

## Five miles a day at 78 years young

On any day of the year, rain or shine, Heppnerites may see a white-haired gentleman walking very briskly through the streets of town.

Marion Olson, turned 78 years young on his St. Patrick's Day birthday and celebrated by walking five miles about town, just as he has every day of the year, since he had a slight heart attack several years ago. He said he travels that distance in a swift-moving 50 minutes, "give or take a minute."

Olson came to Heppner from Iowa in January, 1946, to represent the family at daughter Millie's marriage to Burt Winters. He liked it so well here that he stayed and was joined by his wife and four other children a couple months later.

"I loved every inch of Oregon and still do," Olson said. "Heppner was a wonderful town in those days," he added.

Olson went to work for Heppner Lumber Co. in 1946 when it was owned by Orville Smith and stayed on through the management change to Kinzua Corp. until his retirement in 1966.

"I planned to work three weeks and ended up staying for 20 years," Olson said with a laugh. "Coming here was the best thing that ever happened to me."

The grandfather of 12 and great-grandfather of 9, Olson is an avid gardener and fisherman, in addition to his daily hike through town. He said he used to hunt but "I got too old."

Olson now lives with his daughter Millie, who was widowed, and her second husband Fred Breeding. He enjoys talking about the 'old days', remembering the excitement of the first Morrow County Fair and Rodeo in 1946: "Heppner was a real live town...I remember the dunking tank...There was a Model A Ford made into a paddy

wagon and they'd round everybody up who wasn't wearing western clothes and dunk them in the tank...Those were wonderful years."

"Eastern Oregon has really changed," Olson commented, remembering hunting duck and geese around Hat Rock when it was "nothing but a wilderness."

Olson, though he enjoys reminiscing, denies emphatically that he is against progress. "I'm all for it.

Morrow County used to be one of the poorest counties in the

state, and now it's on its way to being one of the wealthiest," he said.

He is also for the Willow Creek Dam, believing Heppner will become a "ghost town" if the flood plain is allowed to stand. Olson does believe, however, that Heppner itself has declined from the old days: "No wonder there's so many juvenile

problems. My goodness, there's nothing for the kids to do here anymore. They have to go out of town just to see a movie."

In spite of this opinion, Marion Olson still enjoys his active life in Heppner. He said that his daily walk has allowed him to get acquainted with many folks who were just faces to him before.

So the next time you see a white-haired gentleman quick-stepping through the streets of town some fine morning, stop and say "Hello". He won't mind.

## Gazette-Times celebrates 95th birthday....

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story and best feature, both written by Sherman. Hepp-

ner's paper had also captured three second place awards in the best photo, best editorial

and best local column categories.

Sherman's widow, Helen, published the paper alone until November, 1969, when she sold out to Charlie and Dorothy Heard, who had been the publishers of four weekly papers.

When the Heards, now retired in Milton-Freewater, sold the Gazette-Times in July, 1973, it was to the 'tall Texan', Ernest V. Joiner.

Joiner, who had been in the newspaper business since 1945

and publisher of the Sebastopol Times for the previous 11 years, was probably as contro-

versial during his time at the helm of the Gazette-Times as J. Watermelon was in his. His colorful column "Horse Sense" minced no words about his stand on any topic, and, as one observer commented, "you either loved him or hated him."

Joiner repurchased the Sebastopol Times in March 1975 and managed both papers for a year leaving the Gazette-Times mostly in the hands of

another controversial editor, Ernie Ceresa.

The newspaper was finally sold in April 1976 to the present owners, G.M. and Delores Reed, who have been in the newspaper business for many years and are also publishers of the Hermiston Herald.

Editor Ceresa was replaced two months later by Wil Phinney. Tom Franks served for a short stint as editor before the present editorial staff arrived at the Gazette-Times last May.

As a fitting finale to this history of the Gazette-Times,

we would like to quote from an editorial written by O.G. Crawford on the occasion of the paper's 60th anniversary. The number 95 has been replaced for 60 in this excerpt. It is as appropriate today as it was in 1943.

"...The Gazette, and later the Gazette-Times, has weathered 95 years with never a thought of laying down on the job of recording history as it was made from week to week. Today, instead of being 95 years old, it might be better to say 95 years young, for it not only has a commendable record of achievement behind it but a firm grip on the future..."



Marion Olson, 78, steps out briskly on his daily five mile hike through Heppner.

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