The History of the Kraut Festival

When Mr. A. A. Huppert of the Frank Pure Food Company held a “picnic” for his employees and a few friends, little did he realize that it was the beginning of one of the most successful festivals throughout all Wisconsin. Originally designed to show what real home cooked kraut should taste like and to raise money for the local park, the idea has grown to a four day celebration that attracts upwards to 40,000 persons.

With the exception of 1952, when the event was held on the main street of Franksville all of the Kraut Festivals have been held at the Caledonia-Mt. Pleasant Memorial Park. The early sponsors were members of the Franksville Athletic Club and the funds were used to develop the park. When the park was turned over to the joint townships in 1962 the festival was cancelled as it was again in 1967 when Highway K was widened. It was in 1963 that the Franksville Businessmen realized another need for the festival and wanting to continue the tradition, decided to sponsor it and have done so ever since. The new need was the desire of local church and civic groups to raise money and so the businessmen sponsored the festival taking a small percentage from each of the groups that participated. Although the initial profits were small, justice would be served and today many of these organizations need only this one fund raising activity to sustain them throughout the year.

The Kraut Eating Contest originated in the early 1950’s and it, too, had an inconspicuous beginning. Because a kraut eating contest had never been tried before, contestants were allowed to eat with their hands. The unfavorable publicity that followed caused the rules to be changed and along with other experiences gained, it now ranks as one of the highlights of the weekend. To our knowledge it is the only kraut eating contest in the world, therefore, our winner is “World’s Champion”. Maynard Entringer, the current champion, has held the title on numerous occasions and with a record attempt of two pounds in 46 seconds, new challengers are not easy to come by.

The Queen contest is a much different kind of story. Originally called the Kraut Queen, the title today is a more dignified “Queen of the Kraut Festival”. The first gal to wear the title of Kraut Queen was Dorothy Cooper Anderson who was crowned in 1959. The first queens were elected by those attending the festival, however, in recent years the finalist are picked by the businessmen themselves and the queen is selected by a panel of impartial judges.

One of the reasons the festival continues to grow in popularity is the picnic like atmosphere that prevails. The Memorial Park in late July is a good place for families and friends to get together and the combination of polka bands, outdoor dancing, plenty of draft beer and the finest sauerkraut is enough reasons to call Franksville the Kraut capitol of the World.

1952 Festival was held on the streets of Franksville shortly after the paving project was completed. Above pictures left to right Bill Keller, Mrs. Hazel Fritchen, Jerome Fritchen and Dr. F.J. Fitchen. Franksville Food Center in background was previously owned by H. C. Hoppe, Pearl Gutknecht and Christ Ramig. Building is now owned by Bob Tonar and is the site of the Franksville Liquor store. Fred Fritchen was the store’s operator at time of picture.
DEPARTED BUSINESSMEN . . . The late Alex Ramig of the Franksville Food Center and W. C. (Red) Titley of the Franksville Food Center weigh kraut for the 1962 Kraut Eating Contest.

1955 CONCESSION OF THE FBA

The Franksville Businessman's Association had an early envolvement in Kraut Festivals before taking over the sponsorship in 1963.
1958
Dorothy (Cooper) Anderson
Housewife
Husband: Andrew (Banker)
1845 Hwy. H
Racine, Wisconsin 53406
2 Children

1959
Ruth (Eppler) Hansen
Housewife & Works at American Motors
Husband: Robert (American Motors)
4010 - 20th Street
Racine, Wisconsin 53406
3 Children
1960 - No Queen

1961
Linda (Miller) Galovits
Housewife
Husband: David (J.I. Case)
614 Goold St.
Racine, Wisconsin 53402
2 Children
1962 - No Kraut Festival

1966
Barbara (Heberling) Dopke
Physical Ed. Teacher - St. Catherine's
Husband: Kenith (Dir. of Student Affairs - St. Catherine's)
632 Crabtree Lane
Racine, Wisconsin 53405
No Children

1968
Sherry (Kusters) Wifler
Special Ed. teacher for mentally retarded children
Husband: Mel (Audit Manager)
473 Park Ave.
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin 54935
1 Child

1969
Linda (Downey) Tischendorf
Kilbourn Gardens Restaurant
Husband: Roger (Kilbourn Gardens)
4300 No. Main St. - Apt. 107
Racine, Wisconsin 53402
2 Stepsons

1973
Lisa Sajdik
Student-secretary - grocery checker
2515 Virginia St.
Racine, Wisconsin 53405
Single

Kraut
1963
Cathy (DeVries) Keisler
Fashion Design Inst. at Mount Mary College
Husband: Lance (Drafting Inst.)
5100 Russell Dr.
Greendale, Wisconsin 53129
No Children

1964
Carla Kalbfleisch
Secretary - Foundry Allied Ind.
1308 Lathrop Ave.
Racine, Wisconsin 53405
Single

1965
Dee Dee Davies
Teacher - Trautwein School
Miss Dee Dee's School of Dance
1235 Cleveland Ave.
Racine, Wisconsin 53405
Single

1970
Cynthia (Siefert) Moru
Drug Research - Yale University
Husband: Carl (Pharmacist's Ass't.)
76 Main St. - Apt. 6
New Haven, Conn. 06512
No Children

1971
Pam (DeGroot) Wahlen
Model - Chicago
Husband: Rudolph (Wiess Plumbing)
33 Riverside Dr.
Racine, Wisconsin
1 Child

1972
Mary Anne (Sadlon) Kolton
Elementary Teacher - Kettle Moraine
Husband: Gregory (Auditor)
2092 So. 102nd St. - Apt. 206A
West Allis, Wisconsin 53227
No Children

Queens

1974
Virginia Lee
Secretary-receptionist at D & R Window & Awning
6022 Golfridge Dr.
Racine, Wisconsin 53406
Single