

# Union County Agent Tells Story Of Struggle With Barberry Bush

(Editor's note: The following article tells the story of Union county's campaign against the common barberry bush—the object of an organized effort last autumn. The program was carried out under the direction of the Union County Extension Office of Oregon State college in conjunction with several other community agencies.)

By TED SIDOR  
Union County Extension Agent

Many times during the past year we have been told by various speakers, radio programs and editorials that what we need is a return to the thinking of our pioneer forefathers, who, when confronted with a problem worked it out for themselves or with the aid of their neighbors.

Scientists of the soil found at harvest time that instead of 40, 50 or 60 bushel yields of golden grain, some fields produced mere trickles of dark and shriveled, rock-like seeds that splashed into waiting bins. Stem rust has done a thorough job.

In field after field, farmers made one round, took their combines back to barn and opened the gates for livestock to pick what they could of the devastated crop.

Wheat was hit the hardest and by the time harvest was over and the results tallied, Union county had lost almost a quarter of a million dollars to stem rust.

Farmers, feeling like the proverbial Casey who had struck out, began looking for a bigger bat and a weaker pitcher.

The county agents office in the meantime had diagnosed the fungus and pointed a finger toward the common barberry bush as the pitcher that had to be returned to the "bush league."

The Extension agents working with the advisory board of the Union county weed control district and state department of agriculture officials and County Court embarked on an educational program that furnished material for hours of radio time and seemingly endless inches of newspaper space.

Grange's, farm bureaus and service club meetings were not considered complete unless a common barberry bush was exhibited, a movie shown, or a speech telling of the dangers and the damage of the common barberry bush were told. A booth exhibiting the barberry bush and the results of stem rust was also created at the Union county fair.

Business people alarmed at the loss of revenue from the second largest industry in Union county, put up window displays, talked about the bush and asked for more material. Local chambers of commerce were being contacted and asked to help coordinate an effort to eradicate the bush.

After two months of this, the action-program was undertaken.

The first area to be cleared was the town of Union. The Union Commercial Club under the guiding hand of president J. A. B. McArthur, director of the Union Experiment Station, met with doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, mill managers, city employees and Extension agents the morning of Oct. 14, and the drive was on.

Success of the educational program was immediately apparent. Housewives met the men at the gate and showed them plants they had had for years or showed them where other plants were located. In a few hours, several dozen of the shrubs had been removed from the town. Union was clear—now for the rest of the county.

Union county's farming area was then divided into nine equal parts; team captains, usually a weed advisory board member was assigned to each of the areas.

A member of the Extension Service staff, Ron Boatman, county weed supervisors, or Lloyd German of the A.S.C. office met with the farmers on the appointed eradication day, gave them branches of the doomed bush, packages of donated chemical, gave additional pointers on identification and jumped aside.

It was a determined band of farmers that searched streambanks, backyards, hills and valleys for this bush that hit them when they weren't prepared.

November 10, the City of La Grande joined forces with the rest of the county. On this day, under

# Determining Nation Champ Plagued Rodeo For Years

One of the problems that plagued rodeo from the beginning was how to determine a national champion. Although rodeo is now some eighty years old, the problem wasn't completely solved until as recently as ten years ago.

In 1945 the Rodeo Cowboys' Association, Inc., established their point award system, by which each cowboy is given one point for every dollar won at a professional rodeo approved by the RCA.

Although the method sounds simple it was years in developing. In the old days cowboys were considered champions if they won at Cheyenne, and later, if they won both at Cheyenne and Pendleton. With the coming of larger purses in the big eastern cities, however, the faults of this method soon became apparent.

Competition was as tough and a cowboy could win more in the eastern rodeos than at the old well-established western ones. And, of course, there was always the possibility that a top hand would have a better record of winnings through the year than

the Cheyenne winner, and be prevented by injuries from competing at Cheyenne or Pendleton.

Other rodeos picked up championship label in their advertising, and for a while the sport was threatened with being as overpopulated with world's champs as wrestling is today.

In 1929, the Rodeo Association of America, an organization of rodeo managements, instituted a point award system similar to that now used by the RCA, and named world's champions for all around cowboy and for each competitive event. The system came in for a certain amount of criticism, however, since it was based on tabulations only from Rodeo Association rodeos, which were a small minority of those worked each year by most of the top cowboys.

The RAA system is still followed and each year the International Rodeo Association, a successor organization of management, still names its champions. Recognizing that only the RCA system represents all professional rodeos, the IRA recently dropped the title

"World's" champion, however. Giving points for the money won is the only practical method of determining a champion in rodeo, where there are no leagues, teams or playoffs. Other methods have been considered from time to time but were discarded as being unrealistic.

One such method was counting the average total times in timed events and the total number of points marked to each contestant by the judges of the riding event. The major objection to this method is that there is a great variation in the amount of head start given the stock in timed events, which usually depends principally on the size of the arena. Weather conditions also make a big difference.

There are similar problems in the riding events. For example, at the first rodeos in the spring and at the first performances of large

rodeos during the season, the stock is fresher and harder to ride.

The answer was reasonable, simple and dependable on a national scale. The best man at any rodeo is the man who wins the most money. It is as logical that the man who wins the most money in an event at several rodeos through the year is the best man in that event that year.

That is exactly how the system works out in practice. Last year Don McLaughlin, who won the 1954 world's calf roping championship, lost his prized roping horse in a highway accident early in the spring and won no money for the rest of the season. But he had piled up a big enough lead by the end of February that he was never overtaken.

On the other hand, all around champion Buck Rutherford and his friend Eddy Akridge were en-

gaged in a tooth and nail battle for the bareback riding championship all through the season. First one would edge ahead of the other, then in the next semi-monthly posting of the standings, their positions would be reversed.

The competition wasn't settled until the last rodeo of the year at Kingman, Arizona. Akridge, who was 104 points behind, won \$111 more than Rutherford and took the championship.

You'll still see rodeos all over the country billed as "World Championship." They have every right by the rules, strictly interpreted, to be called that. For if a rodeo has the approval of the Rodeo Cowboys' Association, every dollar of prize money won at it will count in the race for the world's championship. And no rodeo is big enough that a man can win a world's championship at that rodeo alone.

Union county people found last year that the old community spirit is not dead and they do have the ability to solve their own problems. They put on a county program that would make the old fashion threshing bee and the community barn raising look like a royal tea party.

Union county in 1957, as in most years of the state, had a very mild winter and when the warm sun of spring renewed the growing vigor of our grain crops, farmers stood and gazed over their fields with smiles on their faces and felt a tug at the nearly empty money pocket for it looked like a bumper crop.

Spring, however, turned out to be a moist affair that slowed down spring planting and produced the most favorable condition for fungus growth in this mountainous valley for many years.

Farmers were soon finding black specks on grain stems, heads of partially mature grain stopped their growth and shriveled. These



CROSSBRED—Dorothy Peterson, 11, will show her Crossbred sheep at the livestock show at Union this weekend. She's a member of the Island City Variety 4-H Livestock club. (Observer Photo)



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the local guidance of Don Dempsey, a local funeral director, and Clint Bellows, advertising director for radio station KLBH, led members of the La Grande Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce and Jr. Chamber of Commerce on a drive.

To add to the farm-merchants relationships, members of the South Forty Club, a Union county young farmers organization, joined the touring businessmen in the outing.

After the blisters were counted and the thorns extracted, seven huge pickup truck loads were carted off to be burned, with many more spotted and to be taken out later.

This, of course does not complete the story. Dr. Frank Bennett, president of Eastern Oregon College, had held a drive with college staff members on the EOC campus a week previous and Norman, Koopman, La Grande High School FFA instructor, using his RRO classes had removed the stick menace from around all public schools in the La Grande area.

The eradication still continues. Hunters and fishermen spot the bush and are reporting it to the Extension office; home that had bushes that were misused in the drives are calling—they want the bush removed. Follow-up work will continue for several years utilizing the talents of the county weed supervisor and state department pathologists.

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