

## 40 years after farms left land, farming community remains



Members of the former farming community on Fermilab property and their family members at the 10th annual Fermilab Farmer's Picnic on Saturday, May 5.

Out near Butterfield Road, secluded from most of Fermilab, sits Leonard Baumann's rickety red barn. Baumann, like 55 other farmers, relocated around the Batavia area to make way for Fermilab's construction 40 years ago. Today, grasses have overtaken their farms and barns have been destroyed, but the farming community survives.

Nearly 100 people gathered at last Saturday's 10th annual Fermilab Farmers' Picnic to celebrate their decades-old farming community. "I come back every year to see old friends," Baumann said. "We are all farmers. We're older than rocks." He will be 85 in two weeks.

Inside Kuhn Barn, visitors were treated to a spread of treats, including a farm-scene cake, complete with a barn and rows of crops. Roads & Grounds' Bob Lootens drove a group of about 10 partygoers around the lab. "I'm going to take you down memory lane," he said as the bus turned onto Holter Road inside the Tevatron's main ring.

Prairie burns have thinned out the forest, making look as it did in the past-even the same gravel roads are there. "It's like a time capsule," Lootens said.

For the farming community, the Farmers' Picnic is a chance to reconnect with those who used to live on the now Fermilab grounds. Baumann looks up his friends every once and a while, but he depended on them most when he had open heart surgery. "They were there to support me," he said.

Flanked by relatives, Baumann pointed out people he knew as partygoers walked past, including a 96-year-old woman for whom he had baled hay when he was younger. A former babysitter, Janet L. Mish also remembered life on the farm. "I babysat for a lot of the people who lived on these farms. I miss these people," she said. Mish left her Eola Road farm more than 40 years ago.

Some from the farming community can recognize patches of grass where their barns once sat. Baumann's barn is still standing, although it is showing signs of its nearly 100 years and might have to be torn down for safety concerns.

-- Kate Raiford