

'The Maker's Mark'

Film explores Monte Beckman's saddles, sons and stories

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

When Laine Perry walked into Monte Beckman's saddle shop for the first time 20 years ago, she had no idea she would eventually make a movie about the man.

Beckman then worked in Mancos, Colorado, and Perry lived in nearby Cortez. On that day, she wandered into Beckman's orb and hasn't escaped his gravitational pull since. The two carved out a close and continuing friendship.

"His saddle shop was the heart of that town," Perry remembers. "Everyone touched down there. All life revolved around that saddle shop."

The cowboy artist, world class saddle maker and yarn teller regularly mesmerizes people with tales such as one about the trout that took a bullet for him. He explains how he learned to make sushi by saying his grandfather had gotten tired of beans and biscuits on a cattle drive and sent the lad to town for a sous chef. He mistakenly returned with a sushi chef who taught the boy all his secrets.

Perry eventually felt compelled to document the saddlemaker's life journey. The result is a feature-length documentary called "The Maker's Mark." Though the film has several more weeks of production, the trailer has had almost a thousand views.

Perry, who began working in the film industry seven years ago as a production designer, said her friend had continued to fascinate her over the years. The saddlemaker had eventually returned to Pendleton, where he once worked, to set up shop. Perry kept in touch with Beckman from Los Angeles and later from Seattle where she now lives.

The idea for the documentary



Contributed photo
Saddlemaker Monte Beckman and director Laine Perry chat on location during shooting of "The Maker's Mark" just outside Pendleton.

germinated over beers at the Rainbow Café during a visit to Pendleton to see Beckman. During lunch with him and Mike (Red) Wallis, she suggested the idea of a reality show featuring Beckman and his five sons. The idea evolved into a documentary. Bill Dochnahl, of Pendleton, later agreed to finance the project.

During filming, cameras rolled in Beckman's shop and in locales all around the area, including the Rainbow. Perry said crew members, some who traveled from Los Angeles, found stunning landscapes to film.

"Pendleton is a beautiful place and we got some amazing footage," she said. "We had to learn not to get carried away with all the beauty shots and keep coming back to the story."

The story encompasses Beckman's journey as a saddlemaker, but also tells of a father whose five sons — Jared, Levi, Walker, Dale and Isaac — come back into his life as young men to help him get back on his feet after Beckman's stroke four years ago. The saddlemaker faced many months of therapy before he could ease back into his life as a leather carver.

"They were all there helping me get going again," Beckman said this week. "Every one of them stepped up."

Isaac, 36, stayed on to learn the trade, something his father now calls "the joy of my life." Tragically, his oldest son, Jared, died during the year of filming.

"This is a story of Monte and all of the good things he's made,"

"The film is about a man in full with his flaws and his brilliance. That's just something worth investigating and it always will be."

— Laine Perry, film director

Perry said. "Those are his sons, his saddles and his stories."

Perry said she has been a movie buff ever since seeing "Dirty Harry" about 40 years ago at a drive-in movie theater with her mom. She has written four scripts, but "The Maker's Mark" is the first she has shepherded to near-completion. Another, "The Trouble with Doubt," will start filming soon in Athena and Helix. The good-versus-evil story centers on a five-year-old boy who is on the run with his mom and his alter ego, a four-foot blue bunny. He sleeps each night in the trunk of his mother's muscle car.

"The Maker's Mark," she said, is unscripted and genuine. Perry marveled at one session between Beckham and Pendleton plumber Jim Hainey, a good friend of Beckman's who served as producer and interviewer. The two friends, she said, sat inside a wall tent and exchanged memories, yarns and guffaws.

"We shared a splash of whiskey and told stories," said Hainey. "It was a conversation among friends."

Hainey describes Beckman as a humble wisecracker. "You can tell when the grin starts, this is going to be a doozy," he said.

Hainey said Beckman makes such exquisite saddles, yes, because he is talented, but also because he grew up in the cowboy

lifestyle. He started building saddles on his back porch in 1980 and sold his first to a dentist for work on one of his sons' teeth. In any case, he knows what it feels like to sit in a saddle for hours on end.

"He's walked the walk," Hainey said.

Another conversation in the film, this one between Beckman and three of his sons, brought Perry to tears.

"I walked outside, leaned against the wall of the saddle shop and cried," she said. She told Dochnahl, who was concerned, "That was so beautiful. You can't as a filmmaker dream of getting that kind of genuine feeling."

Beckman recently saw the movie's trailer and couldn't resist a wisecrack.

"I was really shocked that she was able to get Brad Pitt to be my stand-in double," Beckman said.

Beckman admitted initial skepticism about the project.

"I thought it could be a massive waste of film," he said. "I was surprised when she showed up with a film crew and said, 'We're here.' I thought, 'Damn, she's serious.'"

Perry is definitely serious. "The film is about a man in full with his flaws and his brilliance," Perry said. "That's just something worth investigating and it always will be."

Perry said she is glad she didn't wait any longer to make the film. Beckham recently downsized, moving the business and saddle school out of his Main Street shop and into home.

Showings of "The Maker's Mark" are scheduled for 8 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., Oct. 9, at the Prodigal Son. Seating is limited.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

Sesquicentennial farms honored at state fair

Three located in Umatilla County

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

The original 1840s farmhouse still stands at James Monroe Hemphill Farm south of Pendleton, used now for storage rather than a home that raised nine children on the rural Oregon countryside.

Since 1865, the Hemphill family has farmed this 800-acre homestead along Birch Creek. Colin Hemphill, 34, is the fifth-generation farm manager, growing 650 acres of wheat and raising 30 head of cows.

"I could never think of myself doing anything else," he said.

Farming has changed significantly over the last 150 years, but the Hemphill farm remains a family legacy. The Oregon Century Farm &



Photo contributed by EmmaLee Demianew

The Hemphill family stands in front of their original farmhouse south of Pendleton. From top left: Lacey and Colin Hemphill; Chuck and Dinah Hemphill; and EmmaLee and Chris Demianew. Bottom left: RyLee Demianew, Callen Hemphill, Katelyn Demianew and Seely Hemphill.

Century Ranch Program will honor the Hemphills, along with two other Umatilla County farms, celebrating

their sesquicentennial during an event Saturday at the Oregon State Fair in Salem.

JK Adams Ranches, of Adams, and AB Lieuallen Century Ranches, of Athena, have also reached the 150-year mark under continuous family ownership.

The Hemphill farm was established by James Monroe Hemphill and his wife, Elizabeth, in 1865. James Monroe was born in New Hampshire and initially came west to California during the 1849 Gold Rush.

The Hemphills married in Stockton, California, and came immediately to Oregon. They began raising sheep and sold chickens for \$1 each to miners in the nearby ghost

town of Granite.

Chuck Hemphill, 70, is the fourth-generation farmer and Colin's father. He has since retired, but still lives near the farm with his wife, Dinah.

"To us, it's worth more than a farm because it's our family's history," Chuck Hemphill said.

Oregon Century and Sesquicentennial Farms will be honored at 11 a.m. at the state fair, in the Garden Tent on the west side of the fairgrounds. Oregon now has 1,175 Century Farms and 33 Sesquicentennial Farms statewide.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.



Staff photo by George Plaven

The original homestead still stands today at James Monroe Hemphill Farm on Highway 395 between Pendleton and Pilot Rock, and is considered one of the county's oldest buildings.

Another short agenda for Pendleton City Council

East Oregonian

The Pendleton City Council will make its only September meeting a short go.

The only discussion item scheduled for Tuesday's meeting is a local improvement district for the Pendleton Heights subdivision off Tutuilla Road.

Under an agreement with the developer, the city will cover the \$296,000 for infrastruc-

ture and road upgrades, which the developer will pay back.

The upgrades will eventually service phase two and three of the development, which will add 28 units to the 22-unit subdivision.

The council canceled its Sept. 15 meeting because of its conflict with Round-Up week.

The meeting will be held at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Avenue, at 7 p.m.

BREASTFEEDING CLASSES

One class covers breastfeeding benefits, pumping and much more. Come to this FREE class taught by a certified lactation consultant, and learn techniques that make for a successful experience. Free, but please pre-register.

**September 2
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm**

GSMC Conference Center 3 & 4



EARLY PREGNANCY

One FREE class focusing on the first six months of pregnancy. Healthcare professional speakers will provide presentations on topics that include medication use, exercise, diet, breastfeeding and many other helpful subjects. Free, but please pre-register.

September 24 • 6:30-8:30pm

GSMC Conference Room Center 2



BIRTHING CLASSES

Two-day course to prepare each mother and birth partner for a knowledgeable, rewarding and sharing childbirth experience.

September 25 & 26

**Friday: 6:30 - 8:30 pm,
Saturday: 9:30 am - 3 pm**

GSMC Conference Room



BABYSITTING BASICS 101

For babysitters ages 10-15. Learn childcare techniques, children's developmental ages and what to expect, basic first aid and infant and child CPR.

Sept. 12 • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

**GSMC Conference Room
\$30 - includes lunch & all class materials. Must pre-register & pre-pay.**



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WAR ON ALL FRONTS: OREGONIANS REMEMBER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

- New book launch featuring reminiscences of Umatilla County residents
- Col. John Turner discusses "The World Perspective Seventy Years Later" on eve of V-J Day
- Books for sale, refreshments, and popular songs from WWII

**Terrific Tuesday – September 1 – Free Admission
7:00 pm at Heritage Station Museum**



Call Heritage Station Museum at 541-276-0012 for information



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