

Retirement Open House Today

Elevator Manager Built Career

By Tom Allan

World-Herald Staff Writer

Hordville, Neb. — A man who helped construct the Farmers Cooperative Association elevator in 1949 and managed it for the last 38 years will be honored at a seven-hour open house at the Hordville Middle School beginning at 9 a.m. today.

D.L. "Shorty" Hahn, who will be 62 in March, is retiring Feb. 28. "The open house may seem longer than my 38 years as manager but I'll stand it," he said.

Hahn, a native of nearby Polk and a graduate of Polk High School, served in the Army in the South Pacific during World War II and returned home to work in construction.

"I was working for Tillison Construction Company of Omaha when they built the elevator," Hahn said. "The (co-op) association board ... asked me to become manager in February of 1952 without any previous elevator experience."

Hahn's grandfather, E.W. Hahn, had been a charter board member when the association, the fourth-oldest farmer's cooperative in Nebraska, was founded in 1906.

When Hahn started as manager in 1952 he had one employee, and they worked six days a week. Now the 400-member association has six employees.

The secret of success, Hahn said, has been loyalty and longevity of board members, stockholders and employees.

Farmer Paul Blase is a third-generation member of the six-member board headed by farmer Don Lampshire. There have been only 42 different board members in Hahn's 38 years.

"There have been very few employee turnovers. All employees have worked here for a long time. Shorty's younger brother, Joe, has been an employee for 20 years," said Shirley Parsons, the office secretary for 32 years.

Hahn has been more than an elevator operator. He is a former member of the school board. Last year he retired after 32 years as a member of the volunteer fire department, and he is still an active member of the Freedom Lutheran Church.

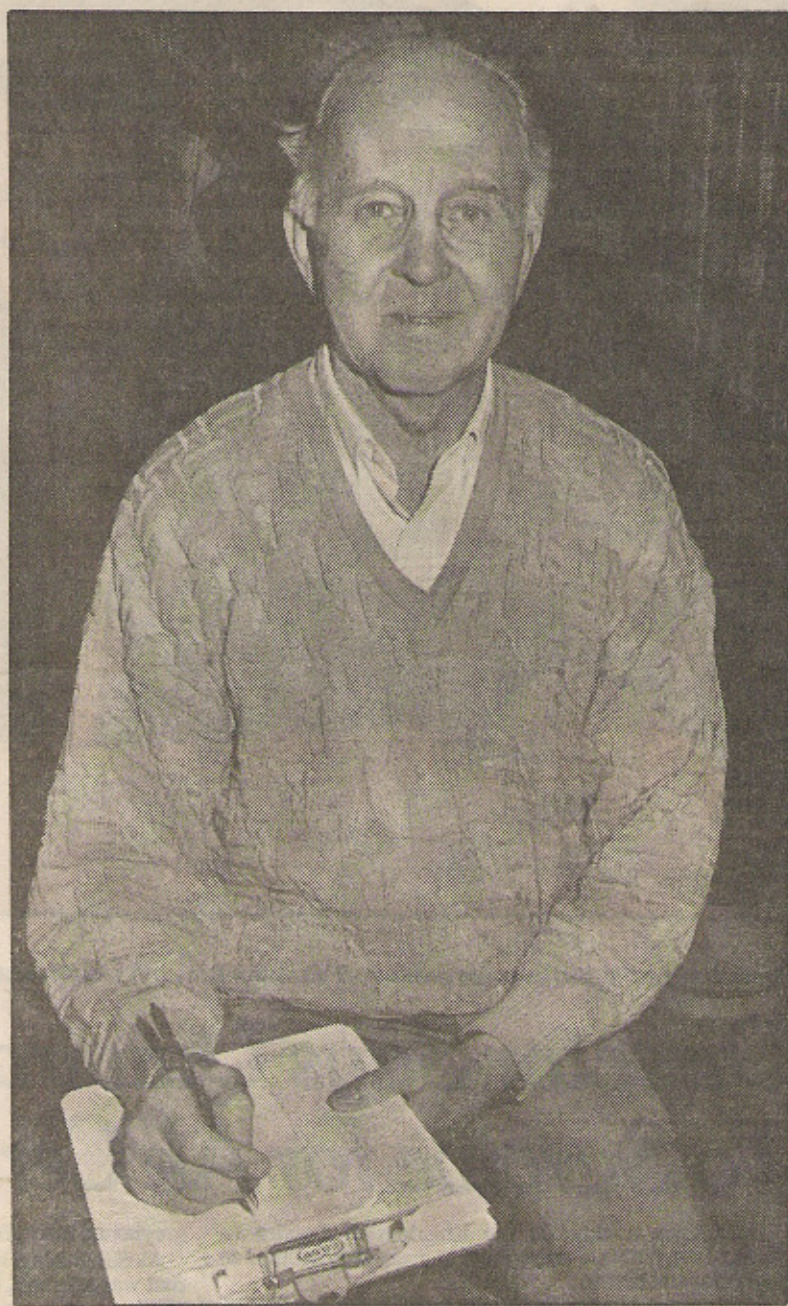
Although Hahn has seen many changes in the elevator business, one thing has remained constant.

"We are one of a very few that still sell stoker coal," he said. "We still supply about a dozen customers, including the Hordville and Silver Creek schools."

One of the major changes, he said, has been "the establishment of irrigation in our area that increased corn yields from 50 bushels to 150 bushels an acre."

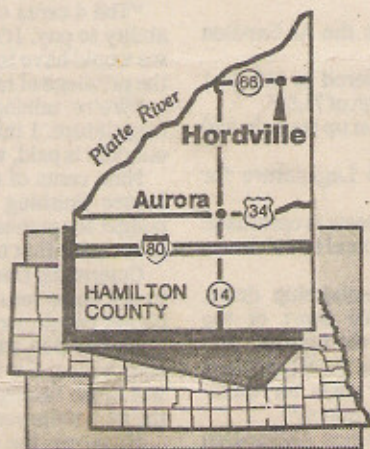
The elevator has kept pace, increasing its handling of grain from 395,000 bushels in 1952 to more than 2 million in the last fiscal year.

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Tom Allan/World-Herald

Hahn ... has seen corn yields increase from 50 to 150 bushels per acre.



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Hordville ... Open house today.

izers and pesticides, Hahn sees an industry change in the future.

"I think something will be done,"

he said, "because there is a pollution of the earth with chemicals. More crop rotation may be an answer."

Hahn's retirement plans include fixing up some property, more fishing at the cabin he owns "down by the river," more time for hunting and a "try at a little golfing."

First he and his wife, Irene, will be off on a trip next month to visit a daughter, Pauline Beckman, an elementary vocal instructor, and her family at Las Vegas, Nev. A son, Douglas, lives at Grand Island, Neb., where he is a stockbroker.

The Hahns have lived recently in Central City, to be closer to Mrs. Hahn's mother, who lives at nearby Polk.

"It will be hard to leave" his post of almost four decades, Hahn said, but he has at least one more trip in mind.

"The Pack is coming back, and I've always wanted to take in a Green Bay Packer game," he said.

Elevator manager will be missed

By Deb Reeves

Independent Correspondent

HORDVILLE — D.L. (Shorty) Hahn is as much a fixture at the Hordville Farmer's Co-op Elevator as the grain tubes. He's been there almost as long as they have.

Hahn was one of the seven sons and two daughters of Harvey and Hannah Hahn. As a young man, Shorty worked construction. He helped build the elevator in Hordville during the summer of 1949. Three years later, when they needed a manager, he applied and was hired.

"I had no experience in the elevator business. I guess I was a brave, young soul, you know," Hahn said. "I was a kid, 24 years old, and the men on my board of directors probably averaged 70."

They paid him \$125 a month, a sizeable salary back then. He had one other man to help him, and they would sometimes hire extra help during harvest seasons, he said. They worked from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

"We still work some of those hours, but it isn't year round now," Hahn said.

Through the years he watched the trends in farming come and go and he watched families change. He's now working with the third generation of some farm families.

"Bill Blase was on the board when I came. His son, Irvin served, and now Bill's grandson, Paul, is on the board," Hahn said. "I've worked with 42 directors in 38 years. Before the late '60s, directors served unlimited terms



and many were on the board for years and years. Now they can serve a maximum of six years."

Robert Erickson served on the Farmer's Co-op Board from 1962 to 1971. He said Shorty's years of service can almost speak for themselves.

"This elevator is one of the oldest in the state. It was organized 84 years ago in 1906. Shorty came on as manager in the early '50s and has been here for almost half of the years of the cooperative," Erickson said.

Hahn said the elevator was organized as the Farmer's Grain and Livestock Co-Operative. They bought and sold cattle and hogs and shipped them to Omaha by rail in the early days. It wasn't until the mid-'30s that the business changed to the Farmer's Co-Operative Association.

Low turnover rate

It's important to note that the employee turnover has been very low though the years, Erickson said.

"When Shorty hired someone, they stayed with him though the years. I would think that speaks highly that he's a good man to work for," Erickson said. "And

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'Shorty' Hahn has been at the Hordville co-op for 456 months.

even though he was the manager he wasn't afraid of a little work. He was very ambitious. He'd go out and do about any job that needed to be done."

The boards always found Hahn easy to work with, Erickson added.

"Everyone pretty much got along with him, whether a board member or a patron. As a board we never had complaints about him, we had a good relationship. He did a nice job for us."

There were times when Hahn had to ask the board for things that might have sounded a little unreasonable at the time.

"I'll never forget the first year we had to put grain on the ground. We put it uptown and it caused a lot of excitement," Hahn said. "We had to go to Central City and buy an auger to do it; we didn't have one."

People drove into town to see it as the word got out. There was a lot of talk about how the milo on the ground would quickly spoil. But, as is well known now, it held and very little was lost, Hahn said.

Milo was king in his early years at the elevator and wheat was also a major crop in the area.

The wheat harvest was their busiest time of year back then, Hahn said.

"The corn harvest stayed on the farm. They picked it in the ear, stored it in bins and then shelled it and brought it in the following summer or fall," Hahn said.

Hahn's wife, Irene, remembers the annual summer wheat harvests.

"When the farmers would bring in the wheat, lines would form all the way to the east road," she said. "I especially remember one Fourth of July. We were in the yard for a picnic and the wagons were lined up waiting to unload."

Corn has taken over the top spot at the co-op, with soybeans holding the No. 2 spot in popularity, Hahn said. The farmers in the area still raise some milo and a little wheat, though, he said.

Central City to perform 'South Pacific'

The Central City High School Vocal Music Department will present "South Pacific" 7:30 p.m. March 16 and 17 at the Middle School Gymnasium.

The cast includes Jill Krance as Nellie Forbush, Jay Ryan as Emile de Becque, Carrie Hansen as Bloody Mary, Brandon Webster as Luther Billis, Kari Petersen as Liat and Dain Johnston as Joe Cable.

Reserved tickets are on sale for \$3 at the Central City High School office, with hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. General admission tickets, which can be purchased at the door, are \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for kids.

Two biggest changes

Fertilization and irrigation are the two biggest changes he saw during his 38 years as manager.

"Irrigation was absolutely the biggest change," Hahn said. "I remember selling our first fertilizer in 1955. We sold it in 50 pound sacks and stored it where ever we could find the room. We started selling anhydrous ammonia in 1959."

Farmers back then, relied more on crop rotation and manure for their nutrient needs. They would apply about 30 to 40 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre compared to about 180 pounds now, Hahn said.

"Anhydrous was a big thing when it came. We had a special meeting to discuss it to see if we even wanted to handle it," Hahn said. "We started with five 1,000-gallon tanks and two applicators."

Feed, coal and even flour were major commodities when Hahn began his career.

"We sold seven different kinds of coal, now we sell one," he said. "Before I became manager I remember unloading lump coal off the rail cars. The local telephone operator would give a line ring, that is ring every phone, and tell everyone that there was a car of coal on the track. It was a dollar a ton cheaper if you loaded it off the car yourself so everyone would come in and get coal."

"We sold a lot of Gooch's feed and we sold flour in cloth bags. Now the feed is down to about nothing and it was just a few years ago that we stopped handling flour," Hahn said.

While they cut down on small items, they've definitely increased in other areas. When the elevator was first built, they had a 90,000-bushel capacity. Today they have storage for 1.6 million bushels of grain. Adding that storage was probably the high point in his career, Hahn said.

"We built flat storage in 1958 and in 1982, we added two Chief 150,000-bushel bins. I got a lot of enjoyment out of that addition. It gave us another facility where we could dump grain and a much higher capacity. It really made a difference," Hahn said.

Grain car shortage

The low point came in the late '70s as a grain car shortage forced small elevators to make major financial

Driver ed classes offered in Kearney

KEARNEY — A pre-driver education class for 14-year-olds and older will be offered April 21-22 by the Nebraska Safety Center at Kearney State College.

Registration deadline is April 13, with enrollment limited to 12 students.

investments to assure rail service.

"We had to put in track at our expense and were required to lease 25 cars. That was tough. It was a program that just did not work out," Hahn said.

He's very proud of the fact that the Hordville Farmer's Co-op is still an independent operation while many other small elevators in the area have merged. It hasn't been easy because when you're bigger, you have a few more options.

"I'm shipping 25 cars but the guy down the road might be shipping 75," Hahn said. "He's maybe going to get a better price. My customers expect the same price for their grain he's paying, which results in a smaller margin for us."

"And there's the paperwork. You're just covered up with paper nowadays. The government regulations are more stringent day by day, it can really add to the headaches."

"The biggest challenge facing an elevators operator each day is the grain market. It fluctuates every minute and you have to stay on top of it. You have to know what you have and you have to be ready to sell," Hahn said.

When he leaves at the end of February, he will have been on the job for 456 months, Hahn said. Through the years he's paid from a low of 85 cents for a bushel of corn to a high of \$3.40 in 1974. The first month was probably the most interesting and the last will be the most difficult, Hahn said.

"You get down to the tail end and you realize that everything won't be done when you leave," Hahn said.

He's looking forward to retirement. He and his wife have a cabin on the river that they use occasionally. Now they'll have more time for it, Hahn said.

They will also be able to see more of their children. Their son, Doug, is a stockbroker in Kearney while their daughter, Pauline, teaches vocal music in Las Vegas, Nev.

Hahn gives his wife a lot of the credit for his 38 years of success.

"For me to be at one job that long you know I had to have a very understanding wife. She had to do a lot of the work of raising the family because I would be tied up with one harvest or another," Hahn said. "Wives of elevator operators have to put up with a lot. When it comes to busy season, you're just out of the picture at home."

Donald Lampshire, current chairman of the board of directors, said he feels they're losing quite a person.

"He's been good to work with and he's done a good job for the community. He's brought us from an asset of \$85,000 when he came to a value of \$1,500,000 now," Lampshire said.

"I think he'll be missed, without a doubt. As far as I'm concerned we're going to have a hard time finding someone to replace him."

Medical to meet in

The Seventy Emergency Medical Association Conference will be in the New World bus.

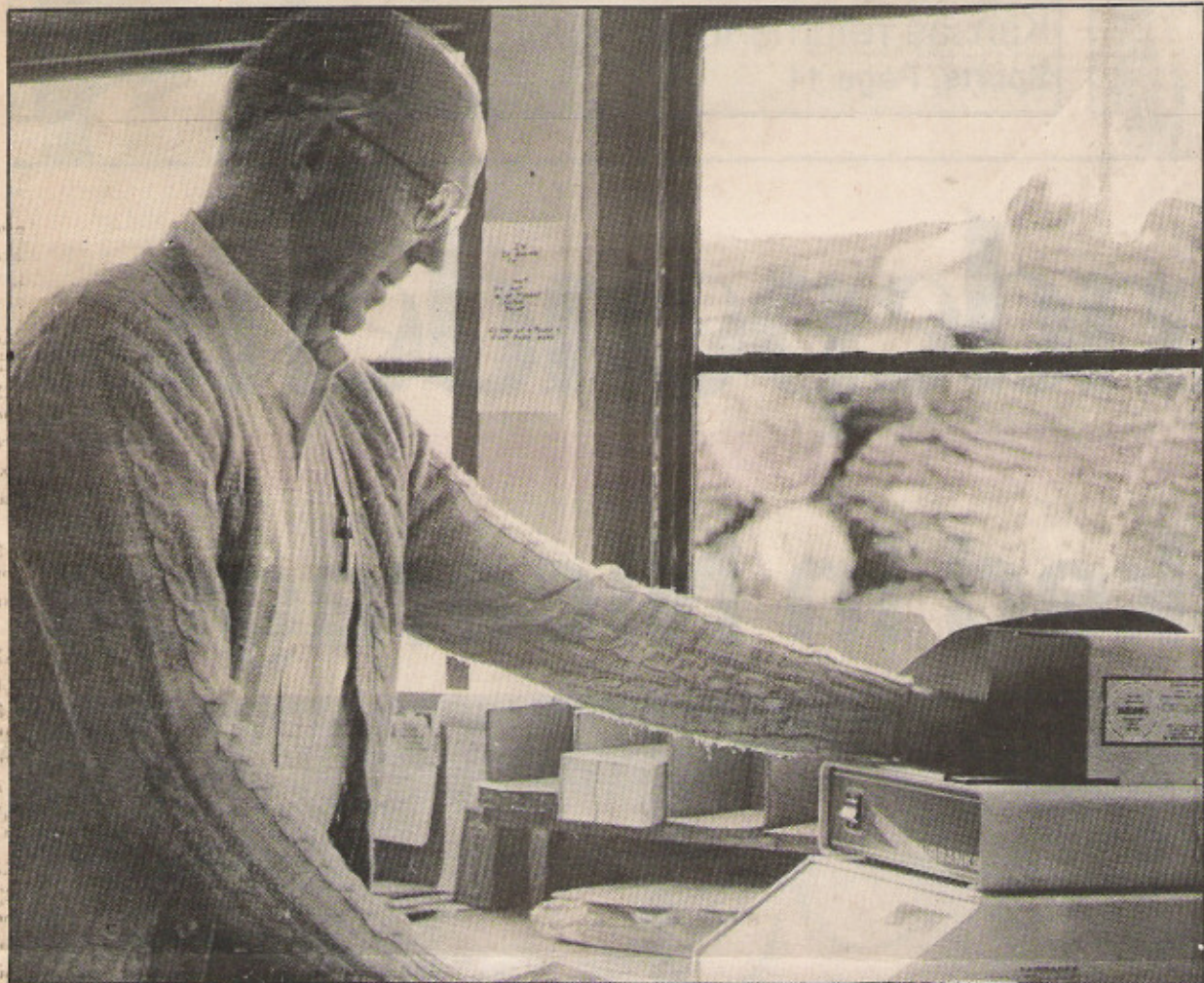
Courses will include assessment, emergency aquatic injury, hazardous materials and patients and

The cost is \$50 for a pre-register to plan to attend. The cost for one-day attendance is \$100. March 11.

Participants will receive semester-hour credit for the entire one-half hour and Sunday attendance. Education awards for each.

To preregister, call CCC community at 564-7132 or 1

ARE YOU CONFUS



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D. L. "Shorty" Hahn enjoys reflecting on life at the Hordville elevator.

Elevator manager
