

Family tradition still strong at Butler County Fairgrounds

By Ellen Blevens
For eventure!

The Butler County Fair has always been a local celebration for families to enjoy.

It may come as no surprise, then, that this year, the theme chosen for the 151st fair is "A Family Tradition."

The Butler County Fair gives families an opportunity to begin traditions of their own, whether by exhibiting animals or goods, or simply by attending.

The Van Gordens and the Cochrans are only two of the many families who have already made the Fair a part of their tradition.

Jim Cochran, 58, has attended the fair 57 times, missing only one year due to military service. Morris Van Gorden, 73, has been involved with the fair since 1937, when he began showing animals through 4-H.

For both men, the Butler County Fair has continued to be a family tradition passed from generation to generation.

Cochran's father served as the locator and concession manager for the fairgrounds for years, a position he now holds.

"It's always been a part of my family," he said. "My father did it before I did, and when he died, I took it over."



Morris Van Gorden poses in the Butler County Fairgrounds.
E.L. Hubbard/For eventure!

Van Gorden's sons and grandchildren followed in his footsteps and now exhibit animals at the fair, continuing the tradition that he always enjoyed doing as a child.

"I exhibited Holsteins," he said. "It's wonderful to see my sons and grandchildren going on to show animals themselves.

They exhibit in the junior fair." Van Gorden's family is very successful with their exhibition, winning prizes every year and often traveling to the Ohio State Fair to compete.

After being a part of the fair for years, Cochran and Van Gorden show no sign of wanting to stop.

"At this point, I plan to keep serving as the concession man-

ager," Cochran said.

Van Gorden has served on the Fair Board for 30 years and was just elected to another three-year term. He also plans to remain involved by being a fair attendee.

Van Gorden also believes that exhibiting has an importance beyond just healthy competition. "It's important that we in agriculture show our goods to our urban neighbors so they can understand the origin of their food and fiber," he said.

Cochran and Van Gorden both still see the sense of togetherness and tradition present at the Fair.

"It still has the same family atmosphere," Cochran said.