

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Jim Johnson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Family Memories* Oral History project

Interview # FM-V-L-2009-023

Jim Johnson, the General Manager and Superintendant of the Rail Golf Course of Springfield, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Family Memories* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: July 6, 2009    Location: Rail Golf Course, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPLM

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Mark Suszko, IL Information Service

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Indexed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview being  
processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 16 min 49 sec = .28 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 08/11/2009.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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## Abstract

### Jim Johnson, *Family Memories*, FM-V-L-2009-023

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** James A. (Jim) Johnson was born on January 16, 1952 in Sherman, Illinois. While still in high school, Jim began working at the Rail Golf Course, which at the time was still under construction, being built by local businessmen Leonard Sapp and Jacob 'Jake' Bunn. The course was designed by renowned golf course architect Robert Trent-Jones. The golf course's front nine holes opened to the public in 1968, and the back nine in 1973. Jim continued to work at the golf course, and eventually decided to make this his life's career. In 1977 he became superintendant of the golf course, the same year he graduated from Penn State University's Turf Management program, considered the best such program in the country.

In the mid 1970s, Jim Maxwell, the Rail's superintendant at the time, recommended that the course host a golf tournament. In 1976, the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Golf Classic was launched. For the next thirty years Jim was intimately involved with the tournament as it grew and evolved over the years. He worked closely with Sandy Wheeler, the tournament's Executive Director, for most of those years, and beginning in 1993 with State Farm Insurance, the tourney's title sponsor. In 1999, Jim became the General Manager of the Rail, overseeing all aspects of the golf course. The State Farm Golf Classic moved to the Panther Creek Golf Course (Chatham, Illinois) in 2007.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Rail Golf Course (Springfield, Illinois); Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Golf Classic, later renamed the Rail Charity Golf Classic, then the State Farm Rail Classic; Leonard Sapp; Jacob 'Jake' Bunn; Robert Trent Jones; Penn State University's Turf Management school; Jim Maxwell; Sandy Wheeler; LGPA; State Farm Insurance; Panther Creek Golf Course (Chatham, Illinois)

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