

Juneau County  
4-H Oral  
History Project

Janice Seebecker

Interview

7/26/2013

Janice Seebecker Interview

Interviewer: Kierstin Schmid

Also in Room: Emily Rebhan

Schmidt: Today's date is July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The time is 1:00pm. We are at the Hatch Public Library in Mauston, Wisconsin. My name is Kierstin Schmid, and I am interviewing Janice Seebecker about her years involved in the 4-H program. Also in the room with us is Emily Rebhan. This interview is a part of the Juneau County 4-H Oral History Project. Thank you so much for being here with us.

Seebecker: You're very welcome.

Schmidt: So, when was the first time you were involved in 4-H?

Seebecker: Fifty-two years ago. I started because one of our leaders wanted to step down, and she was a General Leader. So I took her spot. I had little children who were way too young for 4-H, but they came with me all the time. And I, over the years, I had many 4-H members, at the point where I was after thirty-five years, I began to see second generation come in. We had a really nice place. We had a little hall out in the country, in our township, that we used for our 4-H meetings. In the winter, we would build a fire in this big, big old wood stove so we could meet there. Over the years, however, the township came in and told us the stove and the chimneys were no longer safe. So then we began meeting in the winter time in homes, usually mine. We had for many years a summer softball team that played all the other clubs in the county. We moved from town to town to town, every single Sunday, all summer long. The kids loved it, it was a lot of fun. We always entered what was then Music and Drama, and it was separate. Music was one time of the year, Drama was always in February. And I wrote almost all the plays the kids did. And I took a spin off from the regular fairy tales, like the Wizard of Oz, the Seven Dwarves, all those little fairy tales, and I wrote it so it would fit 4-H. Twice we won, and got to go to Milwaukee to the State Fair. But we got an awful lot of blue ribbons otherwise, but you have to be tops to get to State Fair. The one that we did at State Fair was called "The Bum", and not a single word was spoken. There was just this bum that came in, on stage, and laid down on a bench, and put a newspaper over his face. Throughout the play, various people came in, and touched him a little bit to move over, there wasn't enough room. And finally he got to the end where he had like an inch to sit, so in order to get his bench back he started scratching, and itching. And then one would look at him, and catch it, and pretty soon the whole bench was gone, but it was really funny. And the Bum laid back down, and that was it. That was it. We had a chili supper for the neighborhood every year in October. At the time then we would install our officers, and usually one of the Junior Leaders would come and install for us. We always invited the agent, whoever was here at the time, and pull a little joke on them, a silly little thing. And our chili supper, two of our moms would make all the chili. A couple of them would make all the bowls, and then every family had to bring pies. And then we took a collection. That's how we made our money.

At Easter time we met, and boiled the eggs and colored them and then we made Easter baskets that would have eggs, little bits of candy, not much, a pound of butter, a pound of cheese, little treats, apple, orange, banana, and then we had to deliver those to the neighborhood, mostly to the elderly. And so the kids

enjoyed that. Oh, and then a community project, there were two cemeteries behind our hall. By the way, we were Lindina Busy Bees, so we called our hall, "Bee Hive".

Rebhan: Fun.

Seebecker: And, there's a cemetery behind there, so all summer long as our community project, we mowed the cemetery. Finally we asked the township to please buy us a riding mower because families didn't like to bring theirs all the time, you know. And it was quite a chore. Sometimes, you had to do it every two weeks, sometimes a little sooner, if it didn't rain a little longer, but it was still a busy, busy summer. Then we got paid a hundred dollars by the township at the end of the summer for that.

Let's see, what else did we do? We entered every contest that they had, countywide, like Speaking, Dress Review, Cooking, I'm trying to think. All of the contests, we had kids who would enter them. It was really fun. I loved children. It was really difficult to resign. Well, not resign, retire. I had been a music teacher at St. Pats for seventeen years. And I retired from there, and I thought, maybe, I should retire from both. Which frees up my every Thursday night. (Laughing) My every Monday night once a month. And I do have more time for my husband. I still give piano lessons to forty-four students. So, I'm still in touch with all the little ones, the young ones. And I had six children of my own. They are all married, and now I have nineteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Rebhan: Congratulations.

Seebecker: Anything else?

Schmid: So, how did you find out about being a leader for 4-H.

Seebecker: Because my husband was in 4-H when he was young. His sister was a leader over there for sewing, and because I was a piano player, and did a lot of music, you know, she would have me come over every year and do the plays, music, drama and the chili supper. And I would be there practicing with them, and I thought, well, this is silly. I might as well be here all the time. So, when she decided to quit, I said, well, I'll be the General Leader. So that's how it happened. But my husband still has all of his green record books. I don't know if they are green anymore or not, but...

Rebhan: Wow.

Seebecker: Yeah, all the record books.

Schmid: So, did you have any fair memories that you had with your club, or...

Seebecker: Fair memoires. Yeah, we always had a booth. Oh, sure, lots of times cattle would get loose and you had to chase them all over. (Everyone laughing) We had one young boy who had beef, we chased him all the way up to town. He got out at the fairgrounds, got up on the highway, and came right into town. Beef are hard to catch you know. Once they get going, they are quite fast. Let's see. My son as a senior in high school had a cat that took Grand Championship. (Everyone laughing) Of course it was my

cat, but anyway. And everyone teased him, of course. Here's this great big boy, he's really tall too, and here he is with this cat. (Everyone laughing) But he did get Grand Champion.

We made a lot of friends with all the other, I've been here so long that we've gone through so many 4-H agents that you make friends with them, and their families, and so on. I went to college with one of Judy Kennedy's cousins, I think. I don't think it was her brother. We had a lot of fun.

And we worked the food stand. Every year we had the Sunday morning shift. That was from eight to two. But I always had to get there by seven to get everything ready, like the coffee pot had to be going. And we had that schedule for many, many years. And it worked out really well. The only problem was that at noon we lost probably about ninety percent of the kids because they had to go get ready for the parade. And they were all in band. So then we pulled in all moms and dads. We did it.

Rebhan: Make it work.

Seebecker: We made it work. It was fine and a lot of fun. It's so educational. These kids, I watch these kids that as they grew up went off to school, off to college, graduated. Some came home, some did not. But just the poise, just the assurance that they had, confidence in themselves. And I know that they got it in from 4-H.

Rebhan: Of course.

Schmid: So how do you feel 4-H has changed since you were a leader?

Seebecker: The state has stepped in and made a lot more work for us. More forms, more details. Now you have to have, well we did have to have background checks, but now I think you do it more than once a year for your leaders. The one thing that I just found out last night, from the gal who took over my club, they are not going to do the food stand the way they did by club, they are going to do it by family. That kind of bothered me. Because what if, and you had to be sixteen to eighteen to work the cash register or in the kitchen. What if you're a family with little kids ten and under? What do they do? Do you double up with other families? I didn't ask her, but we'll see how it all comes out this year.

Schmid: Yeah, that's something new that they are trying this year. Are there anything's that are the same, that you think are good that they are the same since you were a leader, at all?

Seebecker: Yeah, the projects. Everybody would sign up for what they wanted and I would go to the office and pick up all those little booklets. We don't do that anymore because the country had to pay for those. And now, if you want them, they are there, but you have to pay for them, or the club could buy them for you. But most of that stuff, when you're a leader you get packets for whatever you want to be a leader in, and when you hold your project meetings, you teach them from what you have there. They don't really need those books anymore.

The values are all the same. Head, Hands, Heart, Health, all of that. That will never change. That's a forever thing.

Schmid: So, what ways are you still involved in 4-H right now?

Seebecker: My grandchildren. I helped them out at festival. What did they do? They did some music things, anyway. I played for them. And when you do that, you get them together to practice, you know, two, three, four times. Let's see, who did I help? Oh, at one time we had shirts, you know for Busy Bees, that had a big bee on the front, and I always saved them at my house and brought them out at fair time. So I gave those all out to the kids there. Now the club is much bigger. Much bigger, which I am very happy about, because there are more kids, you know. But all they have to do is call, and I'll be there.

Rebhan: You never really leave, never. (Laughing)

Schmid: I assume you were 4-H.

Rebhan: Oh yes. I put in my ten, twelve, fifteen years, whatever it was.

Seebecker: Eleven.

Rebhan: But you're in it even before you're "in it" because you come along...

Seebecker: Oh yeah, my children, just think now. My oldest was not old enough to join, then I had a little girl and a set of twins. They were babies. They came with me all the time. Then as each one got older, and the twins got older, I got another little baby, and then two years pass and I had another little baby. There were all these little kids, but by now, two of them are old enough to join. And at one time, our family alone had thirty-two head of Holsteins at the fair. Which left like four in the barn to milk. (Laughing)

Rebhan: I was going to say...

Seebecker: Yeah.

Schmid: So, were there any life lessons that you felt were really important in 4-H? That you thought it was really important for the kids to learn those types of things, or that have changed you?

Seebecker: Believe in yourself, and if you want to do it, you can. Never say can't.

Schmid: So, what ways, has 4-H kind of...you said you were installing your officers at your big...

Seebecker: Chili supper.

Schmid: Chili supper. So, were there any weird things that you did with that? Because I know that our club kind of does a theme...

Seebecker: We used candles. We always had the candles. And a lot of times, like the old officers would stand here, and the new ones here, many, many times one of the older ones was elected for somebody over here, so they had to switch back and forth, you know.

Rebhan: Is it okay if I ask questions to?

Schmid: Oh yeah.

Rebhan: So you were talking about how you had booths at the fair every year, so what were some of the themes that you would do for that?

Seebecker: We always used whatever the fair theme was, and then had to go from there.

Rebhan: Okay.

Seebecker: To tell you the truth, I don't remember. (Laughing) I don't remember themes anymore, but we had a big scrapbook of everything, you know.

Rebhan: So, somebody was in charge of taking pictures every year.

Seebecker: Oh yeah. At our hall, up until the time that I retired, the back hall was filled with every ribbon the club won. We were National Conservatory Members. I don't know if you know what it is.

Rebhan: No.

Seebecker: It was a rainforest in South America. And every year we sent twenty dollars, and so we got a certificate, you know. And that twenty dollars was to protect the endangered species down there. We won the Quality Milk Award I don't know how many times. Those were on this wall. This wall here, when my father passed away, some of his money went to purchase a clock in his memory, with the big 4-H clover in the middle.

Rebhan: Of course.

Seebecker: Let's see. Oh, the piano, on top of the piano were all of the trophies, because with all the cattle that we had, our club could do a club herd. We had many, many trophies from that. We had the club herd. What else did we win a trophy for as a club? Oh, well, all the softball. The softball, all summer long. And we got lots of trophies through that. However now, they decided they wanted to do something different. Because I wasn't there anymore, do it their way. We took all these ribbons down, painted the wall, and then made a scrapbook out of all the ribbons. So that's very nice, you know. And each ribbon, if drama, it will say drama. For your area in the barn, for your beef, for your hogs, we had, our kids all had hogs to, beef, hogs, sheep, chickens, rabbits, there are judges who go around and judge how you keep your area looking. And we won that many times. So those trophies were all up there. Let's see.

And right now we are really excited, because right now, hopefully, in the near, near future, the fairground will look very much different than it does today.

Rebhan: We certainly hope so.

Seebecker: So far, it looks different, the driveways are all different, closed off, the trees are gone. And hopefully the Holig fund will be able to build that dairy barn.

Rebhan: So, you talked about, you had a club herd. How did that work, I don't think you can...

Schmid: Yeah...

Rebhan: We don't have that now?

Seebecker: Oh yeah you do.

Rebhan: We do?

Seebecker: Look in the fairbook.

Rebhan: Okay. How does it work?

Seebecker: You have to have four different exhibitors from your club, and then four animals from different families. So, let's say that...or is it five animals? I don't know, look in the fairbook, it's in there. So, let's say that two of the animals from one of the kids were really top notch, blue ribbon winners. You could pull someone else from your club to help lead that one animal out. And they go out, and stand them all out like this, in rows, each club herd is all in a row. And the judge goes up and down, looking around, and sometimes he makes them move all around.

Rebhan: Sure.

Seebecker: Five at a time, going like this (motioning with hands), you know. And that's what it is.

Schmid: Wow.

Seebecker: And it's excellent, even if you had, like, one year we had junior calf, senior calf, heifer, one two year old cow, four year old cow, so it went like that (motioning with hands). But you, and then you had to have one person who was club herd Director. So we would always pick somebody little, you know, with a brush, and all they have to do is keep walking around and brush the tails. And that makes them feel really important.

Rebhan: Oh sure. (Everyone laughing)

Seebecker: So that's the club herd.

Schmid: That sounds like so much fun.

Seebecker: It is. Yeah. It's usually at the end of the day, after all the judging is done. And then they pull in the club herds.

Rebhan: It sounds much more relaxed than the individual...

Seebecker: Yeah, it's not as tense.

Rebhan: No.

Seebecker: No. And it's not quite like you're going around the ring, and try to watch the judge, and smile, and keep on the right side of the animal, you know, and all and all of a sudden it's going to get swonky, or go potty in the middle of the floor, (Everyone laughs) which is embarrassing, because you've got to stop, and its life. But it's fun.

Schmid: You said something about softball.

Seebecker: We had a softball team.

Schmid: Really.

Seebecker: Um-hum. Cheery, always, Cheery and us Busy Bees were always rivals.

Rebhan: Oh dear.

Seebecker: One year they would win the championship, and the next year we would win get it. Orange Mills. Lyndon Pioneers. At that time, Sumi Linda. Ridge Runners. Every club. And sometimes we would be there until five o'clock. You know, you meet at noon, right after church, and wherever you were going to be, any field. And then you'd have your game, and maybe you'd have two, you know, to get them all in. And the kids loved it; Mom and Dad not so much because it kind of ruined every Sunday all summer. (Everyone laughed) But, did it for the kids.

Rebhan: That's what I think 4-H is. With all the parents that I've met, you just admire them so much. (Laughing)

Seebecker: And I just had such nice families in mine. There're still there. All I had to do was ask. Oh sure. Costumes, I had a lady who made costumes galore. Never bothered her a bit. Whatever you need, I'll make 'em. We did Mary Poppins one year. She made all the stovetop hats, just like that, and the brooms, like the guys had, like the bushel broom, you know. Let's see. I had, my daughter was Mary. We did the Wizard of Oz, and she made a lot of costumes there. My other daughter was the wicked witch. She had really long hair, it had never been cut. So we braided it the night before wet. And that day we took it out, and it was all like this. And when she got to the spot, you know, where she says, "I'm melting", she

could melt, she melted. She's limber. (In the wicked witch's voice) "I'm melting! I'm melting!" Down she went, and her gown went right over the top of her, she just laid there. That's the one that went to State! (Everyone laughs)

And one of the Franke boys, you know the Fankes, he made a huge rainbow, and he put Christmas lights in behind it, the twinklers, and he had it set up in back. Oh it was really pretty. It was very nice.

Rebhan: So when you went down to State Fair for that, you would just go down for the day? Is that how it would work?

Seebecker: Yes. You put it on one time. Now, you have to do it twice. Yeah. And I don't think any more you can, see there were rules then, if you had a play, you had to have thirty minutes. Today, I don't think, with a play you can go any longer than twenty. I don't think so, keep it short. That's because after a while when they didn't have so many of either, they put the two together, but then you ended up being till six o'clock at night, and half your crowd would leave, you know. And the judge is sitting there for long until that time, and that's really hard. Because every event had to go back and talk to the judge. And then there was a big argument one time because they wanted to be able to do individual things. And somebody thought, well, that doesn't sound like club. At least if you had two, it could be club. But they went with the single, and it went very well. She still represents, or he represents, their club. So at that point, I really like it because I had so many students who were piano players, and I entered them in everything. (Laughing)

Rebhan: I have a question. So you've done this for years, and you've watched kids literally grow up in this program, so is there to you, just looking back at all those kids, how do you feel 4-H helped them develop as leaders?

Seebecker: Well, right now I see three of my 4-H members as leaders of that club. Two have become school teachers, and you need to be a leader type for that. Two to four of the boys run big farms now which takes lots of thinking, financial, that kind of thing.

Rebhan: So it's just those life skills you think of just being in the program...

Seebecker: Yes. It just helps build... their inner being. And it just gets better and better and better. And when they go out into the world they can use it.

Schmid: So, where there any funny stories that you can think of, besides the ones that you already told us?

Rebhan: Besides the animals getting out. (Everyone laughs)

Seebecker: Let me see.

Rebhan: There is just so many that...

Seebecker: Oh yeah. Yes, I don't know how funny this is, because she wouldn't like it. There was a young gal. Her two older brothers and an older sister were in 4-H. And this was her first year. And of course I had something for everybody when we had a program. Everybody had to do something. And so she was going to sing with two of the little kids. And she'd get up on stage and sing and cry. The tears would run. But you would hear her singing. And over the years, this lasted until she was in like fifth grade. Or farther. She just couldn't get up in front of people. Today, she's an officer in the marines, what are the lady marines, whatever they are, she's an officer. And I'm sure that she stands up in front of people and does stuff... (Everyone laughs) But the whole audience used to laugh at her, because, it was funny because she was crying and singing. At the same time, you know. And she always knew what she was supposed to say.

Rebhan: So what kinds of projects were your kids involved in?

Seebecker: My children? Arts and Crafts, Dairy, Hogs, Chickens, Rabbit or Poultry, Rabbit... wait, we had a pet sheep but we never took it... Cooking, Gardening, Flowers, Sewing... that's probably all of them. All I can remember is the year I had Cindy was three, and Cathy was a baby, and there's a picture of me, they put it in the paper, I had fifty-two entries besides being a leader of that club and having little babies. I only entered for three or four more years after that and then it got to be too much, you know. I let the kids do it, I couldn't and because I'd have to go out and help, and get up with, six of them, showing, get up at like three in the morning and go out and fog it with a flashlight to pick cows for that day. One year, (everyone laughing) one year the pickles, no tomatoes, the tomatoes, they were bringing them in, and they had a big bucket because they are all going to enter. All six of them were going to enter the same tomatoes from the patch.

Rebhan: Oh yes.

Seebecker: And Cindy had the nicest... the stem broke off. She Elmer glued it back on. (Everyone laughs)

Rebhan: Did the judge notice?

Seebecker: Never said a word. This never happened in my club, but it did happen when we were standing at the woodworking. Oh yeah, my boys all had woodworking. The little boy had a bird house. And the judge said to him, well, what is so nice about this house? Because the back is removable and you can clean it out. Well, let's open it up and see. There was a nest in it.

Schmid: Oh!

Rebhan: Uh-no!

Seebecker: So it was last year's! (Laughing) Which, my little guy had a birdhouse right behind him, and his birdhouse was kind of crooked. And I said, see, aren't you glad you didn't hang it up? All sorts of silly things. Cotton candy all over your face, and they call you into the ring and you don't have a wash cloth. (Everyone laughs) Eating. We always, we hardly ever ate at the food stand because with six

children it got expensive. So I always packed a picnic basket, and we would eat, sit down on a show box and eat there.

Let's see. When my twins were in sixth grade, we got a telephone call from a lady in Chicago who wanted her daughter to be able to spend a week on the farm, because this girl loved animals, and she was going into fifth grade. No, my kids were in sixth grade, she was in fifth. And it was a girl so it would match Tammy. So we wrote back and said, yeah, we would love to have her. So the parents brought her up. To be sure that everything would be okay they took a motel in town and stayed overnight. And this girl did not want to go home. At the end of the week, she stayed the entire summer. We had to send her back the day before her school started, her parents come to get her. The minute there was a day off, or a vacation, she was back. She lived with us for six years. And one year for Easter we gave her a baby pig, in her basket, and took it out in the pig pen. And she raised that pig to be, oh gosh, great big pig. And she said, what am I going to do with Charlie? And I said, you know, you can't keep him, dear. She said, yeah. I said you can't keep him. And she said, can't we breed it? It was a girl by the way, and she named it Charlie. And I said, you can, but you made such a pet out of it, if this pig has piglets, she apt to be really mean. And you would have to be careful because she can out power you. So, she said, okay, well, what will we do with it? And I said, you really have to sell it. (In little girl's voice) "I don't want to be here when you do that." And so one day they all went to town and brought the pig, and we handed her the check. "Charlie?" I said, yeah. One of the things you have to learn on a farm- things don't last forever. They are like people. We all die.

Rebhan: I just find it fascinating that she comes and she just doesn't go home. So she came up every summer?

Seebecker: Every summer for six years. And every Christmas. Christmas vacation, Easter vacation, teacher's convention. Sometimes, she had her parents driving her here, letting her stay two days, and then driving back to get her. Once, well, finally I invited the parents to stay, you know. And they were very nice people. God, they bought our kids a giant swimming pool, huge, as big as this room. And we've had it for years and years and finally we took it down. (Everyone laughs) There wasn't anyone to swim in it anymore, they all grew up. But they were such nice people. And she still comes. She's married now with three children. Her husband is a doctor, and she still comes to see us all the time. I get a Mother's Day card, a Father's Day card for Harold.

Rebhan: So, she was obviously at the fair.

Seebecker: Oh yes, she entered. We bought her a pure-bred calf from the Carters. She had that calf, it stayed in our barn for, well, all of those six years. And then I said, you know it was a good milker, and so I said, do you want to keep it here in your name, or what do you want? And she said, yeah, keep it in my name. When you finally have to sell it, send me the money.

Rebhan: Okay then!

Seebecker: So we kept it, well, we had the milk from it, so we made off with it.

Rebhan: So she showed it, the cow, did she show anything else, vegetables?

Seebecker: Horses. When she came, the first question she said, could I bring my horse up here? And I said, well, yeah, because we had horses. Oh god, we showed horses too. And I said, yeah, (in a little girl's voice) and my mom has one too, could that come too? We'll help buy the hay. So they brought her two horses. They bought her pet chicken, Mildred. She did bring her ferret.

Rebhan: Oh no.

Seebecker: But I didn't like him because he stinks.

Schmid: Yeah.

Seebecker: Musky smell.

Rebhan: Was he, he wasn't in the house?

Seebecker: In a cage in her room. And I didn't like it. Finally I said to her, Cheryl, you've got to send him home with your mother. I don't want him here anymore. The other thing she had was tarantula, and I wouldn't let her bring that at all. But she had, but pets, oh my god, she had cats, dogs, yeah, and her mom and dad retired, and moved all the way to Tomahawk, I believe. Cheryl in Green Bay.

Rebhan: What was her last name?

Seebecker: Kapple.

Rebhan: And she's married now. So, what is her last name now?

Seebecker: Smyth. S-M-Y-T-H.

Rebhan: Cool.

Seebecker: Her husband's a doctor. She has her horses up there, and her daughter is a horse rider. They had, I don't know if they do it anymore, costumes, horse costume party.

Schmid: Oh, I think we do that with the cows now.

Rebhan: Like, dress up a cow.

Schmid: Yeah.

Seebecker: Well, they did it with horses.

Schmid: Oh.

Seebecker: So that, a lot of the trophies came from there. One year Tammy was Little Bo Peep. So that night, her and Cheryl, they were always procrastinating at stuff, could never get it done in time... took this big sheet, put it out on the dining room floor with balls of cotton, I don't know how many I bought, and they Elmer glued it, the whole big sheet, you know for the horse, so the horse was the sheep. Went to pick it up in the morning, and it was glued to the floor. Now there's a funny one.

Rebhan: That is a funny one. (Everyone laughing)

Seebecker: One year she was the Farmer in the Dell. So she had a farmer's outfit on, she latched a spot over the horse, she had her bucket, and a three legged stool, when she got out to the center of the ring, she sat down on her stool, the horse stood there, you know, and she was milking it, she got up, took out a glass of milk and gave it to the judge. (Everyone laughs) She got a trophy.

Rebhan: That was a really good idea.

Seebecker: All those years, and you had to think of something different every year. You know, it was really funny, oh gosh. Now they dress up cows, yeah.

Rebhan: Was there a transition for her, coming from Chicago, and now she's on a farm, was there any transition for her to get used to it?

Seebecker: A little bit. The first day, her mother said to me, out in the kitchen she says to me, now she's really shy, so don't worry if she doesn't talk. Well, she's got all these other kids in the house, she can't help but talk. Don't pick on, don't step on my foot, get out there, she had to talk. But what was funny was like an hour or two after they were there, I handed her two sheets and a pillow case and I said, Cheryl, go upstairs, go to the far end and you're going to share a room with Tammy, and make your bed. And she looked at her mother, and her mother looked at me and said, she's never made a bed. And I said, well, she's gonna now. Tammy, go with her and show her. I mean, everything that she couldn't do, by the time she was done, she did it, and then some. Cooking, her and my twins, they would go places at night, because now they are old enough they can drive. Come home, and the deadline was midnight. On my door is a chime, and when you open the door the string pulls, and when you shut it, it zings. Well, that was my hint, you know, if I couldn't hear that, they weren't home in time. They would be banging down in the kitchen, and I would peak down, and here they are making macaroni and cheese.

Rebhan: At midnight.

Seebecker: Yeah, that was their favorite meal. I don't know how many boxes of that we went through. Macaroni and cheese. But it was fun.

Rebhan: Was she enrolled in 4-H to then?

Seebecker: Oh yes. She'd be in your records.

Rebhan: Cool.

Seebecker: She showed her horse all those years.

Rebhan: I have another question. You said that you exhibited at the fair, so what did you show? I assume that you weren't showing animals, were you?

Seebecker: Not me, well, chickens.

Rebhan: Well, that does count for animals.

Seebecker: Canning, baking, sewing, vegetable garden, flowers...I don't know, fifty-two items. Quilt. I made a quilt. Pillow. See, in sewing, there is a lot of different categories. Potholder, crocheted, no, knitted potholder.

Rebhan: And back then, it wasn't face-to-face judging. It was Danish, even for the kids. So, did you ever have a kid, that would, worked, and your kids even, work really hard on a project, and then they don't get the ribbon that they wanted?

Seebecker: Oh sure.

Rebhan: So how did you deal with that?

Seebecker: You learn to live with disappointment. And okay, so it's just like, so you made a mess out of your paper. And I say, I know that you could have done this better. However, I really like your penmanship, and maybe you needed to arrange it. Another words, you get criticized, but you also put something good at it. And if you're a good judge, on the back of the thing you'll put something good if you don't give them a good mark.

Rebhan: Or what you would have liked to see different.

Seebecker: Timmy made me a rooster, sawed it out of wood for woodworking. It's still hanging in my kitchen. And he nailed it with every kind of nail and screw or button, not button, metal thing. Part of the tail was a roundhead nail this big, one was a little one, and some little square things. You would have to see it to believe it, but it's absolutely gorgeous. That went to State Fair. My daughter, his twin sister is an artist, and so she painted, her very first painting went to State Fair, and that is hanging in my upstairs wall. And every time she goes up, she goes, Mom, get rid of some of that stuff. I mean, she paints beautifully. And so, you know, everything in the house is done by her.

Rebhan: So, what was the painting...

Seebecker: Her painting was a little girl. And you can tell it, it's a little girl painting, but, it's good. It's not like, you know, a scribbled mess. It was very good. And she does every medium.

Rebhan: So, were you a project leader in your club to, then?

Seebecker: Sewing. One little girl was going to make curtains for her bedroom. But there was a pattern for the material. Well, to make it look right you measured the window and then ever so far you've got to make sure the pattern matches before you put it together. Well, we got it all pinned. She sat at my sewing machine, and I said, now all you have to do is sew a nice straight line to put the two pieces together. (In a little girl's voice) What if I sew my finger? I said, you can't sew your finger, look at the pressure foot it's only a half an inch high. So she put it down and I watched her go a little ways. I went back off to go do something and I heard, "Come here! Come here!" I walked in and she's got the needle right through her thumb. She put her thumb underneath that pressure foot. How it got under there I have no idea. The needle was down in there. You can't be doing this. You can't be doing this. Back the needle out. And then I called her mom and said I feel terrible, but I said, Sandy sewed her thumb. Well, she took her in to the doctor, and they gave her a shot, but other than that they never did anything to it. They said it would heal and it did. I felt so terrible. I told her you couldn't sew your finger but she did.

I helped them with grounds and we did that through the cemetery. But then you were able, at that time you were able to get free trees. It was called Trees for Tomorrow, in the camp up north that my kids went to. I don't think they give them free anymore. I think you have to order them and pay for them.

Rebhan: You might. But I think I've seen the pictures for that.

Seebecker: Okay. So when they were free, we went out and the border of our cemetery and edged people's property over here. So we had gotten permission, and we planted these little pines all along there and had to keep them watered. We lost a couple, but today, oh my gosh, they are huge. Great big pines.

Rebhan: So what were the kinds of community service project that you had your club do? I mean, the Trees for Tomorrow, that...

Seebecker: Mowing the cemetery. Painting the outside of the hall. That took a long time, of course. It took forever. And then doing the ditches. You know, pick up junk in the ditches. We did our corner just past the other corner.

Rebhan: And you did this once a year?

Seebecker: Once a year. And the Easter Baskets. We thought that was a good service to the older people, and then invite them all to the chili supper. That was what we did for service.

Rebhan: So we talk about 4-H being the Head, the Hands, the Heart, and the Health, so let's say, we're going to pretend for a minute, okay, let's say you're talking to a new mom, you meet her at the fair, or whatever, and she says, "Oh, I'm thinking of enrolling my kids in 4-H, but I don't know," what would you say to this person?

Seebecker: That happened so many times. (Laughing)

Rebhan: So what do you say to them?

Seebecker: I would say, first of all, we meet the first Thursday every month, at eight o'clock. And I want you to come. It's at the Bee Hive, and I would give her directions. Usually we get the kids from that area, you know like five, ten miles, that area. And I'll say, I want you to come to the meeting. Just sit in and see how you like it. And then after the meeting, I'll sit down with you and we'll go through the project book and see what you like. And she did, well, several of them did, you know. One came with his son, and that whole year, every meeting he came. Sat way in the back. The son was so shy, I thought he would suck his thumb. He was so shy. But he's, oh my goodness, he's an office in FFA, yeah, he got out of that. But the dad had so many questions, because he wanted him in Dairy and Hogs. And so I said, you know what, my husband and son are hog breeders. If you would go to a hog meeting, you would make a marvelous hog leader. And he did. So we got a new hog leader.

Rebhan: Bringing the people in.

Seebecker: Yep. Bring them in.

Rebhan: So what do you say to people who don't know if they want to try 4-H? Maybe they don't know about it, maybe they were from the city and they have moved to the country, what do you say to them to get them to think about it.

Seebecker: Find a friend that belongs, and have them take you to their meeting, their club. Bring them. You've got to bring them, you know. You can't just say we do lots of things. We do baking, cooking, we color Easter eggs, we mow the lawn, you know, they can do all that at home. So, let's get them there and see what happens. Here there's these five little kids sitting up here with a mallet, and two flags, and (bangs on table twice) meeting called to order! Little kids. And every Pledge of Allegiance, and flag pledge, pull two kids out of the audience, come up, and hold the flags. Sit down. Secretaries report. Roll call. Treasurer's report. Reporter's report. I mean, and here's this little kid who might want to join, watching all these little kids run the whole thing without big people.

Rebhan: The power.

Seebecker: And once, you know, every month, there were two families in charge of the lunch, one was the drink and one was the treat, and whatever they wanted. The club would buy your great big packages of cups, like these (holding up plastic glass from the table) so that the parent who was bringing the juice, or the milk, or whatever didn't have to furnish the cup. We always had those. And we got a lot of members that way.

Rebhan: Just bringing them in because they were friends.

Seebecker: And friends at school. One after the other. Plus, I think it's such a nice program for the Junior Leaders to go to the various schools and talk to the kids, because they get them all hyped. And then, you know...

Rebhan: So, the Junior Leaders, did you every have kids in your club that became Junior Leaders?

Seebecker: Oh sure.

Rebhan: So, you watched them, so what were they doing that was fun?

Seebecker: Well, they ran a lot of the stuff out at the fairgrounds, for the arranging, going out and hanging, helping hang the things, washing off tables, even the little kids could do that, but Junior Leaders were kind of in charge. You kids take this pail and these rags and go scrub those tables and chairs over there. And you know, boss them around a little bit. And then tell them, that looks nice, you did a good job.

Rebhan: Did you ever go with the Junior Leaders when they went to the schools?

Seebecker: Not to the schools.

Rebhan: But you were there for fairs.

Seebecker: Sure. I was there. No, I didn't go to school because I was always in school.

Rebhan: Oh yeah. Did they ever visit your class, or anything like that?

Seebecker: No, I had music. I was a music teacher. So I had all eight grades.

Rebhan: So, is there a memory in 4-H that just kind of stands out, something that to you was just something really special, and you just thought, because you obviously worked hard. You worked hard as a volunteer, but it just made you feel that it was really worth it.

Seebecker: I wrote a poem one time about volunteers. I wish I would have brought it along. Anyway, yeah. Awards night was always held in the Justice Center which at that time was the courthouse. It was a school with a big gym. It was always in the gym. So your club was called up for many different things, and your kids got awards, and so on. And leaders, for so many years, well they got me at twenty-five, all of them, my whole club came and surrounded me, and my daughter Tammy came up with this beautiful bouquet of roses. And gave me a kiss on the cheek. The club got me flowers for twenty-five years. It was nice. It was a memory. A really nice memory.

Rebhan: Do you have anything, Kierstin?

Schmid: Not really, no.

Rebhan: Any other stories that you would love to share with us?

Seebecker: No, but if I think of one I'll call you. (Everyone laughs)

Rebhan: And I'll just turn on the tape recorder and we can get it done. Well, thank you so much for coming.

Seebecker: You are more than welcome.

Rebhan: This was so much fun, and I think it is really important to hear stories, and it is so much fun for me to watch both of you, the 4-Her, and the volunteer who has been doing it...

Seebecker: I hope you are a Junior Leader.

Schmid: Yes.

Rebhan: So, thank you very much.

Schmid: Thank you for coming.