

HEPPNER



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## Joe Yocom to ride in Sesquicentennial wagon train



Joe Yocom is ready for the trail

A bon voyage party at his Lexington home last Sunday featured Morrow County's official Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial Wagon Train teamster Joe Yocom, who is ready to roll. Yocom will spend over two months bumping along "the trail" as the driver of one of the 10 official wagons dedicated to this long journey.

Starting June 25 from the Wyoming border the wagons' slow travels across two states will halt at Oregon City for an "end of the trail" celebration on Labor Day weekend. This memorable event will recapture the pioneering spirit of thousands of people who came west beginning in 1843—the longest and largest migration in American history.

The sesquicentennial journey will parallel as closely as possible the route taken by the original pioneers, in some places in sight of the actual ruts. Averaging 15 to 20 miles per day, overnight stops will coincide with festivities of communities planning their own wagon train commemoration.

Former Heppner resident Jerry Schubert, Pendleton, will be the wagon master, using his wagon and horses that have been featured in many parades.

Yocom's wagon train adventures hinged on the restoration of an old farm wagon belonging to the George Griffiths below Ione. Yocom still wasn't sure he could make the trip until a retired pump and irrigation specialist was hired to take his place during his absence from work for the Morrow County Grain Growers.

Stormy spring weather impeded progress as the old wagon was dismantled in haste at the Mel Piper country home. Piper drew up a blueprint to ascertain the missing parts and he fashioned new parts including the tongue and the coupling pole out of oak hardwood. New metal fittings were patterned after ones that had been dug out of the ground

in the junk yards of various farms. The metal rims on the wheels had to be refitted by a wheelwright in Moscow, Idaho. Now that the wagon was reassembled and brightly painted it looks as it had been restored for a museum. But even with lots of free labor from family and friends this authentic wagon cost Yocom over \$1,000 to repair.

Yocom's determination is inherited from the pioneering spirit of his great grandfather who came west by covered wagon and homesteaded in the Willamette Valley. Yocom recalls his boyhood days in Wasco County where horses and mules were used for putting up hay. But because he was too short to pitch hay on the wagon, his job was stacking loose or bundled hay, he says.

Yocom's immediate family took roots in Morrow County while the four Yocom children, Debbie, Millie, Jack and Marie, were growing up. During that time Yocom's western adventures continued to grow. There were wild horse round-ups above Meacham and wild horse events at rodeos with his Lexington friends. Like a Roman Ben Hur, he participated in chariot racing during Heppner rodeos. His jockey experience provided some harrowing tales when he rode for the Heppner Wranglers during relay races at the Heppner show and the Pendleton Round-Up.

While the family participated in rodeo events Yocom served many

years as the dance director for the Heppner Rodeo Board. In recent years his horse-driving interests led to transporting wedding parties in his fancy buggy pulled by high-stepping horses. But for now he's putting aside his tuxedo and top hat. He'll be spending long days pioneer style, perched on the high wooden seat of his trail-worthy wagon pulled by two big Percheron mules.

In mid-August this wagon train will be crossing Morrow County. An overnight stop at the

## County employees receive pink slips

Twenty-four county employees received "pink slips" last week, advising them that their jobs will be eliminated as of July 1.

Unable to support County operations on the revenue generated from the tax base established in 1908, a third levy failure would require the county to slash all non-mandated personnel and services for fiscal year 1993-94, said Morrow County Judge Louis Carlson. The fiscal year begins July 1, 1993.

The lay-off would represent a 31 percent reduction in work force. The road department would receive a 40 percent reduction in tax revenue thus eliminating all new construction, paving and crushing contracts, Carlson said.

## MSWCD to give away seedlings

The Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District will be giving away Ponderosa pine and Douglas Fir seedlings beginning Thursday, June 17 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. There is no limit to the number of seedlings per individual.

Anyone interested in seedlings is requested to bring his own containers. The district office is located in the Pettyjohn Office Building, 430 Heppner/Lexington Highway, Heppner. For more information call 676-5452.

## Council member files suit against council

Heppner City Council member Martha Doherty has filed a suit against the city council, council members and the city administrator over a merit pay resolution enacted by the council.

The suit, filed June 7, names city mayor Bob Jepsen, council members David Allstott, David Pranger, Chuck Holt, Kay Robinson and LoRayne Bowman and city administrator Gary Marks as defendants.

In the suit, Doherty maintains that the merit pay system "violates the city charter in that it unlawfully empowers the city administrator and department heads to determine the amount of compensation for services of city officers and employees."

According to the suit, the city charter states "The council shall determine the amount of compensation for services for each city officer and employee."

The personnel evaluation and merit compensation policy approved by the council calls for evaluation of employees by their supervisors and ranking of employees' job performance based on the number of points accumulated. An employee could be ranked unsatisfactory, needs improvement, satisfactory, above

standard and outstanding. An employee ranked unsatisfactory, needs improvement or satisfactory would receive no merit increase. A ranking of above standard would result in a three percent merit pay increase and a ranking of outstanding would result in a six percent salary increase.

Merit increases become permanent upon approval by the city administrator and are effective the month following completion of a review. Employees will be granted only one merit increase during any calendar year.

The merit increase would be in addition to an annual cost-of-living increase.

Doherty is represented by her brother, Hermiston attorney Dennis Doherty. The city is represented by city attorney Bill

Kuhn.

Doherty is asking for no monetary compensation, just a legal ruling.

A small delegation of citizens attending the city council meeting Monday night protested the merit pay increases and voiced fears that the system would take control out of the hands of council members.

"It's a pretty tough evaluation system," added council member David Allstott.

"The council has final authority over the budget," said council member Chuck Holt. "We haven't lost any control whatsoever. If it gets out of hand one iota, I'll jump all over it."

Those citizens initially disagreeing with the merit increases finally agreed with the council's position of letting the system work for a year.

## Meeting set for summer project

A meeting for volunteers for the Neighborhood Center Summer Project for area children has been planned for this Thursday, June 17, at the United Methodist Church from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The Rev Grace Drake, project coordinator, says that volunteers are especially needed for the second and third weeks of the pro-

ject on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The project begins July 6 and will conclude July 30. Classes are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily, with longer classes on field trip days. Contact Rosalie Scharen 676-9209.

The project is open to children who have completed first grade through sixth grade.

## Shelby Dyer gets souvenir ball



Shelby Dyer

Shelby Dyer, a resident of Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home was made an official honorary member of the Ione Cardinal Major league team Monday night. The team, made up of nine through 12 year olds, presented Dyer with a baseball cap and certificate.

Dyer, 81, who is paralyzed on his left side, caught a fly foul ball Saturday when the Cardinals played Condon. Team members signed the ball and presented it to Shelby. The Cards went on to hand Condon their first loss of the season 5-4.

## Swimming lessons scheduled at Ione

The Ione swimming pool will open for public swimming on June 15. Pool hours will be from 2-5 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 2-5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The pool will be closed on Monday. Pool rates for all ages are: season pass family-\$50; individual \$20; per session \$1.

Season passes will have priority for swimming if the pool fills to capacity with swimmers. Checks can be made out to Ione Pool and mailed or delivered to Ione Schools, Box 167, Ione, 97843.

The first session of swim lessons for Ione and Heppner have been set for the following

dates:

Ione: June 22-July 2, advanced beginners from 9-9:45 a.m. and 10-10:45 a.m.; beginners 11-11:30 a.m. and 11:45-12:15 p.m.

Basic water safety classes for students who have passed advanced swimmers will be available if enough sign up. Registration for the Ione lessons may be made with Jill Nelson at the Ione pool or at 989-8494.

Lessons for Heppner children will be held July 6-16. For more information call Shane Palmer 422-7115.

The second session of lessons will be July 20-30 for Ione and August 3-13 for Heppner.

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