

Recycle Power

DICK STEWART EMBRACES THE SPIRIT OF RECYCLING BY AMY SCHNEIDER

For many years at the main stage area of the Oregon Country Fair, a sign that says “Dick Stewart Memorial Kiosk” has hung above a recycling stand. It’s a nice tribute, but a bit misleading — Dick Stewart is alive and well.

Stewart says the sign hasn’t been a favorite of his wife’s. “She said, ‘It can’t be a memorial! Memorials are something for dead people, and you’re not dead!’” he explains.

“Rumor has it, I’m getting a new sign for my birthday this year,” says Stewart, who is turning 70 on July 13. “This one will say: ‘Make it so — recycle’ on the front, and on the other side it will say, ‘The Dick Stewart Kiosk.’ No memorial. So we’ll see how that goes.”

With his long, white beard and friendly, twinkling eyes, Stewart looks like the spirit of Eugene meets Leonardo da Vinci. And also like da Vinci, Stewart is a true Renaissance man. He worked for the University of Wisconsin — Madison as a computer operator in the early ’70s before switching his major to art. He’s been a gardener at Sweetwater Nursery, a Kundalini yoga instructor in the Bay Area and now, the 69-year-old helps out with recycling at the Fair.

A Fair veteran and elder, Stewart attended the first Fair in 1969. He rode his bike from Eugene and spent the day looking at booths and carrying a geodesic dome around the fairgrounds in true ’60s fashion. After that, he was hooked.

Stewart started helping out with the recycling crew, and in the late ’70s, he became recycling coordinator. Ever since then, except for his stint as a yoga instructor, Stewart has left an indelible mark on the Fair.

“It’s my opportunity to make a difference in the world,” Stewart says. “And recycling does its bit to make it a pleasant experience for everyone.”

His wife, Norma Sax, would have to agree. They met carrying the Oregon Country Fair banner for the Eugene Celebration Parade in 1988. “He never has to think about what the right thing to do is; he just does it,” says Sax, who is an administrative assistant for the Fair. “He’s just a genuinely good person, and I so admire that about him.” ■



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