

Transcription of the interview with Diane Winters

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Interviewer: Richard Leavy

Location: Delaware County District Library

Leavy: How old were you when you first attended the Little Brown Jug?

Winters: Oh my goodness. My first Brown Jug was in 1958 and I probably shouldn't tell you my age at that point. But it was 1958 was the first time that I attended the Little Brown Jug and at that time my cousin, Marilyn Evans ended up as outrider for the Little Brown Jug. So, watching her, watching the races, it caught on real quickly. But it was 1958 and she rode for 16 years.

Leavy: What were some of your first impressions of the Jug?

Winters: Oh the Jug...we are famous and Jug is the highlight of this community and this state but it also one of the premier races in the nation. So, highlights would be the speed of the horses, the attendance was huge and comradery between the drivers and the friendship of different people that came to Delaware.

Leavy: Do you have a lasting memory from 1958?

Winters: I do. As I said, with Marilyn being the outrider, I had my own special brush and I got to stand in the paddock and brush her horse and I had a job from that year forward.

Leavy: That's terrific. How often have you attended the Jug?

Winters: I have not missed any since 1958, not one.

Leavy: Not one?

Winters: Not one.

Leavy: In sickness and in health [Laughing]

Winters: Yes. Our family was kind of funny, we've had different issues happen over the years and nobody is sick on Jug Day. Not until 6 o'clock when the races are over [Chuckles].

Leavy: So you would go with family, with friends?

Winters: Started out with family, cousins, because everybody was active in 4-H. They showed hogs, horses, cattle, just everything. First it started with family, but of course as you age a little bit, you start going with friends.

Leavy: So you were part of the fair, as well as, having your job at the Jug race?

Winters: My 4-H club, that I was involved in, had 40 members, over half were cousins [Chuckles].

Leavy: It was a family affair?

Winters: It is a family. It is a family affair. We've had 4-H advisors. My uncle was on the fair board and 29 years ago, I got elected to the Delaware County Fair Board.

Leavy: Would you say in those years you have developed certain past times, certain rituals [Call to the Post plays].

Winters: I apologize that is my phone [Laughter].

Leavy: I can tell [Laughing].

Winters: I'm sorry.

Leavy: It's OK. But you know you are a horsewoman [Laughing].

Winters: I didn't even plan that.

Leavy: That's OK/ I interviewed Roger Huston.

Winters: Good friend.

Leavy: And in the middle of that interview, his phone went off. Do you have any idea what his ring is?

Winters: Same one I have?

Leavy: No, it's the Little Brown Jug song.

Winters: That's right. I can't hear that because of my job so this (song) attracts my attention real easy.

Leavy: It works. Anyway, are there any past times, rituals, things that, in your family make the Jug, sort of your own? Are there anything that you folks do?

Winters: Mom's fried chicken. Unfortunately she's passed away, but her fried chicken...it was just special fair week. It was just special fair week. Of course everyone loves their mother's potato salad, but there were certain things we had to have for our little pot luck.

Leavy: Well needless to say you have seen a lot of races. If you are thinking back to what you think were the most exciting, most surprising, the really, really memorable Jug races. Does anything come to mind?

Winters: Yes, Bret Hanover...my favorite...1965. There have been others since, people will say and even Roger (Huston) will say 'this is the best year,' 'this was the best year,' 'the best year.' That morning they had to peel the track. Meaning everything on top they just roll it to the top, off the top layer because at that point in time Delaware was not an all-weather track. So now we are, so we can race with some rain and so forth, but at that time they literally had to take off a lot of moisture, I mean dirt, off the track because of moisture, put it towards the top side and by three o'clock in the afternoon he was setting world records. The sun came out and we had to water the track.

Leavy: So it went from a swamp, to you had to water the track?

Winters: Yes.

Leavy: Same day?

Winters: Same say.

Leavy: Well, that's a memorable race.

Winters: Falcon Seelster. Roger announced and he might have mentioned that one. If you go to YouTube, you can look it up. Falcon Seelster and in Roger's famous voice, "if you are not on your feet, get up now." It just resonated across the whole fairgrounds. That horse was literally flying.

Leavy: Set a record, I think.

Winters: Yes he did...before the Jug [Laughing]. He raced, won the Senior Jug, a few races before the actual Brown Jug that day.

Leavy: So would you say that Bret Hanover is your favorite horse, or do you have another favorite horse?

Winters: Well, in do respect, yes I do and he is still standing in the barn. I have, as of today he is 33 and a half. I have owned him 32 and a half years. No one feeds a horse half their lifetime. And of course as life goes through, you are running out of days, running out of hours. We all are. I used him as an outrider, on the track, caught many run-a-ways and I also rode with that horse at the Red Mile in Lexington. He's just

a ton of speed. My favorite horse is still standing in the barn, of racehorses and the standardbreds, it Bret.

Leavy: And your 32 year relationship with the horse and his name is?

Winters: Oh geez...Booger.

Leavy: That's a perfectly good name.

Winters: Yes, because he was so ornery to break, I couldn't name him 'Peaches,' I couldn't call him "Mr. Ornery," so that name just stuck.

Leavy: Booger. OK

Winters: Nothing fancy.

Leavy: Nothing fancy. Is there a driver who you remember fondly or you think was particularly effective driver?

Winters: Oh yes. Because of riding at the Delaware races and the Jug for 37 years, some of the guys that drive, I have ridden with through their career. Again, it's kind of a family unit in some ways. John Campbell. Billy O'Donnell. We had Ron Waples. Ron Pierce. David Miller of some of the current ones. I have been out on the track as long as them [laughing].

Leavy: And you have just named the Wall of Fame.

Winters: I did. After I started that I thought 'oh, yeah, they are on the Wall of Fame.' Correct. Yeah. I worked with them here. I filled in at the Indiana at the Indianapolis State Fair for a few races because of a death in the family. The lady stepped aside and I went over there. Scioto Downs, the Senior Jug Jug Preview Week, down at Scioto.

Leavy: So you have seen a lot of Jugs and have seen some changes over the years. What would you say were some of the major changes that you have seen in this race?

Winters: The speed of the horses. Some people like the heat racing, some do not. The horses, definitely the speed of yesteryear to now. The sulkies, the quote unquote, the bike. They use different shoes on the horses. I get the opportunity to see those and some of those are a little different. Years ago it was all steel shoes, now some of them use aluminum. It's true in our life and it is also true in a horses life, are we healthier because of feed, or our food? Or are we healthier because of medicine and the veterinarians? It is kind of two fold for the horses and us. I would say speed is the number one factor, because these horses race and race serious all summer.

Leavy: Do you think that was a change for the better?

Winters: Pretty much. Pretty much. You always have to progress in life. You can't go backwards. You've got to go forward and it will keep any business alive, any sport alive. You've got to go forward.

Leavy: You mentioned that you were an outrider. So the speed of the horse, I would guess, plays a role in how you do your work. Could you talk a little about that?

Winters: So of my best catches have been between races because there are probably 40-50 horses on the track at any one time. They warm up, go back to the paddock and warm up again. Somebody might break a line. Somebody might have someone, like yourself, help hook them up and the driver does not check, check, check. Or the groom, they have to check every piece going back. If they are exercising and all of a sudden they have no contact with the horse's mouth. That horse is trained to go fast. So the horses I have used recently have a lot more speed than from way back. In outriding, some of the places they only use a parade marshal or a marshal, they'll check a lot of the horses as they go by. You are looking for loose lines, you look for, maybe someone drops a whip, whatever. You need to be able to off and on your horse quickly and get out of their way. But the gentlemen, the drivers will say 'I need help' or they just yell and you have to go. As we talk about, 'pick them up' we will reach over to the bridle or the rein and take a hold of them. Some of the horses are called 'pullers' and if they are going to be on the track five minutes, six minutes, seven minutes between races, or longer, the tension in the muscles they are getting tired they want to keep their muscles usable for during the race.

Leavy: That is a lot to think about.

Winters: Yes, when you are going after a horse, you are sitting on something that is running after a horse, that horse instantly wants to go faster. These two horses are talking to each other, like any horse does, any cow whatever. You are riding something that can out think you, basically, so you want to take a hold of the horse as quick as you can so you can 'back them off.' My horses that I used at the track, I do not say 'whoa.' I have another cue for them so they slow down, so I can slow the Standardbred down.

Leavy: Do you see some things that make the Jug really special? What would you say makes the Jug a special horse race?

Winters: Four turns as they call it. Turn one, right past the finish line. Then you go into turn two. Turn three on the far side and turn four coming into the stretch. We are a half-mile track and so people don't ship their horses here. They race at the Red Mile and other mile tracks. This is a half-mile track. The Pacing Triple Crown is a half-mile, a five-eighths and a mile. But the Jug is unique for half-mile and speed.

Leavy: Are there traditions that you think should never be changed about this race?

Winters: I would have to say that I am probably 'old school,' having known the Curly Smart's, the Hank Thomson's, Tom Thomson. It is embedded in me that the Jug should always be heat racing. The Jug should always stay in Delaware on a half-mile track.

Leavy: On Thursdays?

Winters: That's a toughie. That's a toughie because so many people now their job has changed. It is unique to have the major harness race on a Thursday afternoon in Ohio and not on the East Coast. I wouldn't change a thing.

Leavy: Really?

Winters: Again, I am a traditionalist for when it comes to that race.

Leavy: Some people attend the fair and they don't come over to see the Jug. Why do you think that is so?

Winters: You have your cattle, hog and sheep people, sewing, some fairs have archery and shooting, some don't. There is like an invisible barrier there at any county fair. I have attended 40 fairs, that's my top. At one time I attended 40 county fairs a year. That's a lot of road miles. I've shown horses all over the state, but you will see it at anyplace. I think ours is more pronounced because of...you have all the clientele from out of state, out of country and so forth. There is just a tradition of those people stay over there. I think we are bridging that as I see it from all the other fairs also. People are more interested in that. One of the things I do is as fair board directors, we take the Junior Fair Board and we put them on trolley and we travel all over the fairgrounds. It is wonderful, the kids as some of the greatest questions in the world. We are going to be OK in the future [chuckles]. I get clearance from the trackman and we take them out on to the race track. We stay up on the high side, top side and we drive quietly, there are no horses out there and I say 'now ask me questions.' The cutest thing in the world, they will see a little pebble, they will see just a little pebble and ask if they can put it in their pocket. They are so proud to to have that little piece of the racetrack. We go up into the announcer's stand. Those are the kids that go back to the next year to the actual races. And they go back, so they are building their own team to watch the fair and the races.

Leavy: I think you have anticipated my next question. In order for the Jug to continue in the future, to be sustained, what are some of the things you think that ought to happen, that ought to be done in order to make this a sustained tradition?

Winters: I would say with our bed tax money we need to upgrade facilities, restrooms. That is a must to be handicapped accessible. Even the grandstand, if we had an elevator to get people up and down to enhance their convenience. Going forward we need to be proactive in keeping our grounds upgraded to entice the people to travel that far. It is not cheap to ship horses here. Its 500 dollars or more per horse, if you would see the huge semi-tractor trailers that bring the horses in. It's not cheap to ship from the

east coast. Number one to get the people here, as far as racehorse people, the purse has to go up. It has to go up.

Leavy: This is a difficult question. Suppose that Delaware no longer had the Little Brown Jug. What impact would that have on you personally?

Winters: It would break my heart and this huge family, I have a hundred cousins on both sides, so our family would not be happy at all. Again, tradition of your community. It just needs to stay here.

Leavy: What impact do you think it would have on the county if there weren't the Jug?

Winters: It would play a factor on all your restaurants, grocery stores, rental of cars, hotels, motels that people use. Gosh, I wouldn't know what it wouldn't affect.

Leavy: Wide spread affect?

Winters: Yes and that is countywide.

Leavy: Not just Delaware?

Winters: Nope. The impact initially would be horrendous on the city, but there are people that stay clear down on 23 and 270. There's people that come that have to stay in Marysville. There's people that come to the races that stay in Marion, because everything in this immediate area is full.

Leavy: I just wanted to ask you some questions additionally about being an outrider. When did you first get a chance to be an outrider at the Jug?

Winters: 1980.

Leavy: How did that come to be?

Winters: My cousin retired and there was a person between us for one year. Hank Thomson and Tommy Thomson hired me, thirty seven years later...I had hip replacement and Orthopedic One was not real happy seeing me getting back on a horse, yet alone chasing loose ones at forty, forty-five miles per hour. I can't ride six hours a day like I used to, so to be sensible, even though my heart is still there. My heart will always be in it and to be sensible, as they say, you turn over the reins. You turn over the lines and walk away.

Leavy: And what year was that?

Winters: 2017.

Leavy: For an uninitiated person, how would you describe the tasks, the roles that an outrider plays?

Winters: First of all, I didn't realize until a lot of people told me that it was a dangerous job. I've ridden fast horses all my life. I was slowing them in different events and I got into running barrels. I love speed. So going on a racetrack and being able to put your ability to work and your horse's ability, it was a natural. I've gone through; I won't say I've gone through them. I have ridden a lot of horses in those 37 years and I have sold a lot of horses, because everyone wants 'that horse' and I would say, 'I have one at the barn I'd sell you.' 'No, I want that horse.' Sometimes it is a wise decision to go ahead and sell it. The gentleman at the barn, my big red horse, he's not going anywhere. It's just best that...he didn't go anywhere because he is very ornery to ride thus his name. He just needs to stay with me. You've got to have the ability watch who's where, whether they are coming at you, whether you cut across the center of the track or whether you go around. Some tracks still have a hub rail, most of them are gone now for safety reasons. With Delaware you've got everybody around you has access to the track. If you have the grooms jumping over the fence, now you add a second or third tier of things you have to watch. If you have a horse loose on the track that's running backwards, running the wrong way, that adds another issue. Please note that the best person in the world, bar none, is Roger Huston and he will instantly 'there's a horse down on the track, there's a driver down on the track, there's a horse loose.' I always know, I can tell when I hear his voice that if I didn't see it happen, I just look straight through my horses ears. He is already locked in on where the wreck is. I sued to sit in the paddock all the time. They would throw the gate open and we would go from zero speed, just standing still, to the third jump I am riding forty miles per hour. The difficult problem is if you have to take a hold of one of the race horses and they need help to run behind the starting gate. This is where teamwork comes into play with all the drivers. John Campbell has taught. Billy O'Donnell has taught, the list goes on and on. When you have an outrider in there and they need a horse positioned into number five. They are watching me, I'm watching the horses, every one of them and when the driver tells you and he'll yell, 'I've got them, I need to go on,' or something like that. You can let go of the horse but you've got to get out of the pack. The guys are real good. I'll drop back without having a wheel to run over me. They shoot by me. I mean it is intense behind the gate and I head for the infield. Ron Waples, who is on the Wall of Fame, the wall up there, we're running down the backside of the track and he's says 'don't let go of me, don't let go of me.' I said, 'I won't.' He said, 'will you stay with me forever and ever until death do us part?' Now the whole crowd is laughing like crazy, that is what is neat about Delaware. Everyone hears everything you say and talk to the driver and they talk to me the gentleman in the starting car. It's just teamwork, even though they are out there to win, and everyone is yelling that 'he just proposed to you.' I said, 'He's married.'" We have laughed about that for many years.

Leavy: I really appreciate you being a part of this interview. I do want to say one thing, that we have done some interviews and asked people 'what's special.' What you just commented on was mentioned by others and that is unlike other races...the audience, the fans are right there and it gives a different, more intimate sense about 'this is a race with the people.'



Winters: We have speakers, surround sound, OK? Commercial tracks only have speakers in front of the grandstand on the front side and on the back side it's just a high wall so it's like riding at a concert and riding in the woods, noisy to quite it is really extreme. I like surround sound [chuckles].

Leavy: You were honored in 2015 as a Lady Pace Honoree, what was that like for you?

Winters: Magical. A dream. I never, I never imagined it because some of the other ladies previous to me have; you know...their families have contributed a lot of financial dollars. I just ride a horse fast [laughing]...It was special.

Leavy: Is there any other thing, topic that you would like to comment on?

Winters: The All Horse Parade. Ask me what you want.

Leavy: Let's start with the beginning of the horse parade. How did that get started?

Winters: A gentleman by the name of 'Red' Reed worked for the *Delaware Gazette*, Hank Thomson – Tommy Thomson. We had the window decorating contest and I forget what else started way back then. He wanted to do a horse parade, to kind of kick off the fair. It didn't quite work the way we wanted to. In August they asked he to find some horses and have a parade. While Lyle Byers took the draft horses and I took all the riding horses. We ended up with sixty horses in one month to do a parade. We started out down by St. Mary and marched straight up Sandusky Street to the fairgrounds. We had a traffic jam. So the powers that be and so forth with the Jug Festival, the Texas Bar-B-Que and so forth, they wanted to try it one more time. Well we went to 150 horses the second year and people trying to unload their cattle, people trying to bring their hogs in, the sewing projects and baked goods folks couldn't get to the fairgrounds. So the third year we went to the week before and I suggested that we go to a circle parade. Start and stop at the fairgrounds and that eliminated people shuttling trucks and trailers back and forth across town, or ride your horse back. We went to 200 horses in year number three and religiously we have been over two, three, four hundred horses every year. Don Shakney, he and I co-chaired it a few years. He's passed away. I probably chaired it 28 out of the 33 years. It's a team work. My sister, Debbie, Monte Harris - that's retired from the police department, Susan Barr – Honor Flight and the list goes on. My other half, Pat Allen, he helps tremendously either directly with the parade or behind the scenes. Jeff Wolfe from over in Bellefontaine, he has all the speakers. We have three different speaker set-ups. Cashman's donates the wagons for the speaker set up. Larry Garrett with Mail Pro, he helps with marketing. So we have a pretty good team put together. Brett Cain, he used to be from Delaware, now he's from Marysville, he jumps in with money for sponsorship. Our two big sponsors right now are the Eagles, they donate the most money, and Byers, they are number two as far as financial aid for us to put this on. We have Richwood Bank. We just have some really good sponsors to help put this on.

Leavy: Did you ever, when it started, imagine that it would expand to this?

Winters: That is a scary question [laughing]. My goal was a thousand horses, OK? And the reason why, Tucson, Arizona has a rodeo parade and I wanted to really show off the horses. So when we hit 500 one year and we had four eight-horse hitches, we had this, we had this. We actually had to stop the front of the parade so the tail end could get off the fairgrounds. Along with that traffic control with the police department becomes a little more intense. We always thank them for what they do to get us in and out safely. The squads are on call at all times. We have a veterinary or two from Ohio State University; they come up and have veterinarians on site from 12 to 5 in case anything happens. Fortunately we have only had a couple of minor (things). But we have had people just show up with a lame horse. That's not going to happen, they can't participate. We have quite a list of rules. Anything from proper clothing on to no politicians to you horse has to be clean and you have to be clean. No cussing, no this, no this. We don't anybody throw things off their wagon or from their horse, because one year we had Frisbees being given away and the next thing we know we have Frisbees coming back at us. There's just some things...they're an animal. The bands are not supposed to, once and a while they do, downtown on Winter Street they are not supposed to play. Just because that is the tightest spot for the horses to march through so we try to keep things a little more normal down there. It is 2 point 4 miles of parade. Like I said, the goal was a thousand. I really wanted to put Delaware on the map [laughing].

Leavy: Well it is the largest horse parade, what, east of the Mississippi?

Winters: Non-motorized. You have some others that have the horses and the fire trucks, classic cars and such. We're just strictly horses, mules and donkeys.

Leavy: I am thinking that Diane, you are a traditionalist and a dreamer, both.

Winters: I think that's a good thing.

Leavy: I think so too. Well thank you, thanks very much for participating in this.