

Juneau County
4-H Oral
History Project

Ruth Trembl

Interview

8/6/2013

Ruth TremL Interview

Interviewer: Emily Rebhan

Rebhan: Today's date is August 6th, 2013. The time is 3:00pm. We are at the Hatch Public Library in Mauston, Wisconsin. My name is Emily Rebhan and I am interviewing Ruth TremL about her years involved in the 4-H program. This interview is a part of the Juneau County 4-H Oral History Project. So thank you so much for meeting with me, I really appreciate that.

TremL: No problem.

Rebhan: So can you tell me about what your involvement in 4-H in Juneau County has been?

TremL: I was a 4-H member in 1963. I was the youngest member that year, and I got a five dollar award for showing a dairy calf because I was the youngest member. So I was 4-H all the way through. And this is in the same club as where my husband and I met. So I taught, and a year after we were married, '73, '74, I was a General Leader, Co-General Leader. It was a club, the Wranglers, it was a horse club, kind of. And that's how I got started. And we did like two or three years, but then the kids got more than just horses, they wanted to show beef, they wanted to show other stuff, and we were just mainly horses. So at that time, my sister-in-law, Frances Miller, was the General Leader of Blackhawk 4-H, and she pawned me into, talked me into becoming a General Leader there. We had just been married maybe a year, and we had no children yet, so yep, I went ahead and did it, and it was a great time. And at the time I took it over, we only had like twenty-six members, and it just kept growing and growing, and through all my children. My children just kind of went along with us through everything. And the club has just been like, a lot of fun. It was very supportive. Our oldest daughter happened to get ill in 1985, with leukemia, and we had another parent that helped me out, because we couldn't be there all the time, and stuff with her. And I stayed with it until my daughter, my youngest daughter, in 2006, I retired from it. But I still go back and forth, right now I'm helping our grandchildren with their sheep project. So their sheep are at our farm, and they only live a quarter of a mile away, so they come over. But, the main thing, I was just a General Leader. I made up schedules when things came around. Who wants to be on the Booth? Who wants to do this, who wants to do that? Thought of ideas when they wanted to do Drama Festivals, or novelty things that they did, the song and dances, we did that. The Booth and stuff, I left that up to the children, or the parents of the children, the members that were working. I can't think of some of the other ideas. Towards the end of the years that I was in, the loss of our oldest daughter, she started a Lick Leukemia campaign as a community project. And to this day, it's still running. They still do it in honor of her. So that's twenty some years that they are still doing the Lick Leukemia campaign. Our club, we tried to keep it community active. So every month it was like a community project that we would do. Valentine's Day we would make Valentines up and take them to the nursing home. Easter time we would make these silly little Easter baskets out of

cups, put some candy in it, and went down to the Meals on Wheels, and they were delivered out. Again, they did the Leukemia Campaign in May. I'm trying to think of some of the other things they did. Oh, we did where we had to water the plants on Main Street, took our turn watering the plants.

Rebhan: So the 4-H kids would go and do that, right?

Trembl: Yep, we would schedule, and the parents would take them out. And they had their jugs in hand, and would go and water all these things. Yeah, we really pushed community involvement. They sang at the Boorman House in November. And then of course they had their parties, like the Halloween Party, where they dressed up and had a carving contest. At Christmas time they had their Christmas Party, and we always seemed to get a few parents, or grandparents that would dress up like Santa. And kids, no matter how old they were just got a kick out of seeing him. Santa Clause is here!

Rebhan: Santa Clause is here!

Trembl: And they would exchange gifts of candy. And the kids had it all wrapped up so you didn't know what you were getting, you know. And so that was their fun part of it. They would do singing carols, and stuff like that. They went caroling a few times. I've been out of it several years since then.

Rebhan: So how many years were you a volunteer then?

Trembl: Since '74 to 2006.

Rebhan: Wow. And before that you were a 4-H member?

Trembl: A 4-H member since '63. Yeah, only out one year.

Rebhan: So back then did they let you join when you were...

Trembl: Nine.

Rebhan: Nine. And you could stay until...

Trembl: Nineteen.

Rebhan: Nineteen. So still the ten years.

Trembl: That was the last year I was in 4-H, I was nineteen. I showed at Wisconsin State Horse Show. And that was in September and I got married in October (laughing).

Rebhan: Well that must have been special.

Trembl: That was different, yeah. So I showed at State Fair for dairy that year, and then went to State Horse Show.

Rebhan: So what were the club names when you were a member?

Trembl: Blackhawk. Blackhawk has been around a long time. A long time.

Rebhan: Wow. So when you were a part of it, as a member, or a leader, how big would it get? How many kids?

Trembl: Back when I was a member of Blackhawk, we were big in dairy. If you go down our 12 and 16 now, near Mauston and Lyndon, there were six families. And if you look at that dairy barn that's out there right now, it wasn't anything. I had three other siblings at that time that were showing. I'm from a family of eleven. So there was three or four of us, seemed like we were in 4-H at the same time, and we would clean the barn out. So it wasn't nothing for us to bring in twenty, twenty-five head. And so did these other families have two or three children. Blackhawk alone would bring in a hundred head of cattle.

Rebhan: Wow. And this is to the County Fair?

Trembl: County Fair. And yeah, it would be packed in there.

Rebhan: So was this your biggest project, showing dairy?

Trembl: That was mainly my biggest project, and then as I got towards sophomore, junior in high school I took a steer a couple times my last year. And I got my horse at that time and I showed him my last few years.

Rebhan: So no sewing, no canning?

Trembl: Too busy with the animals. (Laughing) You know that was our whole summer. Children nowadays think, oh, we've got to go on vacation; we've got to do this. We did not. I was from a large family. Our job that summer was to train the cattle. We would rotate. I was with my younger sister or my older brother, and I had another brother younger. There was four of us in

there. My parents would rotate our choices. So it was my turn one year, the next year it was my sister's turn to take first choice, and I would get last choice then.

Rebhan: So that way it still stays fair.

Trembl: Yeah. Otherwise, yeah. Our job that summer was to take care of those cattle. We would show at Elroy Fair, and we would show at Juneau County Fair.

Rebhan: That was my next question if you showed at Elroy.

Trembl: Yeah, we showed at Elroy. In fact, we showed our last few years in Open Class over in Adams County. They had a big Open Class dairy show. And then we would show at, when we got eligible, we would show at State Fair. At that time you had to show at Elroy, which was early enough in July, and you had to have a blue ribbon to go to State Fair. And everybody was there. They wanted to go to State Fair.

Rebhan: So did you stay in the dorms?

Trembl: Down there. And the dorms down there at that time are not like they are now. There was bunks, sets of bunks, at least four deep. And it was, how to put this, the showers were not individual. Oh no.

Rebhan: It was group showers?

Trembl: Oh yeah. And there was at least a hundred bunks in a room. At least. No air conditioning. You brought a fan. And you had to walk all the way up the hill, and all the way down. It was a blast, though. We really enjoyed it. We had the cattle there, and it was totally different from what it is now.

Rebhan: So is it nicer now?

Trembl: Oh now, because I've chaperoned my daughter when she went to State, there is only six sets of bunks in there. And it's air conditioned. And they have a private shower. (Laughing) And private bathroom.

Rebhan: And sink.

Trembl: It's all private. Back then it wasn't.

Rebhan: So was there still a dormitory style meal, cafeteria meal?

Treml: Yes. Cafeteria you went through. The food was good. It's okay, we didn't mind it, you know. It's not as nice as they do now, because now they have more choices. Oh, a lot different. A lot different. But we did enjoy it. It was a lot of fun going down there. And no matter what you got, you came back with, well, I did my best. So yeah, that's how we stayed down there. They don't have them anymore. If you're at State Fair now, our dorms are where the midway is. That's where our dorms were. And you had to go a long walk, under the railroad tracks, up over the hill, and down to the dairy barns.

Rebhan: So I imagine though that you made lots of friends, and you would see each other year after year.

Treml: Year after year. Especially in the county. You met a lot of kids, like from Wonewoc, Elroy, and New Lisbon, stuff like that. But the whole summer you didn't go anywhere except for the fairs. And that was our vacation.

Rebhan: They become, it becomes a lifestyle.

Treml: Yes. Very much so.

Rebhan: This is what your family does.

Treml: What we promote is our dairy products. And then I had the steer for those last few years.

Rebhan: So did you ever have conversations where you were talking to people from Milwaukee, and they are looking at the cows, and they were just mesmerized by all the farm animals. Did you ever one of those experiences?

Treml: We had funny stories. We used to bank behind the dairy cows, way, like four or five feet out, and then like two feet deep with this straw. You make a bank, it looks like a square. And we had a family of color come in, and they literally sat down and had their lunch behind the cattle. And us kids are going, what are they doing? (Laughing) And they did. They would have questions, and we would chuckle so hard. We would have some Guernsey cows, which are brown, or the Brown Swiss cows, we had a little bit of everything down there from people in the county, and they wanted to know if the brown ones gave the chocolate milk.

Rebhan: Even back then, they were asking this.

Treml: Oh yes.

Rebhan: Because I have gone, and I have been asked this. And I thought it was something new.

Trembl: No. (Laughing) We just returned from State Fair yesterday with sheep for Open Class, and they are blanketed to keep them clean, and to keep the flies off. And we must have been asked a hundred times, why do they have blankets on? To keep them clean. Next year we're going to put signs up. They have blankets on to keep them clean.

Yeah, that was one of the funnies things with the people. They didn't really understand how the cow gave the milk, and I just don't think they understand what went into farming.

Rebhan: Did you ever have little kids ask if they could pet the cows?

Trembl: Pet? Oh yeah. Can we pet your calf? Can we do this? We did have an experience with my son, my second son, showed a steer at State Fair. And he was a Main Anjou, just kind of like fiery eyes, and everything like that. And he had to go home a day early after he showed, and I had to help him lead the steer out to the trailer, and another adult helped me get him out. He was like, I don't like this. And these people in buggies come up with their babies, can we touch the cow? No, no, please say back. Because now they block off everything. But when he was showing they didn't block anything off, they let those people right in there while they were moving these cows. One little crunch, one little step, and someone could get hurt. But yeah, that was the scariest thing I ever did at State Fair.

Rebhan: Don't want to do that again.

Trembl: No, no. And my horse, I showed him at state horse show. He was a farm horse, and he did well here, but he got in that Coliseum and the people all sat on one side, and he'd come around, and he'd see those people, and he would move. He stopped, he froze. I couldn't get him to move at all.

Rebhan: He had stage fright.

Trembl: He had stage fright. And I finally got him to get going, and he was fine, and then he had to stand still, and he watched those people, he was so nervous he pawed and pawed. He made a hole in the dirt he was so nervous. But I can say that I showed him at State Horse Show then. I accomplished that.

I did camp counseling.

Rebhan: So you have camp memories.

Trembl: Oh yeah. (Laughing) Yeah, that was a lot of fun.

Rebhan: So what were the camp memories?

Trembl: Campfire nights were fun. The skits that us counselors would do, I can't even remember some of the skits. And we would plan a dance. They had to do a dance. And that was fun because us counselors, we had more fun on our own, we would send the little kids, campers back, and us counselors would, you know...

Rebhan: So this was a counselors dance.

Trembl: I never went as a camper. I went as counselor.

Rebhan: So this was a counselor dance?

Trembl: No, it was the whole group danced. Then the campers were sent back, and the counselors got to stay longer because the adults would go up and stay with the children. And that was fun. I did that, like my last four years I did that. Went to Washington Focus, which was amazing. That was awesome.

Rebhan: See the national capitol.

Trembl: Yes. I went to the Wisconsin Conference down here. I did that. We hosted once our children, we hosted LABO. We've done that.

Rebhan: You hosted what?

Trembl: LABO.

Rebhan: LABO. Oh, I'm not familiar with that.

Trembl: LABO is a program through the Japanese. We did, where the first year, our daughter was in 4-H was in '85. The year she got sick. We hosted a chaperone. We had him, Katsu. He was amazing. He was lot of fun. And then the following year we hosted a girl from Germany for just two weeks during fair, and it rained the whole time during fair. And the following year Heather was old enough, Heather our daughter was old enough, she had her own student come, Yoko, and she didn't speak much English. But those two communicated with books. And we could get her to come downstairs and moving faster is we told her we were going shopping. She knew the word shopping.

Rebhan: Shopping.

Trembl: Shopping. She would come down stairs. She was there that year. Heather was still working. She was in remission, but her chemo for her leukemia, so she was still with us. And then the following year Heather had relapsed on us. And so she wanted to come back again, and so Yoko came back the following year. And the following year after she passed away in '90, Yoko came before she passed away and then they came back a few months later, because it is very much a ritual to visit the grave. And then our son, Tony, hosted Kiyomasa and in fact Tony, he went three years later to Japan to do his month over there. And Pete had, our third child, Pete, hosted Daisuke. He was a crazy one. He was a lot of fun.

Rebhan: So are there stories?

Trembl: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. Kiyomasa was one that was with Tony. And we would tease him with the slang, and the girls would go by, and we would say, oh blond chick. He would go, what do you mean, blond chick? He couldn't figure out- girls! It was funny. Yoko, not understanding English very well, would come down with pigtails one day. And we told her, oh pigtails. And she was very insulted. She thought we called her a swine. So we really had to work. We even had to call her chaperone and explain, no they didn't mean that, they didn't mean that. She was very upset. But afterwards she got used to that. You know, she's been back, she's visited us at least five times since then. We've seen Kiyomasa twice. He was here twice. Daisuke we've seen twice. And then our youngest daughter, Alecia, hosted a girl. Oh, what's her name? I can't think of it now. She was very shy and quite. We thought, oh, she didn't have a good experience, but the two girls are now married with children. And they send us all kinds of pictures. And in fact three years ago, our first chaperone we hosted, he came back and visited us. Twenty-five years after the first time he was here.

Rebhan: How much fun is that.

Trembl: That was a blast. He told us we got a little more fat. They stay very slender. (Laughing)

Rebhan: Okay. This is Wisconsin after all.

Trembl: What he loved the most, he does like cheese, he always took cheese back. But out of all of our years in 4-H, hosting was the best experience we ever had.

Rebhan: Was hosting?

Trembl: Hosting and learning the cultures of them. Letting them all experience. They all rode the horses. We have horses. And we had sheep, and they helped with a couple of the steers, the boys had steers, so they would help with that. We would take them to our niece and nephew who has dairy, and they would milk a cow.

Rebhan: Was there any transition for them, I mean, coming from another country, and here you are in Wisconsin, a rural place...

Trembl: Yeah, they had an orientation, from what I understand, and we had and write to them a month or two before they got here. We were corresponding before it, so they had an idea of what they were getting into.

Rebhan: So they knew to expect animals.

Trembl: Yes. Very much so. Yeah. A lot of them that wanted to come to a farm would say, I want to come to a farm, and stuff. Because we didn't milk cows or anything, we just had beef and sheep, a lot of sheep, and they all showed sheep. Or they all made a project. Daisuke won Horseless Horse Project. He showed a horse, one of our horses. Won a trophy, and took that back. They just, they all had a great time with that. So I think that is one of the most reward things that ever came of all of it. Having those. And our children went on all these trips, you know, anything that 4-H could do.

Rebhan: CWF, Youth Conference?

Trembl: Yeah, they've been to Boston, they've been to Washington D.C., they have seen Niagara Falls, been to the National Conference in Atlanta. Like I said, our son Tony went to Japan.

Rebhan: So can I ask you, as a parent, you've had kids in 4-H, and they go out on these trips, do you notice a difference in them when they come home?

Trembl: Oh yeah. In fact our daughter was only a freshmen and she was going to Washington D.C. Did not want to go. Mad at us. Didn't have anybody that she knew. She was the only one from Juneau County going. She was mad. I'm not going by myself. So these four girls come off the bus, oh come on Alecia, you're going to have a blast. Talked to her, and talked to her, and finally she got on the bus. But she was very hesitant. Two days later she calls from Washington D.C., oh, I'm having the time of my life. She was almost crying getting on the bus. So when we go pick her up the seven or eight days later, she's bawling leaving the bus, she didn't want to leave her friends. So she still does some correspondence with some of the girls that she met going to Washington. But yeah, that was the difference that I could see in her coming back, it just changed her. And I think that's what more parents need to do, a little push. You're going to be safe. You're chaperoned.

Rebhan: Exactly.

Trembl: Go. The boys really loved the American Spirit trips. They thought they were the best. They all liked them. The boys were okay with Washington D.C., but that was so much more meaning they said. In fact our youngest one, she did them all too.

Rebhan: So where you a project leader for anything in 4-H?

Trembl: Oh yeah. Dog. Sheep. I helped with sewing. A lot of times the kids would come after school for crocheting, and sit at my house.

Rebhan: So what kinds of things would you show them how to make?

Trembl: Mainly how to get started. A lot of potholders were made, or scarves. Some wanted to do an afghan. No, no, that's not what we are going to do. And some of them didn't like it, it didn't look right, and we'd take it all out. They would be like, no! Well, you have to get it right. And sewing. We would do projects like that. And being a General Leader, if someone isn't helping them, I turned around and helped. Did what I could. And it's very hard, even then, I don't know how it is now, to get a project leader for every project. It's very difficult.

Rebhan: To find those people that have the expertise.

Trembl: The expertise, or time. And patience (laughing).

Rebhan: Because you are working with kids, after all.

Trembl: Working with kids. The 4-H club always did Demonstrations.

Rebhan: Okay, so this is something that I need to hear about.

Trembl: Yeah, it was funny. We would have our meeting, and it was short, like twenty minutes, and they were scheduled to do a demonstration. And we would have some of the neatest demonstrations. Like one member, my husband's nephew, and he did not like doing demonstrations, and the only reason he wanted to stay in 4-H was to show his rabbits and stay in the softball team. So his famous demonstration was how to make Kool-Aid. (Laughing) And that was about it.

Rebhan: Year after year (laughing)?

Trembl: Year after year (laughing). I would just get a kick out of him. But we would have them bring their dogs in, and their birds would come in. They would make brownie mix. They would make different cookies. They would show you different crafts, how to make wreaths, how to make...I'm trying to think of something that my daughter would do. She always did a demonstration, and I want to do this, or this, or this. I was like, okay. And then we would try to critique them. And if they didn't want to demonstrate, they had to do a little speech, they could just talk. The main reason we were doing them was to get them out in front of people, in front of a group. That was a main, main goal. So while the kids were demonstrating, we had refreshments, and the kids would get their refreshments, sit down, and then they had to ask questions. And I can just remember most of these kids are going, please don't ask a question. I don't want to talk about it. (Laughing) And I think they still are doing it, because my grandchildren came over, can you help me with my demonstration? And so they were asking

about it, and our grandson is doing how to measure deer horns, how to score them. That's what he is doing this year.

Rebhan: So was it fun for you as a General Leader...

Treml: Oh yeah.

Rebhan: Watching these kids year after year, and year after year, and you're remembering maybe when they were really shy.

Treml: In fact I had one family, they moved out of the area, oh, I was a leader at least fifteen years, and she moved out, they moved to Utah. And just four years ago she called me. Her kids are in 4-H. She had to call and thank me for what I did for her. She's a General Leader now out in Utah.

Rebhan: So doesn't that make you proud?

Treml: Yeah. It makes you feel very old, but. (Laughing) Yeah, but it was fun to see the growth of these kids, and how they wanted to be, oh, I want to run for president, or I want to run for vice president, you know and all this other stuff. See we would have elections of officers in September, and they would meet with me, and we would plan a calendar. We would have a preliminary one done, and the last few years we were in, and I know they still do it, they have a theme for every meeting. And they love the one with Accidents, Injury Night. You had to come in like...

Rebhan: You were injured in some way.

Treml: And Pajama Night, they would come in their pajamas. Of course Halloween they would dress up. They would try to do a theme for every one. And Sports Night was mainly Packer Night.

Rebhan: Packers, maybe the Badgers in there.

Treml: What we thought was anything to get the kids interested to come. They just have got to get in there and see. You know, get them interested.

Rebhan: Did you feel that once you got the kid there, that most of the job was done, they wanted to join?

Treml: Yes. They wanted to join. And if you can get the parents to come with them. The little ones had no idea about the business part of it. But they wanted to fun stuff. They wanted to do that. And the Cloverbud program, I had a couple parents that would take them aside during the business meeting and work projects with them every month. Because they had no idea when they are five, six, or seven, no idea. What's this about? They just want to do something, you know. And so they were antsy, and stuff, but yeah. It was fun. A lot of work.

Rebhan: Oh yeah.

Trembl: Because now everything is done on email. Back then we didn't have email. So, two weeks before the meeting, I would call the president, and say, do you have anything new, and he or she would say no, or yes. And then I would type up the agenda and type up a meeting list for the parents, and send out letters. And when I left, I think we had thirty, thirty-five families. These families are on refreshments, these kids are on demonstrations. But the beginning of the year, the 4-H year, being in September, in October they would get a printed out calendar, a paper calendar, with everything on it. I would say, this is your bible. Don't lose it.

Rebhan: Exactly, I was going to say.

Trembl: And they would, they wouldn't lose it, but I felt they were very updated on it if I would send them that letter. They could put it on their refrigerator, and say, oh, I'm on refreshments, oh, the booth committee is coming up. Oh, so and so, her daughter wants to be on the booth committee, I've got to be sure and sign her up. Because the fair is in August, and I'd have our booth committee set up in May. Because they had to start thinking.

Rebhan: I was going to say, you need time.

Trembl: Yeah. So I did a lot of delegating.

Rebhan: Good for you!

Trembl: So I didn't do all the work.

Rebhan: Good for you!

Trembl: Because I was like, I can't do all this. At one time I had three kids in 4-H of my own. Three children in 4-H, and a little one running around. That was very fun.

Rebhan: So, let's say a new family would come up to you, or a new kid, and they would say, oh, we're interested in joining 4-H, but we just don't know if we should or not, what was your sales pitch through the years to get them to come.

Trembl: The main thing I would ask them is what is their main interest. Was it animal, or not animal? What things do you like to do? And the next thing I would say is that we are community active. We do these kinds of projects. Would you like to do these kinds of projects? The music and drama, and the speech contest, we would promote that as much as possible. We always had fun. It seemed like we had parties all the time. We'd have the summer picnic, and we'd have the Halloween Party, and the Christmas Party, and they would go swimming once in a while. So that was the fun things that they liked. And another thing that I would tell them, the parents, that this is a family club. It is not just your children. It is a family club, and we met on Sunday nights. Sunday is a family day, and this is when it's held because these school activities aren't involved

on Sunday. So that's our main sales pitch. I told them you should start them only in one or two projects.

Rebhan: Start slow.

Trembl: Start slow. Any questions, keep asking. A lot of times when these little ones would come in we would ask older 4-H members to kind of oversee them. Like if you knew the family, you know, help them out. We even had a hand out for new people. This is what you need to ask.

Rebhan: Here's your cheat sheet for 4-H.

Trembl: Yeah, and stuff. And for that monthly letter that I would send out, even for entry forms and stuff, they would have no idea. How do I do this, you know? So we would say after the meeting, anyone who wants to stay behind, we'll help you fill out your entry form, so you can get them filled out. And there was a few of them, aw, this isn't what I wanted. But the majority of them would stay.

Rebhan: Record book stories.

Trembl: They had to a record book in order to re-join.

Rebhan: Required.

Trembl: Required. And some of them were really good. And some of them would have a club story in between the two covers, and that was it. (Laughing) And so we would get them, and I would get other parents that didn't have children in 4-H to help me judge them. And the top ones would go in. But some of them were really slick. I mean, they put the pictures, and stories, and they were in like ten projects, so their books were one, two inch thick. You knew they did the work, and all the activities they did. I dreaded those years with my kids. Oh, here we go again. We've got to do these. It really got nice when they got older, and they were able to use the computer, and they were able to type it right up. They didn't have to do the handwriting part of it.

Rebhan: Because when I was a 4-Her, at first my family didn't have computers, so we were doing it all by hand.

Trembl: By hand, yes.

Rebhan: And I remember just sitting at that kitchen table...

Trembl: Kitchen table.

Rebhan: And we would make a mistake...

Trembl: Have to start again.

Rebhan: Yes.

Trembl: We would have so many forms.

Rebhan: Because it had to be in pen. It couldn't be...

Trembl: In pencil...

Rebhan: Because my mother was a school teacher.

Trembl: Oh I used to let the first and second years, when they were nine and ten, they could do it in pencil.

Rebhan: Well I was a little older then. My mother would have us practice it in pencil, but then you had to do it in pen, and if you make a mistake...

Trembl: You have to do it over. And you always wanted to start early, like my goals, and stuff. Well they would get kind of some of them done, my own children. And I would keep after the other kids, the members. Because the fair comes in August, and then you had to have them in by mid-September, and I thought, ah...to me, they hated it. (Laughing) But, I think a lot of them thought it was great, because they had all these memories down in a book. In fact I still have my children's stacked away.

Rebhan: It's something to go back to, that we did this.

Trembl: And their record keeping, like they had their sheep, they had their steers, they knew how much feed they put into them, they knew the other stuff they put into them...time. Our youngest daughters all did sewing, and how much that garment cost, and stuff like that. That was another hard time, sewing. They liked to sew, but mom had to be there. Be there to assist them. Then we came up with that brainstorm idea where we would all bring our old sewing machines to the old courthouse, and we had the meeting room with several rooms, and we would all try to do our sewing projects at one time. There would be two or three of us there. All we did was jump from one table to the other. But they got projects done. So we did a lot of that. We would have group project meetings. You bring this, this, and this, and we'll see what we get done. We used to have a project day.

Rebhan: It was like a learning day?

Trembl: Yeah, it was like a college, 4-H...what did they call it? And you would sign up, and I remember helping teach some of that for crocheting. It was a forty-five minute class, and you had to bring things. There was woodworking projects there, and my boys did that, and they came home with it. It was all pre-cut out, and they had to put it all together. Plants they did there. Oh, they made all kinds of projects that day. A cooking class. I can still remember the demonstration, my oldest daughter did for a foods demonstration at the meeting. She went to make biscuits, and I was doing something, and she came up to her dad, and said, "Do we have any more baking

powder? It calls for one cup.” And my husband goes, “I don’t know much about baking, but I don’t think you need that much baking powder.”

Rebhan: I don’t think that’s right.

Trembl: So she made the biscuits, or the muffins, and I came in and said, you have to redo this, honey, you only need a teaspoon. And so what happens when you use a cup of baking powder, we had a lady from the extension come and judged them, for practice. And they mount up. It’s hollow underneath. It’s really weird. The muffin, it’s like there’s a hole inside of it. Hard as a rock, too. (Laughing)

Rebhan: Don’t really want to eat that.

Trembl: No. But she said, this was really kind of a good learning experience. So she showed, there was about six kids that were in foods at that time, this is what you do not do, and this is the correct way to do it.

Rebhan: How fun.

Trembl: But she put a whole cup of baking powder in her muffin (laughing). That was so funny. She just misread it.

Rebhan: So you said you did like a crocheting workshop.

Trembl: Yeah, I did.

Rebhan: So it was basically for kids to sign up to learn about a different project.

Trembl: I did crocheting. We did arts and crafts. Some sewing, and of course sheep. We did the sheep project. We still help kids in 4-H with sheep. In fact this coming weekend, we’ve got twelve lambs coming to be clipped. Kids will clip the bodies, and we’ll do the heads for them. But they have to learn how to do it.

Rebhan: It never stops, does it?

Trembl: No, and we’re not even 4-H leaders anymore (laughing).

Rebhan: It doesn’t let you out. Have you noticed that?

Trembl: No.

Rebhan: Once you are in the clover, there is no out. There are four leaves, but there is no out.

Trembl: The lady who took over the club for Blackhawk, she wants to retire. Now our daughter, our daughter-in-law and our son have their children in there. And they are trying to get her to do

it. But our daughter-in-law has never been in 4-H before. She's confused. So somebody says, why don't you just go back in. And I'm going, oh boy.

Rebhan: Maybe not.

TremL: Both are getting to retirement, you know. But I can help. We never did stop, really. We still kind of pitch in here and there. Do you need help with this? Somebody comes around, I don't know how to do this. Well I'll help you, type of thing.

Rebhan: So softball.

TremL: They used to do it a lot. They haven't done it, gosh, the last ten years I was a leader, I think in the late nineties they stopped it. It was co-ed. And boy, the boys loved doing it. Oh, that was a big thing to draw boys into 4-H. It was competition. We had a lot more clubs in the county than we do now. There was Hustling Hustlers, they were really a real good softball team.

They're not around anymore. There had to have been about another eight to ten clubs compared to what there was. And we would have to meet every Sunday. There would be three, four games, one at one, one at two, and one at three. And they would have tournaments at the end of the year. And they would play co-ed softball, girls and boys. And I can remember two boys that came, they are from Jamaica, they are foster children to a family, and they played softball with no glove. They would bare hand it. But they had a hard time knowing how to catch it, and stuff. So somebody says, just throw it at their head, they'll catch it. And they did (laughing).

Rebhan: Okay then.

TremL: Yeah, when they were afraid they'd get hit, they'd bring their hand up. But they were the ones that played with us. But the boys just...we had a good time. And then we'd do a picnic with it, you know. I think nowadays people are too busy. I think they have so many other activities. Well, they go on their vacations. And you know both parents are working. My parents both did work to, they ran the farm. But we still didn't go much. We were from a large family. We couldn't afford it. And when we were at the fair, the kids...the feed store, down here, Domann's, we had feed through them. So I mean, you were in showmanship, with your dairy, Domann would give you, if you placed up high, as a blue, Domann would give you so many tickets to go on the rides. So you really wanted to do good in showmanship, because they would put money in there. We didn't care about the money, we wanted to go on the rides. Because we came from a large family, and we couldn't afford it.

Rebhan: No.

TremL: So that's how we did our rides. It's those little crazy things that we used to do. We didn't care about certain things...it was all about the rides. Being together sitting in the barn playing cards. Our youngest daughter, the last few years she was in 4-H, another family with show kids would bring a couch in every year. An old couch in the middle of the beef barn. And they'd

bring more chairs, and they'd sit and play cards. These kids would just sit, and you know, I just thought it was the greatest thing in the world, because, they are socializing. They are being friends.

Rebhan: Laughing.

Trembl: They are having a good time. They aren't causing any trouble. They took care of their animals, they are right there. They would do anything for you, and stuff. Our daughter says to this day that is one of her best memories: sitting together, playing cards, talking, us bringing in food and warming it up and they would all sit around on the old couches. I mean they were pretty old. They were pretty ratty.

Rebhan: They were barn couches.

Trembl: They were barn couches. They had to beat them out a little bit before they brought them in. But they enjoyed that. 4-H to her, that was friendship.

Rebhan: So did I hear you say that you met your husband through the 4-H program?

Trembl: Yes.

Rebhan: Okay, can I hear about that?

Trembl: It was his last year. We did a club tour always, and he was kind of hitting on me.

Rehan: How did the club tour work?

Trembl: You would go from farm to farm. And we were going from farm to farm, and he says to me, he had his car, he says to me, would you like to ride up to the next farm? So that's how it started. And then the fair came. We were at Elroy fair, he was over there, and I had steers and dairy. Three steers. My mom was not impressed with him. She says he knows nothing about cattle. And then at the Mauston fair he was helping me out. He was a freshman in college, and I was going to be a senior. He was just finishing his freshman year.

Rebhan: Was he a farm kid?

Trembl: Sort of. His parents had like six cows. But he had asthma and stuff and his mom wouldn't let him go in the barn. So he didn't know much about that, and it was a very small farm, dairy farm. No, he really didn't know what we did. That was my mom, he won't make much of a farmer. So yeah, we dated, like that, almost two years. And then we got married. We both farm now. Out of all the children in my family, I'm the only one that's farming. So when I got to be a 4-H leader, I told them, yep, this is how my husband and I met, through 4-H. And they would look at each other, like, oh yeah. (Laughing) And there has been romances.

Rebhan: In your club?

Treml: Oh yeah. There was romances, off and on, dating and stuff. I don't think any of them every married, but there was dating. And there was dating with our kids, and other kids from other clubs, off and on. You could see that.

Rebhan: How much fun is that.

Treml: That was fun to watch, and oh, I can remember those days. He would often sit there on that hay bale with you, and help you wash your cow, or come down with you...

Rebhan: True romance.

Treml: True romance. He would come down to help me break my steer that didn't want to be broke. And that's when my mother would say, he don't know anything. Because there is different ways of breaking steers. But then she was okay after we married. He knows more. He's farming now. We're farming. We both work out, but we're farming.

Rebhan: So Drama Festival.

Treml: We used to pick out plays, and I would help direct them, and then one of my 4-Hers, that used to be in 4-H, she took drama up, when she graduated, and she came back in the late years to help direct it. They would do musical numbers. We would just come up with ideas, the kids' ideas, and we did that. Every year that we had enough kids it was, come on let's try it, come on, come on. And we would have entries every year.

Rebhan: Did you ever go to State Fair?

Treml: Oh yeah.

Rebhan: For Drama?

Treml: Not Drama, Musicals.

Rebhan: Okay, Musicals.

Treml: Yeah, we did the one...we took the Scrooge theme, idea, and turned it into 4-H. They didn't sing Silver Bells; they sang 4-H Bells. Turned everything into 4-H, and Mr. Scrooge hated 4-H. And our oldest son was Mr. Scrooge. So here they are dressed in their winter coats, and everything, in ninety degree weather at State Fair, in the building that didn't have air conditioning at that time.

Rebhan: Was this in the Ag Oasis?

Treml: Yeah...no, not in the Ag Oasis, it was in a building that is gone now. It was on the side. It was hot.

Rebhan: But they are all in these...

Trembl: Winter clothes, singing Christmas songs, type things. But we did that. We did a barn dance one time we went down. We went down several times. They yeah, the kids liked that. They thought that was cool. They liked that. They went to those. When I was in 4-H, you didn't go to State Fair, you went somewhere else for the competition. You went to a state completion where other states came and competed with you.

Rebhan: For Musicals?

Trembl: Dramas, Musicals. When we did Drama, when I was in, it took two days. Two full days of Drama. Plays, half-hour plays. They would be all Saturday from ten until six, and Sunday one until seven. Drama plays.

Rebhan: And this would be different states that would come in?

Trembl: No, clubs. Here. Every club did a drama play back then. And then they had the Musicals another date, where you did novelties or singing groups. And everybody was in that. (Laughing)

Rebhan: Of course!

Trembl: And the club to beat, back then, was Hustling Hustlers.

Rebhan: Really.

Trembl: They had Mrs. Lowe who was big into music and drama. She directed some beautiful plays. It was a lot of fun. I remember all the crazy things. I remember somebody dressed up like they were coming up out of a stump. I can't remember now what that play was about.

Rebhan: But just the image is there.

Trembl: Yeah. The corn shocks...I mean, it was a fall scene type of thing. I can't remember what it was. So yeah they did that.

Rebhan: So I have been asking this question to everyone that I have interviewed, and I always get the most interesting responses. So, you were involved in this organization for quite a period, and you saw kids grow up, literally grow up in the 4-H program. How did you see their lives change by being in 4-H?

Trembl: I think they were more, they know how to handle themselves. They know how to manage their time. They seem like they were more outgoing. They were ready to go off to college. They were more outgoing. They were ready, they could do it. I knew a lot of these kids that were in 4-H, and coming back, and they said it was the best thing that helped me get through, and helped me get ready for my future life. Because some of the skills that they learn are basic, but, you know, like cooking, or sewing. I had boys that did sewing, and any of that stuff. They just...they had an idea of maybe what they wanted to go into. Because 4-H isn't all agriculture. It's everything.

Rebhan: It becomes a life.

Trembl: It becomes a life. Yeah, they learn how to run a meeting, how to run for an officer, how to run a checkbook. They learned how to write stories. They learned to keep records.

Rebhan: All these life skills.

Trembl: All the life skills. And I think, to me, the majority of the kids, that I have seen, have gone and made something of themselves. 4-H has been really cool. I can't wait for the fair.

Rebhan: The most wonderful time of the year, to a 4-Her. I think, Christmas might be close.

Trembl: The fair is the biggest. Even for us now, we show in Open Class, and stuff, at the state level. The last few years our grandchildren were showing in Open Class for Sheep. But now they are in 4-H. I don't have to do the decorations, they do!

Rebhan: You get to enjoy!

Trembl: Just sitting back!

Rebhan: You can be an actual fairgoer, almost.

Trembl: Fairgoer. My son will come and load the sheep up that our grandson has been working with. He'll be over a few days before and we'll help him clip them. We'll clip the sheep. But otherwise, load up the feed, load up the hay, and you do it.

Rebhan: So the organization- what have you seen change, what have you seen stay the same?

Trembl: Wow. The email thing. That's been the biggest, my daughter-in-law says the biggest complaint. Because if it isn't in front of you, she has four children, it's hard to remember, unless you see it, visually, in front of you, on the calendar, or on the refrigerator, or on the wall. That's one thing that she...and I don't think I would like it. I would rather go back and type up that letter. But I see the time, and people are busy. And the involvement, some of the kids just don't want to get involved...in like say, Drama, or Demonstrations. Yeah it's like pulling teeth. Come on, you've got to do it. I could see that. There is less and less farm kids, I hate to say it. There is less and less Dairy at the fair then there used to be. I see that going down, a lot. You know the livestock part of it stays the same. What I see kids now doing more, is stepping up. Not just going to the county fair, they are going to the District Shows. They are going to these weekend shows to better themselves. I've seen that. You can see the kids improving their project, their animal project. The more time you spend with that animal, the more you will be with it. Project wise it's safe to say...well now they have different projects, like Legos, and everything else. We didn't have that, even when I was a leader. There is a Lego project! And there is Archery. You know, we didn't have many in Archery. We had the gun project, but we never had Archery. I did the Dog project for years. I taught that. That was a lot of work. (Laughing) In fact I was interim 4-H agent for seven months.

Rebhan: Oh no.

Trembl: My children, Alecia and Pete were both in 4-H, and going to State Fair. And I had a helper like you.

Rebhan: I hope so.

Trembl: I sent her, she was a dairy person, and I sent her down with the dairy children (laughing). I stayed here and took care of it back here, and went down then with the livestock.

Rebhan: So you handled all the paperwork.

Trembl: All that stuff. A great secretary I had. I was only part time. But she was a great secretary, until we got...it was an agent. I was in-between the agent before Judy, and I was in-between the man and the woman that came before her. Yeah. It took forever to interview them and get somebody. They said it would be three months, and it was seven, eight months. I liked it, it was fun. But the secretary was great. She helped me.

Rebhan: I think the secretaries in 4-H are the best people.

Trembl: She would come out and, oh next month is this now, what do you want to put in the newsletter? Oh goodness. And we'd start look for stuff, and get it all laid out. But yeah, I've been a jack of all trades. The Dog project was a great time. I enjoyed the kids with Dog. I did that for like four years, because our daughter had Dog. They couldn't find anyone to do it, so...I went to the State Dog Show with them. It's the easiest project to haul around, your dog.

Rebhan: So, in all the years that you were a volunteer, and all the things that I'm hearing about that you did, was there a moment where saw a child do something where it just really felt worth it? All that time, all that effort.

Trembl: I think when you see them...say they had a project where they tried really hard, and maybe they got a White ribbon that year, and next year they made something again, and they got that Blue ribbon. And the grin on their face, it was like, (speaking very softly) oh my god! Or, in fact, I would get a couple of Christmas presents from them, and it would be the project that they made. And they would give it to me. I still have some of them. But, yeah, just to see the growth of how they would improve. And they would be so proud that if I would be in the Dairy Barn with our kids, or in the Beef Barn, and the non-animal kids would have put the booth up, all by themselves, and if they had got a Blue, they would come over. Mrs. Trembl, you have to get over here! We got a Blue ribbon! They were just so excited because they did it. I didn't help them, they came up with their idea, and they did it. Or, if they got a Grand Champion on say their drawing or something. They would find me, and make sure they pointed it out. Did you see what we got? Did you see what we did? They were just so proud of themselves, and I think that was the best thing. To see that they could do it. They could do it.

Rebhan: So booth ideas. Do any stick out in your mind as something really creative?

Treml: Oh what did they do?

Rebhan: Every year they do something different.

Treml: It is something different. They had a tree growing one time. They had pictures of project all over the tree. 4-H is growing, or whatever it was. Pictures of projects growing all over this tree. Mrs. Irene Kelley was a project leader with us. She was a project leader years ago, and she helped the kids. She loved doing the booth. She always said, keep it basic. Don't overdo it, because if it gets too cluttered, you can't see the whole theme. Community projects, they had some pictures of stuff. They would do things like that. I remember one year we were trying to find a Barbie doll that would sit on a horse, for the Horse project. They couldn't get one to fit on the horse. And they had to get a cow in there. Oh. That took a lot of work because they were doing something with the live animal projects, and they had kids looking through their toy boxes trying to find a dog, or cat. I remember that, we had all these animals. And a bird, and he bird was bigger than the cow. And you know, all that stuff, but they found it. Booths were fun. I like to look at the booths here every year.

Rebhan: So many creative ideas.

Treml: Oh very much. And how they promote it, and stuff like that. And hauling all that stuff in, and hauling it all back home. (Laughing) And having a child that did all the livestock. Our youngest did everything. She showed Dog, Horses, Dairy, she showed Sheep, Beef, and Swine. Mom and dad had no rest. She was just moving in the ring, in and out, in and out. But we enjoy it. We missed it after she was done.

Rebhan: It really is the best of times.

Treml: Yeah, you were just run ragged, but. Washing animals. And she was doing things, and it was just like, wow. It took a lot of work. She was one of those that wanted to do everything (laughing). Clothing Review, Demonstrations.

Rebhan: You come home with the boxes.

Treml: Boxes. Trailer loads of animals. Truckloads of stuff going in, and don't let this get banged. Clothing. Mom, I want to make it like this, we have to alter the pattern. Oh yeah. (Laughing)

Rebhan: Good times.

Treml: Yeah, it was good times. It makes you young.

Rebhan: It keeps you young.

Treml: Any other stories that you would like to share with me? I think that we covered almost everything.

Treml: Yeah, especially me getting married through 4-H. Having the kids through 4-H. It's really a good organization. I like it because it's co-ed. All ages.

Rebhan: And you can start so young.

Treml: You can start very young. Yeah, we had a lot of them that started when they were five years old, Cloverbuds. All mine did it. That was the hard part, keeping them interested enough once they got in 4-H. Camp. Floating...they had so much rain the one year at camp Upham, they had the floating campfire. They put it on a...something. They had the kids up higher, and they had the campfire come in floating. So I don't know if I will ever really go back as a General Leader, but I'll help (laughing). There is a lot of work if you are a General Leader.

Rebhan: Thank you so much for meeting with me. This was so much fun. Thank you so much for sharing.

Treml: Thank you. I enjoyed it.