



LITTLE BROWN JUG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of Fred Stults

December 9, 2019

Delaware County Historical Society

Delaware, Oh

www.delawareohiohistory.org

© 2020 The Delaware County Historical Society, Inc

Do not copy or share without written permission

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Fred Stults, conducted by Dr. Cassie Patterson, Center for Folklore Studies, Ohio State University and by Mariah Marsden, graduate student in the Folklore Studies program on December 9, 2019 at the Orange Township branch of Delaware County District Library

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been edited for clarity only.

Transcriptionist	N/A
Transcription Date	N/A
Interviewee	Fred Stults
Interviewer	Dr. Cassie Patterson, Center for Folklore Studies, Ohio State University Mariah Marsden, graduate student in the Folklore Studies program
Interview Location	Orange Township branch of Delaware County District Library
Interview Date:	December 9, 2019

Fred Stults Transcript

STULTS:there were three of them - Hank Thomson of the Delaware Gazette, Joe Neville who came up with the idea, and Curly Smart got involved. Curly Smart was one of the original trainers and driver and was a part of the organization to start the Little Brown Jug. All of the harness racing previously, the major stakes, had been for trotters. The difference between a trotter and a pacer...with a trotting horse the right foreleg goes forward as the left hind leg moves forward. Pacing, (the right side) both move together.

PATTERSON: Oh, Ok.

STULTS: You can probably see it in this [showing a book]. See that's a pacer. See? He has what are known as 'hobbles' on.

PATTERSON: Yeah, we saw a few of those at the fair. We actually got up and a guy showed us some things up close.

STULTS: Anymore they probably don't have any trotting horses in this one. They will in this one [showing another book].

PATTERSON: The Jug is strictly pacers?

STULTS: Strictly pacing. [Showing a photo] That horse right there...see how this leg is standing and these two legs are moving?

PATTERSON: Ok, that is really cool. So what did you do for the Jug?

STULTS: Well, I was the Delaware County Engineer for 27 years. I became a member of the Delaware County Fair(board) and then, one of the members of the Jug Society passed away and the Jug Society always elects a replacement. Since the Little Brown Jug was created for Delaware, by Delaware, they wrote the original requirements to be a member of the Little Brown Jug Society. When Curly Smart passed away they appointed me to be - I was a Fair Board member which is a county-wide election - a Little Brown Jug Society Director and that is world-wide or could be. Most of them have always been US, Canada, and Australia, as I recall. It depends on who the Jug Society elects but of course when the Jug Society was formed there were more members from Delaware County than anywhere else, so Delaware County chose to make sure that the Jug stayed in Delaware, rather than moving to another location. The majority of the members are from Delaware County. Actually, the Jug Society owns the Little Brown Jug.

PATTERSON: So you served on the Society as the county engineer?

STULTS: I served as both. I was on the Fair Board and the Little Brown Jug Society and I was the County Engineer. Twenty-three years ago though. I retired from the Delaware County Engineer's office, but I am still a member of the Little Brown Jug Society.

PATTERSON: Do you attend the Jug still every year?

STULTS: Uh huh. We have one official meeting of the whole Little Brown Jug Society once a year.

PATTERSON: When is that?

STULTS: The week of the Jug. The way things are set up, the way it all has to work through the racing commission for legalities. The conditions of the race, such as the Little Brown Jug purse are made up of nominations first of all colts that have been born – they pay, I think it's a \$10 nominating fee. We may need another fella here. I didn't realize we were going to get into that [laughing]. The nominating fee is due the same spring that the colt is born. In other words, the owners go by how fast the mare goes and how fast the stud goes, to know whether to really keep a colt that is totally unproven of anything, to keep them eligible. So there is an annual payment, every spring, for those horses. It is much more than that \$10 or whatever it is. The \$10 is just the nominating fee. Then the next year there's a probably a \$200, you know a pretty good-sized payment. When it's a yearling, a two-year-old and, of course, the Jug is raced when they are three years old. Just strictly three-year-olds. The only ones that are eligible are those that paid the nominating fee and the sustaining payments as time goes on.

PATTERSON: So you are really hoping you have a good one from the moment that they are born?

STULTS: Absolutely. In fact, that's the way the breeders and the farm owners determine whether they are going to be nominated or have their sustaining payments. They see them out in the field and they are pacing free-legged or what have you. Free-legged is without the hobbles. I have raised a few colts, none Jug eligible [laughing].

The Jug Society, each year, creates or changes some of the conditions, maybe. One of the last changes that we had is the winner... of the first two (eliminations), plus the second-, third- and fourth-placed horses come back for the (second) heat. They had to win two races...in order to be the Jug winner. A lot of times in this last race, we might have three horses.

PATTERSON: So what was the change that you put into place?

STULTS: The change that we made, the first four finishers in these two races would return. But the winner of this race was the Jug winner. In other words, you could have only one on that race.

PATTERSON: So when was your first experience with the Little Brown Jug?

STULTS: I think probably when I was a youngster. I think I was around nine or ten. Me and a few of my friends sat over on the east turn and we went and got pencils from the political people in the Merchant's Building and we'd bet pencils [laughing]. Now today the mutuels are automatic. Have you bet on a horse?

PATTERSON: We bet on one this year.

STULTS: You stood in line and they pushed some numbers and the ticket rolled out. Well, we were betting pencils, they had a wagon, the auctioneer stood on the wagon and anybody who wanted to bet on a horse, they would say, 'number one horse' and the auctioneer auctioned the horse off. The one with the highest bid got to take that horse – take a ticket for that horse as the winner. If nobody wanted to bet on a horse, I assumed that winning ticket would be carried over to the next race. They just auctioned them off. They would go through the whole list. I remember watching them do that.

PATTERSON: Did you bet pencils because you weren't allowed to bet money?

STULTS: Well, that's all we had [laughing]. The mutuels came into being in the early 50s.

PATTERSON: So you have been going to the Jug ever since?

STULTS: Well, pretty much. I remember one year, 1961, my wife and I were on our way to Angola, Indiana where I went to college. Tri-State was the name of the college. I made the comment to my wife when we were dating that someday I wanted to go to college. Soon after we were married, she had a miscarriage and she said, 'you know, if you are going to college, now is the time.' She was right [laughing]. So, we picked up stakes and away we went. We listened to the Jug, I ever remember where we were and on what road, Route 31 north of Marysville. We listened to the Jug on our way on the radio.

PATTERSON: That was the only year you missed attendance?

STULTS: Boy, there haven't been many of them. There might have been another one or two, but I don't remember. I'm 83 years old and my memory isn't quite like it used to be [laughing].

PATTERSON: So nowadays, how do you prefer to watch the Jug? Do you sit in the grandstands?

STULTS: Oh, yeah.

PATTERSON: I know the backstretch is a pretty popular place for some people.

STULTS: Yeah it is. It has been for a good long time. They chain their chairs to the fence – six or seven months before the race. They lock them on.

PATTERSON: That's just not for you?

STULTS: No, I like to sit in the shade [laughing].

PATTERSON: Do you bet?

STULTS: On occasion. My brother used to train and drive. Our son used to train and drive through college. He trained and drove and had a bigger public stable after college. He went to Ohio Wesleyan... Then one day he said, 'you know, I have a race in Cleveland on October the third and that's going to be my last one.' He said, 'I want a life like other people.' You see as a trainer and driver, it's seven days a week... their horses are in need of care and what not. His mother and I would be going to church and he wouldn't be able to go because he had to go take care of his horses.

PATTERSON: I hadn't heard that side of it before. Are there other things that are kind of demanding of being a trainer, racer?

STULTS: Yes, pretty much demanding. Now some of the larger farms they have second trainers and second drivers, you know, assistants, along that line and they may train, or I say break, and train. You see, a horse has to be broken to the track. That's what they call it anyway. Some of the (trainers) have 75 horses, but they have people under them, so they can occasionally get a little more time. Of course they are the major trainers, usually those that are in the Jug. A lot of the drivers are strictly – that's all they are--- drivers. They don't own any horses. Don't train any horses. They just drive.

PATTERSON: Do they usually work with the same horses?

STULTS: Not necessarily. In fact, even at Delaware, people will have races – not major stake races – well, even major state races, they will hire a driver to drive their horse in the race at Delaware. Delaware is the fastest half-mile track in the world. That's where they usually come to get their half-mile race record. That's why Delaware is so popular. I know that they have been – even before I was involved – they had been accused of having a shorter track. Well, I can assure you they don't, because I have measured it. I was the registered engineer and a registered surveyor and it is about a foot and a half long.

It is a major classic. It is THE race for the pacing horse. The major owners, and trainers, and drivers want to win (it)... I remember as a youngster showing dairy cattle at the fair. I was a 4-H member and we'd see cars driving in on Thursday morning before daylight with California license plates and Canada license plates. A lot of that has changed, now they fly in [laughing].

PATTERSON: We had some Australians in this year, I believe.

STULTS: Probably so.

PATTERSON: Because the race is so big and important, I am sure some exciting things have gone down. What have been some of the most memorable races you've seen?

STULTS: I would say the most memorable was in 1993. [showing a photo] See how close those horses are? Those were the best horses in the world at that time and that's the way they finished. The horse on the outside won it. His name was Life Sign.

PATTERSON: The other two had to be upset that they didn't make it.

STULTS: Absolutely [chuckles]. Going around a circle, the horse that is further out runs farther, right? That horse was on the outside of every turn and still won. Now he got in after the turn, but of course that didn't save any ground.

PATTERSON: Are there any other races or events that stick out?

STULTS: All of them have been good, especially the Jug, especially the Jug. [showing another photo] This race here – after the race the driver stood up on the seat the rest of the way around the...after he had been presented with the trophy, the driver then stood on the seat to bask around to the barn. That was (Herve Filion). They are all...Bret Hanover was everybody's favorite. He was such an incredible horse. I remember after he won the race and headed back towards the barn he just looked over to the crowd just like he said, 'see what I just did.' He was quite the horse.

Did you watch the race from the grandstand?

PATTERSON: We got to watch it from the Press Box.

STULTS: Oh, that's good.

PATTERSON: We got a nice view.

STULTS: Right, a huh.

PATTERSON: You were in the grandstand?

STULTS: Yeah.

PATTERSON: Was there anything that particularly stuck out this year or was it more of a normal Jug?

STULTS: This year was pretty much a normal Jug. It really was. No major surprises.

PATTERSON: So when you are watching Jug week or anytime, do you have any habits, rituals or things that you do normally?

STULTS: I know the ladies in our box – and I think a lot of people do this and they make sure they get the men’s money also – they have a dollar, everybody puts a dollar into a hat or bag or something and everyone draws a card...whatever card you drew that had to be the winner and you’d get the ten dollars or whatever it is. It’s just a fun thing .

PATTERSON: So each of the cards correspond with one of the horses then?

STULTS: Their number.

PATTERSON: Is there anything else?

STULTS: We like to go to dinner afterwards for sure. We get there early, we invite friends to our box. Our oldest son, he’s a high school principal out in the state of Washington and of course he was raised with the horses and what not, he flew in this past year. We went and picked him up on Wednesday evening and he left to go back on Saturday. He came in just for that little bit. It’s usually a family thing. My wife’s uncle used to train and drive horses that they owned, never in the Jug, in just some of the other races. Since my brother was a trainer and driver and our son was, we were involved for a long time. We raised five or six colts and one of the last colts we raised, he tried to jump a fence and cut his legs really bad. It was the night that (President) Reagan was shot. I went out to do chores and there he is and he’s got his legs all butchered up. I took him to Ohio State down at the veterinary clinic they have. They saved him but he couldn’t race after that, so that was one of our last ones. He probably would have been the best. The Lord said, “Fred, you have been doing this too long, just forget it.” [laughing] Not many people make a good living at it.

PATTERSON: Is it something that you lose money at before your gain it?

STULTS: Yeah, I would say yes. Probably much more often. In fact, in order to take a deduction for their expenses in the Federal income tax they have to show all entries, so you can’t have more than three years of loses in a row without showing any income.

PATTERSON: Something that I have always been interested in with horse racing is how do you guys decide what to name your horses? You have some of the weirdest names out there and I would love to hear some of your insights.

STULTS: The Hanover horses – you’ve heard of Bret Hanover and this Hanover and what not – are from the Hanover Farm out in Pennsylvania. It’s the Hanover Shoe Farm, they made their money on shoes. Adios horses...he was a great sire and so they name them after the sire or a lot of times after the sire. Rum Customer – his mother was Custom Maid, I don’t know where the Rum comes from [laughing], a drink. We had a colt that we named Tike Ollie – our sons are Tim and Kelly and I had a tractor, an Oliver tractor, so it was Tike Ollie. [laughing] No good reason. Most of them are from farms or from previous horses, previous good horses and things like that.

PATTERSON: What makes the Jug so special and how has it changed?

STULTS: Well, special-wise, the speed of the track. The horses get over it very, very well. It's a clay track essentially. It's got a little different surface on it now from what it did have when I was involved. It used to be strictly clay that we got from the property right there. In fact, my employees would go out and load clay into trucks and take it over and re-spread it on the track. Over the years you lose some soil or some clay. It washes off - right down the drains and out to the river. Since it was organized here in Delaware County, of course, it's very well attended by local people also. But since the speed brings in the people from California and Canada and wherever and they bring a lot of people with them. A lot of the horses are owned by multiple people. The Jug is the one that they really want to win.

The Jugette is a fairly new race, not real new, but it used to be just the Jug, but then the Jug Society decided that, 'hey, why not get the girls involved here?'

Did you see the fairgrounds before?

PATTERSON: No.

STULTS: They used to have bleachers that extended – like your high school football bleachers – clear for probably 150 to 200 feet to the west of the grandstand. People weren't using those. They costs less to sit in than what the grandstand does, but they want to sit out there with their friends and whoever. The bleachers got torn down this year. This was the first year without any. They had reduced them many years ago, a few years ago. Many years ago when I was involved, it was a pretty large bleacher. I recall, I was new on the fair board and I asked our race secretary, who operated the fairground and I asked him how the bleachers were out there. He said, 'I really don't know, we should look at them.' So as an engineer I went out and looked at them, but what I found may of scared me, or what I found scared me. The people that had extended the grandstand, so they moved that set of bleachers that was next to the grandstand, clear down at the other end. I went down and looked at those and they were made, or supported, by carpenter's scaffolding, which usually has X bracing and whatnot. Just round pipe about yea big around, a couple of inches, and they went up, along the way, but the people, the contractors that moved those bleachers had not put in any of the cross bracing. They would have gone down. No question in my mind. So, as the County Engineer, I was able to do work with my county people and bill the fairgrounds for that work. I sent my bridge crew out and we put braces on those. The next year we had new bleachers, totally, because I scared them. I scared the board.

PATTERSON: Good. Sometimes you need to do that. I heard stories of one year when there was a torrential downpour and you had to help redo the track. Can you tell me that story?

STULTS: They started doing that before I was involved. They had a big storm the night before the Jug and I mean it was soaked. It gets awfully slippery out there and dangerous if it's not an all-weather track...they are going to fall, no question, and of course you can't have horse going around the track falling. So Curly Smart, the fellow that was in the Jug Society and the Fair Board and he trained there. He said, 'hey, we need to do something about this.' They tried drying it with torches, fire torches from the National Guard, and different things. Of course it wasn't working, so they decided that they would scrape the track. You've seen highway graders, it has the big tires, four wheels and the cab sits up high and underneath you is a blade and they can adjust that blade, so they can subgrade for a road exactly like they want it. That was used then to get the track the way they wanted it. In other words, to take the top layer off, scrape it, roll it out in a big windrow all the way around the track. But to do that you can't start down at the hub rail and roll it out. You have to angle your blade and roll it out to the end, come back around and roll it further and you roll it all the way out. You have to take the top out first and then roll from the bottom. You keep going until you get the whole mud surface off. The rolled portion is not pretty, but it's still there, because after the fair it's rolled back on (the track). It was a bunch of people and equipment to roll it all off.

PATTERSON: How long did that take?

STULTS: I would usually say a couple of hours, two in that vicinity, two to three (hours).

PATTERSON: So you were in charge of that after you became County Engineer?

STULTS: I was the County Engineer which was the head of those people that were doing it. I didn't get personally involved with the grader.

PATTERSON: So do you have any other stories that you would like to tell us, about experiences with the Jug. Anything you would like us to officially get recorded?

STULTS: Well there's one that I am not sure I should or not [chuckles].

PATTERSON: Let's go for it.

STULTS: Well, I've never seen it. Some of the backside people right after the Jug, or course a lot of them have had a lot to drink, but they would have what was known as a 'wet t-shirt' contest. A ladies t-shirt contest.

PATTERSON: I think we have heard about this.

STULTS: I figured [laughing]. You heard about it at the fairgrounds? Had you?

PATTERSON: We didn't see it.

STULTS: Well, I haven't either [laughing]. But, I know this: one day after the fair I was back in my garage superintendent's office and he had a picture of two girls on top of our grader. Of course, that's what they were doing. Well, I had to put a stop to it. It was the first time I ever knew that they were way up here [raises hand] with all that steel all down below them. If they would have slipped and fallen...well after that we made sure, I made sure, that all the graders were all in behind the fence. I don't know if it is still going on or not.

PATTERSON: Neither do I, but a lot people seem to remember that.

STULTS: I know I had a friend that, he and his wife watched it every year [laughing].

PATTERSON: Do you have any questions that you would like to add?

MARSDEN: I am curious about these books. How did you get a hold of these? How did you come across them?

STULTS: I don't remember how I got that one. I remember I got that one from the Fair Board. If you like, if you want to borrow them, that's fine.

MARSDEN: They might have copies at the Little Brown Jug.

STULTS: They are not going to have copies of that one. This one, probably.

MARSDEN: Do many people have this kind of...books from the Jug? Is that pretty popular?

STULTS: Yeah. This one is from (19)95.

PATTERSON: Do many people get them autographed, like you did?

STULTS: Well, that was (signed) by the Jug Society. I don't know, they may.

MARSDEN: Some people keep the (programs) from the race. Do you do that as well?

STULTS: Well, I have some from the past. [stands up] I am not sure if this is this year's. I think it was. This is the Juliette. This year's Juliette.

MARSDEN: Do you take notes in them as well? I know several people take notes in them. Do you have a notes system or anything?

STULTS: Not usually. If I am watching a horse warm up – you see they warm up about three races before their race – pretty good. If I see one that's warming up real good, looks good, I might make a notation. My son - I always give him \$20 and he puts \$20 in and he usually does the picking, since he was a trainer and driver. That doesn't mean we win anything [laughing]. Do you know how to read one?

MARSDEN: Somebody showed us very briefly, a quick way to read it. It looked pretty complicated.

STULTS: It is. It is. [showing a program] The Ohio (Breeders) Stakes – this is for the horses stabled in (Ohio)... This is the date, the track was good. This is where he started; he started in the number three position. The first quarter was in 29 and 1. The half went in 59 and 4. The three-quarters in a minute and 29 and the winning time was 1:58 and three. That horse started in the three position, at the quarter he was fifth on the outside. He was fifth, five lengths behind (at the half mile). He was fifth, three and quarter lengths behind (at the three-quarter pole). He was fifth (at the top of the stretch), but he made a break. The X shows a break (in stride). Whenever a horse breaks stride they have to lose ground. They have to pull away from the rest of the horses. When I say break stride, that means instead of pacing or trotting – whichever the race is set up for – he's running, he's galloping. So he has to lose (ground). Usually, a lot of them will keep running and they get clear out (of the race) then. Occasionally, a horse will go off-stride, pull-out, get back on stride, come back in and win the race. It's possible, but if he didn't lose ground, he wouldn't be declared the winner.... The race, the final quarter went the difference between 1:29 and 1:58 and 3, which would be 29 and three-fifths of a second. This horse went the last quarter in 31 and three-fifth seconds. So, he finished his race in 2:01 and one-fifth and the race went in 1:58 and three-fifths. This is what he would have paid, had he won. Ok?

PATTERSON: If you are betting, do you usually read the (program) or do you just...

STULTS: You need the book. I'll look at it anyway, but we really don't get down into it, unless you are wagering, or you are an owner or such. We used to have a fellow by the name of 'Detroit Red,' a fellow with red hair. He always came to the races. He would pick out the best horse. He wouldn't bet him to win, he'd bet him to show. Years ago, the minimum that could be paid was 10 cents on the dollar. \$2.20 was the – if they paid \$2 for a win ticket, he won the race, and it would have to pay \$2.20, that's the lowest the odds could go. So this 'Detroit Red' would pick out the favorite and he might bet 30 of 50 thousand dollars on the favorite, if the horse won, he made at least 10 percent.

PATTERSON: That's amazing. That guy knew the system.

STULTS: You have people doing that. A lot of people go just to wager on the races. In fact, if you go to the grandstand, behind the (mutuel) windows – under the grandstand – there's chairs sitting there. They watch the TV. These guys wager a lot of money.

PATTERSON: It is somewhat stereotyped that betting people are also superstitious. Are there superstitious folks at the Jug or are they more calculating?

STULTS: I wouldn't call them superstitious. What you are thinking about is that they don't know who they bet for, they want to make a little money – I've got a friend who would bet his seat number, he would bet his electric bill, he would bet any number that came across his (mind),

anything. He didn't win often that way, but occasionally he did. One year, Kenny Reed and I – a county commissioner – he was in our box and that was before my son (quit) and my son was still training and driving. We would put \$20 in the kitty – he didn't know how to bet – I'd do the betting and he'd do the complaining [chuckles]. This one year, it was on Wednesday and we hadn't cashed a ticket. We probably put another \$20 in, but we had not cashed a ticket all that time. I saw this fellow down at the windows and I said, 'Mitch, who did you get?' He said, 'I have a trifecta on the 5, 6, 7.' I looked up at the board and they were the longest shots on the board. I said, 'well if you can do it, so can I.' So I called for a 5-6-7, got my ticket and went up and it came in 5-6-3-7. I looked down at my ticket and they filed an objection against the three. They moved my horse up from fourth and that paid just a little under \$2,000. My wife likes to tell the story that she spent that (\$2,000) several times on new clothes [laughing].

PATTERSON: Do you have anything else you would like to add to the interview?

STULTS: Not that I can think of, right at the moment.

PATTERSON: Thanks.