



Bartenders rush about making drink orders on Thursday night at the Fraternal Order of Eagles lodge on Main Street in Pendleton.

EAGLES: ‘We’re not going anywhere’

Continued from 1A

Round-Up for 40 years. It is a place where he can meet up with friends from his rodeo days when he competed in bareback riding and steer wrestling. His wife, Rae, also used to be one of the best Quarter Horse and thoroughbred jockeys in the country, he said.

The two seemed perfectly at home Thursday in the dim mood lighting, surrounded by fellow cowboys, cowgirls and the twangy sound of steel guitar emanating from the stage.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles is an organization that dates back to 1898. The local lodge, No. 28 in the nation, opened a year later, and board chairman Jerry Dunn said they have been at their current location on South Main Street since the mid-1940s. Even a devastating fire that gutted the building on March 15, 2007, couldn’t close them down.

Like most establishments in Pendleton, Round-Up is a major draw at the lodge, brining a rush of visitors through the door. Music begins after 9 p.m., and the group also hosts a \$22 prime rib dinner on Friday and Saturday nights, with all the trimmings.

“Round-Up is definitely one of our staples,” Dunn said. “We tend to get the people who don’t want to drink and fight and raise all sorts of heck, but they just like to have fun.”

Dressed in their finest Western attire, John and Karen Harris made a point of stopping by the Round-Up on their way back home to Sherwood from vacationing in Montana and found themselves in the Eagles Lodge on Thursday night. The couple loves to dance — they actually met during a dance class in Portland —



The Fraternal Order of Eagles lodge opens their doors to non-members during the Pendleton Round-Up.

and soon found themselves lured onto the floor.

“We’ve been coming (to Pendleton) for years,” John Harris said. “We just enjoy the camaraderie with friends we’ve met through the years. And the rodeo is always a plus.”

The last several years have been somewhat difficult for fraternal organizations in Umatilla County. The Pendleton Elks Lodge surrendered its charter in March after falling on hard times, and the Eagles Lodge in Hermiston also closed recently.

Larry Dalrymple, trustee with the Pendleton Eagles, said they aren’t going anywhere, despite whatever rumors may be circulating.

“When you have a brother fraternal organization that closes down, the questions always jump to the next one,” Dalrymple said. “We’re going on. The locals have never given up.”

The Pendleton Eagles Lodge currently has 220 aerie members and 196 auxiliary members. Recruiting more members is the group’s number one goal, Dalrymple said, especially younger members willing to roll up their sleeves.

“The membership is getting older,” he said. “The

younger generations are not joiners like us old dogs.”

The lodge has also received a helping hand from the national FOE to stabilize operations and pay the bills moving forward. Dalrymple said the work is going well, but they still make sure to have fun at the same time.

Mel Lappen, fellow trustee and secretary for the lodge, said Round-Up is a big part of that fun.

“Everybody who comes in here, they’re in a joyful, playful mood,” Lappen said.

All money raised by the Eagles goes to charity and community groups, Dunn said, and Round-Up is a major bread winner on the annual calendar.

“It’d be a little rough to get through the whole year without Round-Up, to tell you the truth,” Dunn said. “We’re just people helping people. That’s what we’re all about.”

As couples dance the night away Friday and Saturday, Dunn said they are looking forward to many more Round-Ups to come.

“We’re not going anywhere,” he said. “The Eagles is here to stay.”

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Couple fulfills Round-Up dream 65 years later

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

For 65 years, Tom and Kathy Acord dreamed of attending the Pendleton Round-Up.

They drove through the area shortly after they married in 1952. The town, busy with the Pendleton Round-Up, drew them in. They explored the Indian Village and walked around outside the rodeo grounds. The young couple (she was 18 and he was 20) ached to go inside and watch some rodeo.

“But we didn’t have any money,” Kathy said. “We couldn’t get in.”

“We dreamed about it ever since,” Tom said.

Life got busy and the couple started a family.

Tom worked for a short time as a fireman for Union Pacific Railroad in Hinkle, then moved to Alaska to work as a telegraph operator. He held down two jobs and completed correspondence school to become an electrical engineer. While living in Juneau, they got horses and built a riding arena with about 200 rental stables.

They eventually moved to California, where Tom worked as a U.S. Forest Service engineer. They retired to McCleary, Washington, last year.

Every year, around Round-Up time, they thought about returning. Distance or some other thing always interfered — until this year.

“I got online, then called and got tickets,” Kathy said. “We told our children, we’re going to Pendleton.”

Their progeny, a son and a daughter, were a little worried about their octogenarian parents heading to a



Tom and Kathy Acord finally made it to the Pendleton Round-Up 65 years after their first glimpse of the rodeo from outside the gates.

rodeo in wild and woolly Pendleton.

“We’re old,” Kathy said, with an amused smile.

The experience did not disappoint. They sat in the South Grandstand for the first time Wednesday and marveled at the athletes and the animals. They had attended little rodeos when they could and loved them, but hadn’t experienced anything in the same league as Pendleton.

“It was wonderful,” Kathy said. “This was a cut above.”

The couple will attend all four days. They don’t plan to check in with their kids, Kathy said with a mischievous grin.

They agreed that the Round-Up experience was worth the 65-year wait.

“Every year since we came back to the mainland, we have thought of going to the Pendleton Round-Up,” Tom said. “We finally made it.”

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Calliope players just as unique as their instrument

By EMILY OLSON
East Oregonian

If you stayed for the end of the Westward Ho! Parade, you probably saw an unusual caboose. If you decided to sneak out early, you still probably heard it.

The Pendleton Main Street Cowboy’s calliope belts out whimsical, cheery melodies, reminiscent of flutes and fairy tales.

“I refer to it as sparkle music,” said Carolyn Mildenerger, who played the instrument in the purple truck at Friday’s parade. “That means we’re not doing Mozart. We’re not doing anything dark and serious.”

It takes a special kind of musician to play the very special instrument. It’s a lot like playing the piano, but with a shorter keyboard and sticky keys. Once known as a “steam organ,” the calliopes of today are powered by an air compressor — meaning musicians have to put some oomph into tickling the ivories. That sends air through large whistles like you might find on an old locomotive.

Every year, the Main Street Cowboys rely on a small team of veteran players and young, fresh faces to bring the unique music to parade and event audiences.

With more than 40 years of experience, Mildenerger has been playing the Main Street Cowboy’s calliope longer than anyone.

She remembers the first time she saw the instrument, during Pendleton’s Fourth of July Parade. As someone who had been playing the piano since age 3, she knew it was only a matter of time before she’d take a turn at the calliope keys. Sure enough, by next year, the Main Street Cowboys put out a radio call for a player and Mildenerger picked up the phone.

“I said, ‘Tell me about this Calliope player you’re looking for. Do you have to be a boy or would you like a girl player?’” The Main Street Cowboys had never used a female musician. “And he said, ‘At this point



Carolyn Mildenerger plays the Mainstreet Cowboys Calliope during Friday’s Westward Ho! Parade.

I don’t care if I get a chimpanzee.” Mildenerger told him she wouldn’t pass for an ape, but could certainly figure out how to make the calliope sing.

“And here I am, 77 years old and I’m still playing,” she said.

The need for players has never really disappeared since Mildenerger started playing. In recent years, the Main Street Cowboys have taken to recruiting local music students. This year, it’s an even split of three older musicians and three younger players.

Bethany Van Cleave was one such recruited student. Two years ago, her Pendleton High School music teacher encouraged her to give it a try, knowing that Van Cleave had been a pianist since age 5.

“I’d never played on a calliope before,” she said.

But she had seen it. The Main Street Cowboys made frequent appearances in the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade in Heppner, where Van Cleave grew up. She said she’d always thought it’d be cool to play, but admitted she was a bit nervous for her first few parades.

“The other ladies were super encouraging,” she said. “They were so excited to have someone new.”

Often, multiple players will ride along on a single

parade to ensure they’ve got enough energy to play the whole route. Van Cleave counts the connections formed over parade routes as her favorite thing about the experience.

“Some of the players are a few generations above you,” she said. “It’s very special that you can bond over playing the calliope.”

The youngest player is 16-year-old Kipling Bose. The oldest is 94-year-old Vivian Larsen. Larsen is the same age as the instrument itself.

No one knows for sure, but the Main Street Cowboys believe the calliope has been featured in parades since the organization got its start in 1951.

The calliope makes appearances at more than 20 parades in the region each year. Mark Jaeger, the out-of-town parade director for the Main Street Cowboys and an air force veteran, likes to the think of the rig as the Main Street Cowboy’s version of the Thunderbirds.

“It’s great advertising,” he said. “It’s a way to say ‘Hey, come to the Round-Up!’”

He hopes the tradition continues, he said. He’d love to see the younger players stay around long enough to develop their own styles—to master the “sparkle music” that Mildenerger knows so well.

INJURIES: Group will provide treatment for more than 300 people during the week

Continued from 1A

him off and slammed him to the ground. The bull also injured one of the volunteer gate staff.

Dice said neither injury turned out to be serious. And the volunteer, Bill Boyd, was in the stands Friday, according to the rodeo announcer.

Cornell has brought her trailer and expertise to the rodeo for three years now. Contestants and others with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association come and go every few moments. She said her group will provide treatment to more than 300 people during the week. They treat another 30-50 during the Professional Bull Riders contests Monday and Tuesday.

Much of the work in the trailer is preventative. Bulldoggers take a seat so Cornell or Dice can pass layers of athletic tape around their ankles. Calf ropers and trippers come in for the same.

The medicine in the trailer is “really quick,” Dice said, and they also rely on a cadre of dedicated volunteers. Cowboys and cowgirls come in for ice, bandages and even sutures. Most of the injuries they treat at the Round-Up are muscle strains in backs, groins and necks. Dice said the Round-Up’s grass field contributes to those. The



Bull rider Brady Portenier inspects the work of Dr. Tom Weeks in a mirror as Weeks tends to an injury Portenier received when a bull’s horn connected with his chin on Friday at the Pendleton Round-Up.

grass can prove tricky, he said, and vary from being wet and slick to bone dry.

He recalled a horse slipping last year after a morning rainfall, and its rider fractured an ankle, leaving the foot to flop in the wrong direction.

One of the ambulance crews — they station at either end of the arena —

drove onto the field to take the cowboy straight to St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton. Dice said that almost never happens, but carrying the cowboy on a stretcher would have caused him more agony.

“So far this year, we have not taken any contestant to the hospital by ambulance,” he said.