

Irish Navajo turns cowboy

by Justine Weatherford

Robert B. Henry is a real American, a full-blooded Navajo, who came here from New Mexico and the big Navajo Reservation near Four Corners. Since he has lived in Morrow County about four years, it seems like his fine red blood is getting green streaks.

When he prepared for the 1977 rodeo season he invested in new chaparajos (chaps to you). What design did he choose? Well, somehow he found some marked with shamrocks. Last week he presented us with a snapshot taken at the John Day Rodeo which shows his chaps better than it shows his face.

My husband Bill considers Bob a natural athlete. Bill first met Bob when he came to live on the ranch that Bill had sold and where Bob's Uncle Roger Henry was then employed. Bob rode Bill's morning school bus to town with his "little" cousin young Roger.

Robert played football with the Mustangs (formerly the Fighting Irish just like Notre Dame, but lighter and younger) that first year and often walked the 16 miles home after practice in the dark and cold as there was no activity bus out toward Butter Creek. He hadn't yet earned nearly enough to buy the motorcycle that whizzes him around now.

His Uncle Roger, now employed by the W.E. Hughes Ranches, was one of Oregon's Chemawa School's most outstanding athletes. Bob also played some basketball and baseball for Heppner High and soon joined the Rodeo Club. Unfortunately scholastic eligibility rules mowed him down, and he couldn't compete as much as he wanted to. We were very pleased that he completed his high school work last spring with the Heppner class of 1977.

Robert had attended reservation schools at home and was mostly raised by beloved grandparents who spoke the old Navajo language. His English vocabulary was pretty undeveloped when he entered school here, and he found the teachers and students using words that were meaningless to him. However, he learned our lingo pretty quickly. Since he has lived in town he loves watching television which has given him lots of background that he missed—some good and some not so good.

Incidentally, in my opinion, the Kinzua Mill ball team is missing some really good help by not getting Robert on its roster. Of course being on the swing shift doesn't allow him soft-ball hours; but then too, playing ball could interfere with attending the weekend rodeos he loves so much.

Twelve years ago when I was about to move to this cowboy county from the Willamette Valley, several persons bragged to me that this was an "all white" community. They didn't realize that just saying this made me think they were not truly "white-spirited." I knew that the Weatherford family, which I had been invited to join, has some good, red blood. I was proud of that, as they are. For years I'd had some very special friends with very dark skins.

My own family records only go back to 1066 (the Doomesday census), but I read of several wildish ancestors and can easily hope and imagine that not all



Robert Henry, Heppner's shamrock-chap clad Navajo Indian rides Mr. Hixson at John Day.

of them were pale-faces. It has long seemed to me that America's strength comes from the melting-pot system, from the blending of many ethnic strains. It is my hope that this county will grow by more blending.

I am happy here in "New Ireland" as one ethnicity, "a social group often misleadingly referred to as a race, though not biologically differentiated", that I have always most admired is that fun-loving, fighting group called the Sons of Eire.

Our friend Robert B. Henry, who wore his shamrocked chaps around the lesser rodeo circuit this year as he mounted plunging bulls and bucking broncos clearly demonstrates that no matter what color skin it comes wrapped in, the friendly, fighting, Irish spirit will always shine through.

Hospital Notes

Activity at the Pioneer Memorial Hospital from Sept. 20 through Sept. 27 included the dismissal of Ruth Van Winkle, Raymond Corwin, Andy Anderson, Clarence Warren and Gladys Beckett, all of Heppner, as well as,

Cammie Papineau and Frank Robinson, Lexington, Emma Moore, Condon and Randall Allen, Noonvik, Alaska.

Still hospitalized are William Weatherford, Heppner; Warren Miller, Kimberly; and Isidoro Sanchez, Ione.

New Languue arrives

Mr. and Mrs. Eric Languue, North Plains, are the parents of a daughter, Tanna Janette, 6 lbs., 14 oz., born Sept. 6.

Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Walter Languue, North

Plains, and Mr. and Mrs. Pete Hams, Ione.

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County VFW Post seeks new members

Morrow County V.F.W. Post 4184, winners of the 1976 District 8 membership trophy—are doing all they can to win again this year.

The bell-shaped trophy is awarded for the biggest percentage of membership increase in the previous year. The Morrow County Post doubled its rolls last year and are trying to make it 200 per cent this time around.

Thomas Blue, a spearhead in the recruiting effort, urges all veterans to join the V.F.W. now and keep that trophy here for the coming year. Ironically, Blue, a two-year Heppner

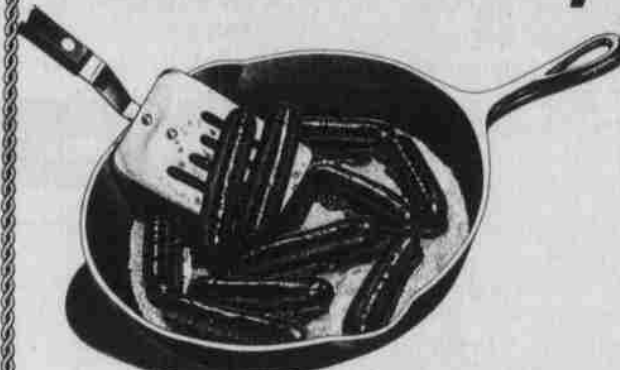
resident, isn't eligible to join the Morrow County group since he already holds a lifetime membership in the Hermiston Post.

Meetings are held every second Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the Wagon Wheel Cafe. Veterans interested in joining Post 4184 are invited to call Blue at 676-9641 or Chuck Flynn, Quartermaster, at 676-9259.

Wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of veterans who fought in foreign wars are eligible to join the V.F.W. Auxilliary. For more information call Doris Flynn at 676-9259.

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Legion

news

The first fall meeting of Heppner American Legion Post No. 87 and Auxilliary was held Monday, Sept. 19 at the Legion Hall, beginning with a potluck dinner. Plans were reviewed for the Hunters Breakfast to be held all night, Sept. 30. Also discussed was the dues drive now under way. Department has set Nov. 11 as the date for reaching quota.

District 6 Conference will be Oct. 8 at the La Grande Legion Hall, beginning with a potluck

dinner at 6:30 p.m., with the business meeting following. This is the department chairman and officers visit to our district, and an opportunity to meet them and hear them explain some of our programs.

District 6 President, Evelyn Sweek, Heppner, recently installed officers at Athena. Going with her were Rita Hedman, past District 6 president, and Martha King, secretary of Legion Auxilliary No. 87.

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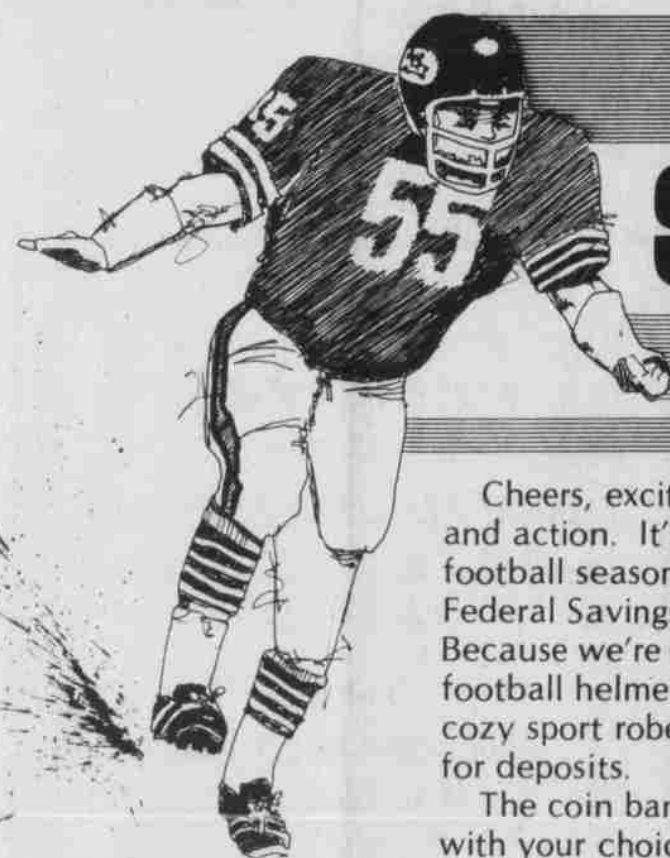
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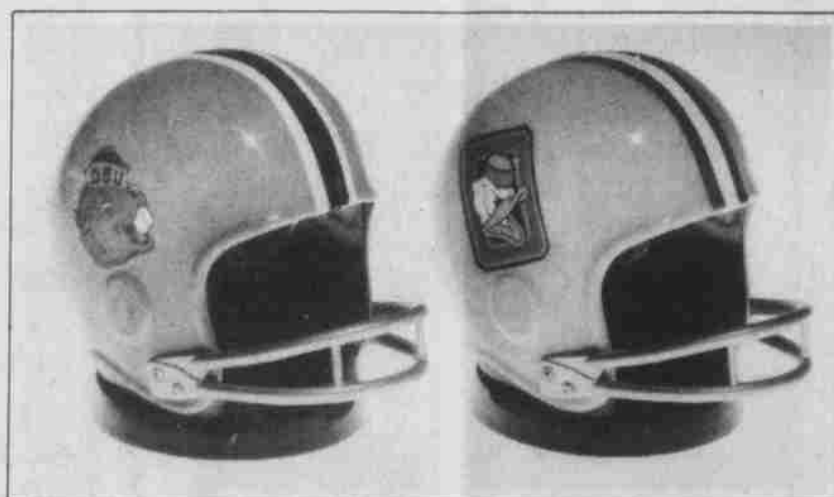
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