

Carnival starts long history in 1973

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An editorial by Howard D. Kessinger, editor of *The Oberlin Herald* in 1973, pretty much summed up the success of the new home-owned carnival, which opened for the first time 40 years ago. The Decatur Amusement Authority, along with countless volunteers, had worked hard to make it all happen.

Captioned: 'The big change in 1973' it goes on to say:
"1973 is history but it will long be remembered."

Thanks to the efforts of so many Decatur Countians, it will mark the year when the fair took a sharp upturn from mediocrity and truly became a community-wide effort. The fair was strong enough to compete successfully with other, large county fairs. And there is every reason to believe this fair will show further improvement and growth; already plans are underway for more carnival rides and other additions.

This is not to say the fair was not good in the past. It was, and thanks to the hard work of people from throughout the county, the exhibits and competition for ribbons was good and some of the evening shows were outstanding.

Yet this was the year when the community took an active role in that bold gamble, a home-owned carnival; when the community was actively involved in every night show; when the community turned out for the shows and supported the carnival; when careful planning and community effort paid off in a new fairground arrangement that meant far less dust, a more compact layout.

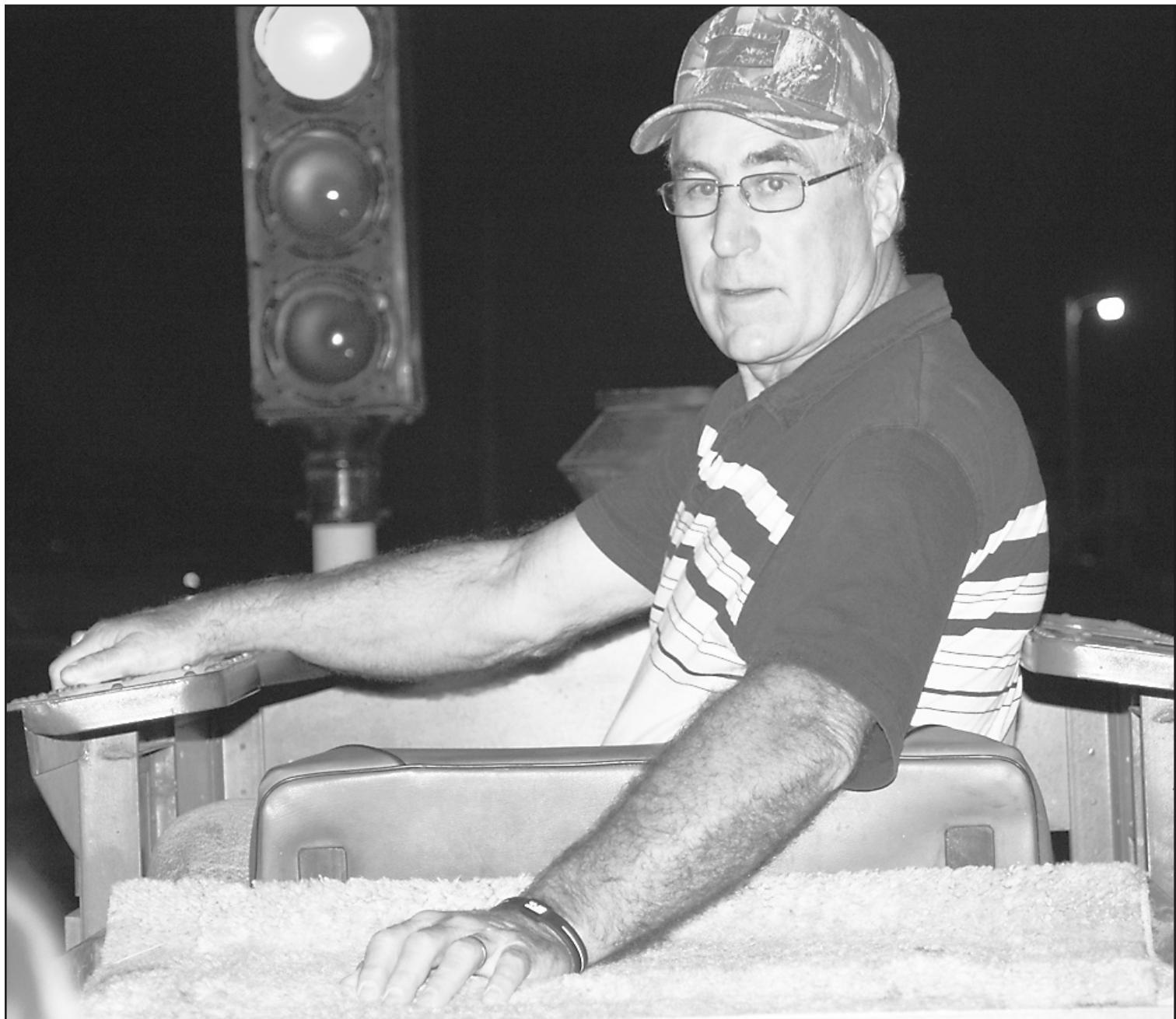
This will also be remembered as a time when the farmer's income began catching up with the rest of the economy, and doubtless this played a major role in the success of the fair. In no way does this minimize the role of the determined people of our community. In years to come, when visitors ask how a sparsely populated county like Decatur got such an outstanding fair, they will be told that it started with a big change "back in 1973."

Another story entitled, "New Carnival," tells about the relaxed atmosphere when the new carnival opened on the midway at Decatur County Fairground in August 1973.

"It started out pretty much as everyone had hoped it would — the 1973 Decatur County Fair.

In its first two nights, the fledging home-owned carnival was attracting a steady flow of happy patrons. The money was trickling in, and with only a few hitches in its well-oiled mechanism, the carnival was purring along smoothly.

Folks who were working in the concessions and manning the rides were having a good time, and comments on the brand new project ranged from "It's so nice to walk past a booth, and see someone you know running it" to "I don't mind



LAMOINE WOLFRAM took his turn driving the train at the Home-Owned Carnival. Volunteers like Mr. Wolfram keep all the games and rides going during the five night carnival.

— File photo

spending money here when I know it will be kept in the community."

There were comments on the relaxed atmosphere, the opportunity for children to travel from booth to ride on their own and without parental supervision and the general carnival atmosphere.

Decatur Amusement Authority President Floyd Lotker said he was pleased with the results of the months of work which went into the making of the carnival. He reported Monday night's take to be \$1,000. Prizes given away on the first night were valued at \$400, so the net for the night was \$600.

The second night's take was running higher. Lotker said Wednesday morning it had not been

all totaled up yet, but it appeared between \$1,700 and \$2,000 had been taken in Tuesday night.

"If this project is a success, and it looks like it might be, it will be because people from all walks of life and from all corners of the county were willing to pitch in and make it a success," Lotker said.

"I'll be happy if we can net around \$1,000 a night, he said.

Funds earned by the carnival will be used to pay off the debt incurred in building it and to help in expanding it. After the carnival gets on its feet, it is hoped there will be proceeds to plow back into improvement projects for the community."

And this was just the beginning of what

has turned out to be not only the first, but as the founders named it, "The World's Greatest Home-owned Carnival." It has gone from a Ferris wheel, several kiddie rides and swings, to additional rides, booths, food stands, games and much more.

The first members of the Decatur Amusement Authority, headed by Floyd Lotker, would be proud if they could see how their initial efforts have grown into the carnival that it is today.

And it continues to be a wonderful time for families to flock back to Oberlin to enjoy the Decatur County Fair and enjoy being together in a relaxed atmosphere.

See you at the Fair!