

"These planes kept coming, come out of nowhere. I couldn't visualize what in the world was coming off, but you know I seen those planes and I seen that red dot, that's the rising sun on them. This one plane in particular; I will never forget it. Why he came down over the barracks building and he was making his approach to launch his torpedo into one of our ships. He was proceeding on his run and apparently somebody was alert enough to take a shot at him. And they hit him with a 50-caliber machine gun. He blew up like you'd light a match, and he was gone, disintegrated.

"So that was my first taste of war right there."

Those are the words of Iowan Keith Clark, a Navy veteran and eyewitness to the devastation of the attack on Pearl Harbor on the morning of Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941.

Clark's interview with Grout Historian Robert Neymeyer is preserved in the Museum's oral history library, "Voices of Iowa," and is on view in its permanent exhibit.

KEITH CLARK
US NAVY VETERAN



ROBERT NEYMEYER
HISTORIAN

Neymeyer started with the Museum more than 20 years ago, and "Voices" is his baby. When asked how many interviews he's done, Neymeyer answers, "How many do we have in the can?"

"In the beginning, we had a VHS camera and we would send out VHS tapes of the interviews," he said. "Our equipment has gone through several changes. We've attempted to stay modern."

Neymeyer doesn't believe the importance of the interviews can be overstated.

"They are describing an event in their own words. That is something I couldn't begin to recreate with my words," he said. "

"We interviewed one gentleman who was a prisoner of war of the Germans in World War II. His daughter came in looking for his interview. I asked if there was a problem, and she said 'No, I just want to see it. He never talked to me about it.'"

"These stories, if we don't capture them, they are gone forever," Neymeyer said.

Our interviews include first-hand accounts from military veterans, civil rights leaders and farmers. We have grown our collection to about 2,500 interviews. The veterans' collection alone houses the largest number of interviews conducted by a single institution in the nation.

But it is not enough. As each day passes, we lose the opportunity to interview a World War II veteran, or hear the first-person experiences of someone on the front lines of the civil rights movement, or the chance to chronicle a fading way of life. We want to document and preserve your stories, your history and your knowledge. In addition to capturing these stories, it is equally important to share them and make them available to as many people as possible. Through technology, and with your help, we can carry the past into the future for generations to come.

Of course, this can be an expensive endeavor. Taking into account time, travel, equipment, editing, storage, and processing, it costs hundreds of dollars to produce just one video interview.

But we have come a long way already.

Jacque Persson started at the Grout 11 years ago as a graphic designer. She now serves as Director of Art and Marketing.

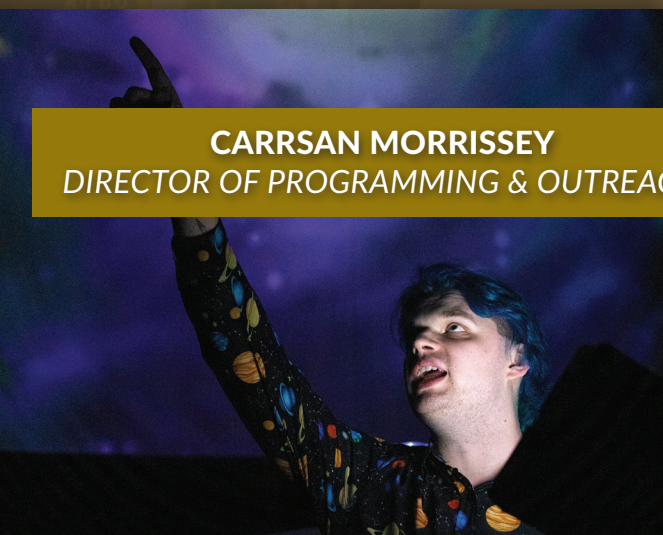
"When I started, we weren't doing any videos on our website. It didn't even have the capability. You couldn't purchase tickets or sign up for programming. We barely had a social media presence."

Recent numbers show more than 40,000 monthly impressions across our social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, and visits to our website remain solid and consistent.

"I would like that to continue and to steadily increase," Persson said. "I would like to continue growing our following on social media."



JACQUE PERSSON
DIRECTOR OF ART & MARKETING



CARRSAN MORRISSEY
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING & OUTREACH

"I would like to put money behind posts, behind funding social media content. These are things a lot of donors don't think about."

You could say Director of Programming and Outreach Carrsan Morrissey is leading the charge to more fully integrate technology into the Museum's daily operations.

Spurred on by the pandemic, Grout staff have created virtual content including tours, events, tea parties, Toddler Time, Animal Spotlight, and even Museum School.

"We netted about 88,000 views," Morrissey said. "That's a big number for a local business."

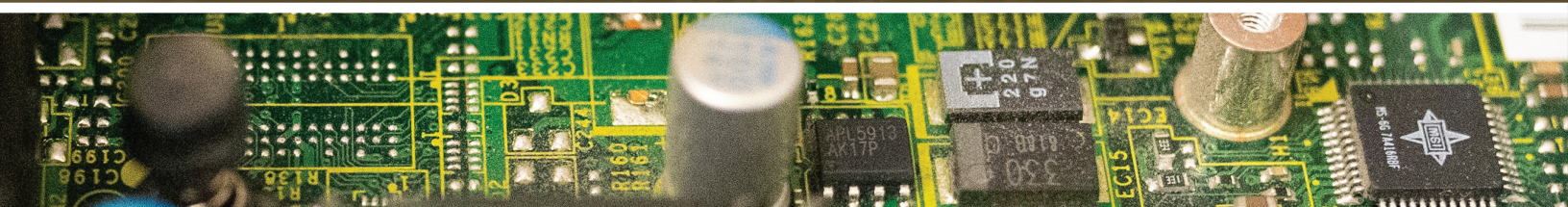
"We have a lot of ideas for new video content," Carrsan said. "We would love to do supplemental, educational videos. We are just getting into that. We would like to create a lot of new content, either bi-monthly or monthly programming like we did during the pandemic. I would like to see that become an entirely new branch and facet of what we do."

Morrissey would also like to broaden the Museum's reach through the use of technology.

"I would like to see more digital engagement for sites further away. I mean, theoretically, we could do Museum School for a school across the country."

Morrissey would also like to see technology take staff outside the Museum.

"I would love to do mini-documentaries about local history, document the things that are important to the community. I'd love to see us expand beyond our walls and create things we can't do inside our brick and mortar."





JOHNATHAN ETRINGER, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

No appeal focusing on technology would be complete without introducing our new Director of Information Technology, Jonathan Etringer.

A Reinbeck native, Etringer graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in fine arts and comes to us from the Waterloo Center for the Arts.

You may ask, as I did, how an art major ends up as an IT Director.

"Technology was always a secondary interest of mine," he said. "I love to mess around with stuff. I've been taking computers apart and putting them back together since I was a kid. Any kind of gadgetry or technical system, I have a knack for getting them going again."

"Technology is one of the few fields where it is better to be self-taught than school educated. Education is focused on the very surface level. You need to learn function, so you can adapt."

Etringer would also like the Museum's interviews to be more accessible to the public.

"We have a pretty unique set of information. We want to make use of that asset," he said. "We need to look at what we need to change to facilitate that, everything from storage to cross referencing."

Etringer would go a step further, as well.

"I would like to see our entire (artifact) collection available to view online," he said. "We have some of it digitized and sitting on a hard drive. We have the potential of making it available to the public. I think that is really important."

At the Grout, we will continue to interview Iowans and preserve your unique stories. We will continue to capture the memories and tell the stories of the veterans, the farmers, the people of color, and all of those who make up our communities.

These people, their voices and recollections, are an unimaginable resource, and the Grout Museum District is committed to preserving and sharing them.

Your donation can ensure that these stories continue to be told, continue to be shared and that they reach the largest audience possible. *Be a part of saving history.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Hudson Hill

Holly Hudson Hill
Membership & Grants Manager

Christal Jennings

Christal Jennings
Community Engagement & Development Manager

For questions, or to donate to Opening New Doors, contact Christal Jennings or Holly Hudson Hill at 319.234.6357.