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Interview with Troy Cooper and Larry Hall

Rachel Keller

Troy Cooper

Larry Hall

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Interviewer: Rachel Keller
Interviewees: Troy Cooper and Larry Hall
Date: 3 February 2012
Place: OSU Extension Office, Mount Vernon, OH

TC: Troy Cooper
LH: Larry Hall
RK: Rachel Keller

RK: This is Rachel Keller interviewing Troy Cooper at the Extension Office, it is Friday, February 3rd 11 o'clock. First would you just briefly explain your role in the fair?

TC: my role in the Knox County fair is one that is...we have a long history there as the extension agency. We're there to basically provide a support role to the senior fair board. its really their fair. They operate it, they make the big decisions. But 4H is such a big part of the fair, that's where all the 4H members go to exhibit their projects, whether its baking, quilting, sewing, photography and all the livestock. That's their way of exhibiting it and over the years, the two are almost entwined. We just um when we go out there we and ..we have other people in the office, the 4H people, we help with putting together the shows we have training the teenager we call them junior fair board members, we basically help them run the fair. When you go to our fair, the kids actually run the fair, they do all the announcing, they get track of all the class winners, they hand out the trophies, they're making all the announcements they announce who the judges they announce on the microphones and everything. The junior fair board members also help manage things like the pig show, they'll help you know if pigs start to fight they take a board out so the pigs can't hurt themselves or an exhibitor. So we're helping with that as well. We also help line the kids up, working the shows, running errands, um, helping on sale day with getting kids in the sale arena. Most of our stuff on a sale stand point happens between 12:30 and 1 um its...the paperwork with the judging, we help with the paperwork. Oh what else do we do...we have a booth building, we, our office collectively, is there when people bring in projects help with everything from A to Z.

RK: Wow. Is the Junior Fair...so the 4H um kids are a part of the Junior Fair?

TC: The junior fair members are selected from 4H. FFA can also do it but the majority of them come from 4H.

RK: Um, are there also adult animal shows?

TC: There are a few. They call them Open Class Shows and they have a sheep open class and a beef open class and the last day they have a beef or swine open class. In those open shows, they can any adult can do it. Now down on the junior fair...its almost like there's halves to the fairgrounds out there. There's a junior fair portion and then there's just the rest of the fair. And in

that rest of the fair, that other half, they have lots of open class things. They have flowers, they have art, they do a lot of-

RK: baked goods

TC: baked goods. And that's where anyone in the county can enter in their projects of exhibits or whatever you want to say and we encourage the 4H kids too to go do both. So what we've seen, our county fair is still pretty large. We have seen a gradual decline in the number of open shows and the number of exhibits as people become less connected to agriculture. You know, fairs used to be the break from harvest, was a break for the ladies to come in, just a little friendly competition to do this and that's kind of some history there. It really goes back to a festival to celebrate the harvest for people to show the type of quality of fruits and vegetables, their wood projects and their animals just to kind of come together. And people used to be too, those shows would be an indication of good replacement animals. When people had the best, their animals were sought after because they had good genes so that's just kind of a little history there. Uh...I forgot what your question was...what did you ask me?

RK: Um, just if there were, exactly, if there are adult shows?

TC: There are adult shows.

RK: Have you noticed a decrease as well in the 4H participation?

TC: Just slightly. What you're seeing is the number of livestock projects because the kids aren't on the farms, a lot more of them live in the cities. There's more of the miscellaneous types of projects that kids start managing uh...money managing...what is the one? I can't remember what they call it...they do it's kind of like medieval, the kids they do...kind of costumes for knights and ladies...and yeah uh

RK: Renaissance something?

TC: Yeah, kind of the Renaissance era...

RK: Middle Ages?

TC: Yeah mmhumm, I'd have to ask somebody...

RK: So those are the only two that are not agriculturally based activities that are a part of the Junior Fair?

TC: Oh, non-agricultural we...oh the whole booth building, kids bring in all their posters and everything their photography, creative writing, uh we have some dog exhibitors—that's actually growing quite well and they do a lot of their judging just before the fair. There's one show they do during the week where they do um obstacles, kids that have dogs. The fair is kind of divided...you start on a Saturday bringing kids and exhibitors in or the projects in—madhouse, just mayhem. Everyone getting their projects in into their stalls and everything, doing weigh-ins,

you know there's weight limits on the ends so a lot of those occur Saturday evening and Sunday morning. The shows start Sunday. We have a showmanship competition where really that competition is the skills of the kids, who's best at showing the good points of their animal, who can really bring out all the high points on the kid, then the following day whatever species it is, then they are judging the animals to determine the best market animal because they're so those shows pretty well are done by Tuesday. So its Sunday, Monday, Tuesday just mayhem I mean just rip-your-hair-out busy.

RK: And that's not open to the public yet right?

TC: Oh yeah, when we do the hog shows on Sunday and Monday the bleachers, we'll have 200-300 people watching the shows and some are at night and some are during the day. By Tuesday they're pretty well done, market class shows are Wednesday... you start your market class shows and it's pretty laid back. Wednesdays are our transition time when we're getting everything pretty much laid out, figuring out everything before the sale which occurs Thursday. The sale is the big event. Kenyon comes out and they are very, very supportive. AVI, they've been very, very good at supporting. Thursday is the bug day for the kids, it's really why a lot of them do it, because of that check that they get and then the animals, the market animals are shipped out that day. Friday is a decompression day. Saturday is just relax and enjoy what's left at the fair.

RK: Wow.

TC: The concert, the rides, [coughs] whatever exhibits are still down.

RK: So it really is a week-long.

TC: Yeah, it is.

RK: So would you say the big line-up entertainment occurs that Saturday then?

TC: They have a lot. They try to have the truck crash derby, monster trucks there, they try to have something every night. Usually for about Wednesday on, they try to have the big entertainment.

RK: Who comes up with those ideas?

TC: The Senior Fair Board.

RK: OK.

TC: They are a board of 20, 25.

RK: Who is the director?

TC: Right now the president of the Senior Fair Board is John Curtis.

RK: OK. Do you know if, I'm curious how they come up with ideas for all of these activities—how many of them are new that they come up with or are traditions.

TC: How do I say this...there is a state and even a nation-wide association for fair boards and every year, in the December-January time frame, they have a conference in Columbus.

RK: It's a national conference?

TC: It's a state conference. So all the county fair boards are going down there, it's a 2-3 day deal. They have all these vendors with ideas so they get their ideas by going down there. But they also travel around to other counties, walking around and talking to their fair boards. So they're kind of swapping ideas: 'oh yeah, we had so and so perform at our fair last year and it was great, we sell out crowds, people loved it' so people say 'oh, we'll try to get 'em'. Or they say 'oh it was a bust, I wouldn't bother' so there is a network where people get their ideas. But there is an association, national and state, where they are tied in for people who want to come.

RK: That's awesome, that makes sense. Do you happen to know how many students are involved in 4H in the county?

TC: just in our traditional 4H programs we just submitted this, there is almost 1200 in Knox County.

RK: Beth Pae, um she is an advisor for a 4H group and they're meeting Monday at Kenyon in one of the buildings. But I'm also curious, I found some other contacts who are also 4H advisors, so even within the county there are different 4H clubs?

TC: Can I grab Larry real quick? 'Cus he'll have...

RK: Yes! I actually called him too.

[pause, Troy asks Larry if he can come talk about 4H]

TC: This is Rachel.

RK: Hi Mr. Hall, how are you?

LH: Larry!

RK: Nice to meet you.

LH: Yeah, nice to meet you too.

RK: I actually called you and left a message—

LH: Are you Rachel Keller?

RK: Yes

TC: She's here, now you can talk. How many clubs do we have?

LH: Well, 69 is what we had in 2011, it's possible that that may go up a couple or drop down one, I mean it's in that range. Around 70.

RK: In the county.

LH: In the county, community clubs.

TC: Community clubs. Now I told her about 1,200. Traditional--

LH: 1,155 kids were signed up in those 69 last year. We won't know until March 15th how many will be in this year.

TC: And in those 69 clubs, there's 100 advisors.

LH: 209 advisors in just the community clubs. We also do other programming in the community where other types of volunteers are involved. It's not just your regular, stereotypical 4H club.

RK: How are the community clubs organized?

LH: We... we have a kick-off every January, for two days, and we bring in at least one representative from every one of the clubs and they get the most recent updates on dates and forms and expectations and deadlines and all this to lay their battle plan for the year. Then they give us a report back, one per club, that says here is the name of our club, here's how long we've been in business, how many kids we had in 2011, if we're accepting kids for 2012, who the co-advisors are, what day of the week we meet, where we meet, what are our expectations of the kids and how many meetings are we going to hold in the year and what percentage they need to attend. We have a basic expectation, a basic constitution that says have at least nine meetings a year, most have more, the kids show up to at least two-thirds of the meetings you know to be involved. You get into some of the more specific oh uh, livestock clubs, especially the equine, the horses and ponies, they have many more meetings and they are to attend a certain number of meetings and mounded meetings so the advisors can see the child on their horse around other kids on their horses. So you know, some of them, for some projects it's a year-long project. They've got the animal year-round. And sometimes they're multiple year projects where they've had the same animal, they're breeding stock or performance animals like the horses and dogs. Others are short-term projects—market animals where maybe they were just born this year and they're going to market come July.

TC: For instance, those might be the chickens—broilers. The kids get them first week of June and by July they are well past...they're way bigger than they necessarily need to be. That's a very short-term project. Steers they get in October, November, they tag them in December so they identify these are the steers we're bringing to the fair but they don't show them until July. So that's a huge investment of time and money for kids to take those. And that's why we see a

decline in those types of projects because they are so labor intensive, long-term and expensive. Kids are opting for the rabbits, the chickens, the turkeys—they're shorter—the goats.

LH: And we do have some livestock projects that are strictly for pets and they don't even go to the fair. You know, the guinea pigs, some of the pet rabbits and dog projects you know they don't necessarily take to the fair. But others, they are more performance-based and you know this animal has become part of the family. Some of the horses keep coming back year after year after year because the kid grows with the animal and they work on performance. And then if they achieve a certain level of competency, then they look to maybe bringing a second animal that may be younger but not as trained so they're working with two different levels. With dogs or with horses, you know something of that nature.

TC: You know, she was asking about just the importance and historical significance of the fairs and again, this is the biggest even in Knox County in the entire year.

LH: Right.

TC: But I think it really goes back to our roots. There is something about a fair that takes people back in time, in your memory. I jokingly said with her that you remember the fair from the very first one. [laughs]

RK: 110 years ago.

TC: 110 years ago.

LH: Have you gotten the little...not the elevator speech...but the little thumbnail sketch of how 4H got started in Ohio?

RK: No.

LH: OK. Um Albert Belmont Graham, or AB Graham, was a school super intendant in Springfield, Ohio, in Clark County. He gathered together 85 kids in the first Boys and Girls Agricultural Experiment Club on January 15th, 1902, 110 years ago this year, and he did that in an informal setting in the basement of the courthouse. Boys, girls, people of different ethnic backgrounds, so they could compare notes and look at how they do things in their life. Now it was an agrarian lifestyle so they learned how to raise garden crops, field crops, animals, and how to tie knots in rope. And they took that rope knowledge and made halters for the animals. Then they, they didn't have exhibitions and fairs at that time, so they would take some of their displays of things they had learned and they used the scientific method—even with an informal education, they would do something one year and then change one thing and try it again the next year and compare the results from both years so absolutely using the scientific method. But they would put these kids, and sometimes animals and sometimes ears of corn and stuff, on a train and go down the railroad track to the next town and display what they had learned and then they would switch back and forth. Then finally they did start doing some fairs. Now in 1999, was the...

RK: Bicentennial

TC: But there were fairs occurring before then.

LH: Oh yeah, but it wasn't...they couldn't get there.

TC: Right. They were just using fairs because they were harvesting and the women would spend so much time with the canning—it was just an afternoon together. I don't think they went a whole week, it was just a day or so.

LH: Oh no, yeah. It was just a local display. It was our 150th anniversary in 1999 of the Knox County Fair. We have not had 150 fairs because there were times when we didn't have enough money to have a fair and we used to have the fairgrounds in town, on Park Road.

RK: And then they moved...or bought...

LH: And that was bought and they moved out to the Hiawatha Park area. At one time, the KKK rented the facility and uh you know [uncomfortable laugh from both LH and TC], really interesting because we had the Underground Railroad during the Civil War and we had the KKK—uh, whoa!

TC: Very diverse.

LH: but yeah, uh, it's the kind of thing we're steeped in tradition. I have archival information going back to 1919 and a little bit from 1905 and I came across a slide of a birthday cake celebrating 50 years of 4H in 1954. Well so that tells me it took two years to get from Clark County to Knox County so in 1902, and they didn't even call it 4H until about 1917 but you know we do the look-back and we say 'this was the start of 4H'. if you go on the national 4H website, they will acknowledge AB Graham as one of the forefathers of 4H in the country. They also will acknowledge a few other people who started Corn Clubs that had the same sort of concept but they were more geared to one type of project. So whoever started...you know, I think there were similar ideas going around at that time. And then he became director of extension, worked for Ohio State and everything, I mean, he went through the whole stream of things and was a prolific writer and uh, just, you know, he really knew what he was doing. He even made two dresses for his granddaughters for them to wear. But when he was eight years-old, his house caught on fire and his father died of the burns he received so AB and his mother took in laundry and you know just to survive and he learned how to sew because she was a seamstress and he learned how to sew as a kid so he could help her.

RK: That's interesting.

LH: Great stuff.

RK: Do those 4H community clubs, do they um get together depending on their location? Everybody in this neighborhood or—

LH: Some of them do it by location, some are by church, homeschool group. Um by project type.

TC: Friends.

LH: Yeah, friends. When I had a club, I was a sixteen year volunteer before I got my present position, and I had kids who were cousins to each other in my club that were from all over Knox County whereas you might have some that only go to one school or live in one neighborhood, and they just congregate because you know not everybody has the facility to move around. When I was in 4H, we had a Knox County 4H Satellite Club and it was one of the earlier satellite clubs in the state, it started in 1946 before I was born and in 1964 we had 149 members in one club and in 1965 they split and went to regional 4H satellite clubs. Everyone had a different name and what that did is it broke up the big club and that's good and bad because we were a family-type situation but that opened up more kids to take leadership positions by being junior leaders and officers in the smaller clubs rather than just having one slate of officers in the big club. So it was good news, bad news. So they are supposed to meet, elect officers, get their officers trained—they can do an online training or come to a leadership advisory conference—but they are their own entities, big or small. 25 years ago we had a 120 clubs with about the same number of kids so the tendency has been fewer clubs but bigger clubs. Uh one young lady who was in my club with my older daughter now has a club of her own, she's probably had it for about 4 or 5 years, and uh she said that her club will probably have about 50 members in it. She started off with about 20. Clubs that are doing really good stuff work really well with the kids and parents, kids start flocking to those clubs and parents start shoving their kids towards those clubs. You reach a finite time frame where it's probably better to split the club and this group go do this. I had two clubs split off of my club during those 16 years and it was amicable—we had a good time together but they needed to meet on a different day of the week or in a different location, so we split and it worked.

RK: So would you say about 20 is average size for these clubs?

LH: [sighs] Carol could probably give you that information

TC: Yeah, if you want to know the average size

LH: And we do have a website where you can download the 2011 information across the state, county by county so you could look up how many clubs, how many advisors, what the gender mix is, what the age range is, what the grade range is...typically you-

RK: What's the website?

LH: ohio4h.org. And the 4 is the number 4 and there is not a hyphen between it

RK: dot org?

LH: Yep, and I can show you that on my computer before you leave if you want but you can pull up that demographic information over the years. We have what they call a 2-37 Report and that's a national reporting system that we do every year so you can compare state by state and different states have different selections of projects. We all do the same thing differently. Across the state and across the counties, in Ohio, I mean each extension office is just a little bit different. Its

staffing and it's how they do things but some things are, you know, most of the projects are the same within a given state. But some, we offer some that the state doesn't offer because we still have the books for them.

RK: Is the county fair, as the main event—I believe you said it was the main event in the county—is it the main event in every county in Ohio?

LH: Well, there are some counties that have more than one fair.

RK: Really?

LH: Some have a county fair and they have independent fairs. Licking County doesn't have a fair, they have a Hartford independent fair which encompasses all of Licking County, three townships in Knox County, and four townships in Delaware County because of where the donated ground for the fair is located, up in that northwest corner. There are some counties, like Union that will have three fairs—two independents and a county fair. And Washington has three fairs, and so—

TC: And then there are some that are not as big as ours or we may not be as big as some other county fairs, it just kind of depends. You know, I don't know what the county fair in Franklin County is like--

LH: Oh, it's very small. At Hilard.

TC: And then there are some counties that will do like a street fair, Loudenville does a street fair

LH: and Bellville

TC: and Bellville. And they're just a little different format then we have. Fairs are still very popular in this area. I don't know what they are like in Kansas for you...

RK: Um, the Finney County fair—or Douglas County fair—I've been to a couple...the state fair is definitely way bigger um but our county fair is like, I don't know if I would say the biggest event in the area but maybe it is we have a lot of community events but nothing that really brings everyone together.

TC: See where I come from, you could fit every animal in the whole fair in this office. [all laugh] It is non-existent. I don't know why and you would think out west, where the ranching and farming is so huge on a grand scale would be...but the county fairs are really just nonexistent.

RK: Yeah, I've been to the county fairs in Colorado and they are way smaller. I was expecting them to be bigger.

LH: When Troy first came here, and saw our fair, he said 'your county fair is bigger than our state fair'

RK: Wow.

LH: Now, in Kansas, I did a four day exchange in Miami County, Kansas and out there I saw 4H county fairgrounds. They didn't bring in FFA and some of the other youth groups, it was all based out of 4H and they have some magnificent fairgrounds out there but it was pretty much locked into 4H participants.

TC: So do you think it goes back to our culture here, of why there are so many...I don't know...is it the Judeo-Christian...I don't know what it is that makes it so popular in this area.

LH: I mean, out west, you have your distances to travel, just to get to a store and stuff so maybe that is part of the reason why you don't have the big huge gatherings. Tradition has been a big thing there, you know—

TC: Just part of that tradition

LH: You grew up, you know going to the fair and unfortunately we have some parents that just try to live vicariously through their children: because I was a horseman, you need to be a horseman and some of the kids are going 'uh-uh' so that causes some strife sometimes but when they get into it, a groove, and I'm hearing more of it more and more—you know they say one in six Ohio-ans have a link to 4H, and it probably used to be one in five—so now we're starting to see a dilution of experience with 4H but as new kids come on whose parents have never had anything to do with 4H, they are kind of swept into it. If it works for them, that's great so you know, its just one of those cultural things. We interviewed a young lady the other day who grew up in 4H here in Knox County, married a man who had no clue what 4H was and she has brought him into the fold now because their kids are involved in 4H and she's going to be a volunteer.

TC: You know, we have families that know year in advance, they ask for the week off a year in advance, they ask for the whole week off to come to the fair. Its, we're seeing a little bit of a decline in the fair—they used to be there sunup to sundown, night and day. They sleep, eat, everything at the fair and they remember it...it creates very found memories. Sitting up at night playing cards, um...

LH: Getting into water fights...

TC: Shaving cream fights. Up on top of the hill, there is space for campers not so much for tent campers but...

RK: How many campers do you have?

TC: Oh...I'm thinking probably upwards to close to 100 spots you know they've added to it and you know I can give you the phone number if you want to talk to Linda Lahmon, the fair secretary.

RK: I was trying to actually talk to her brother—

TC: Son probably

LH: Scott Lahmon?

RK: He's in charge of the Tractor Show? They are related somehow...

LH: The phone number for the fair is 397-0484 and that rings into her house except for the month of July, she has call-forwarding. But she is the Senior Fair Board Secretary and she has her son Scott and her daughter Tammy that are also board members.

RK: Um...thank you. I have another kind of numerical question. Do you know off the top of your head how many tickets you sold last year or how many attendees you had last year?

LH: That would be them.

RK: OK.

LH: Talking to Linda, she can get you that data.

TC: I know it was down, significantly

LH: Yes

TC: Last was not a very good fair year.

LH: It was very hot for one thing

TC: Yes

LH: And the economy is showing its ugly head. And we do a couple of fundraisers there, we help the grange members sell pop and uh

TC: See grange, that's a whole 'nother part of your culture there, the Farm Bureau

RK: Somebody is doing a project on the grange. Do you have any ideas of who he should talk to? My friend Dan is doing that.

LH: Uh, Lee Walker and um

TC: Dave Greer

LH: Well I don't know if Dave is in the grange

TC: Amy Fovargue used to be involved in a grange

RK: Amy Folbart?

LH: Fovargue: F O V A R G U E and she worked at the state Ag Administration building right across there

TC: Lee Walker is just—

LH: Yeah, he is just right across the hall there and his sister Marie Walker is very heavily involved in the Harrison Grange which is the closest grange to Gambier. Um...yeah you're right, David Greer would be with the Greer Institute and that kind of stuff...Dave's phone number is 504-4497. He only goes with a cell phone now. He is also the, just FYI, the president of the Malabar Foundation...

TC: See, that with the grange, it's just dying out

LH: It is, unfortunately, it is. Just you know the Farm Bureau, we still have members but I don't think they are nearly as active as they used to be, the youth are not as active. We used to have KRY—Knox Rural Youth—and there are still some folks that used to be in it and it was like a very informal youth group that uh all grew up on farms. But I mentioned last year we had 1155 members, only 400 lived on farms. So our stereotype of 4H as cooking and cows is wrong.

TC: Right. I told her we are seeing a decline in that. I told her about photography—what's that one...Renaissance era...

LH: Collectables?

TC: No, no no...where they do the costume thing?

LH: Oh, Living History. Now Living History is part of the shooting sports. We have archery, rifle, pistol, shot gun, black powder, muzzle loader, hunting and wild life skills.

RK: Would you like shoot at the fair?

LH: No, they do that before the fair. They go to camps and things like that. Ok then they added Living History and that's where you can take on a persona and there are three basic components to that. You can throw your—immerse yourself into selecting a person from the past, or you can make a fictional person from the past. And history is anything from yesterday and before so you can pick what era you want to study. You can get into the costuming, the lifestyle, the lore or whatever and they go through an interview process just like all 4H members do to assess their level of knowledge at the end of the season so through the face-to-face interview with a caring adult, they're getting workforce prep training on job interviews, scholarship interviews, things like that. And what we hear from perspective employers and college administrators is 'if we see 4H or FFA on their resume, they have a much better chance at getting an interview, number one, and a much better chance of taking the initiative to be part of a student-driven club or organization and they are the ones that step up and become the officers of a group because they've already done it. They've been there, done that. When I was in—I showed horses—I'm not a great horseman but I took part in speaking contests over a number of years and the top

three winners of the speaking contest would get to be the horseshow announcer so for three years, I was one of the three.

RK: Here in Knox?

LH: Yeah, and I would you know, 'cus I like riding horses but you know sitting on a dirty horse in the hot sun, dust and everything, not so much fun. Sitting in a shading spot with something cold to drink—

TC: Talking

LH: with a captive audience and a microphone, not a problem! You know so once I got this job, I volunteered at the state fair you know where thousands of people work. And one day they came to me and you know I was doing paper work behind the counter and setting up barrels when the horses knocked them down, you know scruff stuff, and they came to me and asked 'Larry, can you announce a horse show?' and I said 'yeah, you know I did it when I was a teenager' and they said 'well, we need somebody to cover for this regular announcer who's been there for years, he is meeting with the attorney general' 'sure' so there I am in the coliseum crowd's nest at the state fairgrounds, this mammoth building with a captive audience of hundreds if not thousands of people all day long just talking into a microphone. I had a fan, had a cold drink, life was good. But I never would have done it as an adult if I hadn't had the opportunity as a teenager to do it and we had supportive people and so you do it. So I can stand up in front of thousands of people and talk. I can sing, crack jokes—it's not a big deal.

TC: Crack jokes, really? [laughs]

LH: It all stems back from me being able to do it when I was growing up and having approval from the people listening. At our Junior Fair Board at the fair, those are the kids that run the shows. I try to make it a point never to get up on the stand, never to have microphone in my hand unless I absolutely have to, I'll turn to one of the kids and say 'make this announcement please' because that's how they learn. That's how they become the caring, contributive citizens of the future. So that's why we do what we do. You know, I...come fair time, I am a glorified gopher. I have a utility vehicle and a ranger and I say 'what do you need, do you need sawdust, do you need pitchforks, do you need brooms, shovels, trophies, papers whatever, I'll go get them. You stay here and I'll be right back' because that's what they need to do, they need to conduct the show. I know I can do it. I don't have to prove that to anybody. Let them learn how to do it. They're the boots on the ground, I'm support staff and bring it to them and try to make them responsible for their own actions. Yes they're going to make mistakes, yes they're going to slip up on the microphone, pronounce something wrong, maybe not wear the appropriate clothing and we say—

TC: Go change

LH: Go change. Now I had one young lady giving out back numbers one day and [deep sigh] I could tell what color thong she had and I'm like—

TC: You know you're being recorded

LH: Oh, no!

RK: Yeah, I was actually—

LH: Sorry, well I didn't use any names but uh you know, how else are they going to know? Things like this they used to learn in the school house or the church pew, they no longer get all of that input as to what's appropriate and what's not. Some of them are buried in their technology and their texting and they put the ear buds in and they tune the world out and that's not what we're about. It's like, get rid of the technology for a little bit and talk face-to-face. I tell them, you have two ears and one mouth. You should listen twice as much as you talk. That doesn't count for me [laughs]

RK: I was just thinking, do I do that? Wow. Well, I mean it's obvious that the 4H component and the youth, the Junior Fair, is a huge part of the fair.

TC: It's like the cement that keeps—

LH: Its everything. I mean, if 4H kids didn't go to the fair, I'm not sure what they would do. I mean, but at the same time, if we didn't have a structure in place it would be hard for the 4H kids to display their projects. It's like you can't have one without the other.

TC: Kids grow up at the fair. I actually met my wife at 4H.

LH: They should make a sign for that

TC: Yeah, we talked about that, actually some of my 4Hers got married this past year and we have signs that say 'I got my start in 4H' we thought we might make 'I got my spouse at 4H'

RK: Oh, that's good, that's really good. Did you do that?

[all laugh]

TC: we should Larry!

RK: well that could go with the 'I got my start' thing because that's when your life really begins

TC: Do you have any other questions?

RK: I do. I just have a question about the other activities that were, the other activities that were at the fair.

LH: Let me get a chair [laughs]

RK: Do you want mine?

TC: Other activities?

RK: That are big. Actually, if you have a copy of the program from last year, I could look at that too. Just, if there are any big activities that I should know about at the fair.

TC: Team pinning

RK: Team penny?

TC: Team pinning. The monster truck, the crash derby...

LH: Demolition derby

TC: Oh that's the one. Of course there's rough truck, rough truck is huge at our fair

LH: It is the biggest draw at our fair

RK: Rough truck. Who's in charge of that?

LH: Senior Fair Board... Shipley I think. And it mainly involves local people with a vehicle, it may or may not be a truck but they go through a course that has water hazards and a lot of them wreck and the people come by the thousands to watch it

TC: and all these events are held at night, so people can enjoy it. They get off work, they bring their families out, they buy fair food—fair food, we don't necessarily call that an event but fair food is a reason why a lot of people come to the fair. They want to have fair food and they call it fair food. The bloomin' onions, the...

RK: funnel cake

TC: funnel cake

LH: elephant ears

TC: elephant ears

LH: the French fries

TC: porkette sandwiches

LH: porkette sandwiches, that's something that's unique to our fair, that's a staple.

RK: Who is in charge of that?

LH: The Pork Council

RK: Is that the Female Pork Council? I saw them at the Tomato Show, the Tomato Festival

TC: That is a unique...everybody has to have one of those at the fair

LH: I have one for every morning for breakfast at the fair. People will line up and stand in line for several minutes waiting to get a porkette sandwich.

TC: And you'd think, its just a hamburger bun, a sausage patty—

LH: Quarter-pounder

TC: Quarter-pounder, you can have it with egg and cheese or not and you can put whatever you want—

LH: pickles and onions

TC: there's nothing really...its not a secret recipe or French cuisine or anything...its just...everybody loves them

LH: you can buy them in the stores, you can buy the patties that have the special spice mix built right into it

RK: Does the meat come—is the meat local?

TC: Yes

LH: Yes

TC: So those are probably the big...other than the livestock shows, those are probably the big attractions we have at the fair

RK: music? Big concerts?

LH: Friday nights

TC: Friday nights at the fair they usually bring in a country music act or two. They have lesser known, more local or regional acts at the Midway stage. You know they have a Junior Fair Choir, they have a Little Miss Knox, they have kids singing the Star Spangled Banner every night. Um they used to have a horse pull—

LH: well, they kept it

TC: they didn't have it last year.

LH: Yes they did

TC: they did?

LH: uh a draft horse pull

TC: see, that's me

LH: they moved it away from the Grandstand and up on the hill. It's a smaller venue but there's still enough draft horses...I mean, we have the National Pertron (?) Association headquarters in Fredericktown, Ohio. The national.

RK: wow

LH: Pertron, it's a breed of draft horse

RK: so, whats the pull...where they—

TC: you hook up two horses and they see how much weight they can pull a certain distance and they keep adding weights

RK: is there a driver?

LH: Not on the sled, he walks along the—there are three people per team of horses: one's a driver, the other two are helping to control them and hooking up the sled.

TC: To watch them—tractors, now those are cool, those are metal and gas—but for me, its spellbound, binding, to sit there and watch these horses...they're just prancing, they're so wound up...you see them back those guys up and they are so nervous. Now those guys have to be careful because the minute those horses hear the cling of that sled, they're gone. If your fingers there, it's gone. Those things, their muscles just bulge and it's just...ahh see! Tractors are cool, tough trucks are awesome but horse flesh is just raw power to me and I love to see it and they pull. Tons.

LH: oh yeah, its huge

RK: Do they train?

TC: Oh yeah, they have teams and these teams travel around the state, country.

LH: if you drive out Martinsburg Road, 587 out of Mount Vernon, going south on the left-hand side about half way before you get to Martinsburg there's a guy that has a team of Belgians and they're just...he works them out into the field, pulling weights throughout the year and uh, you know...Joe and Sally Reed who live up off of...between Old Mansfield Road and Knox Lake Road, they farm with horses. He plows with horses.

TC: Well, and the Amish do too.

LH: but I mean, he's an Englishman and he...when you see a street festival where they have horse-drawn wagons, usually he's one of the wagons and they show at the fair and everything but they'll go out and harvest their fields with horses

RK: Wow

LH: You know, its just the lifestyle that he has chosen

TC: and that's part of the fair too

LH: and we have probably the best agricultural museum in the state of Ohio

RK: So I know that that is...is that museum on the fairgrounds?

LH: Yes

RK: But isn't it also next to the Historical Society?

LH: There's one right out here but that's the Knox County Historical Society, but this is the Ag Museum

RK: So that's open at the fair, so people will go in and

LH: and at other times if people request it, they have several buildings that they have brought and reassembled and when we do our May Ag Awareness Day, it opens up and we bring 4th graders in there in groups of up to 20 and they learn a little bit of the lore but it's a magnificent museum. I've not seen an equal to it.

TC: and demonstrations, they take rags and weave strips of them into rugs so they make them there and they sell them and its pretty cool.

LH: Corse it used to be Lake Hiawatha Park so the lion cage is still there, a one room schoolhouse, a smokehouse, an outhouse, a spring house, a cabin, uh a grain bin, all of those things have been added over the years plus inside the museum are tons of tractors and farming equipment and you know a shower, an old fashioned shower and a cistern, you know old things like that. Its magnificent.

TC: The people who run it, who give the tours are very, very knowledgeable and we used to use the Ag Museum as the focal point of our Heart of Ohio tour which we had the first weekend of October.

RK: Yeah, I went to that! We went to the airport stop and the horse club

LH: Horse park

RK: That was awesome, it was really cool. The horse are just...I'm with you, I think horses are just the most beautiful creatures. I wish I had grown up around them but I didn't--

LH: Yep. Now years ago I had—

TC: OK, I have another appointment, so I just want to make sure you have all of the questions from me, you guys can talk as long as you want

RK: OK, um yeah I think I...its very clear why it is important to you so I think I got that, thank you for meeting with me.

TC: Sure, and you're welcome to stay here and continue talking

LH: Or we can go next door to my office

TC: I don't mean to be rude

RK: No, I understand

TC: You'll probably have to have him sign that paper though, huh?

RK: I should have told you ahead of time, but is that OK that it has been recorded?

LH: Yes of course.

[sounds of recorder moving from the desk]

RK: Thank you very much

TC: Nice to meet you Rachel

RK: Nice to meet you too, I really appreciate it

[more sounds]

LH: Can we set up another appointment?

RK: Yeah, well I think I got plenty. Thank you so much. I'm actually going to be going to a 4H meeting Monday at Gund—

LH: I'll be there

RK: You'll be there! Because I do have a question about getting images, like more recent images of the fair because I didn't go over the summer—

LH: Mount Vernon News has tons and I have some, yes

RK: Do you think you might be able to bring them to the meeting?

LH: [laughs] They're bunches and bunches of digital photographs and stuff...I'll see what I can pull together.

RK: OK um just, will you please sign this release form, just in case...

LH: I understand

RK: OK [sounds]