

Jerry and Bev Sloan were inducted into the Association of Iowa Fairs Hall of Fame during the AIF Conference and Annual Meeting in December 2019. Following photos taken at the AIF Conference:



Jerry and Bev Sloan



Sue Barnes Executive Secretary AIF, Jerry Sloan, Bev Sloan, Tom Barnes Executive Director AIF



L to R: Carly Sloan, Tiffany Sloan, Allison Sloan, Kevin Sloan, Jerry Sloan, Beverly Sloan, Jim Sloan, Lisa Sloan, Alissa Sloan, Craig Breja, and Lauren Sloan

Sloan family keeps fair humming along

By DON DAVIS
Courier staff writer

ELDON — Jim Sloan's long steps propelled him across the fairgrounds in double time.

"Hi chief," said a man, now a blur in the background.

The sound of that greeting faded and was replaced by another man's question. Then another and another.

After answering, Sloan unloaded benches from a trailer, then headed to the race track infield, hopped aboard a tractor and pulled a stage in front of the grandstand.

Sloan is a busy man this week. He's president of the Wapello County Regional Fair Board after having served on the board 10 years. And he's expected to have the answer to all fair-related questions.

The 33-year-old Eldon-area farmer dispatches most questions with ease and tracks down the answers he doesn't know.

Questions about an ice truck, weather, tickets and seating were a few the youngest fair board director handled as the fair opened Wednesday morning.

Answers are his easy job. As with other fair directors, Sloan pitches in where ever he is needed.

"We've got a good bunch of directors," he said. "Everyone knows what to do to get things up and running."

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Jerry Sloan sat in the ticket office, ready to sell tickets for what is expected to be the fair's best-attended grandstand act.

Jim Sloan's 53-year-old brother continues to help at the fair, as he has for about 35 years.

Starting as a paid gate worker, Sloan came on to the fair board about 30 years ago. He served as president, vice president, treasurer, car racing superintendent and a variety of other posts.

"We really spent a lot of time in

the early '70s with the car-race thing," he said, referring to the year the fair board started the races.

Today, Sloan works on ticket sales. This year, that job has been especially busy — fans of country music star Alan Jackson may fill the 6,000 seats Saturday night.

And if that isn't enough, Sloan also represents 27 central and Southern Iowa counties on the Association of Iowa Fair Boards. He will be vice president next year and then president.

He said he's not sure why he continues with all of his fair duties.

"I kind of enjoy it, I guess," he said.

His children, Kevin, 14, and Lisa, 18, also are involved in the fair, Lisa as a member of the state 4-H Council.

"It's a family thing," the fair board member said. "The wives work. Generally, the kids work."

"It's hereditary."
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Harley Sloan either inherited his interest in the fair from his grandfather or son Jerry.

His grandfather was a stockholder in the predecessor to the current fair — The Big Four Fair.

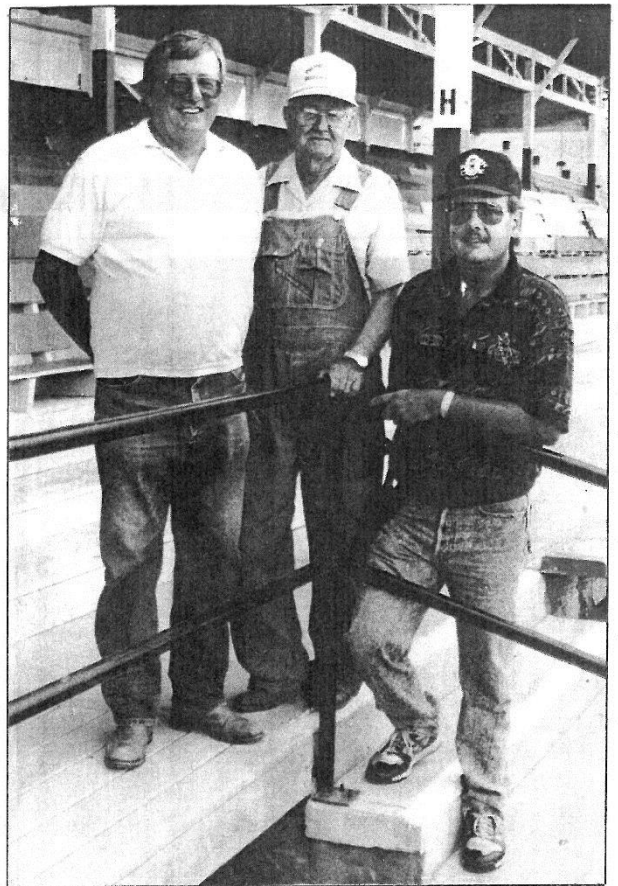
"Granddad was interested in the fair when I was little," said Sloan, who turns 78 today.

His grandfather brought crops to exhibit, but Sloan went for the machinery, and still does today.

Sloan didn't get involved in the fair until about 25 years ago when he was asked to help the fair's treasurer. He spent eight years in that job, until leaving the board about four years ago.

But he still works at the fair. Tuesday noon he was husking corn for a sweet corn feed Tuesday night.

"It's good for the community," Sloan said. "When I get to the point I'm not interested in (the fair), I'm



Courier photo by Jim Hamann

FAIR FAMILY: Harley Sloan, center, stands with his sons, Jerry, left, and Jim in the grandstand at the Wapello County Regional Fair.

ready for the nursing home."

His introduction to the fair started early — he was born during the fair on a farm across the river from the fairgrounds. The main attraction that year was the first airplane flying over the area.

"They laughed and said the airplane brought me," Sloan said.

Sloan, who farms with sons Jim and Jerry, is proud of the fair and of Southern Iowa.

"To a certain extent, we are the Garden of Eden of the world."