

News Release

Alumni Feature: Allan Dragseth 1957

By Jess Bengtson 2010 on Thursday, October 20, 2022

He's used to the local attention for his involvements, but Northwest School of Agriculture alumnus Allan Dragseth 1957 received national attention during the summers of 2021 and 2022 for one of his special projects. Dragseth built a "Radio Flyer" car modeled after the original little red wagon he had as a child and has been seen at area events and cruising the streets of Crookston.



The project got its start after Dragseth, a retired farmer of 65 years, saw something similar on YouTube and began looking for cars. In the fall of 2020, he found a Ford Fiesta at a junkyard but it didn't have a key so he kept looking and a couple weeks later he stumbled upon a Pontiac Sunbird.



"We had some aluminum sheets from a grain wagon laying in the trees on our farm for about 20 years, so I brought five in and made the box of the car," Dragseth explained. "People thought I was making a duck boat before I got the decals from Kustom Kollision."

Dragseth brought the finished product to Crookston's annual summer festival Ox Cart Days in August 2021 and parked the Radio Flyer car in the middle of the Crookston Sports Center during a visit from The Hershey Company of Pennsylvania, who were there to promote a smores fire table project built by local high schoolers. The Radio Flyer car even made it in several scenes of Hersheys' YouTube video that's now been viewed over 30,000 times.

Then came 2022 when Twin Cities news station KARE 11 featured Dragseth and his project in Boyd Huppert's Land of 10,000 Stories series. The story's subtitle reads, "80 years ago, Allan Dragseth played with a little red wagon. Now he drives one." KARE 11's story video has been viewed on Facebook close to 50,000 times and was shared by hundreds of people.

"They came to Crookston and spent five-and-a-half hours recording video then they got it to three minutes," Dragseth explained. "Scott Maves and his son came out from True Value Hardware for an interview."

Dragseth's Radio Flyer project story was also picked up by networks in New York, Illinois, Idaho, and California.

The Radio Flyer car is now put into storage at the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Museum in Crookston, a place Dragseth helped found. Dragseth recalls being on the Polk County Museum board of directors in the 1990s and hoped to devote a place exclusively to sugarbeet equipment, so, years later, he and others found property on Crookston's south end for exactly that.



"Before we signed the papers, Tri-Valley (Opportunity Council, Inc.) got a hold of me asking about the other buildings on the site and we worked it out so we got the land and the rent on the building," said Dragseth. "I had a lot of equipment and then we added some, now they're here in the museum. We also have movies we can show about different projects and videos of farm work done in the 1930s and 1940s that we've recorded to DVD."

The RRV Sugarbeet Museum houses dozens of antique machinery and hosts an annual "Harvest Festival" event the second Sunday in September. Harvest Festival activities include a live sugarbeet harvest using both old and new equipment to compare, showcasing museum machinery, using an "old-fashioned" combine to cut grain, and, in the past, they've had a tractor pull and steam engine thrashing.



One future plan for the Sugarbeet Museum Dragseth would like to see come to fruition is to get a video kiosk designed like a tractor where guests could use a steering wheel to move the screen and pull a lever to shift between videos that would show farm work, machine restoration, and other museum-worthy clips.

Other involvements Dragseth is known for include being on the Care and Share homeless shelter board and the foundation board for Benedictine Living Community's Villa St. Vincent nursing home and Summit Apartments for assisted living, plus he was previously on the Crookston School Board, RiverView Health hospital board, and the Eldred Elevator board. He and his wife of 63 years, Judy, also have a student scholarship they provide.

The Dragseth's son, Paul, sadly passed away in the fall of 2021 and Allan's grandsons have now taken over the family farm in which Allan has offered to them advice stemming from his years of experience.

Before his decades of running the family farm where they grew and harvested sugar beets, wheat, barley, soybeans, and sunflowers, Dragseth attended the Northwest School of Agriculture from 1953-1957 with "longer days" of "pretty intense" education.



"The classes I took were mainly towards agriculture," Dragseth recalled. "We started October 1 and were out by the end of March. On the weekends I went home and helped on the farm. One of my favorite classes was geometry."

Dragseth was even named valedictorian in 1957.

Today, Dragseth looks forward to watching his grandsons farm and working to finish yet another project - a 1928 International truck with a handmade box that's currently sitting in the back of the museum.

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