



98TH NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION & EXPO
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Lois Lawson - An FFA Sweetheart

Written by David Laatsch

Lois Lawson was as surprised to be selected the Brandon FFA Chapter Sweetheart in 1951-52 as she is today. But that doesn't diminish the pride that she has for the Future Farmers of America and the boys that voted for her!

"Girls couldn't be members of the chapter at that time," Lawson, age 91, explained. "But they selected one girl from the senior class to represent the chapter! There were only 12 or 13 girls in our class, and I have no idea why they selected me. I was given the blue sweetheart jacket at a time when few, if any, of the boys have a blue corduroy chapter jacket!"

"Mr. Glen Clement was the chapter advisor," Lawson continues. "He initiated the idea of a Chapter Sweetheart in 1950-51, when the chapter selected Ruth Ann Frei to be the first Chapter Sweetheart."

The Brandon FFA Chapter was chartered in 1938. According to the 1952 yearbook, the chapter was active in FFA basketball, sponsoring dances and entering a float in the homecoming parade. The chapter also operated a fertilizer demonstration plot and treated hundreds of bushels of grain for seed for community farmers.

Many FFA chapters across the national had a Chapter Sweetheart program. Some were extensive 'beauty queen pageants' but most were simply an opportunity to involve girls in chapter activities. The national FFA constitution was amended in 1969 allowing all students enrolled in vocational agriculture to be FFA members, including females. Today, over 50% of FFA members are girls and only a few chapters still have a Chapter Sweetheart program.

"I was born in the farmhouse that I still live in. I attended Union Prairie School for eight grades. My husband, Charlie, and I operated the farm for 18 years, after my dad died. I then worked at Ripon Foods and later in the office at Davis Manufacturing in Brandon until I was 86 years old," Lawson reminisced.

Retired Beaver Dam FFA Advisor and FFA historian, David Laatsch, has been collecting FFA memorabilia as a lead up to FFA's Centennial Celebration in 2028. Laatsch explained, "I am searching for FFA jackets from chapters that no longer exist because of school consolidation and give those communities special recognition. Cindy Sheskey, a Fond du Lac County 4-H leader put me in touch with Lois Lawson. She obviously respected the jacket and the honor that went with it because she kept it all these years and is very excited that it will be on display during the 98th National FFA Convention!"