

Oregon’s politicians horse around at parade

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

Just because a parade is completely non-motorized doesn’t mean there aren’t mechanical difficulties.

Sen. Ron Wyden experienced some of those difficulties firsthand when his horse and buggy drifted into the crowd near the Round-Up Stadium at the Westward Ho! Parade on Friday.

“It was just a little bit of the Wild West at the main stage,” said Round-Up Publicity Director Randy Thomas.

Thomas said Oregon’s senior senator escaped the buggy unscathed but the horse collided with a young girl in the crowd.

Wyden spokesman Hank Stern said the senator stayed with the girl to make sure she was OK. Thomas said the girl was treated for some bruises and sprains by medical staff and is doing fine. The source of the mishap was a broken shaft in the buggy, Thomas said.

Without the benefit of sitting on a float or in the backseat of a convertible, Westward Ho! forces politicians to make some hard decisions on whether to travel the parade route by horseback, buggy, wagon or by foot.

Perhaps portending the parade to come, the nervous horse backed the carriage into Wyden while he was answering questions during an interview before the parade.

While the driver calmed the horse, Wyden, a Democrat first elected to federal office in 1981, stepped out of the way and continued to tout the federal money he helped secure for the Round-Up’s facilities a few year’s ago and Pendleton’s volunteer spirit.

An experienced equestrian, Gov. Kate Brown, also a Democrat, followed in her predecessor John Kitzhaber’s hoofsteps by confidently riding a horse throughout the parade while flanked by the Oregon Mounted Governor’s Guard.

Before climbing on her horse, Brown mingled and posed for pictures with people in line for the Cowboy Breakfast at Stillman Park.

Stepping aside for a brief interview, Brown said Oregon Promise, a program that provides free community college to recent high school graduates, was something she would continue to push if she was elected to finish out Kitzhaber’s term.

“That’s a damn good deal,” she said.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, a Republican who has served in the House since 1998, rode in the wagon behind Wyden while state Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove who represents Pendleton in the Oregon legislature, rode on horseback shortly behind. State Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena), asking voters for a second term in office, also rode in a buggy.

Dennis Richardson, the Republican who challenged John Kitzhaber for governor in 2014 and is now campaigning for Secretary of State, rode on horseback, while Bud Pierce, this year’s Republican nominee for governor, covered the parade route on foot.

While traveling by horse or horse-drawn vehicle can earn a westside politician some style points, Wyden’s incident is a reminder that there is some risk, although former state senator Mike Thorne found some humor in it.

“Mike Thorne told him, ‘Any time you can stick the landing, you’re doing OK,’” Stern said.

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Two girls frolicked along the Westward Ho! Parade route Friday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney



The Happy Canyon Directors ride on top of a stagecoach pulled by a team of mules at the intersection of Court Avenue and Main Street on Friday during the Westward Ho! Parade in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



A skateboarder hangs onto the back of a wagon Friday during the Westward Ho! Parade in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

More online

Parade video at eastoregonian.com



The Happy Canyon fire department puts on a show during the Westward Ho! Parade on Friday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Jackie Skinner and Rod Retherford watch the Westward Ho! Parade from saddles on stands on Court Avenue Friday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

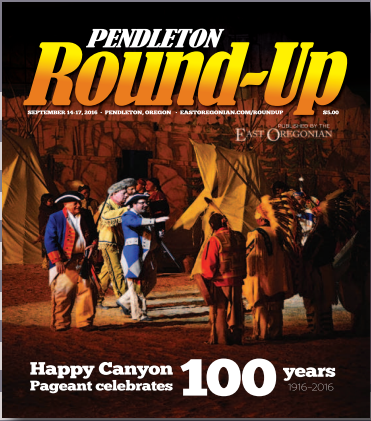
A trick roper performs during the Westward Ho! Parade.

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