

Call number: 81-33 PT. 2

**Name and place: Speech on history of Tanana Valley Fair Association,
Fairbanks, Alaska**

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Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

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Notes: Original on 7 inch reel, recording is a speech

Recording begins with music.

3:23 A lady's voice [identified as Joan [Joann?]] says that the music was by Summer Stage Band from the Malamute Fairbanks High School. They have an old-time ice cream freezer and the ice cream is freezing and [Unclear] is to her right. A man's voice thanks Joan and greets the audience [applause]. He says that he is the MC tonight, and says that it's great to be Joan's co-MC on the 50th Anniversary of the Tanana Valley Fair. Joan says that they have a display of early time pictures from the fair, a little bit from each division. They have a complete list of the Tanana Valley Fair board from 1924. Their current list of fair board from 1974 is there too.

5:15 Joan says that fair has touched many lives, and is going to do so for years to come. She's going to introduce people who have had a substantial part in the past fairs. MC says that he's going to start with the senior member of the organization, who is present at the event. He's a 51 year resident of Fairbanks and one of the organizers of the Tanana Valley Fair, as it was organized in 1924. He's also a charter member of the Lion's Club and has shown devotion to community service. He introduces Paul Greimann and asks him to stand up [applause]. Joan asks if Paul would like to reminisce for them and invites him to the microphone.

6:42 Paul says that he arrived to Fairbanks in September 1st, 1923 and in 1924 he was merely in the audience when they organized the Tanana Valley Fair Association. He says that things that happened 50 years ago are easier for him to

remember than things that happened 4-5 days ago. The thing that rocked Paul's mind was the speaker who gave the address in that initial meeting of the Tanana Valley Fair Association. He was former governor [William] Sulzer of New York. He had had mining claims at the Kobuk River country for silver, copper, and gold. Then he came to Fairbanks and when the Association had their first meeting, he was invited to be the guest speaker.

Paul still remembers the speech he gave, looking like Abraham Lincoln with his swallow tail coat. He looked at the audience for a good while, and Paul suspects that the people were getting impatient before he finally started his speech by "All good things move slowly." That was the central idea of the speech.

The early board of directors were Paul's good friends over the years, especially George Gasser and P. J. [Paul] Rickert. When Paul was in Fairbanks in his first fall, Rickert had the farmers [?] at the 12th and Cushman and he had a thresh [threshing] machine. Paul knew something about them since he had been operating them since he was 12 years old. Paul was working for the NC-Company [Northern Commercial Company] as a mechanic at the time and Rickert came to talk with him, telling him that he needed somebody to operate a thresh machine. Paul told about his experience with them, but said that he had just started working for the NC-Company and wouldn't want to quit right away.

10:48 Billie Hunter was the superintendent at the shop [for the NC-Company], and he told Paul to take the other job since they would close the operation down around 1st of November and if Paul had a chance to have a job longer than that, he should take it. Paul accepted the job and worked for the farmer, getting well acquainted with Rickert who was the first president of the Fair Association.

Paul thanks the audience. [Applause.]

11:39 The MC says he hopes that Paul will be around for 50 years more. Joan says that Paul Greiman is familiar to her because he was the chairman of the board when Joan was the Harvest Queen of the Fair. She introduces their current queen, Cathleen Murphy. [Applause.] There will be a new queen selected the following evening. [Unclear talking.]

Joan asks Cathleen if she remembers the previous year. She says she has been helping the contestants and it's going to be emotional for her, since she is attached to all the girls. Joan says that as the waning queen gets to know the contestants she just knows that they are all going to win, and Cathleen agrees.

13:27 Joan asks what time the show is the following day. Cathleen tells that it will start 7:30. It's open to the public. [Applause.]

MC says that they are honored to have a very wonderful couple from Washington D.C. who represent an organization that have celebrated 100 years of service with the farmers and rural residents of "our country" [United States]. Then he introduces Master Don Scott and his wife Dorothy from the National Grains headquarters. [Applause.]

14:38 Joan says that [Unclear] touch lives of many people. Some people come and go; some people come and grow with [unclear].

She introduces the secretary of the fair board, who has now been the manager of the fair board for 10 years, Janet [Unclear]. Janet thanks for the introduction and says it's a pleasure to be associated with the fair organization and all the people in it and she says it's a privilege to be a part of an organization that has held together for 50 years with reasonable success in putting on an annual event that many people in the community enjoy. She says she's proud to be a part of it. [Applause.]

16:05 A man's voice says that Mrs. [Unclear] offered him a place on the board and that became his association with the fair. It's got better and better every year, and the speaker says he'd like to think he had something to do with it.

He says that he wants to reminisce about some of the people whom he has known, and who deserve acknowledgement for the service they have done for the community in serving in the fair board. He mentions: Johnny Albrecht, Blanche Herman, Johnny Gusteson [sp?], Carol Philip, [Unclear], Mary Pippin, Jerry Lewis, Jean Burlander [sp?], Mike Hill, [Unclear], and many others who have worked to make the fair into what it is today. They should all be recognized for the importance that they have had. It's the speaker's pleasure to introduce the president of the board, John Kevin who is serving his second year as the president of the board. He's a banker. The speaker calls him to the microphone. [Applause.]

17:57 John says it's a pleasure to serve the Fair. It's quite maddening "this time of the year" and that the people who have been associated with it really wish that everybody would have canceled the fair. They have a tremendous number of people who are involved – probably more than anybody even realizes. The fair has 2,500 separate classifications in its exhibits and it takes people to judge those. The judges aren't paid. They are supervised by assistant superintendents and they aren't paid either.

The fair has grown. In the short time John has been serving in the board, their fair has grown from 38,000 to anticipated 50,000 [visitors]. In 1967 and 1968, there were only some 20,000 people and in 1966 there was even less than that. They've come a long way in a short time. They have improvements on the fairgrounds, like the new Totem Building community center and paving on the ground, which has helped control the dust [applause], and hopefully before the year is out, there will be a number of improvements that only the electricians will see. They have a very limited budget and John thanks everybody for supporting the fair. He thanks the audience. [Applause.]

20:08 Joan asks how many people were at the fair when they started the Harvest Queen contest and turned the big spotlight on and it blew a transformer out at College Road. [Laughter.] They sat in the dark for an hour and a half before they could start the show.

MC thanks Joan and says that she gave him the honor of introducing the next group because he's in love with all of them, the wonderful ladies of song, the Sweet Avalanche with the greatest songstress of all. [Applause.] [Singing a couple of songs a cappella. Applause.]

34:30 [Unclear talking. One more song.] The MC thanks for the music and says he will tell a story: Mom and dad were sitting on a porch one summer afternoon and there was a church nearby where a church choir, like the Sweet Avalanche, was singing. The mom was listening to the music and the dad was listening to the crickets. Mom said, "Isn't that heavenly music," to which dad said, "Yes it is and to imagine they do it with their hind legs."

38:07 Joan introduces the folk singers Timothy James and Lori Rogers. [Break in the recording.]

MC thanks Tim and Lori and invites tireless, charming and hard-working manager of the fair, Mrs. Bear [sp?], who is going to give out a couple of purple ribbon awards. [Applause.]

39:38 Mrs. Bear says that it's a pleasure to give a prize to the Grand Champion of the fair, and continues that color purple is traditionally reserved for the top awards. She continues that audience's attention has been called to the historical displays that are in view in the hall, and now she wants to call their attention to the signs along the roof line that are taken out of the first Fairbook of 1924. They tell the divisions in which the exhibits were accepted that year. Many of them have been continuously a part of the fair for all those years in between. Probably the prettiest is the flower show. In 1924, they had floral displays and in later years, they have had magnificent displays in flower shows. Last year they had a couple of ladies who with great imagination and devotion made their flower show of 1973 fair one of the lovelies they have ever had.

Each year they have an award that goes to the best competitive division. That doesn't have to do with the exhibits that are in the division, but it has to do with superintendence and the people who run the division. It's about how they work with the material they have to work with, how it looks like, public relations, design and decorations, the information that's presented in the educational aspect of the division, and that sort of routine material. All those factors go into the choice of best competitive division award. Last year it went to Elaine Hawks and John Crowbert [sp?], the superintendents of the flower show. Mrs. Bear invites them to come and receive their awards. [Applause.]

42:25 Mr. Bear says she's very happy to give Elaine her ribbon. Elaine thanks Mr. Bear and says that she met some fantastic people from all over the United States last year, so that was worth it. [Applause.]

43:29 Joan introduces the Young Alaskans who were at the fair last year too. [Applause. Band is playing two songs. Applause, break in the recording.]

50:31 The MC introduces [Unclear] McLoy and her cast for a dramatic historical reading. Joan says that the whole evening's program is Terry's [?] and welcomes her to the stage. She says she would like to point out that she's not the program

director this year, but Joan Henneman is and she had a part on “this evening” too. [Applause.] Terry welcomes the [unclear] to come on up.

She continues that it’s a commemoration of Fair Association that has been together for 50 years and they thought it would be nice. [Break in the recording.]

Fair Association has been providing entertainment and has brought everyone together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Fair Association. 50 years ago in 1924 three men: George Gasser, Charles L. Thompson and P. J. Rickert filed articles of incorporation at the territory’s capital, Juneau, on July 7th, 1924.

52:26 A man’s voice says it was certified and undersigned by bona fide residents of the Territory of Alaska that they had associated themselves together to form a private corporation. A boy’s voice says that the name of the corporation shall be Tanana Valley Fair Association. [Following segment has various voices reading different parts:] The purposes for which the corporation is established are: To advance and encourage agricultural, livestock and industrial interest of the Interior Alaska, and to that purpose hold an annual agricultural, livestock and industrial fair in Fairbanks, Alaska, or in the vicinity. To arrange exhibitions of agriculture [unclear] in the Territory of Alaska, to encourage formation and activities of Boys and Girls Club, and to arrange for the exhibition of products raised by them. [Unclear talking.]

53:57: Article 5 says that the location of the corporation’s location for conducting business shall be Fairbanks, and there shall be 7 directors in the board. They were G. W. Gasser, [unclear, names are read]. Article 9 is that the names, places of residence of the persons forming the corporation are: G.W. Gasser, Charles L. Thomas and P. J. Rickert. The document is dated the 10th of June, 1924, and it’s signed by Gasser, Thomas, and Rickert.

The United States of America, Territory of Alaska, 4th Division. [Unclear] office of P.A. [Philip Augustus] Marquam, a Notary Public of Alaska, and a board member of the Fair Association in 1924, certifies that Gasser, Thomas and Rickert signed the establishing documents.

Having an agricultural fair wasn’t a new idea and several fairs had been held prior to 1924 fair. Pioneer Edby Davis could tell about them. The first agricultural fair

was held in 1907, the same year George Gasser came to Alaska. It was held at the Wickersham Hotel and was directed by Mr. Gasser [unclear], Harry Badger, Mr. Ballaine, P. J. Rickert who had a greenhouse on 14th Street, Mr. Snodgrass, and others. [Unclear talking.] It stayed “here” for 13 years.

57:01 In those days, the three of them established what was known as the Tanana Valley Agricultural Association, but in 1924 the name was changed and the new association moved back to Auditorium. Dr. George Gasser could tell people about that.

1924 marked the first fair of the Tanana Valley Fair Association. The News-Miner editor [William] W. F. Thompson called it “our pumpkin show” and called it the County Show, even though Alaska was never divided into counties. In September 11th -13th, they had a three-day fair with 13 competitive divisions: livestock, dairy products, poultry, needlework, culinary, home canning, floral displays, amateur photography, mines and minerals, boys and girls department, Native [unclear] and individual farm and garden display. Superintendents included Paul J. Rickert, Clinton H. Morgan, Mrs. P. A. Marquam, Mrs. Thomas Gilmore, Mrs. Grant Courtney, Harry Badger and Mrs. Elizabeth Raumaker [sp?]. They had a baby show, amateur contest, fashion show, [unclear] skits, singing, dancing, and a grand ball with a carnival. There was a popularity contest and at midnight, the young lady who got the most votes became the queen of the ball.

By midnight, the winner of the popularity contest was clear, and she received a box of chocolate. All the winners were announced that time, in fact, and the fair was the most prominent social affair of the summer. The second annual fair was held the following year and [unclear].

59:07 The purpose of the Tanana Valley Fair Association is to create interest in natural resources of Alaska and its success can be ensured only by participation of the people. Then in 1931, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner announced the Fair to be the hottest festival of the North. George Gasser was the president of the association that was putting on its 8th annual fair in the Auditorium. Fairs in Alaska were already starting to receive some assistance from the Territory, but there were hard times throughout the country. The Territorial government was cutting down expenditure in an effort to survive the hard times. John H. Kelly was the manager

of the Fair Association in 1932, and on May 13th he received a letter from George Parks, who was the governor of the Territory of Alaska.

It says that the revenue of the Territory has diminished and that they have to cut expenditure. [Bad feedback from the microphone, unclear talking.]

1:01:30 The 9th Annual Fair, that was to be held in 1932, was not held until 1933. Until 1952, fairs were held regularly but not always annually. The organizations that were involved, like the 4H, simply did the best that they could in the face of the WW 2.

By 1947, the Fair Association was functioning more consistently and the annual fair moved to the Auditorium of the Fairbanks High School that is now known as [Unclear] Junior High. President Gasser and manager Herb Hilscher made some statements of that year's fair at the meeting for dinner for superintendents and officers at the local country club. [The same text is read again.]

In the statement, Gasser thanked all the superintendents of the fair and says that they are proud to have made it without assistance from the territory. They hope that the fair can stand on its own without assistance from outside. The first fair in 1924 was held following the Anchorage fair that was for 2 nights and at 3rd night they had gambling with which they made a lot of money. They offered to do the same in Fairbanks but Fairbanksians turned the offer down, saying that the fair should stand on its own merits as purely educational and instructional affair.

1:03:47 They made good money: \$581 dollars on the opening day, \$684 dollars the next day and last day \$803 dollars. There was no help from the territory that year.

In 1952, the founder of the Fair Association and its president, G. Gasser, resigned and Daniel Bennett took his place in the board of directors. That was the beginning of changes for the Fair Association. [Unclear talking.]

[End of the recording.]