

It's hayin' time!

By **Jim Anderson**
Correspondent

Many in Sisters Country are familiar with David Asson as a member of the Sisters City Council. Perhaps not many are familiar with the other side of David: his fascination with putting up hay in Idaho as a kid, his life-long interest in haying machinery, and the book he's written about haying, titled "Bringing In The Hay."

Asson will sign copies of the book at the Friends of the Sisters Library Book Corner at the library on Saturday, January 10.

When Asson was asked about his detailed and wonderfully illustrated book, he smiled and said, "I really never intended to write a book. I just happened to have lived at the right time and learned a lot about horse farming," and went on to explain what it was like growing up in Rupert, Idaho in the '40s.

"As my interest grew, so did my desire to take lots of pictures of equipment and haying operations, and years later, when my kids asked questions about haying, I decided to frame some good shots and add a caption or two. More questions led to a few more paragraphs and eventually guidance from Ivar Nelson, director of the University of Idaho Press, then on to Word, PageMaker and PhotoShop..."

"After thousands of miles of back roads and wonderful talks with aged ranchers in every western state — clear to the Missouri — over a six- or seven-year span — a book was born. Timing was critical. Had I not shot all those derrick and stacker pictures when I did, it would not have been possible. Now, as I drive some of the back roads where I know stackers

once stood, they are no longer there. Time and weather have taken their toll, and all of that history would have been lost."

Many old-time residents of Sisters Country have come around the corner of a familiar old country road and wondered what happened to that old hay derrick that had been standing there all those years, or found the crumbled remains of a proud old hay barn slowly going back to soil.

Asson's book brings to life the early days of haying as he describes what it was like during his time, and that of his friends, fellow ranchers, farmers and family. What it was like swinging on the derrick cable; chewing one more drying stem of alfalfa. If you never lived the good times of bringing in the hay, you can feel what it was like through the author's words and photos.

Of the hundreds of letters and emails Asson's received congratulating him on writing and publishing his detailed account of what it takes to bring in the hay, one sent from Terry Cline of Miles City, Montana, reminded Asson of another facet of haying:

"Some of your memories about haying and mine differ somewhat. For instance, what about the rattlesnakes that ended up in the stack with the stackers? Alfalfa leaves down one's neck? Drinking



David Asson, Sisters city councilor and author, explaining to his granddaughter (and "literary agent"), Hailey Asson, how a hay derrick works. PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

water from a common bottle wrapped in filthy burlap? Working in the hot, boiling sun? Machinery breakdowns with every fourth dump? Numerous trips to town for buckrake teeth? Hired men not showing up? Mosquitoes? Horse flies? Skunks? Field mice? Smelly field hands who bathed once a month? Being dragged in the tines of a buckrake?"

And if you want to know what a buckrake is all about, all you have to do is ask Asson's granddaughter — 8-year-old Hailey Asson. Some people know Hailey

as a third-grader in Sisters Elementary School, but she's also a saleswoman who won't take no for an answer.

Back on March 14, Central Oregon Hay Growers Association held their annual business meeting and dinner at Aspen Lakes Golf Course. After the meeting, Lee and Peggy Fischer of Tumalo introduced Asson and his haying book.

Before he could get his pen out of his pocket to sign even one book, Hailey-the-book-agent — who was running the book sales card table — had already sold 30 copies

or more.

To start the new year off right, Asson has decided to make a contribution to the Sisters Library.

On Saturday, January 10, from 1 to 3 p.m., his hard-working "agent" will have a table set up at the Friends of the Sisters Library Book Corner on the north side of the Sisters Library to sell her grandfather's book, and he will be on hand to sign them.

The price will be \$15, with \$5 going into FOSL's coffers. The book will be available on any Saturday or Tuesday the Book Corner is open.

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