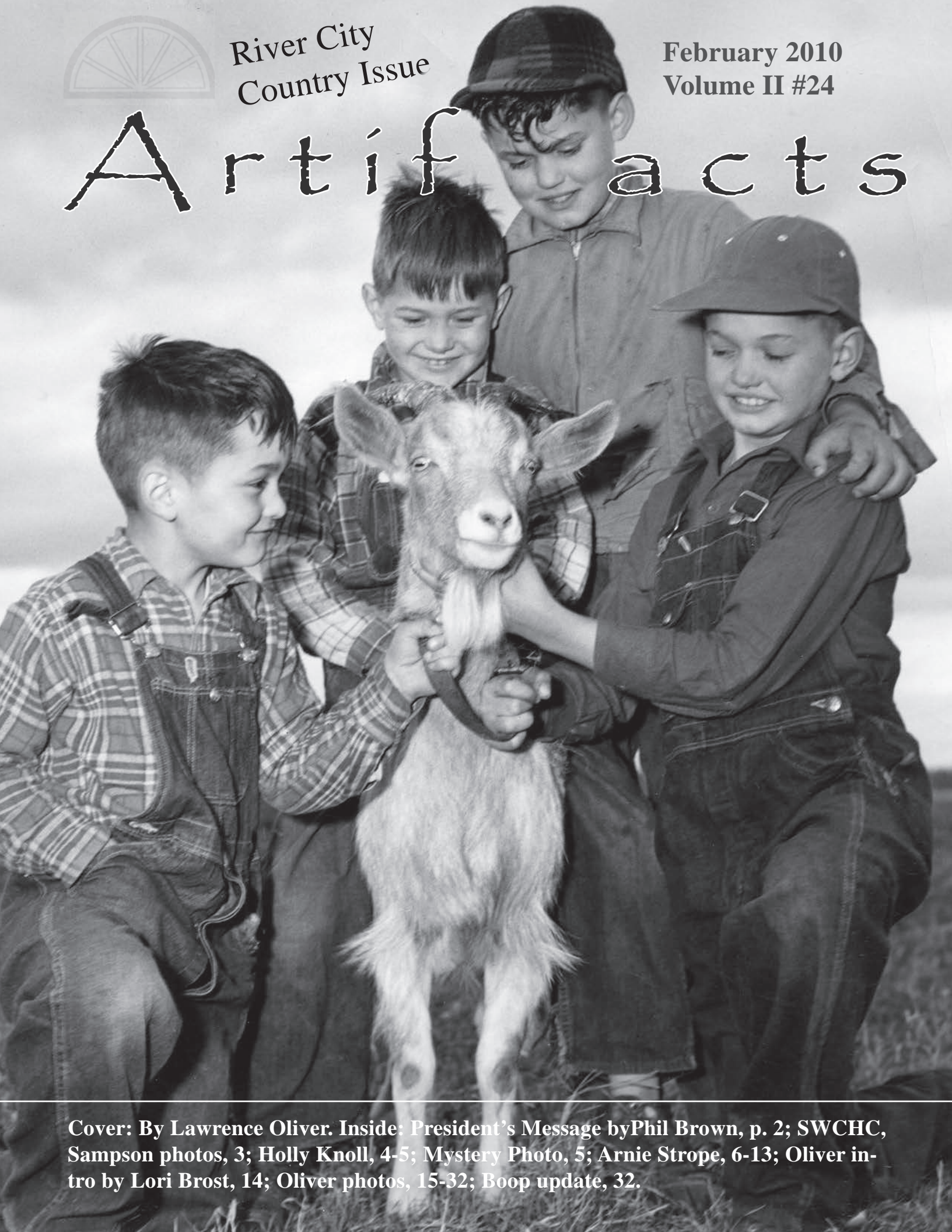




River City
Country Issue

February 2010
Volume II #24

Artifacts



Cover: By Lawrence Oliver. Inside: President's Message by Phil Brown, p. 2; SWCHC, Sampson photos, 3; Holly Knoll, 4-5; Mystery Photo, 5; Arnie Strobe, 6-13; Oliver intro by Lori Brost, 14; Oliver photos, 15-32; Boop update, 32.

From the Den of Antiquity**By SWCHC President Phil Brown**

A little over a year ago, through the annual appeal process, we let members know our 2009 budget was going to be in jeopardy. To say the least, I am humbled and extremely thankful as many of you not only renewed memberships, but also gave generously beyond the basic level.

With your help, our accomplishments of 2009 include:

- Publication of Uncle Dave's biggest "tome" and first hard-bound book, *Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII*, possible at no cost to SWCHC through member contributions.

- Continuation of *Artifacts* at the same high level of quality.

- More videos and history from SWCHC member and distinguished contributor Paul Gross.

- Expansion of the SWCHC website thanks to volunteer and board member Barry Jens.

- Increased cooperation with Wisconsin Heritage Online and McMillan Memorial Library to spread the digital word to Internet users worldwide. As our counterparts at the Wisconsin Historical Society have been known to say, "If it's not online, it doesn't exist."

- An even higher activity level in the main office, led by Museum Administrator Lori Brost. This includes the cataloguing of many major donations of documents, photos and items.

- Bringing on board a new part-time Museum staff member, Holly Knoll, profiled in this issue.

- Moving the Krohnograph exhibit to a semi-permanent location on the second floor, thanks to Holly.

For SWCHC as a Museum and tourist attraction, 2010 looks to be the "Year of Boop." As an important part of a community-wide festival, the first floor exhibit rooms at the Museum will be devoted to the life and times of Myron "Grim" Natwick, native son and animator of the "cartoon" character Betty Boop in 1930. A traveling exhibit of Natwick's work will enhance the display that has been part of our Museum for almost ten years. With an increase in activity, we felt it was appropriate to upgrade some of the other exhibits at the Museum as well. For sure, there will be something new at the Museum for the upcoming 2010 season.



It's her party now!
2010
Year of You Know Whom





Thanks Phil!

For the contribution that allowed purchase of the digital camera used here for the first time. Left: Kurt Sampson, director, Dodge County historical society, Beaver Dam, who points to a photo of his antecedent, Henry Sampson, first white child born in the area. Also shown, new SWCHC staff member Holly Knoll. Above, Kurt's father, Henry "Sammy" Sampson, LHS and UWSP basketball legend. Below: Pete Smart, Nick Brazeau, Bob Zimmerman and J. Marshall Buehler having some fun at the December 2009 SWCHC Board of Directors meeting.





Photo by Uncle Dave with new camera

Holly at SWCHC Main Office

Life Calling — at the Museum

By Holly Knoll

It all started 11 years ago. I was baby sitting for three young girls on Third Street, near the South Wood County Historical Museum. On one particularly ‘boring’ day, I decided we would make the trek down to the grand old building. I loved everything about the Museum: the ambiance, the smell, the objects, the feeling of being transported back in time. I think I found my life calling that day and did not even realize it.

Now, fast forward to December 2004, as I proudly walk across the stage at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point to accept my diploma.

Although I had started at UWSP with a double major in Accounting and Business, it wasn’t long before I took an Anthropology course and was again feeling much the same as I had all those years ago when I first set foot in the Wisconsin Rapids Museum. Accordingly, I switched my major to Social Science with a minor in Anthropology. I was not sure exactly what I wanted to do with those credentials but I knew there would be opportunities.

My focus changed a little after I took an Archaeology course with Professor Ray Reser and decided that I wanted to go into Cultural Resource Management, or as many people recognize it, “archaeology stuff.” I took every anthropology course that UWSP offered and started working with Prof. Reser at the University’s Museum of Natural History.

Like many graduates with a liberal arts background, I wasn't sure where to go with my new degree. I was not yet qualified to go into my chosen profession, Cultural Resource Management. Figuring out what still had to be done was a job in itself. It was necessary to evaluate what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Did I want to travel indefinitely, doing archaeology work or did I want to settle down in my home town of Wisconsin Rapids? I knew I had to do something with my degree, and quickly. I was getting bored in the "college job" I had held through most of high school and all of college.

I decided that maybe I should focus on Museum Studies. I really enjoyed the time that I had spent working with Professor Reser at the UWSP Museum of Natural History and it was still in the direction I wanted to go.

So, one day in March 2009, I decided to e-mail Uncle Dave and see if there was anything I could help out with at the same museum I had loved as a young teen. It wasn't long before I got a response, asking to meet with him and go over a few ideas he had that I might be interested in.

After talking with "the visionary," I knew I had done the right thing despite only being brought on as a volunteer. I still had to work at my college job but I could also be in a museum doing what I loved to do one day a week.

The visions came to pass as, over the past year, I have worked on many projects I never dreamed I would be doing so soon out of college. First, I helped Uncle Dave put together his song book, *Three Fingered Gypsy*. Then, I organized his *Daily Tribune* articles from 1998 until 2008 for the just published *Ghost of Myself*, what may be his final *River City Memoirs* book. We also began researching the history of Mid-State Technical College for a book to be published by them in 2010.

Along the way, I was able to work into a one-day-per-week paid position at the Museum, continuing a project began by Uncle Dave's daughter, Angelica, scanning photo negatives into digital form. Many other Museum duties followed, including sorting, filing and organizing, helping Lori and Uncle Dave, as he says, "bring order from chaos."

An especially satisfying project that I undertook was to build an exhibit featuring Wisconsin Rapids life in the 1950's, using Krohn photographs and pictures from the White Sox days among other things. This was the first exhibit I have ever put together. It will be new to the museum for the spring 2010 opening.

Now, after almost a year at 540 Third Street South, I am an employee and share three days a week between SWCHC and MSTC. I am excited about all the changes taking place this year and cannot wait to be a part of all that will happen in the future.



Some Like It Hot

A Sand Hill reader submitted this week's photo challenge. Who, when and where? Not to mention, "Why?" Pay close attention to style in the form of coiffure, spectacles and headgear. Can you date the cigarette machine and what looks like bar room accoutrements?

PS: There was a winner last time!

One More Kaffee Klatsch with Arnie Strobe (1922-2009)

March 13, 2007

*By Uncle Dave
Also present, Jim Mason*



Photo by Uncle Dave

Arnie Strobe 2007

Arnie: What do you want to cover? We could be here for three weeks, you know?

Uncle Dave: You can tell me your full name, just for starters.

Arnie: Arnold William.

UD: How about your parents?

Arnie: My mother was never married. I grew up with my grandpa and grandma, who was W.W. Strobe. Willie Wilson, his name was. My mother, of course, was there.

UD: What was her name?

Arnie: Her name was Mabel.

UD: Strobe?

Arnie: Yeah, she was never married, see. That's why I got the Strobe name and I grew up without a father, which was something different in those days.

UD: What's your date of birth?

Arnie: It was 9-27-22 and...

UD: So your early years were characterized by not having a dad?

Arnie: Well, it didn't really bother me, I didn't really know. It was never brought up to me.

UD: Your grandma's name was?

Arnie: Minnie Strobe. Yeah, see, we're actually direct descendents of the Pittsville people. Minnie Strobe was a Bennett. Her family name, her maiden name was Bennett. Her mother's name was Pitt.

UD: So you're a descendent of the Pitts of Pittsville?

Arnie: There was a story in the paper, probably three months ago, written by Margie Lippert, a classmate of mine. She told me that the Pitts were not the first people in Pittsville.

UD: Did you know the identity of your father?

Arnie: I didn't until after it was all over with. I found out later, probably, I would say fifteen years ago. Never knew that I met him, never knew that I'd shook his hand. Never had any contact with him. And that's fine, if that's the way he wanted it; he didn't do anything for me or to me.

UD: You mean you never did see him?

Arnie: No. I did, but I didn't know it. I found out later, he came to visit me in the hospital one time. I was told. And, I got a letter from somewhere. I think it was in South Dakota. Came to the *Tribune* building.

UD: Where you worked.

Arnie: He had passed away, the father had passed away. And, I should check into it, maybe there was some money. Well, I talked to Bill Nobles and Bill said, unless you had proof, unless he admitted that he was the father — I said forget it. And [later] I was out in Osseo, where he lived, I found that his name was Walters.

UD: His last name was Walters?

Arnie: Yep. And never associated with me, or anything, I never got any help from him. Never got any conversation, nothing. So I think, leave a dog lie, you know?

Pleasant Corners

UD: What was the nature of your childhood?

Arnie: I had good relations with everybody.

UD: Where was it first?

Arnie: In Pittsville. I was five miles from Pittsville, six miles from Vesper, seven miles from Arpin, south of Bethel, on Bethel Road. Where County Trunk C hits Bethel Road or Bethel Road hits County Trunk C. I grew up there on a farm and, well, my birthday being late in September, I went to school pretty young. You could start school when you were five at that time.

UD: And what school was that?

Arnie: That was Pleasant Corners Grade School, I had three different teachers for the eight grades. Matt Knedle was my last one. He was county superintendent after that. And he pushed me in school, I don't say that I knew this, I don't think I did. I made eight grades in seven years, I skipped from the sixth to the seventh in the middle of the year. He had me take some tests that the seventh graders were doing, when I was in the sixth grade and I was getting passing grades and they were failing the damn things, you know? Well, so he said, you come to class with the seventh graders starting Monday...Actually, I started high school at twelve years old.

Stropes

Arnie: But, like I say, I grew up with my grandpa and grandma. My grandpa would, well, you better do it right, or you get booted in the butt, you know? He was not mean, I don't mean that, but he would let you try to do anything you had a mind to try. I think that's why I grew up like I am, or was or is, or whatever.

UD: Did they call him Bill?

Arnie: Will. People thought his name was William, but it was Willie Wilson. W.W., Willie Wilson. W-i-l-l-i-e, then the last second name Wilson.

UD: Where did the name Strophe come from, what is that?

Arnie: It's a Pennsylvania name.

UD: Is it German?

Arnie: Well, it's basically German, sure. And

he was so close to being Mennonite, Amish or whatever, that's what they came from out there. And anything that those people wanted done, if they wanted something done, they did it themselves.

UD: Your grandpa was like that? Was he austere in his house? Were you allowed to play cards?

Arnie: Oh, yeah, we did that. We didn't have electricity, 'cause I think we were a little too early. We had a sort of a gas piped around the whole house and farm. With a pipe, pipeline...

UD: From what, a tank?

Arnie: We had our own tank, our own manufacturing thing for that. The carbide, ever hear of that?

UD: Yeah.

Arnie: Carbide crystals, like little pieces of stone, then the machine would drop that in the water and then they would foam and froth and then it would rise a bell to a point, only a certain amount of those crystals were in there so the thing would go up and that whole dome was filled with gas and then it would go around in the pipes around the house. So you had lights, you had like a hot plate stove, and you had lights on all over the farm. Like with a flint.

UD: Your mother and your grandmother lived there?

Arnie: Right.

UD: Did anybody else live there?

Arnie: Well, yeah, I remember two of my aunts that were still there. My mother came, my grandpa and grandma had a family of eight girls, no boys. Maybe that's why I fit in, I don't know. My two younger aunts, one was married to Joe Haske.

Arpin Neighbors

UD: When you lived out there were the Native Americans still living there?

Arnie: They were still north of us.

UD: Did you have any contact with them?

Arnie: They would come and want to trade you a basket for a chicken. They always walked. I don't think they ever had any transportation.

UD: And you would do it?

Arnie: Oh, yeah. They, this was not an everyday thing, but oh, probably three, four times a year they'd come around that way.

UD: Did you ever hear of any Jews that lived out by Arpin?

Arnie: Yeah.

UD: What did you hear about that?

Arnie: Good. Nothing bad, the guy that I knew was a Jew was Max Leopold. And my grandpa always kind of raised his eyebrows when he talked about Max Leopold.

UD: Because he was Jewish or because he was a radical or...

Arnie: His way of doing business with people, my grandpa didn't really trust him, I guess. He figured he'd screw ya if he got a chance. Oh, yeah, Leopold, well, he lived between Bethel and Arpin.

UD: What was the nature of Highway C at that time?

Arnie: Highway C, to my knowledge was always there. It wasn't surfaced, I remember when they graveled it one time, of course it was six miles from our house to Vesper. Yeah, it was always a pretty good road. Glen McKee used to peddle papers. Do you know Glen McKee from Pittsville?

UD: He's the guy from Pittsville *Record*, huh?

Arnie: Bob McKee, I think had more to do with Pittsville *Record*, but Glen worked for the *Tribune*. He was out selling subscriptions and delivering the paper at night, he had to run out all the time on County Trunk C and you knew when he was coming down the road, he was going like a bat out of hell.

Falling Off Cloud Nine

UD: Pittsville High School, then, four years?

Arnie: Yes – plus, because I got hurt. I was a junior, going through school, fine, no problem, then I got hurt. Right after Christmas, Christmas vacation. I was splitting wood in the woods, the big logs, with a maul and a wedge and a wedge chipped and I had the little piece of steel, it went in my leg.

UD: You still have it?

Arnie: Yeah, it's in my bedroom, in a little box. I got it there.

UD: And it caused an infection.

Arnie: Right. It went in and it severed and lodged on an artery and infection set in there. Dr. Hart Meyers was the doctor's name in Pittsville. And,

he didn't think anything was in there, so I'd say ten days later it was hurting like hell. We went up to Marshfield and had an X-ray taken and the next doctor took the steel out. Of course that artery was getting in the way of everything and when they hit that steel again, blood all over. And then they wrapped me up and took me to the hospital, from the clinic.

The nurses were prepping me for surgery and I was on cloud nine because they had given me a couple of hypos. I was trying to give the girls a hard time. Kidding them, you know. I remember, I said, if I'd known that you had such nice girls up here, I'd been up here a long time ago.

UD: Did you know what was going to happen?

Arnie: No. I had eleven transfusions while I was there, still couldn't get that thing to turn around the right way. So, finally, they would take me up into surgery, clean out that area, this is right below the knee on the front of your leg. And I know I went to surgery five different times, trying to clean that thing out. And, finally I said, a week from today they'll take me up and they'll probably take my leg off. So, they didn't wait until Monday, they took me up Saturday and they amputated my leg.

They didn't tell me that I was going to lose my leg that day. They just said you're going to surgery again. They amputated in the morning on Saturday and before I went to sleep that night, I'd say 9:30, 10 o'clock, I was hollering for more food to eat, really. You felt so much better, getting rid of that poison in your system.

UD: But then what? Was that kind of rough for a young fellow, were you an athlete?

Arnie: Yeah, well, yeah, we didn't have a lot of things in Pittsville. I'd never played football, I did play basketball one year, before I got hurt. I had baseball, because I could throw that damn thing a country mile.

UD: Did you drop out of school for the rest of the year?

Arnie: I did.

UD: Did you go home to the farm, then?

Arnie: Yeah, the amputating, I think, was on the 26th of February. By that time I had missed quite a bit of school and the principal, Ed Monette, his name was, he came out to see me at home and said,

I would suggest that you just leave it as it is right now and start your junior year next fall. He was a nice guy. Really good fellow.

UD: And how did you get around?

Arnie: Well, I must have gotten out of the hospital about the middle of March. I couldn't stand up, I was too weak. I weighed 126 pounds. And, I couldn't use crutches, didn't have enough strength. But, I would get outside on the lawn in a Boston rocker, wooden rocker. I'd slide all around.

By that time I think it was the 10th of May or early in May, I was being fitted for an artificial leg in Milwaukee. I was, supposedly, supposed to be the Prom King that year. They wanted me to come and be the Prom King, sit in a throne and all that bull crap, you know? So I didn't go for that, so I fixed it up, a little bit on the sly, like I had to be in Milwaukee for a fitting that night for an artificial leg.

Pittsville High

UD: You had to go up and down stairs I suppose.

Arnie: Oh, yeah, and I played in the band and marched in the band. We walked from downtown out to the cemetery in Pittsville, which was somewhat of a distance. I played the bass horn, too, you had a load.

So — but I have to say this, I was always involved and invited into the group. If there was a party, a birthday party, or whatever, I was always part of it, even though I came from the country and was not with those kids in town. If there was a birthday party, I was there, they invited me. I probably only had one pair of pants to my name, you had to go home and clean up and press your pants and go back to the party. But I always did, I was always part of the group, girls, boys, and whatever.

UD: You appreciate that still.

Arnie: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Second Catastrophe

UD: Do you know any of those people? Who were some of your pals in high school?

Arnie: Well, pals, my best pal was killed in a car accident on the 19th of October, 1940. Herbie Zuehlke, Herbert.

Killed on the corner of County Trunk N, which is now County Trunk A, the old Highway 13. I started school in Point and then we get in this car accident.

The driver of the car was killed, the car I was in and the passenger in the other car was killed. Here I am, 97 feet out in the field and gravel and blood and acid and everything all over me. I came to in the car. I tried to find my friend, the driver and I knew I couldn't find him in that car, you know?

He was just outside the door. The door was open and he had had one of his legs completely severed. And he was dead, of course.

The Hansen boys from the funeral home in Marshfield, twins, they picked me up in their ambulance service. And I had big time stomach ache, I was hemorrhaging internally, it was my spleen.

UD: So they took you to Marshfield?

Arnie: Yeah. And I know they were hollering who are we going to get in first here, you know? And somebody said, take this man, he's still alive. This guy out here is dead, you know.

So they wheeled me in, I went in to Marshfield. Edna Bach was there that night. She was a nurse at St. Joseph's. Then they ran into my artificial leg, which was all messed up, you know? They didn't know that I had an artificial leg. So...

Rehab

UD: Were you able to continue in college?

Arnie: No. I was out of college so long, you know, you can't lose a month and a half. That was the 19th of October, then I took most of the rest of the winter to recuperate. I went to stay with an aunt and uncle of mine, up in the town of Richfield, George Feldt. He had a farm and I ran his tractor and did a lot of farm work for the neighbors around there for him.

UD: What were you going to do at Point, what was your plan?

Arnie: I was going to be an electrical engineer. I didn't fall too far from the original plan, but I went into radio about that time. I was in contact with a rehabilitation department in the state of Wisconsin. Man by the name of Ralph Renzel was here. He came to me one day and he says I got a deal for you. The local radio station had gone on the air the

fall before, 1940, November. And now we were in 1941. On the 26th of May, I came here for on the job training.

UD: WFHR?

Arnie: No money whatsoever. The state gave me \$5 a week.

UD: It wasn't because of your voice?

Arnie: No, no.

UD: It wasn't even because of your electrical knowledge?

Arnie: I didn't have much.

UD: It was just because you needed a start?

Arnie: I knew that was the direction I wanted to go somewhat, you know, and the state rehab knew that. I just signed that check and gave it to my aunt, another aunt I lived with in town here. And that was my board and room. I got nothing from the radio station, no pay until the last week in January of the following year, which would have been '42. So that's the way I got into this business. There's no money in radio.

WFHR

UD: Where was it, what, who was there?

Arnie: We were upstairs, above the Nash Hardware. In the 100 block of West Grand Avenue. Well, I was working as an operator, I would spin the records and do this and that another thing, a little bit of work at the transmitter, but nothing serious. You had to have a license and I didn't have a license yet, I was too young and wasn't trained.

UD: You weren't speaking?

Arnie: No, no.

UD: Who was on air at that time?

Arnie: They started out with Bert Mulroy, Bernie Smith, Bruce Beichel, Les Sturmer. The chief engineer was Gary Bowker.

UD: Did you know Bill Huffman?

Arnie: Oh yeah. He really didn't have much to do with it, you now. Really, he was the owner, sure. But he didn't tell you what to do. He didn't have the knowledge of radio; he was a newspaperman. And a rather shrewd business man.

UD: Who was your superior?

Arnie: George Frechette, he was the manager. He was at the newspaper and when they got to the radio station, he was given the job of manager.

So George was there all of the time. He and I got along real well.

UD: How old were you when you started at WFHR?

Arnie: Well, I was 18 years old.

UD: And how old were you when you retired from there?

Arnie: I retired at 65.

UD: And how many years was that?

Arnie: 47 years at one radio station, no one will ever do that again.

UD: World War II was just starting.

Arnie: We were losing people now and then. They thought, I better get in the Army or Air Force or something. Archie Davis was one of them. But I thought, well, I couldn't get into the service because of my disability at that time, but I was all set to go to Dayton, Ohio. Wright Field, the Air Force base there. I was fingerprinted, physical, everything, set, ready to go. And then I didn't want to go.

UD: What were you going to do there?

Arnie: It was just a spin-off of the Army you might say. You would be working in radio, communication for the Army. I was supposed to go to Lawrence, Kansas first of all, to school. I refused it after I got that far. I was wondering what would happen, you know?

Uptown

UD: What did you think of Rapids after Pittsville?

Arnie: I was not a guy that went around, I didn't do much as far as the entertainment, I didn't go out a lot, I didn't have any money. I know when I did stop in for a drink or anything, I used to go in the Uptown Tavern. It would be on the corner of, well, it's a park there now. Where the theater used to be on West Grand. I used to go in there, OK, I'm 18 years old. I'd go in there anytime, didn't make any difference, and could order any drink, any drink I wanted.

UD: Legally?

Arnie: He'd serve it to me. And Walt Zurick and Bill Huffman Sr. and George Frechette and Francis Daly were at the Elks Club with some doing there one night, they had a speaker, I don't know who. And we were going to broadcast, so I'm pretty

young, and just into this business. And I had to go down there and set that up with the microphones and stuff. So I remember Bill Huffman and those guys, Zurick, they're watching me set up. Pretty soon, Bill calls to me and says Arnie, come here. He says how old are you? I say 18. And Walt Zurick says, what the hell are you coming into my place buying booze all the time?

On the Air

UD: When did you first speak on the air?

Arnie: I was here probably almost a year before I even opened my mouth. I didn't want to, I was scared. And when I started, I made more trips down to the bathroom and down the hall, you wouldn't believe, I was nervous.

UD: And what did they want you to do?

Arnie: They wanted me to train to be an announcer.

UD: Because?

Arnie: They were short of people. And they didn't want to pay anybody, probably. People were going away to service, and they needed somebody to talk. So I started, I'd do little things, just the station I.D., "WFHR, Wisconsin Rapids," to start with.

Hinkley

Arnie: Gordon Hinkley came in here about the same time, he's from Port Edwards.

UD: And, he went on somewhere, didn't he? Milwaukee?

Arnie: Yeah, he went to Wausau first. At that time, Milwaukee owned Wausau.

UD: So he came into WFHR?

Arnie: Yeah, Gordie was probably a year younger than I am. He lived in Port Edwards. He came up here and he was fooling around the radio station and if he had a minute and a half, and he'd run out of something to do, he'd go and play the piano.

UD: On air?

Arnie: Yeah. He'd just fill in and improvise for a minute and a half, right up to the eight o'clock hour when it was time for news. But he'd come up here early in the morning, before school and do that. Then he started talking a little bit on the air from time to time, like I did. Only he was more

anxious to do it than I was.

UD: He was a little more flamboyant?

Arnie: Yeah, then he went to Wausau, basically I guess because he got some more money in Wausau, than he did here. And then WTMJ bought Wausau radio, WSAU, at that time. And they were looking for somebody at Milwaukee after he was up there for a year, or whatever.

Big Bands

UD: So you're just getting on the air and you're about nineteen years old. Still living with your aunt?

Arnie: Yeah, I lived there until I got married.

UD: When was that marriage?

Arnie: 1945.

UD: Who was your wife, what was her name?

Arnie: Her name was Georgia Berard.

The radio station was quite instrumental in bringing big bands in here. We had Glenn Miller, Jan Garber, Guy Lombardo, all of those bands in the field house. And she was at the field house. It seems like I was working at the ticket office. She was dating another fellow at the radio station. And, we started talking.

Then a few weeks later I was over at Pittsville with a couple of my buddies. "Let's pick up some girls and go to a movie."

So I call Rapids long distance and I had a date and that was the first time we ever went out.

UD: Did you ever announce one of those big bands?

Arnie: No.

UD: Ever get on the stage?

Arnie: No, no. I didn't there, I did at the Marshfield fair.

They used to have big deals here, what they called the Cranboree. They always brought in a big band every fall.

UD: Did that affect the radio station, the Cranboree?

Arnie: They were into, it, I mean, promoting it.

Man on the Street

UD: Did you have any remote broadcasts?

Arnie: We had a man on the street every day.

Right there, where the Nash Hardware was, we were upstairs; we'd throw a microphone out the window and go downstairs, it was a direct line. Archie Davis and I would go down there and do that. That was one of the first broadcasts that I ever helped with.

2 Turntables & A Microphone

Arnie: So, the thing was different, you had two turntables, to play records, and they were all 78s. And you couldn't put two records on at the same time, I mean, you had two turntables, but you couldn't turn them on electronically at the same time. It was a split fader we'd call it. You could turn it to the left, it'd be the left one, or turn it to the right, it'd be the right one.

UD: How did you drop the needle on it?

Arnie: Well, you'd do that while you were running the right one, you'd cue up the left one, see, or vice versa.

UD: What were you playing on the radio? The same type of stuff?

Arnie: No, well, actually, way back then, we would run half-hour and quarter-hour stuff by the same person. Like, you might have, oh...

UD: Bing Crosby...

Arnie: Bing Crosby for fifteen minutes, Kate Smith for fifteen minutes. And, the, television came along and everybody gets scared, I think, they're going to take our audience away. So then they started trying to be everything to everybody. They put Kate Smith, Wayne King, mixed it all up. And, we were always quite big in Country Western and Old Time Polkas. And that sort of went together, in the same half-hour.

Red Blanchard & Friends

UD: I know you knew Red Blanchard.

Arnie: Red was a full time employee of the radio station. He's a little older than I was. Red lived west of Pittsville.

UD: What was his first name?

Arnie: Donald Red Blanchard. And he had been on WLS for years before that. He was married before he came back here. Then he went on the air in 1940. They had him all set up to come back

here and be the studio man. Ruth Sweet and Red's girlfriend, what the hell was her name? He brought her along from Chicago. I didn't realize it at the time, I'm sure they lived together.

UD: That would have been shocking.

Arnie: Sure.

Arnie: We used to have a Christmas party, which was a good party for the *Tribune* and the radio station, at the Elks club. A lot of people abused it, I mean, they'd get a drink, take a sip and well, I'll get another one.

UD: Who did you know at the newspaper?

Arnie: Carl Otto, Alma Peters. She had some money in there. I think she came to work for Bill Huffman and he couldn't pay her all of her money. So he gave her some stock in the corporation. Len Hicks. There was another Andrews, Mike Andrews. They were two brothers, they worked there.

UD: Did you ever broadcast sports events?

Arnie: I never did play by play. I did a lot of sports broadcasts, but not play by play. I did the commercial or the introductions.

UD: Did you do that for WFHR?

Arnie: Yeah, oh yeah. I did that. I did that for Ed Hanson, and, well, Archie Davis did that too. Chuck Clifford, he was a little after that.

Wisconsin Network

UD: You worked with the [University of Wisconsin] Badgers? How did that come about?

Arnie: Well, it was in 1942 and they were expecting to do the Badger football broadcast. The Wisconsin Network was started. WFHR was the sister, or the big station. George asked me if I would like to do this. I was never a guy who'd say, oh yeah I can do that. I'd say well, yeah I think I can. Well, sure. So we started doing the Badger football broadcasts. And I went to every game, at home and away. Starting in 1942 through 1988. That's 47 years inclusive. A lot of miles, a lot of football. A lot of sweat and tears, you know? You work hard.

UD: Good years and bad years.

Arnie: Oh, yeah, really bad ones. Like I say, I saw Jug Girard gain more yardage for the Iowa Hawkeyes than he did for Wisconsin one day.

UD: But he was a Wisconsin player?

Arnie: Quarterback. Yeah, oh yeah, we traveled with George Frechette, that's an education in itself. He was tighter than hell, here in Rapids. But when he got out with his boys, you ate at the best places, you slept in the best hotels, you traveled the best and you drank the best booze. Everything was top, nothing was too good for him.

I saw every game, home and away for 47 years. That's a lot of running around.

To go to Penn State, we drove to Chicago and got on the train. We pulled into Pennsylvania early in the morning, like 7 o'clock, so we were all night on that, sitting up.

We couldn't find George in the morning; he's in the men's room, and they had benches on the side in the corner. He's curled up in one of those corners, you know, with his butt in the corner, feet on one bench and his head on another, sound asleep.

Well, we got in and our rooms weren't ready, we're tired, didn't sleep worth a damn, so finally, he says, I'm not going to take that damn train home. So he called the travel agent and traded our train tickets in for some plane tickets – United, a four engine, and we're the only four guys on that damn plane coming back from Chicago. There were five stewardesses so we talked to those girls all the way back to Chicago.

We get to Chicago, we had to get to our car and drive home. That's hell, you know?

UD: Ever have any good scandals down at the radio station? Anything juicy down there?

Arnie: Scandals? I think, well, of course, everything was going on with that Red Blanchard group.

UD: What became of Red?

Arnie: He went back to Chicago after a few years and he was doing syndicated shows. This would be about 1950. I drove out here and my brother-in-law and I went down to the tavern one night to get a pizza and there's Red Blanchard on the television; that was quite new, television, at that time. And he was doing a show, singing, and, of course, he liked to joke around, be a comedian more than anything else. He went back to WLS and worked around the Chicago area.

UD: What happened to the Wisconsin Network?

Arnie: Well, I don't really know. See, all of the stations, there was Wausau, Wisconsin Rapids, Point, Madison, Janesville, Racine, Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Appleton, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, and we were all in this network. We were all hooked up by telephone lines at that time.

We used to have a weather program in the morning about 8:15. We'd go to every station, they'd report temperature, well, snowing here today, temperature, we did that.

UD: You worked with Earl Gillespie?

Arnie: Yeah, I thought he was the best guy I ever heard. He was exciting as all hell. Earl and I had a lot of fun. He was two months older than I was.

UD: You were the engineer or what would you say? You would push the buttons, had the machinery going?

Arnie: Had two tape recorders with me. I taped everything and then we used that — wrap up the play by play and re-cue everyone, get that all set for the wrap up.

UD: Where are those tapes, do they exist?

Arnie: No, we always re-used them. In fact, I about erased them every time. I think I carried twelve tapes with me. It was always after a scoring play, we would take that tape out and I'd rewind it.

UD: Did you get paid better from the Wisconsin Network than you did...

Arnie: Eventually we got up there a little bit but the first Wisconsin game I did, I got ten bucks for it. Ten dollars and it was a whole afternoon.

UD: And the honor.

Arnie: Yeah.

UD: Do you have many photographs from that era?

Arnie: Yeah.

UD: Do you have a photo album somewhere?

Arnie: No, I don't have. But in the hallway, there's a picture, there's a whole montage of pictures in there.



God's Country

The photographs of Lawrence Oliver

Some of the best photographs of rural Wisconsin Rapids in the mid-20th century were provided by freelancer Lawrence H. Oliver of Vesper, Wisconsin. Over 150 of his prints are included in "Krohnographs," a collection donated to the South Wood County Historical Corporation by former Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* photographer Don Krohn.

Using techniques of an "artistic photographer," Oliver's black-and-white images are more formal than Krohn's news and feature photos. Through careful composition and interplay of light and shadow, the results are likely to emphasize scene and scenery more than city sports and schools.

The only and never-married son of real estate agent Owen and Lydia Pfeiffer Oliver, Lawrence Oliver operated Oliver's Studio in Vesper, Wisconsin, until his death in 1983. His father, a Genesee Depot native (1865), brought many settlers to Wood County, especially between 1894 and 1912. Born November 22, 1906, in Waukesha County, Oliver was a veteran of World War II. In 1942, his humorous photo of local sportsman Nick Zieher appeared as a cover for *Field & Stream* magazine.

Above description provided by Uncle Dave for the WHO website discussed below.

WHO is Lawrence Oliver

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator

The "Krohnographs" proudly displayed for the last two summers were a success and many of the photos can still be found on display within the Museum and on our website. Within that collection, provided by former *Daily Tribune* photographer Don Krohn, were a category of pictures by freelancer Lawrence Oliver. Despite the photos being taken during the same time frame, the Oliver pictures can usually be recognized, in part because they focus more on the scenic portrayal of the area.

An Internet "portal," for libraries, archives, and museums, Wisconsin Heritage Online (WHO) has taken on the challenge of inspiring discovery of and education about state history by offering an outlet to organizations such as ours where we can display a variety of digitized collections. WHO will be sharing our Oliver photos on their website, this particular service hosted by the Milwaukee Public Library.

In addition to the photos in this issue of *Artifacts*, the complete group of pictures will be available to view on the WHO website. If you recognize anyone or anything in these photos and can offer us information, contact me at 423-1580 or lori@swch-museum.com.

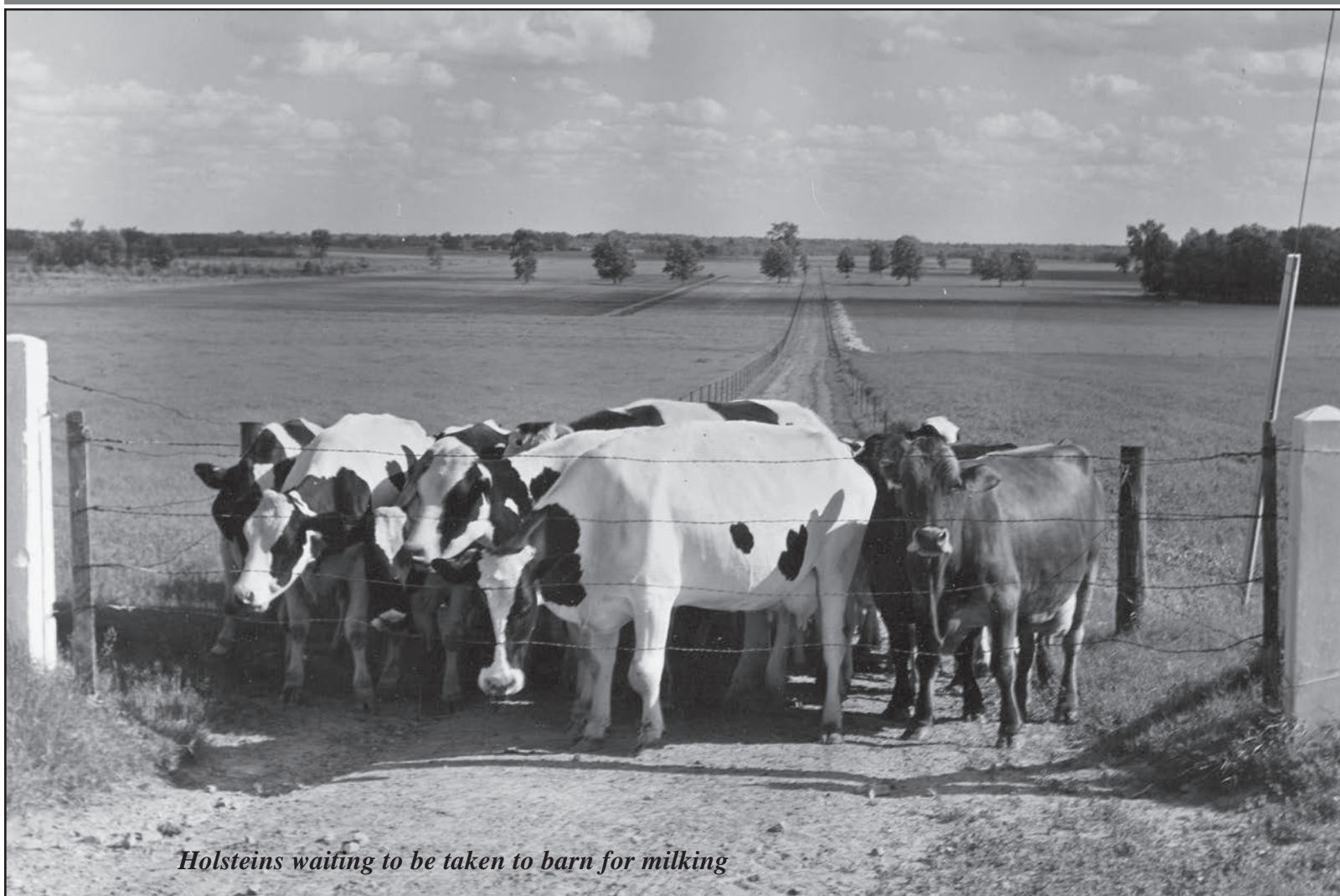


Oshkosh B'Gosh and — some tall corn? Millet? Sorghum?





C. 1950 by Lawrence Oliver



Holsteins waiting to be taken to barn for milking



Applying herbicide, pesticide or fertilizer — to what?



“Crop dusting”

Dairy Barn

Right: Feeding dairy cattle at stanchions

Below: handling milk can, used for transporting product from barn to creamery or cheese factory.





Liquid Diet

Left: Administering TLC

Below: A chicken coop was standard on most Wisconsin dairy farms, providing eggs on a daily basis and, in the pre-refrigerator era, practical storage for chickens, to be butchered when needed, e.g. for Sunday visitors.

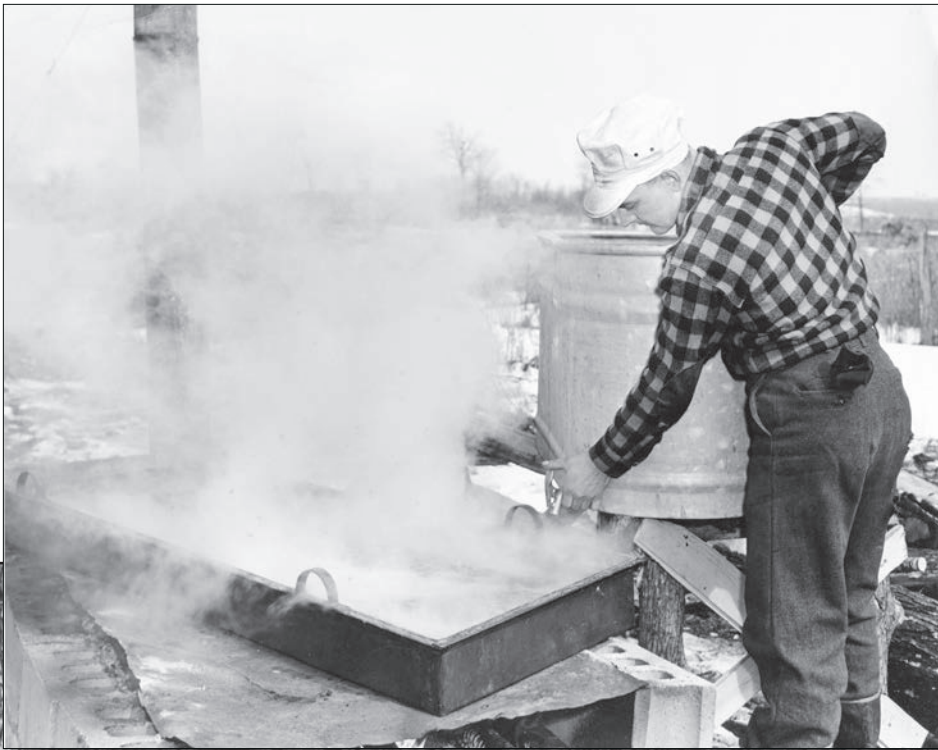


Work and Play

Right: Raspberries?

Below: Young contestant shows off beef "cow," possibly a (male) steer, at fair-like country gathering. Similar scenes also typified the Central Wisconsin State Fair at Marshfield.





Spring Ritual

Left: boiling down maple sap to make syrup.

Below: Bringing in sap from the maple woods... or, less likely, transporting syrup out of the woods.





Above, picking peas or beans? perhaps destined for Sampson's canning factory, Wisconsin Rapids, and corn, below. Note tractor above and horse's rear, below. Horses and tractors were equally available for field use in 1950.





Weeding

A productive farm garden required hand work by what was often a large multi-generational family. The implement is probably a hoe. Looks like a good crop of sweet corn in the back.

Harvest

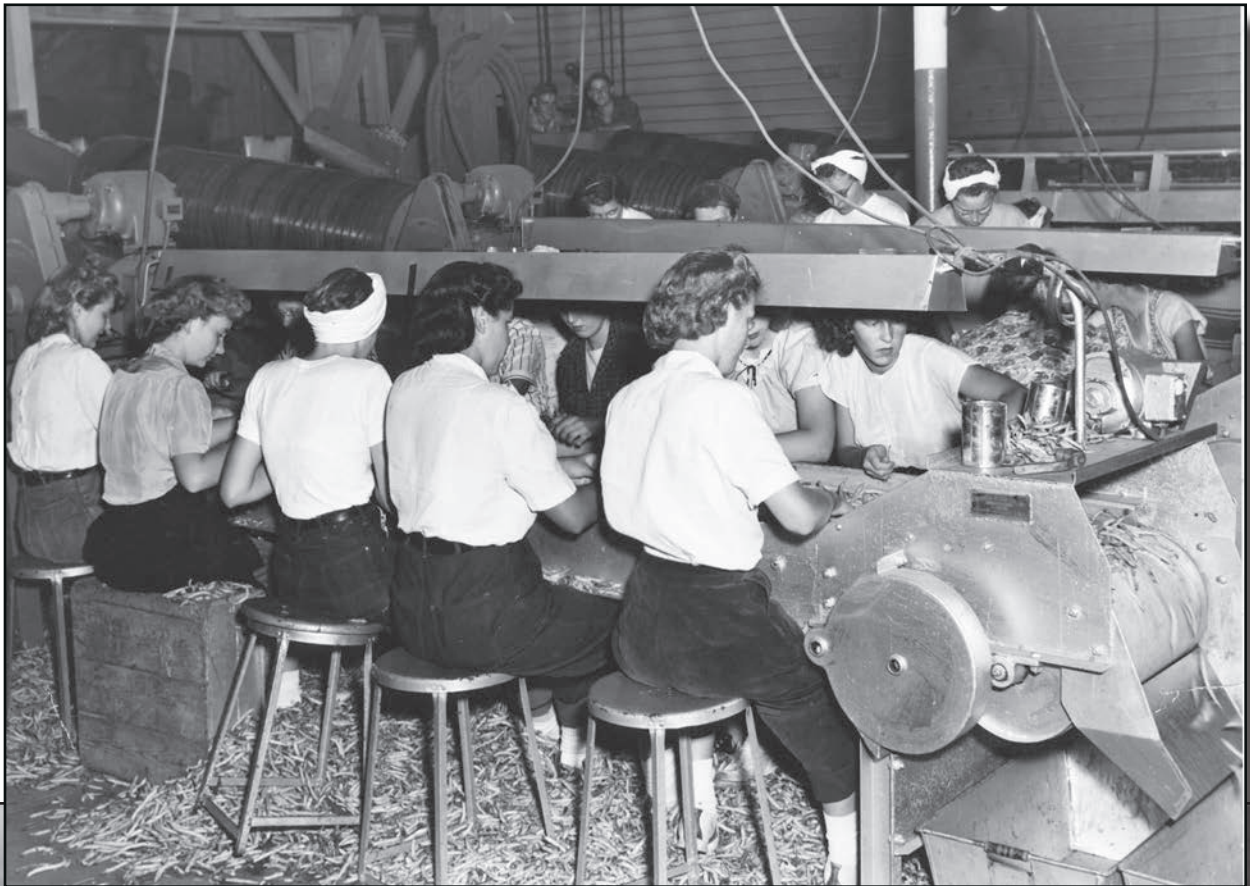
Right: Ears of corn being extracted the modern way. Stalks would be chopped for silage.

Bottom: Straw and grain, probably oats, being separated by threshing machine

Opposite: Sorting beans

Below opposite: Shucking corn and having fun, all at the same time







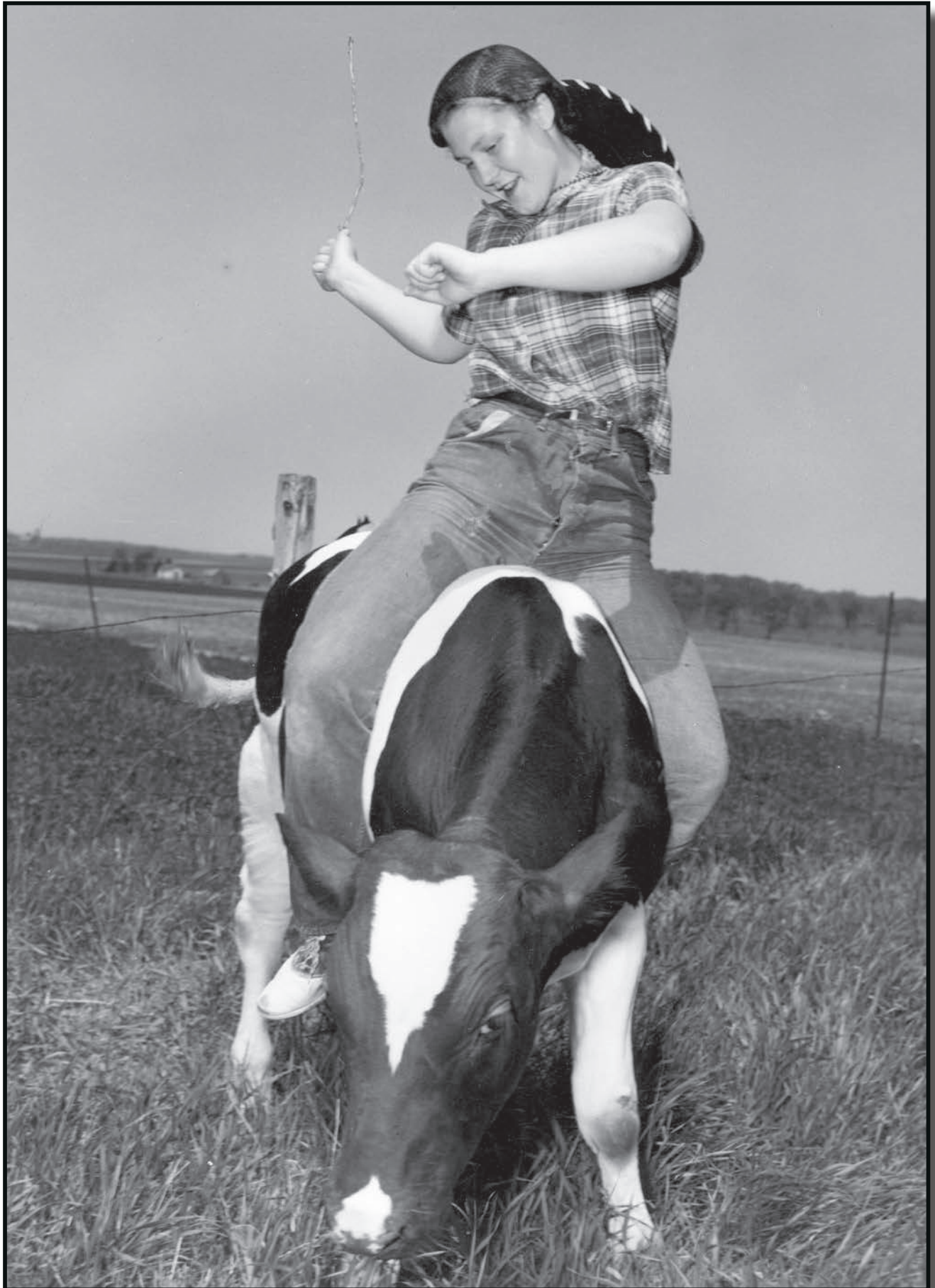
Holsteins (But No Udders) On Display



At the Mill

Shipping out or in? With what? Refrigerator car: "Fruit Growers Express."





Good Times on the Farm

Images by Lawrence Oliver

South Wood County Historical Corp.
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 31



Artifacts, a local history magazine and newsletter for the South Wood County Historical Corp. welcomes contributions of writings and photographs relevant to the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. For a year's subscription and membership send \$20 to the address above. Questions? Contact Lori Brost, Museum Administrator and assistant editor, 715-423-1580. lori@swch-museum.com

Oliver



Do you have the Betty in you???

This summer Wisconsin Rapids will be hosting the Betty Boop Festival from August 5th through the 10th. Information can be found at www.bettyboopfestivalwi.com regarding all planned activities. We are in need of volunteers on many levels to ensure that the events are enjoyable to all. If you would be interested, please contact either Kathy Daly at 421-1654 or Marge Hass at 421-2983 for information. If you have Betty Boop items that you have collected throughout the years and would like to be part of the collectibles show at the Mead Inn, contact Krista Dhein at 422-4860 or Suz Berklund at 715-451-1027. Monetary donations are also greatly appreciated, please contact Suz Berklund.

Lori Brost
Museum Administrator