- H: Right.
- S: People just put on their trash bags and go to the fair. (Laughter) Do you ever have any problems with your neighbors around the fair? Do they complain?
- J: We've had some water problems, drainage problems. I think in one case the fairground was wrongly accused of drainage that may have come from further up the water shed, drainage supply. By and large, we've enjoyed a real good relationship with the neighbors.

- S: You don't have races out there anymore, car races?
- H: Stock car races, no.
- S: Is the fairground used for other things during the year?
- H: Oh yes, a lot of things. In fact, if you look at the calendar, and Grace Williams will fill you in on this, I know there is an antique show and sale coming up the first of May. There are some flea markets coming up later in May. During the winter a lot of boats and campers and that sort of thing are winter-stored in the buildings. We have harness horses train year-round. They're housed in the buildings there and have access to the track. They have some practice meets, shows, and sales during the course of the year, as well as daily training. They also participate at race tracks that they can trailer to and from Canfield. They will leave here by trailer and go to Cleveland, or down towards Pittsburgh and race. Harness racing only, there's no thoroughbred racing or training in Canfield.
- S: Dog shows?
- H: Dog shows, a big dog show has been there for many years. They also have cat shows.
- S: Horse show, isn't there a big horse show there?
- H: The Youngstown Charity Horse Show has been there for years and years. There are a lot of weekend horse shows, primarily junior horse shows using the pony rings as well as the Junior Fair ring. There are also rabbit and chicken shows, and dog training and obedience schools. There are a couple of different groups that have dog obedience training out there.
- S: They used to have polo games out there?
- H: Yes.
- S: Did they move them?
- H: They moved them. When we started the new dairy complex three years ago new cattle barns were built in the area where the polo field was. According to the best reports we had, polo was kind of in a down cycle and they hadn't been getting large crowds. The last I heard the local polo group had joined with Darlington, and of course, the Polo Association in Darlington, Pennsylvania,



has their own property and field for their games. I don't know, I honestly don't know, because there were several folks from Poland that worked closely with the Polo Club.

S: Curty Crum?

H: John Zedaker, Curty Crum, Jake Bowmaster. Stan Strouss wasn't from Poland. There was another fellow that I met the other day.

S: Zedaker?

H: Not John Zedaker but . . .

S: McDowell?

H: McDowell, that was the fellow, yes. Going way back to a few years beyond that was Chad Johnstoy, when he used to have the polo out here east of town.

S: Where the ball field is?

H: Yes.

S: I think polo was probably originated or nurtured right here in the Poland area and then became Mahoning Valley, or whatever, Polo Club and moved to the fairgrounds. There are some other activities, some are for money and some are for contributions. Canfield has used the fairgrounds for a Fourth of July celebration. They've made quite a day of that. They have parades and a program and then they climax it with a show and fireworks display in front of the grandstand. I've mentioned the variety of antique shows and flea markets in buildings and around the track. When you're talking with Grace have her bring out her calendar of events. It's almost astounding how many different places and different people do use the fairgrounds.

S: I think most people think there's the fair for five days and then that's it and nothing else goes on. They think that place is just sitting there empty.

H: I've had a chance to collect some thoughts. They have a lot of livestock sales there. In fact, I think the Pony Association is having a sale now. I think they have two a year and I think there is one coming up in the very near future where they sell ponies, riding horses, equipment, and that sort of thing. They have also had cattle sales, purebred cattle, young stock, or it would be a consignment sale from a guernsey, holstein, or

jersey association, and bring them to the livestock coliseum for show and sale.

S: That's about all I have here. Is there anything you would like to add?

H: I think I've kind of run off. I don't know whether you can make any sense, rhyme, or reason of this. Personally, I feel that I've gained more, met more, and learned more, by being a part of this fair, than you can measure. It has been enjoyable. The fairs do have an association, state and national. We've been privileged to participate in these. The state association meeting is an annual conference and the national association is a program. When you go and compare what you do and see what somebody else is doing, you can always learn something. You never know where a good idea will pop up because there are different areas and different people. One thing that I would also add in here is that some of the earlier fair board directors for Canfield were smart in that they started a gentlemen's agreement that no one person will serve as president for more than two years.

S: Has that always been true?

H: This has been true as far back as I can remember. I don't know how far back in time it was accepted, but I have seen and heard that if you keep changing things, you always have some new ideas coming in. They don't necessarily change the departments. In other words, the person in charge of cattle stays with that department. There are changes made as time and need arise, but the leadership is kind of an automatic thing. I say it isn't the bylaws or constitution, but as far as I can remember this has been true. I think it's healthy. I think it's a good sign.

S: All right. I thank you.

H: My privilege. Thank you for taking this extra effort in recording what I personally feel is a good activity for our community.

END OF INTERVIEW