



LITTLE BROWN JUG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of Phil Terry

April 19, 2019

Delaware County Historical Society

Delaware, Oh

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Phil Terry, conducted by Dr. Kyle McDaniel, Ohio Wesleyan University on April 19, 2019 at the Log Cabin on Delaware County Fairgrounds.

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	Phil Terry
Interviewer	Dr. Kyle McDaniel, Ohio Wesleyan University
Interview Location	Log Cabin on Delaware County Fairgrounds
Interview Date:	April 19, 2019

Phil Terry Transcript

File #2 (0:12)

Q: Unintelligible

A: I've been a lot of things here. I was fair manager and director of sponsorship. Probably my first big time-consuming was when I got to be the head of security.

Q: Unintelligible

A: I have history (Laughs). I started the simulcast program, I did the uh, change of security, started using the hill as a normal... I've just done a lot of things.

Q: Unintelligible

A: Okay.

File #3 (0:16)

Hi. I'm Phil Terry and I've done a lot of things at the Jug. Let's try that again.

File #4 (4:31)

My first experience here was in 1967. '68, excuse me. 1968. I was a student at Ohio Wesleyan and at that time we were on semesters so school didn't start until after the Fair. So I came up here and got a job directing traffic at the main gate for the week of the Fair. And that's what I did: directed traffic from the time we opened the gates in the morning until we closed at night.

Q: Unintelligible

A: I was very surprised because I didn't really realize, you know, we were just a little county fair. I grew up in Licking County and it was a small county fair and Delaware County Fair should be the same, I thought. Until Jug Day. (Laughs) I couldn't believe the cars, the people, and everything that came in here. It changed, we practically moved a second city in here. It was surprising to me, the number of people who came.

Q: Unintelligible

A: I, uh. Once I graduated from Wesleyan, I was in the Delaware City Police Department and one of our businesses every year is taking care of security at the Fair, direct the traffic, et cetera. And that's what I did. Whatever was needed at the time of the Fair.

In 1983, we had a very serious accident on the track. The starting gate, which has wings, didn't open and the driver of the car went wide. The gate hopped the fence. It was supposed to work but it didn't. Hopped the fence. It hit several people that were on the outside of the crowd. I was sitting in the grandstands watching the fair from my father-in-law's box. I got up, walked down, and crossed the track clear over to this corner here. And I turned out to be the first person of any kind of authority to show up 'cause nobody could get there. It used to be you could show up to Delaware and drive as far as you could as close to the track. Once you couldn't go any further, you turned the car off and got out. And it would take 2, 3, 4 hours to get people out of the thing afterwards.

Anyhow the powers that be--- Tom Thomson, John Wolf, and Bill Lowe--- came to me and asked if I would become the security director, Safety and Security Director of the fair. We talked about it and I said, "Yeah." And I need three things. I need six radios so that those of us working could communicate with each other, I need 6 golf carts so we could move around easily, and I need the promise from your Board that you'll support whatever we do, you'll support it as long as we're doing what you tell us. And they did that, and away we went. That first couple years, that made an awful lot of changes on the fairgrounds. We developed some rules for fairs. And one of the rules we developed was it's a bad idea that the first thing happens. The second year is "we've got fix I like this." The third year is is that "I came up with this idea and it's working really well" because it takes that long for a change to be made in something like this. It's periodical. And it doesn't happen overnight. But. So, we made those changes and they worked pretty well. As we've moved forward we had to learn how to handle crowds better, which we have.

Q: Unintelligible.

File #5 (4:21)

A: I'll try to keep it good..Yeah, we've had, uh... ESPN. No, Sports Illustrated, in one of their articles they wrote about the Jug was we were the biggest cocktail party in the Midwest on a Thursday afternoon because there was an awful lot of alcohol consumed here. A lot of it's brought in. At that time all of it was brought in because we didn't have (unintelligible) ourselves but that's another story. But. So, we had to control it and we found that people... It's sort of a universal rule that you give people enough rope they will hang themselves. If they don't have some rules, they'll end up getting in trouble because they always want to push. People are like that. We push the limits until we've figured out we've pushed too far.

By keeping the level of alcohol consumption and the level of, uh, activities for people to keep them monitored so they don't get out of hand. We used to have a classical thing that took place here call a wet T-shirt party on Jug Day. And, as usual, every year it got more risqué and more out of control. Use to be right around the cabin here. And then one year we had I think we had about 12 different cars damaged by people stamping and stomping on the cars to see. So we created our own party place. It's out in the back field. We put a wagon up, put up tape around it so no one could be around it. That's when the shirtless... wet T-shirt part went. It did become shirtless. But again, people will press it. Somebody would be drunk and knock someone out of the way. Next thing you know there are fistfights going on. So finally we quit it. That's it. It's not gonna happen anymore. I had people on the police department, I had several people lined up sitting on golf carts in different places. I saw the first fistfight. I called for back up. They all came in their golf carts (laughs). We cleared out. Arrested maybe 8 people. Cleared things out. That's it. There will be no more wet T-shirt contests.

Q: Unintelligible

A: I got yelled at for a couple years but it got beyond the point of control.

Q: Unintelligible (for 23 seconds)

A: Well, the rules for people who grew up in Delaware, their kids were not permitted on this side of the grounds. You could not go beyond the grandstands because what went on here was terrible. They drank (laughs). They cussed. It was a different experience. These were country kids, conservative country kids so they kept the two apart: the junior fair over there and racing was over here. And they didn't want to mix the two together because they were sure it would rub off bad onto them. But then they would grow older and they would move from the front to the back.

Q: Unintelligible

A: Yes.

File # 6 (3:05)

I became a board member and Tom Thomson asked me to look at bringing simulcast to the Jug. Simulcast, I'm assuming everybody (unintelligible)... We broadcast the races out to racetracks, betting sites, et cetera and they bet on our races there. It's handled here. But it's a tricky operation especially we didn't have any of the equipment. Racetracks have the equipment set up to film the thing, run it, everything. We had to set it up, develop the whole thing here. And we did that and I also had to convince tracks to bet on us because nobody knows what's the Delaware County Fair. They knew about the Jug but they still didn't know and certain things. If you haven't been to racing, racing has a sort of set format that it goes through. First race starts at

1 o'clock and it goes off, takes about two minutes, then the next race is gonna be maybe 15 minutes later. So they clear up all the paperwork, bookwork from that first race and open up the windows so that people can come bet on the next race. And then you just, over and over. Well, Delaware, we didn't really have it that way because one of the things we do is that we had what they call "heat racing." "Heat racing" is the same horses racing more than once on the same day. The rule for the Jug itself: you have to, a horse has to win two races on the same day of the Jug. That has changed some over the years but we still gotta win the final Jug. Well, these tracks that are just used to taking, you know, got 15 races, 15 races, et cetera, that's it. Send them the information, they've got their programs and it's all there. Well, here is this guy coming up with "send me a new program that's gonna go off in half an hour later and I'm supposed to..." Yep, that's the way we do it. As it turned out, we worked all the kinks out and we were able to do that and actually the second heat, when we're bringing back the top horses, that is the best-bet race here at the Fairgrounds on our simulcast circuit because people, there's a lot of thrill to it. There's a lot of enjoyment. See those horses. See them coming in. Totally amazed that they do what they do.

File #7 (1:18)

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: Yeah. I am retired.

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: This is '19. Ah, I retired in '17, 40-some years been involved with the fair in various capacities. I've done it all, from directing traffic at the front gate to managing the whole thing. Probably the most fun I had was when we were sponsorship racing, raising funds to help pay for, pay for the races and do the things that we do. We do a lot of things here at the Delaware County Fair that county fairs can't afford to do or that major racetracks can't do 'cause it's a mixture of that uniqueness of the fair and the levelness of professionalism at a racetrack. We mix it together. Sometimes it's hard to mix together but work at it, it's good. One of the things we always did was we brought in the best people in the business...

File #8 (1:41)

A: But over the course of my involvement here from directing traffic at the front gate to doing it all. But my best time has been doing the sponsorship. I go out and I get to visit with people who are going to sponsor. A lot of people that are sponsors are involved in the business either by owners of horses, owners of breeding farms, owners of race horses or somehow involved in the racing business. That would be where most of our sponsors would come from. We did get a lot

of sponsors that were not right in horse racing but still liked the sport. And I would travel around the country to various races. One of the things we survived with and we pushed on is the branding. We are the Little Brown Jug and people know that the Little Brown Jug is a pacing race in September in Delaware, Ohio. They know that because we've branded it that way. My car, if you noticed, outside, its tags are "Bet Jug." Anything we can do to make it greater the consciousness of people that the Little Brown Jug is, is, is a race here in Delaware and that it comes annually.

File #9 (4:07)

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: Yes. Ah, probably the main...the two main reasons is, one is simulcast and two is society. We used to be the only gambling game in town. You know, if you wanted to bet on horses, you wanted to bet, in most of the country you had to go to races and bet on the horses. That's the only way you could gamble. If you go to Vegas, it became Atlantic City, too, but we were the only local game in town. And so people would come for that. They'd also come for the sport of it. When we simulcast, if you live in Cleveland, Cincinnati or some place in New York or on the West Coast, it's difficult to always travel to Delaware to see the races, so they would quit coming to the races and instead watch it on simulcast shows that are everywhere you go. 256 locations throughout North America where people could go and see and see the races. So a lot of them... I used to tell these friends, watch it on Jug, on racetrack this year, "We missed you." It was...we had to change with the, with the, with the business and we had to change to be a part of that. So we dealt with it and replaced, developed income from that that sort of set back or, in part, took care of the loss of live bet. The most important part of a racetrack is the live bet. Somebody's here, they bet their monies through what we call our windows. That you bet a 2 dollar win ticket and it's through our windows, I get, I get 18 cents out of that 2 dollar bet right here. If you bet that at a facility that cuts in here, I get 3 cents. So we talk about there's, there's 18-cent dollars and 3-cent dollars. It takes a whole lot of 3-cent dollars to equal your 18-cents. But at the same time, you can't let that go away. So we do that.

And the other is that we have so many opportunities to do things in our country that were not probably in the (unintelligible) especially when I grew up. Traveling is easier, different events are easier to go to, we keep thinking of different things to do. That it takes... there are too many opportunities, there are a lot of opportunities for us to do things. Some of them are going to lose. Those are the two things: society changes and then the aspect of gambling through simulcast.

File #10 (4:35)

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: Yes. I did. For me it was very good. I had a good time. I got to see a lot of my friends and actually visit with them that are from around the country. You know, normally it's "Hey, how you doin'" and I keep on going, got things to do, but this year I was able to visit, talk. So that was quite a bit different thing for me.

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: Oh, they live for it. You will not... We had... And they live for the whole prospect, aspect of the Jug. We had in 2011, er 9-11, 2001, we were the first quote major sporting event to take place after after the attack. We had several meetings to vote to decide whether we were gonna continue or just cancel it. We all decided we were gonna go ahead and do it and so we did. But the challenges there. First of all, half our people come from Canada, half the horses compete here come from Canada. Getting them across the border that week was quite a big challenge. We had, we had things where people weren't able to fly for a while, had a lot of people having to change their flight patterns or whatever to get here. So there were a lot of things we had to deal with, but one of the things that we dealt with in improving security et cetera was we hen we said we cannot just let people bring coolers into the grandstands. We're going to have to inspect them or limit them from bringing them. To compensate for that, we settled, we were gonna sell beer in the grandstands so people didn't have to bring their own beer. They didn't like that. (Laughs) They complained a lot about it. And that fall, I went to a race up at Woodbine in Canada, in Montreal, in Toronto, Canada and a bunch of people there who I know handed me a petition they had signed protesting the not being able to bring their beer into the grandstands. (Laughs) Thanked them for the thing. They did this on TV.

They don't like things changing. It's uh. Any time you do something like this, it's part of your background, part of your life, they don't wanna see change. "I've always parked here; don't make me not park here." That type of thing. Once you change a person's ability to do something it takes a while to get used to and I guarantee you they are not gonna like it when you first make them change. That's just the way we are. We don't like being told what to do, including me. But it's our job. So once we get through that, then, if you've done it right, how are we doing this to best get accomplished what we want to accomplish as far as safety or anything; and at the same time, we're addressing the needs of the patron as much as we can so that they can still get all of their activities, everything without drastically changing. And sometimes that is tricky. It takes a couple times. One thing we found is that we make a change that's gonna start this year, whatever that change is, you gotta stay with it for that year. You cannot make changes in the middle of the process of doing it because you don't have enough time to look around or we don't have the personnel to make changes like that. So you live with, live with your idea. You live with the rules until the next time. So then you can change.

File #11 (4:15)

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: The Jug is, is.. We're sort of a family. That we come from all over the country to do one thing here and celebrate it and we've developed friends that I've watched. People that show up one time a week a year and the person that sat next to them is from Saskatchewan and the other person that sits next them is from New York and they talk to each other like they're old friends because they've known each other a week after week, you know, here. And it's a family thing that... is doesn't have to be anything other than we all have a love for the Jug and we all have a love for horse racing. And it's people following the rules they set them. So. For instance, you'll see that they set chairs around this entire track and they'll be set 10, 12 people deep around the track --- first of all, that's not allowed anywhere in racing--- but, if you come in and they'll start doing these things setting them up normally by Labor Day, all the chairs are set in place. People show up, somebody comes in late goes to set a chair there, somebody else over here, "You can't go there 'cause that's John's area" He goes, "Move over here." We don't do any of that. We don't have any rules on that. The only rule we have is keep the chairs up so we can keep the weeds mowed.

But that kind of thing people work for and it just happens year after year. It's not something you're gonna see at a... normally any major professional sports site. It's just not gonna happen. So that's the family element that's good with the horse racing.

Q: (Unintelligible)

A: Yeah. And how we all come together, too. We're, we're...the group of us that run the...we're a small community. My wife, her father was a dairy farmer but his passion was harness racing and he owned harness racing, horses and that was my first involvement with actual horses going to the track right here and helping him train his horses. He's... I used to call him "uncle" but I don't think he's an uncle, I think he's a cousin: Rollie McNamara, was the county engineer back in the '40s. He designed the track. It was a very unique design. This track has a very unique design in that it's not very ---it's a half-mile track--- but it's got very wide turns. Shorter straightaways but wider turns so that what happens is the horse can go through that turn faster than it does on a normal half-mile track with tight turns. It was a very unique development but that is one of the reasons we are the world's fastest half-mile track. From that design, but, you know, my box in the grandstand now was his box from originally when they built the grandstands.

But it's family like that. I'm not a McNamara; I got to marry one. But people come together like that and its stays family.

File #12 (8:15)

A: The Jug is a unique race in that --- especially today---in that we call, I mentioned earlier, heat racing. Heat racing is when a horse has to complete more than one race in one day. Originally, our rules for the Jug, had to win two, two heats. And they ran different scenarios of that format, the way that was set up in the first four or five years. Like they'd have in one year we had horses split up, they had to win two races of their division and then they had to win two races of the other divisions and those horses came back to run a fifth race. Horse racing five times in one day?! It's one of the reasons is standard...you couldn't do that with thoroughbreds. Standardbred is a much more durable horse. It's bulkier, more muscular, and can last for a longer period of time. But as we've progressed it became standard that you had to win the Jug twice. If you win your division and came back and raced in the what we call the second heat, then you...if you win that race then you've won the two races. (Interrupted by sound of his cell phone. Laughs). Sorry about that.

So you win, if you win your second heat then that's the two wins so you're the Jug winner. But say we have divisions. The max we race is 10 horses per division, 30 horses total. So we have 3 divisions racing and you end up with 3 winners. Those 3 horses when we had a comeback in the second heat back with three winners, the three second-place horses, and the 3 third-place horses. So we have a field of 9 then racing the second time. If one of the winners of their division wins, then that's the Jug's won. If a horse that came in second wins that second heat, then we have 4 winners and but only one race each. So we bring those four horses back and race them against each other which will result in the winner of the Jug.

For county fairs that used to be a very standard format. That's what we do. That's why we have Standardbreds. But as time changed, as different wagering patterns came, it became cumbersome to be able to have all those races happen. Especially if...when we were broadcasting live we were on ESPN for 5 or 6 years and we had to hit...we didn't care, we knew approximately when--we gotta finish our races before sunset. We didn't worry about anything but then set up had to hit time schedules so that we were hitting the right schedule on time for ESPN to run the horses, the races before they showed an ad or something else. That was very, that was different to us: establishing a, establishing a solid time schedule and sticking with it. One year...plus they had to deal with the fact that we could do a "race off." A race off is what we call that fourth heat when we brought all the winners back. We'd call that a "race-off." That winner's gonna take it all. And we had to plan for that with ESPN, but they don't want to just have "Well, we might have a race-off, we might not have a race" here, et cetera. So what we did, we reached a deal with them: that we bought a 5-minute segment in their 6 to 7,---what is it, that sports show? Yes, SportsCenter. We bought a 5-minute section that could float in there so that if, in fact, we had a race-off we would break back into ESPN and we'd cover the whole thing. And lo and behold, the first year we did this, we had a race-off. (Laughs). So we got to do it and it worked out very well. It was the only time we had a race-off during that time. The reason we quit broadcasting, it just became too expensive. Too expensive for a little county fair that only raced 5 days a year to pay

for that production and that time on TV. But it was fun when we did it. But it was... you had to learn a lot of different things. Following schedules and that's helped us put schedules together.

Another change we made is we went...we no longer...a horse no longer has to win two races. They can win...come in in second or third in their division, come back to the race-off, and if they win the race-off, then they are the Jug winner because they raced against the best and won. We had to do that for...probably the biggest reason we had to do that is, that is for the horse. Over the course of years, the development of the horse, the breeding of the horse, has changed. Standardbred was a very heavy, bulky, muscular horse, but as breeding happened we always expected---what people with do--- breed this horse to be a little faster then I've got an edge. So we're gonna breed for speed and they did. They bred for speed. The loss is endurance. The faster you run a horse, the harder it is for him to come back and do that same thing. And it's the only race in the country now that they have to do that. So that we changed that from having to win two races to just qualify for the final and win the final. I think we'll stay there. I don't think we'll lose that because that's a very important part of the tradition. But that's...you know, it's different. The trainers, everybody in the business---some didn't like it, some did like it. We caught a lot of heck for it, making those changes. But, all in all, tried to make the change. Every time we do something, two things: make change so that it accommodates the fans as best we can and that it accommodates the horse as best we can. Because those are the two things that are important. We don't want to, don't want to subject the horse to unhealthy conditions and we want the people to have a good time.