



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Harley Tucker's white horses were used as a part of his fast and colorful grand entries.

Six inductees to enter Chief Joseph Days Hall of Fame

By JACK PARRY
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Leading up to the 76th annual Chief Joseph Days Rodeo, the Chief Joseph Days Hall of Fame announced six inductees into its 2022 class.

These inductees are being honored not just for their contributions to Chief Joseph Days, but also for their impact on the sport of rodeo. Here are the inductees of the hall of fame's second class:

Cy Taillon was the first announcer to make his entire living by calling rodeos. He announced his first rodeo in 1939 and would go on to announce practically every major rodeo in the country. Known as "rodeo's Walter Cronkite," Taillon stood out with his precise grammar and description while trying to recognize cowboys as professional athletes. After passing away in 1980, he has since become a member of the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame and was awarded its lifetime achievement award. Taillon was the voice of Chief Joseph Days for 11 years between 1961 and 1975.

The man who the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo and the town of Joseph were named after, Young Chief Joseph was born in 1840 and became a leader, who according to record, counseled his people to keep peace when settlers arrived in the Wallowas. But after the killing of a Nez Perce brave by white men was left unjustified, Chief Joseph led his people away from the Wallowas

in 1877 and many settled on the New Peace Indian Reservation in Lapwai, Idaho. He would eventually die in exile in 1904 at the age of 64. Even though he is recognized throughout the town, his name represents a black mark in our country's history causing the suffering of Native Americans, when a man who wanted nothing but peace was forced to leave his home.

While the action at the rodeo is what many remember, people are rarely honored for the work that it takes to organize such an event. Dallas Gene Williamson did just that, and was a respected member of the Joseph community. Graduating in a class of five from Joseph High School in 1947, that same year he would end up digging post holes for the rodeo on the Wallowa Lake moraine. His passion for the rodeo didn't stop there, as he served on the rodeo board of directors from 1970-1981, and was arena director from 1973-1981. As arena director he was responsible for working countless hours and nights before rodeo week to prepare for the event. He helped build new rodeo stands in 1967-1968, and was the one who suggested

that the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo court receive commission from selling tickets. An integral member of the rodeo behind the scenes, Williamson passed away in 2016 at 85 years old.

Frank McCully became the president of the Joseph Chamber of Commerce in 1946, which was the year

of the first rodeo. He was elected mayor of Joseph the next year, and in his time on the chamber, the membership grew from 30 to 130. He and the chamber members would promote the rodeo fervently, even flying to do so. McCully was the one who figured out what weekend the rodeo would take place, by asking his father and grandfather to pick the best time of the year based on past weather patterns. He was the parade grand marshal in 1985, and will be recognized for the work he put into making the rodeo what it is today.

After his service in World War II, Ross Dollarhide Jr. began participating in rodeo competitions as a saddle bronc rider and steer wrestler. His career was illustrious, winning 17 event titles in saddle bronc riding and 18 event titles in steer wrestling between 1947 and 1955. Between 1948 and 1950, he won the saddle bronc title three consecutive years. Dollarhide won at Chief Joseph Days as well, taking the all-around titles in 1950, 1951, 1952, calf roping in 1950, saddle bronc riding in 1951, and steer wrestling titles in 1950 and 1951. He would also work as a riding double/stuntman in Hollywood in the late 1950s. A cowboy superhero, Dollarhide died in 1977 in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Harley Tucker's white horses are being inducted. Tucker gathered six white horses together for his grand entrance to the parade. Riders would wear red leather jackets and carry colorful flags and matching leather chaps and the horses were outfitted with hand-tooled saddles and matching saddle blankets. These extravagant steeds were used by Tucker as a part of his fast and colorful grand entries.

The Hall of Fame and a museum will be located in a new event center that is being planned that will be located at the rodeo grounds.

Tribal encampment plays key role in Chief Joseph Days

By KATY NESBITT
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Chief Joseph Days Rodeo is a mashup of Western culture with both roping and riding action in the Harley Tucker Arena as well as the dancing, singing and feasting of the tribal encampment.

In the "old days," according to Ralph Swinehart, there were 200 tepees on the rodeo grounds during Chief Joseph Days. Slowly the tribal members stopped coming.

"In 1986 it trickled down to only three tepees," Swinehart said.

In 1988, Swinehart said, a couple Wallowa County residents — Steve Zollman and Bruce Womack — went to visit Nez Perce descendants of the Wallowa Band on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Nez Perce Indian Reservation to ask why they were no longer coming. They were told they were not invited.

"Bruce and Steve got together with Milley Fraser and welcomed them back," Swinehart said.

Tribal members from the Nez Perce reservation in Lapwai, Idaho, May Taylor and Horace Axtell, as well as Soy RedThunder from Nespelem, Washington, on the Colville Reservation and Priscilla and Fernmore Craig from the Umatilla reservation restarted it.

Swinehart said Don and Rosemary Green from Wallowa County and the Craigs brought fish and organized a potluck that now feeds hundreds of people a year.

Jean Pekarek has been

volunteering at the friendship feast as long as Swinehart.

"In 1988, I got word that there were going to be some tribal people bringing salmon, and people in the community wanted to come and bring side dishes," Pekarek said. "I went, and as the years went on, it started growing."

In 1991, tribal dancing was held at the Joseph High School gym, Pekarek

a permanent arbor was constructed with plenty of room for the feast and after the chairs and tables are picked up, the dancing and drumming begin.

While the tribal encampment needed some reinvigoration in the late '80s, Swinehart said tribal members have always been in the parade. A vintage car collector for more than 30 years, he has driven some of the elder tribal members who no longer ride horseback in his Model A Ford.

Today, the chief salmon cook is Joe McCormack and the Stangel Buffalo Ranch donates burgers. Ahead of time, volunteers get together to make patties out of 250 pounds of ground meat, said Shelley Rogers, a rodeo committee member who helps organize the friendship feast and other encampment details.

This year the local Rotaract Club — a Rotary Club for 21-32 year olds — are in charge of preparing and freezing the burgers ahead of the feast.

Rogers said Brenda Axtell of Lapwai is helping organize other aspects of the encampment remotely.

"It takes a lot of coordination with phone calls, emails..." Rogers said.

While Swinehart, Pekarek and Rogers are dedicated to their labor of love and hospitality, each confessed to being over 70 years old.

"We are putting out the word for anyone to get involved, especially young people," Swinehart said.

The Chief Joseph Days Rodeo Friendship Feast is held after the grand parade at noon on Saturday, July 30. Those wanting to attend are asked to bring a side dish to share. Dancing and drumming will follow the feast.

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— Jean Pekarek, Friendship Feast volunteer

said, and in 1998 the dancing was moved to the rodeo grounds' encampment.

Over the years, there have been several improvements to the encampment facilities, Swinehart said.

"We've gone through several different arbors," Swinehart said. "The first year we had a lodgepole frame with shade tarps and in 1990 the first arbor was constructed."

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