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In Their Own Words

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The summer festival season has arrived! Here is the story of a local family that supplies carnival rides across the country. To read the complete article, please check out the April, 2018 newsletter at eaglehistoricalsociety.org.

The Lake Family Carnival Enterprises *by Beau Lake*

When a company has been in operation for 87 years, one has to ask, "How did they endure?" Almost always they provide a service or product that the people prefer to an alternative. There are many other reasons they could have lasted, like a great business plan, competition collapse, location, a competent workforce, an innovation, and luck.

For the traveling carnival Lake Enterprises, it is all of the above. The company still functions much as it originally did, offering thrills, tastes, and carnival trinkets to the best of their ability. Luck affects us all in the decisions we make every day; some have good luck, bad luck, no luck, or some have the ability to make their own luck. This was the case with Scott William Lake who bought a traveling penny arcade in 1931. Scott had been in Kansas farming in 1928 where it was a hard life and there was plenty of work to go around.

In April, 1929, his son Frederic Kern Lake was born; six months before the stock market crash. Work was hard to find and there was lots of moving around, but Scott worked something out. Somehow, he bought a traveling penny arcade, and by 1931 he was traveling around with some of the biggest shows out there.

Though Scott may have been able to get by on the income from just the penny arcade, he hardly stopped there. Within the first few years of opening, he acquired a car ride and a chair-plane (swing ride).

Around 1935 Scott won a "Flying Jenny" airplane in a card game with other show owners and decided to fly it home.

Scott operated from the Wisconsin area to Florida. He operated a summer-quarters in the Milwaukee area, winter quarters in Apalachicola, Florida, and he housed the arcade in St. Louis if not in operation.



Frederic Kern Lake in 1948 in Eagle with his semi tractor ready to pull a load.

Scott bought several acres in Eagle, WI, where he moved his operation in about 1940. Scott created a business called Lake Machine Works where he constructed his own rides at his address. He also constructed dozens of homes in the area under a company called Melody Homes.

Lake Enterprises is still in operation today, still in Eagle, WI; still in Melody Hills. Fred Lake's son Mark operates the unit with son Beau, daughter Lindsey, and nephew Matt.

Lindsey Lake stocking her shelves in Shullsburg, WI, about 2003

