

MARSHAL: Morris is a long-time Rodeo volunteer

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neighbor of John Leavitt in 1988, Morris was encouraged to become part of the rodeo association. Within two years, he was asked to replace the unfinished term of a board member who moved out of the area.

In 1992, the first year of his presidency, the rodeo founded a scholarship for seniors graduating from the new Sisters High School. He recalls awarding the first scholarship to Missy Bermel, daughter of Peg and Doug Bermel. Sisters Rodeo has since granted over \$110,000 in education assistance. This was possible, even in lean years, because another highlight of the Morris presidency was paying off the mortgage for the rodeo property.

"Having the mortgage paid allowed us to create an investment account to assure we'd have money for scholarships every year," Morris explained. "The plan was to pay into that account with annual amount equal to mortgage payments." He got a bit wistful discussing the

scholarship investment, noting that his friend and co-board member, Billy Bob Bruhns, (now deceased) was responsible for that plan.

The years of Morris' service as president were the years in which the rodeo began beautifying the rodeo grounds. For Morris, this is the legacy that has resulted in Sisters having a reputation as one of the most functional rodeos in the nation.

"We tore down old buildings and built a new ticket booth and support buildings," Morris said proudly. "We have not let up on the improvements since, in the attempt to make our rodeo inviting and exceptionally memorable for rodeo fans."

For Morris, being part of the institution of Sisters Rodeo is "The satisfaction of seeing something put together and then to see the pleasure in the happy crowds that results from the work we have done. A membership of really great people makes this happen."

He expressed satisfaction for how much the rodeo has returned to the community, not only in bringing travelers to town, but also in funding the Eva Poole Memorial playground equipment at the elementary school,

being a founding member of SOAR (now Sisters Park & Recreation District) and supporting other Sisters Country charities and projects.

Building things is a passion for Morris, who has won several trophies and a People's Choice Award at the annual Sisters Glory Daze Car Show with his 1955 Chevy. He bought the car from a friend who had it stored in a chicken coop for twelve years in Scappoose, Oregon.

"Many good friends were involved in bringing that black and white Chevy to its current beauty," Morris said. He built friendships through the "car guys," and recalled great days at the Ski Inn with many of Sisters' old-timers.

"Without my friends, this car would have never returned to its glory," Morris noted, as friends helped him dismantle the classic, strip and rework the body from the frame to the polished finish and rebuild the engine. The biggest smiles may be seen when he drives his Chevy on a nice day.

Morris was a telephone-company employee for his entire working career, doing installation, repair and communications systems in



PHOTO BY GARY MILLER

That's John Morris's usual expression as he works hard for the Sisters Rodeo each year.

Southern California and then for Pacific Northwest Bell in Portland, where he and his wife raised two children

In 1978, Morris was transferred to Bend. He became part of the Moss Springs hunting group in the Eagle Cap Wilderness area of north-eastern Oregon at "Charlie's Camps."

From 1985 through 2010, he was a packer for Charlie, moving hunters by horseback to camps that he and other crew had set up.

For 12 to 15 hours a day, pack riders made their runs in subzero temperatures.

"You wore all the clothes you owned," Morris said, "and you better not need a

pit-stop between trail heads and the camps. It was just too darned cold."

That was a "fun" job. After retiring in 1993, he continued to work for a variety of contractors in the Sisters area, if only to stay busy and learn more. His longest unpaid career, however, continues to be at Sisters Rodeo grounds.

"His involvement in the rodeo is so appreciated," said Rodeo President Glenn Miller. "He didn't just quit after his years on the board, but continued to be here working. He is an example of the kinds of members who make this a great rodeo."



Photo by Kathy Krause

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