



Ellen M Bishop

Marian Birkmaier is still at home on the ranch.



Ellen Morris Bishop

Ruby Zollman relaxing in her Joseph home

the clothing ourselves,” Zollman said. “You took what they had. Sizes didn’t always fit real well. But they were big enough that I can still wear mine. I’m going to wear mine this year.”

“We went to a little western store in Joseph where they had lots of different kinds of western wear,” Marian Birkmaier recalled. “We got a hat, a pair of boots, one pair of gabardine pants, and a shirt—one was brocade, for riding and wearing during the day and the other was sateen, for the dances. That was it, except that Harley Tucker’s wife, Bonnie brought the brocade shirts for us back from a trip she took to Denver.”

Then, as now, the young woman who sold the most tickets was crowned queen. But in 1949, they had only one frantic week for ticket selling. Zollman

and two of her friends drove a jeep all over the county. “We sold tickets every day that week,” she said. “We drove from Hurricane Creek to Lower Imnaha and all the way up to the Palette Ranch. We knocked on every door. And I tell you, there were a lot of doors.” Every night an anonymous donor filled the jeep’s gas tank. “The community stood behind me 100 percent,” Zollman said.

Master storyteller Mack Birkmaier recounted the humorous tale of how moths completely disrupted the 1949 Coronation Dance. “We had lights strung across the dance floor outside,” he said. “Then it started getting dark, really dark. We looked up and there were moths and light-colored smaller moths called millers collecting on the lights. They sort of looked like big hornet nests. Then the millers began fall-

ing off the big globs of moths that were clinging to the light bulbs. They started flying up the girl’s dresses and dropping down everyone’s shirts. It sort of stopped the whole show.”

The 1949 court’s duties included riding horses in the parade, and also making a dramatic, galloping entrance at the start of the rodeo. “Marian and I both had to borrow horses,” Zollman said. “My family had moved into town during the war (WWII). So we didn’t have horses—and I didn’t have a saddle.” A classmate lent her a saddle, and a local cowboy who was going to compete in the rodeo said she could use his calf-roping horse. “It’s going to be at the rodeo grounds all the time, anyway,” he said. Zollman was set.

The 1949 rodeo was only the second show ever held in the newly