

# Spirit Historical Society Newsletter

November 2023 Vol. 5 No. 3 Spirit Historical Society Newsletter is published by Spirit Historical Society, Inc.



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Our new Machine Shed was completed on the outside by mid-August as planned. There is a bit of landscaping yet to be done and a ramp to be built between the



buildings. The inside is still unfinished. There will be insulation installed, plywood put on the ceiling and on 3 walls, and one wall finished with circle sawn boards. Once the inside is finished, we will work at bringing our artifacts out of storage to display them.



**There is still time to give a donation** to help us finish this project. Anyone giving \$200 and up will have their name put on a plaque. Anyone giving \$500 or more will have their name in a separate category on the plaque. Any amount of donations is appreciated! A big thank you to all of you that have donated so far. We are well on our way to paying for the whole shed.

A concrete sidewalk was poured from the parking lot to the door of Our Yesterday House. Railing will be installed at a later date.



Larger culverts and a rock wall were put in place to handle the melting spring rains.



**Working hard to make SHSI something to be proud of!**

Philanthropy or charitable giving plays a big part in what SHSI is able to accomplish each year. As we reach the end of the year, now is a good time to renew your membership, make an additional gift, or continue your investment by including SHSI in your estate plan. Legacy gifts reflect the values you feel are important for those who follow you. You can provide substantial support to SHSI through outright gifts of your long-term investments. Donating stocks, bonds, IRAs, or mutual funds also offer tax advantages - you can take advantage of a tax deduction and avoid capital gains tax. Recognize a friend or family member or the memory of someone who loved Spirit. Your hard-earned retirement assets will make the work of the Spirit Historical Society, Inc. possible for years to come. Naming SHSI as a beneficiary of your retirement assets may also result in significant tax savings. There are many opportunities to leave a legacy to SHSI. Speak with your financial advisor to discuss giving options that fit your desires. Your support to Spirit Historical Society, Inc. can help more people like you experience the power of the past.

Spirit Historical Society, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt organization whose mission is to protect, conserve and display buildings, artifacts and documents of historical value for educational purposes. Members are persons who contribute \$25.00 or more at any time during the year. Membership continues through the month of January the following year. As a member of S.H.S.I. you will be contributing to our mission, receive our newsletters and will be eligible to vote in person or by absentee ballot at the S.H.S.I. January annual meeting.

# Community Events

Our next **SHSI meeting** is scheduled for Saturday, January 20th at 2:00 pm at the Spirit Town Hall. Board elections will be held at this meeting. If you would be willing to serve on our board, please contact one of the current board members by the end of November. Let us know if you would like to participate online (phone President Dawn Meier @ 715-544-0023) and we will send you the link ahead of time. Everyone is welcome to join us or contact us with your input on issues.

## Current Board Members:

Dawn Meier-Pres., JaNelle Nelson-V.Pres., Maryalice McHugh-Sec., Pam Welch-Treas., Cheryl Pierson, Johanna Holliday, Anne Marie Fries, Dean Gilge, Mark Nyberg, Karen Baumgartner & Luann Lind



The 81<sup>st</sup> annual **Spirit-Hill-Ogema 4-H Fair** was held Sat., Aug. 12 at the Spirit Town Hall.

Participating 4-H clubs: Happy Hoboes, Hillbillies & Hamburg Hawks  
Chloe Cummings was crowned Queen

Check out the fair at [www.facebook.com/spirithillogema4hfair](http://www.facebook.com/spirithillogema4hfair)

Fair Board Members: Darrel Lind-Pres., Ed Ulrich-V.Pres., Molly Lind, Mary Jo Ulrich & Colleen Schult-Sec./Treas.

Next year's fair will be held on Aug. 17<sup>th</sup>.



Annual Community Christmas Program will be sponsored by Spirit Legion Post 452 and the American Legion Auxiliary. Everyone is welcome to attend and /or participate with readings, musical talent or anything else that would make this program great!

It will take place at the Spirit Town Hall on Saturday, December 9, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Contact Duane Harper @715-657-0304 (leave a message) if you would like to be a part of the program.



**Spirit Town Board** meetings are held in the Spirit Town Hall on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tues. of each month, starting at 6:00 pm.

Town board members are: Darrel Lind, Bill Evans and Gary Siebert.

Clerk – JaNelle Nelson    Treas. – Myrna Holmquist

**Spirit Legion Post 452 and the American Legion Auxiliary** hold their monthly meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of each month at the Spirit Town Hall beginning at 7 pm.

There will be a one-time change – in December the meeting will be on the 7<sup>th</sup>.



*May your Thanksgiving be full of peace, love, and joy.*



Tours of Our Yesterday House will be available again next summer. Visit us on Facebook, email: [spirithistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:spirithistoricalsociety@gmail.com), or visit our website [spirithistoricalsociety.org](http://spirithistoricalsociety.org).

# Obituaries



**Gladys Ann Howard**, the second child of Carl & Olga (*nee Harrold*) Meier, was born at Sacred Heart hospital in Tomahawk, WI on August 22, 1935. She joined her 20-month-old brother (Albert Harrold Meier) in the log house built by her parents at the end of what would later be called “Meier Rd.” She would be joined in the family by three more brothers (Marvin Carl, Michael Lee and Timothy Allan) and a sister (Rosalie Jane, who died in infancy). Gladys was baptized and confirmed at Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in the Town of Spirit and she began her education at Liberty School, across the road from the church. After completing 8 grades, she went on to Rib Lake High School, graduating in 1953. She chose to become a teacher and continued her education by going to “Taylor County Normal” in Medford, Wisconsin. After graduation in 1955 she began her teaching career, with a job teaching the lower grades (1-4) in a two-room school in rural Price County. A couple of years later she moved to a teaching position in a larger elementary school in Phillips, Wis. She took continuing education courses and sometime in the late 1950s she graduated from what is now the “University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire” with a BA in education. In the early ‘60s, she moved to Milwaukee and began teaching reading comprehension skills to 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the West Allis—West Milwaukee School District. During those years, she continued her education and earned an MA in education from UW-Milwaukee. Teaching was her gift, her calling and her lifelong, successful career. During those years she met Kenneth Howard and they were married on June 11, 1966, at Kingo Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Their only child, John David Paul Howard, was born March 19, 1970. After Gladys and Ken were divorced in 1974, she bought her own home in Glendale, Wis, where she raised John. She lived there until April of 2020 when she was no longer able to take care of herself and with the help of her devoted son, John, she moved to McKinley Place in Cedarburg, WI. Gladys was a gifted seamstress, making many of her own clothes. She also had a gift for “crafting” and over the years she was busy making (or re-making) something unique to decorate her small home in Glendale.

Gladys entered hospice care in 2022 and passed away peacefully at McKinley Place on April 27, 2023, at the age of 87 years, 8 months, and 5 days. She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, John & Michelle (*nee Johnson*) Howard, two grandchildren, Sterling Alexander Howard and Summer Daisy Howard. She is also survived by 2 brothers-- Michael (&Toni) Meier (Corvallis, OR) and Timothy (& Mary) Meier (Independence, MO), 2 sisters-in-law: Carol Meier (Milbank, SD) & (Joleen Meier, Maple Grove, MN), several nieces and nephews and many other relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by two of her brothers, Albert & Marvin.



**Clare Meier**, 70, of Rib Lake, is singing psalms of praise in the presence of her Lord and Savior, following her final victory over the cancer that ravaged her earthly body these last few months. Clare was born the first of seven children to Clarence and Eloise (Szerlong) Nowobielski on November 21, 1952, and died September 3, 2023. She grew up on the family farm just outside of Thorp. After graduating high school, she attended Mount Scenario College and the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, earning a bachelor’s degree in biology. While she was in college, she spent a summer working at a Wisconsin DNR office in Hayward. In October of 1974, Clare married forester Wes Meier, and moved to the town of Spirit where he grew up and where she would spend most of the next forty-nine years of her life. Clare and Wes loved to spend time outdoors together; in the early years, Clare would help Wes a bit in the woods and helped to run their forestry consultant business. She also worked for a time for as a dairy herd inspector. In 1980, Clare and Wes welcomed their first child, Martha, followed by Andy in 1983 and Debbie in 1986. In 1992, Wes was diagnosed with colon cancer, which Clare and he fought together for almost two years, until Wes’ death in January of 1994. Clare decided that she would like to pursue a nursing degree, which she completed not long after Wes’ death. She then worked for a few years as a nurse for Hope Hospice, but ultimately decided to follow her life’s dream of working on the mission field overseas. In 1999

she took her first short-term mission trip, bringing the family for a two-week English language camp in Poland, the land that her ancestors came from. She followed that trip with other mission short term trips to Poland and Mexico. In 2005 she quit her job with Hospice to enroll in Bethany Global University for a one-year mission training program followed by several years of overseas mission work. Ultimately, however, she realized that adapting to a new culture and learning a new language all on her own in her sixties was overwhelming and decided to return to the A-frame on Stone Lake in Spirit and missions closer to home. Upon her return, she began development of a local ministry called Hillside Parish Nursing.

Clare was preceded in death by her husband of just 19 years, Wes, in 1994, and her father, Clarence, in 2016. She is survived by her seven grandchildren, Emma, Elijah, Josiah, Ezekiel and Philip Scott and Wesley and Marilyn Gray, as well as her children, Martha (Jordan) Scott of Spirit, Andy (Ania) Meier of La Crosse, and Debbie (Patrick) Gray of Chiang-Mai, Thailand. She is further survived by her mother Eloise, four brothers, Ed, John, Frank and Jerry Nowobielski, two sisters, Judy Conner, and Pat Jarocki, and by two sister's-in-law, Marilyn Erickson and Marie Arneson.



**Jean Ann Nyberg** went to be with our Lord on July 31, 2023 at the age of 87. She was born to Marie Helgens on March 14, 1936 in Iowa City. She spent the first 9 years of her life in and around Monticello, Iowa. They lived with her grandparents until her mom got married and they moved to Spirit, Wisconsin. She went to Liberty School and graduated from Rib Lake High School in 1954. During her high school years, she was in the Glee Club, played clarinet, was a cheerleader, enjoyed being in 4-H and spent many hours babysitting her 6 younger siblings. After graduation she moved to Milwaukee, where she met and married Greg Glisson in 1961 and they moved to California. Together they ran a restaurant, a construction business and had two children, Gary and Cindy. After divorcing, she married Stewart Nyberg, an old friend, in 1989 and moved back to Spirit. They ran a realty business together and the dreaded mink. After his passing she moved back to California to be with her two children and grandchild. Jean was a dedicated and loving mother, grandmother, sister, daughter and wife. Jean held various volunteer roles at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in California and First Lutheran Church in Ogema. Throughout her entire life, she held an unwavering faith in God, which she shared with those who surrounded her. She was patient and kind to all she knew and loved to entertain on holidays and bake Christmas cookies to share. Her quiet and gentle spirit was an inspiration to others.

She is preceded in death by her Grandparents Reinhard and Gesina Helgens; Marie Hoffmann (mother); her special Aunt Roberta Helgens; Uncle Raymond Helgens; Aunt Elnora Kernan; Julie Buckner (niece); and Stewart Nyberg (husband). She is survived by Gary Glisson (son); Cindy Glinwood (daughter); Roman and Brodie Glinwood (grandchildren); sisters Patricia (Emery) Mueller, Linda (Jerry) Sanchez, Myrna (Andy) Holmquist, Luann (Darrel) Lind and Nancy Cramer; brother Glenn (Helen) Hoffmann; many nieces and nephews; Jeff Nyberg (son); Marcie, John, Lisa, Russell and Nikki (step-children) and grandchildren on Stewart's side.



**Gloria Jeanette Brietzke** Age 88, of Rice Lake, WI, died Saturday, October 7, 2023 in Rice Lake. She was born on April 15, 1935 in Price County, WI to Gustav and Ann (Heller) Brietzke and spent her childhood in Spirit Township, WI. Gloria moved to Barron in 1960 and worked for Jeromes, Wright Products, and Nichols Homeshield for many years and retired in 1996. She was also a caregiver. She was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, the Altar Guild and Debra Circle. Gloria was a former member of the Legion Auxiliary. She loved the Milwaukee Brewers and the Green Bay Packers. She is survived by many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, 4 sisters and 8 brothers.





**Rev. Michael Lee Meier** was born on August 23, 1941, the fifth of six children to his parents Olga and Carl Meier in Spirit Township, Price County, Wisconsin. He attended nearby Liberty School for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades, having been promoted directly from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Michael graduated from Rib Lake High School in 1958 at age 16, completed a B.A. at Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1963 and graduated from Concordia Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in 1967. He received a call to serve as Lutheran Campus Pastor at Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis, Oregon. On August 6, 1967 he was ordained as a pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Corvallis.

Michael and Anthonia Ethel "Toni" Udem Hass met through church ministry and were married in December, 1979. In 1981 Michael received a call to serve as Pastor at Sitka Lutheran Church in Sitka, Alaska. While living in Sitka, Michael and Toni hosted a high school exchange student for one year, Alper Yuksel from Konya, Turkey. Michael and Toni became close friends with Alper, his sister Pinar, and their family and would later travel to Turkey to visit them.

Michael and Toni later lived and worked in Seattle and Chicago, and returned to Spirit Township in 2006 when Michael served as interim pastor at dual congregations of Zion Lutheran Church in Brantwood, and First Lutheran Church in Prentice, Wisconsin. Following in his father Carl's footsteps, Michael served on the Board of Directors for Price Electric Cooperative. Michael and Toni together founded German Settlement History, Inc., a legacy that will likely bear good fruit for many years to come. Their home, which by this time included not only the former Liberty School, but also "The Yesterday House", and "The Machine Shed" museum they had added to the property, was the place to be for many community and extended family gatherings. Michael and Toni were good neighbors, always welcoming no matter the time of day, always with a happy wave to anyone who passed through the adjacent County Road YY intersection. They were truly a "Spirit" couple and an asset to the community. German Settlement History, Inc. continues today as Spirit Historical Society, Inc.

During the summer of 2019, Michael and Toni relocated back to Corvallis, Oregon to be closer to family and health care resources. Michael passed away peacefully on Monday, September 25, 2023 at Good Samaritan Medical Center in Corvallis with family members at his side.

Michael is survived by his wife Toni, former wife Iona Trapp of Corvallis, OR, sons Andrew (Jenny) Meier of Eugene, OR and Peter (Eloiza) Meier of Belmont, CA, daughters Mary (Cyril) Oberlander of Arcata, CA and Naomi (Jeff) Trapp Davis of San Diego, CA, step-daughters Lauri (Mark) Speelman of Dallas, OR, Julie (Matt) James of Albany, OR and Debbie (Tom) Gerding of Philomath, OR, step-son Rick Hass of Billings, MT, brother Timothy (Mary) Meier of Independence, MO, sisters-in-law Carol Meier of Milbank, SD and Joleen Meier of Maple Grove, MN, 9 nieces and nephews, 18 grand- and step grandchildren, 10 step great-grandchildren, and two step great-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by parents Olga Catherine Marie Harrold Meier and Carl Theodore Reinhold Meier, brothers Albert Harrold Meier and Marvin Carl Meier and sisters Gladys Ann Howard, and Rosalie Jane Meier, who died in infancy.

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Spirit Historical Society, formerly German Settlement History, Inc., would not exist if not for the hard work of Michael Meier and his wife Toni, and their desire to preserve the history of the Town of Spirit and Hill and the surrounding Spirit Valley. Michael was born and raised in Spirit and cherished his hometown. He and Toni purchased the Liberty School, converted it into their home and a museum and arranged for the Yesterday House to be moved to their property. They opened their home for potluck dinners, open houses, and Liberty School reunions all with the intent to gather friends together and to share stories about their families and community. All that we have accomplished is due to Michael and we who live, or have family that comes from Spirit will be eternally grateful.



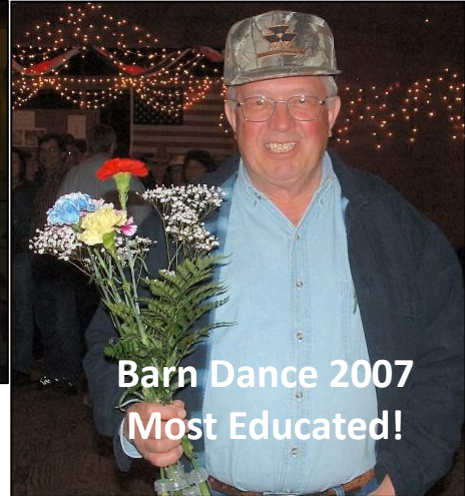
**GSHI meeting 2005**



**GSHI Board Members 2007**



**Barn Dance 2006**



**Barn Dance 2007  
Most Educated!**

# Memories of Michael



**Visit with cousin Gene**



**GSHI Board Members 2004**



**Great Hosts  
Toni & Michael**



**Serving  
Others  
2013**



**SHSI Board Members 2019**



**Building Barn Ramp 2012**

# Magnuson Bros. Fur Farm

Herb and Lester Magnuson's Dad Harry started trapping wild fox in 1917 along with buying his first foxes from the Fromm Bros. Farm in Hamburg, WI. From then on, he raised and bred them for their fur. The most popular fox fur at the time was from silver fox which were black or brown with a white tip on their tail.

Harry traded a heifer for 5 mink in 1937 and the Magnuson Mink Ranch got its start with Yard 1. These were bred along with wild mink that were trapped. Eventually he bought some breeding stock. Mutations of color were obtained by cross breeding different colors of mink. Eventually they were known for their white mink which was a rare color.

Herb & Lester worked with their father for many years and continued the business until 2012 when they pelted out.



Magnuson family  
Jenny, Lester, Aileen, Harry & Herb  
In front of the old farm house



The early years of mink farming  
Lester age 13 and Herb age 18



Herb with a couple of fox kits and teaching Scott Lind how to skin & flesh fox.

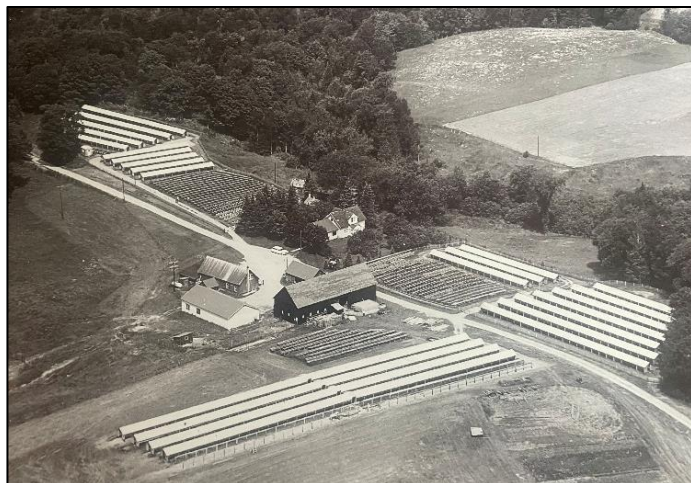


1976 Pelting fox –  
Alice Heiser, Herb Magnuson, Shirley Andreae, Betty Quednow



Fox pelt crop - Harry & Aileen Magnuson, & Elmer Gilge

Magnuson mink ranch  
1958  
Located in the Town of Spirit on W. Forest Drive





Ben Kauer with the big leather gloves

Mink are not the easiest creatures to handle. In fact, they are downright nasty. Heavy, long leather gloves had to be worn and a person had to be careful to keep the mink far away from any unprotected skin. The males were four or more times larger than the females and took extra care when handling them. Workers had to be alert when combing out knots from the fur in the fall to ensure quality pelts. Scraping the old feed off the trays could also be a challenge.



Breeding took place in March with the females being escorted to the male's domain. Timing was important as they sometimes would attack the females. Kits were born at the end of April and into May. They were born hairless, and their eyes don't open until 3-4 weeks old. Each box had to be opened to get a count of the kits along with a health check. Young ones averaged 4-6 per female. Kits stayed with Mom for about a month. At that time the females and young ones were moved to separate cages. The young kits were full grown by November and after careful grading of the animals, selection was made for those to be pelted. Mink were sorted according to color and fur quality.



Herb with a white mink

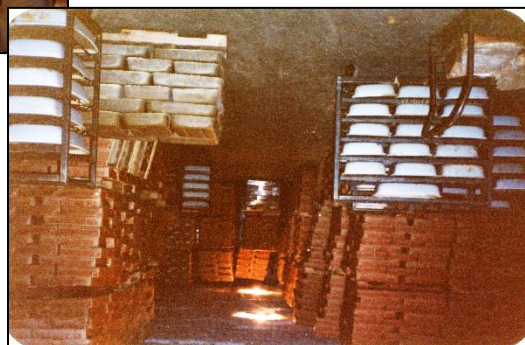


Wayne & Dona Jahn, Dan Meindel Cal Eighmy, Pete Kauer, Kathy Heiser, Louis Heiser



Joe Filas Jr., Joe Filas Sr., Elmer & George Franz

In the mid 60's Herb built a huge freezer that held a million pounds of mink food, replacing an old smaller one. Herb ground the feed every morning at 4:00 in a large mixer. The mink were fed by the crew using feeder carts. Mink feed was made up of fish, chicken, liver, cheese, cereal and water. Every day hoses were pulled through the sheds to water each cage by hand. Uneaten food was regularly scraped down to keep the food fresh.



Inside the big freezer



Louis Heiser & Herb with a feed mixer

Birthday Party for Bob Tripp. Frank Quednow, Patty Schneider, Phillip Schupp, Herb Magnuson, Leon Jarchow, Paul Zondlo, Jimmy Quednow



Herb and Bob Tripp, his foreman for many years!





Julius Rezutek, Stan Price, Dennis Myer, Art Gerstberger, Bob Tripp. John Skagerberg in front

Extra help was hired for the pelting process which included fleshing the pelts, pinning them on boards to dry, then putting them in boxes in the freezer to be shipped to the auction company. Hudson Bay Co. based in New York City handled the auction of their pelts for the most part. The ranch employed 50-60 people during peak seasons of pelting and breeding. Lester's wife Donna did the office work and payroll.



Warren Frisbee, George Hedstrom, Mark Wildberg, Stan Price. Dennis Myer in front.



Bob Tripp, Louis Heiser, Lester & Herb Magnuson

John Skagerberg, Dick Zielke, Joe Johnson, Ben Kauer, Wayne Jahn, Wilbert Nelson, \_?\_, \_?\_, \_?\_, Larry Halverson. Front Ethyl Eighmy, Tom Warden, Dona Jahn, Linda Zielke, Emily Swenson

## Stories and comments from folks who worked at the ranch

**Donna Jahn** – I fleshed fox by hand. One bad snow day, I couldn't get to work so Herb came to pick me up and took me back home so I didn't miss work. He was all over the road because he was talking so much.

**Dalpa Halverson** - Magnuson Brothers Fur Farm was once ranked #6 in the nation. I worked for them at the height of the mink market during the 1980's. The women mostly worked in the fleshing room – that's where you suck the fat off the pelts with machines and pinned the pelts on boards to dry. During breeding season in Feb. we worked in yards out of small heated shacks. Our job was to carry the females to the males. The women didn't handle the males as they were too large and strong. One of my jobs was feeding. We rode on a power feeder squirting the right amount of feed onto each feeding tray. We built new pens, using a 'hog ringer'. We spent a lot of time walking up and down the sheds, moving mink with big thick leather mittens. We worked outside a lot but it wasn't in "fresh" air! We got used to the smell, sometimes even eating meals right in the fleshing/pinning room. The men were always nice and respectful of us girls. Bob Tripp was our foreman. When he was gone Joe Johnson took on that responsibility. Lester was good to work for. He always smoked his pipe and chuckled as he went along. Herb always had a good sense of humor. If you asked for a raise, he brought you a piece of cardboard to stand on. Right after Christmas he would start saying "Well only 364 days 'til Christmas". If you came in at quitting time dead tired, he'd say "Well, today we didn't get much done but tomorrow we'll give her". Donna was like one of the gang. Joan (Herb's wife) would invite us to view her collection of fur coats. One year for Christmas the girls all got a corsage made of a silk rose and white mink. I still have mine.

**George & Janet Hedstrom** – Magnusons helped support a lot of the community families for years. They also made us part of their family. We worked in all kind of weather sometimes 20 or 30 below. But they made sure we had a nice warming shack. When Magnusons went out of business it hurt the community for a while. Workers gained life-long friendships.

**Emily Swenson** - The girls did everything that the guys did. We made pens for a few thousand mink, helped with the feeding, giving shots, pelting, breeding, cleaning pens, etc. It was like a big family working at the ranch. For a short time about 1980 we had a softball team. We called ourselves the Sunny Hill Minkettes. George Hedstrom and Harold Swenson were our coaches.

We were sponsored by Lester & Donna and Sunny Hill Bar owners Dan Keenas & his wife.



Bottom: Carol Nicholles, Barb Kittinger & George Hedstrom  
 Row 2: Jeannie DeLeo, Emily Swenson, Dawn Plude, Renee Rumberg  
 Row 3: Suzy Andreae, Linnea Waszkiewicz, \_?\_, Patty Schmitt  
 Top row: \_?\_, \_?\_, Janet Hedstrom



**Larry Halverson** – I worked for Magnuson Bros. Fur Farm 1980-1986. I started in the fall for pelting season, thinking it would be just a seasonal job. My cousin Tom Warden at the same time. We both found that we liked it and stayed for longer than we had planned. Lester and Herb were both good bosses, though very different. Les was more business-like. He managed the mink operations. We took most of our orders from him. Though more business-like, he did have a good sense of humor and was a kind and thoughtful man to work for. Herb, though also our boss, was more involved with the fox operations and other daily tasks to keep the farm running. During pelting season or breeding season everyone pitched in wherever they were needed. Other times of the year you could be building mink sheds and pens, repairing pens, housing, fences and so forth. Of course, there was the daily feeding, watering, and countless other jobs to keep things running. Bob Tripp was the ranch foreman, and he was also great to work for. A good man that kept everything going in the right direction. Aside from the fur business, you could be working in the woods logging, repairing roads, planing lumber & building different projects. There was most always plenty of variety, and you were too busy to get bored. As time went on, I became more involved with the fox operations, and worked mostly with them. Because of this, I spent a lot of time with Herb. I learned from him and he was always interesting. He was endlessly entertaining, and had a way of making things interesting and fun. I really enjoyed my time with him. Herb and I made quite a few trips to other fox farms, always looking to see what was new and would let us grow and improve. The trips were always enjoyable and productive. Magnusons employed a large crew of very diverse people and characters. By and large, it was a very good group of people to work with. Thoughtful of each other, and always interested in having fun. I will always look back at my time there with good memories.

Julius Rezutek, Marlin Franz, Joe Johnson



Paul Zondlo with a bobcat caught outside the pens. It was scaring the mink and many females were eating their young.



Herb, Marlin Franz, Hiram Beam



Herb & Carl Magnuson, Louis Heiser



Leon Jarchow, Carl & Herb Magnuson



Larry Halverson, Billy Parks, Steve Scott, Wayne Jahn, Joe Johnson

**Scott Lind** - Many memorable moments came from working for Herbie off and on during my school days. Herbie's whistling always indicated where he was in the mink yard. He was always laughing or whistling as best I can remember, regardless of whatever mundane or sometimes miserable task was at hand. Whether it was scraping mink poop, feeding time, or trying to hang on to those viscous varmints during vaccinating, he always had a positive attitude. At least that was the outward appearance.

Possibly the most memorable moments came from Spike the mink dog. Whenever we heard Spike we always knew he had a mink escapee pinned in a corner somewhere. We would drop whatever we were doing to grab the net and head for the bark. He was also very faithful to join us at the door of the "shack," a tiny little building in the middle of the mink yard that we would sit in to enjoy our lunch. He was always looking for a handout, and he would literally eat anything we threw to him. One summer my brother Nathan joined me to earn a little extra cash working for Herbie. We had many a laugh at the things that dog would eat, and some frustrations as well. He ate our peach pits, our sandwich bags, our pop cans, and an occasional piece of actual food. I had never witnessed a dog that could shred an aluminum can and then eat the pieces and still be alive and well the next day. It was pretty crazy. I guess to take on a rodent a fraction of your size but with 10 times the bite he had to be a little crazy. Since lunch break was the highlight of our day, we always made sure we packed something weird in our lunch bag just to see if Spike would eat it, and he usually did.

One afternoon after returning to work Nathan remembered he had left his watch in the "lunchroom." Although we both made a dash for the shack the watch was nowhere to be found, that was until we found Spike. We both grabbed him, attempting to pry his mouth open, as the vigorous chomping ensued. Eventually he did drop out the watch, in several pieces. No doubt he was disappointed that we did not let him finish the job as I'm sure the shredded pieces of electronics would have passed right through his system along with all the shredded aluminum.

On another occasion I was working on building cages, which was a very exciting and challenging undertaking, in comparison to scraping mink poop anyway. As always Spike was right there to help, offering an occasional smile and enjoying a pat on the head every so often. Fear struck when I dropped a 4 inch piece of bent up fence wire and Spike was right there. Despite my efforts to pry his mouth open he was very determined to get that thing down and finally succeeded after what seemed like several minutes of fighting with him while trying to not get bit. I thought for sure this would be the end of him, picturing coming to work the next day and finding him curled up in a ball somewhere in agonizing pain. I didn't have the nerve to tell Herbie what had happened, although he probably would have just responded with some smart crack and a laugh. It was a wait and see game. To my amazement the next morning Spike met me at the gate, his usual bouncy, bubbly self, and never suffered any ill effects. His guts must have been made of steel.

We learned with time to keep the door shut to the shack when we were not enjoying our lunch. Being attentive teenagers, it would occasionally slip our minds, and we would despairingly run back to the shack to find something missing. If it was something of ours it was disappointing but we knew it was our own fault. When Herbie's coffee mug went missing we knew we would have to answer for that one and that was a bit scary. Upon discovery we all took off yelling Spike's name in hopes he had not been gone for long. With Spike it didn't take long. We found him quickly but to our dismay the nice poly mug was no more. At least we caught him before he ate the whole thing. To my recollection only the handle made it down his gullet, although the rest of the mug was quite unusable with all the punctures from his teeth. Although Herbie was a bit upset I remember him taking it out on Spike and not on us, which we were thankful for. It didn't seem to deter Spike from future mishaps but it was a good reminder for us to keep the shack door shut when we were not present.

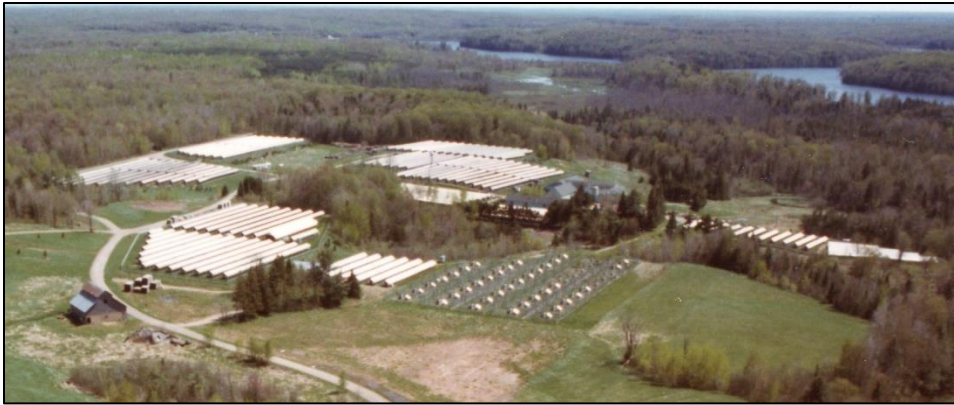
So many memories in such a short amount of time. Not exactly the funnest job I've ever had but Herbie was definitely one of the most enjoyable employers I've ever worked for. One valuable take away from my time there is that a good employer is always worth more than a fun job because a good employer can make any job fun. Those were some long days. Paul Harvey and lunch was the highlight of my day.

**Ben Kauer** – Herb had a funeral for Spike & everyone had to say a word for the dog before the burial.

All I could think to say is "Dog gone"!

At peak production the ranch had a total of 8 yards and approximately 100,000 mink.  
They pelted out in 2012. The last of the foxes were pelted out in 2020.

In 1969 the first census of the mink ranches in Wisconsin was taken and there were over 500 in Wisconsin and 8,500 in the U.S. In 2020 there were 19 ranches left in Wisconsin and under 100 in the U.S. This huge change was due to several factors including PETA, fashion companies eliminating fur clothing and COVID in the mink population requiring many to be killed. Today the only countries that deal in mink pelts are Denmark and Finland.



A side hobby for Herb & Lester was to raise a few badgers just for fun.



It was a great business for the community and the folks that lived here. Families found employment here for more than one generation. They also found friendship and memories that will stay with them in the future.

A note from Donna Magnuson (wife of Lester)

Our success was in large part due to the wonderful group of employees and the community involvement through the years. From the early days when the land was cleared for mink sheds and buildings, these individuals made our business unique and were the reason we thrived through the decades. There were many families that had multiple members working at the same time and some that spanned generations. Some of the family names were: Heiser, Kauer, Johnson, Eighmy, Hedstrom, Jahn, Halvorson, Walbeck, Fuchs, Kutzke, Schmitz, Quednow, and Zondlo to name just a few. There were Grandparents, Sons, Daughters and Grandchildren, and many Aunts, Uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and in-laws. It was one big family of close-knit, hardworking, and loyal people that made Magnuson Bros. Fur Farm a success.

# Spirit Historical Society, Inc.

## Membership Application

You are invited to become a member of S.H.S.I.



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\_\_\_\_\_ Homesteader - \$500.00 to \$999.00 per year

\_\_\_\_\_ Settlement Builder - \$1000.00 or more per year

Mail checks payable to SHSI and mail to:

Spirit Historical Society, Inc.

P.O Box 621

Ogema, WI 54459

Contact us at:

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## Books we have for sale written by local authors

<b>Books by Jeanette Gilge</b>	Quantity	Total	<b>Books by Carl Rhody</b>	Quantity	Total
<i>"Pioneer Family Series"</i>			<i>"Saga of Spirit Valley Series"</i>		
A Winter's Promise \$5.00	_____	_____	The Saga of Spirit Valley \$7.50	_____	_____
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<b>Set of 6 Pioneer Series \$20.00</b>	_____	_____			

City-Kid Farmer \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_ German Settlement History Pamphlet \$2.00 \_\_\_\_\_

**Written by Roy Meier**

### Books by James Rhody

Brant's Bear \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

The Pleasure of the Sorrow \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping – Orders for \$10 and under – add \$3.50 > \_\_\_\_\_

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