

Gerald Swaggert, 1996 Fair/OTPR Parade Grand Marshal



Grand Marshal Gerald Swaggert

The spirit of the old West lives on thanks to Grand Marshal Gerald Swaggert of the 1996 Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro rodeo. He was 12 years old at the time of the first Heppner rodeo in 1922.

His father, Frank Swaggert, was one of the founders of that event held at its present site on land donated by V. Gentry.

The son of pioneer settlers, Gerald grew up on the family's Little Buttercreek ranch. He remembers horse roundups on the Buttercreek Buttes that occurred each spring, long before there were fences. Cowboys tested their skills on these horses inside wooden corrals near Lena.

This was the forerunner of the Heppner Rodeo, Gerald recalls. When Heppner and Pendleton began putting on shows they used local bucking stock before stock contractors and bucking chutes were common. Wild horses were roped and blindfolded and a snubbing horse was used in saddling and for mounting. Once turned loose, riders that didn't buck off still had to dismount unassisted.

Due to the influence of his grandfather and father who bred race horses, Gerald's horsemanship was on a fast track. For about 20 years,

Gerald was a willing jockey in flat races, relay or pony express heats. He also was brave enough to ride roman style standing up on the backs of two horses running side by side. Not intending to hone bronc riding skills, Gerald had his share of wild rides and spills.

Gerald recalls that his former neighbor Jerry Brosnan was one of his staunch race horse holders. One time the dust was so thick when Gerald was racing into change mounts, he couldn't see where Jerry was holding the next horse. By voice, he located Jerry and the horse who were both flat on the ground. Gerald says he doesn't know how many times Jerry got run over after being knocked down, but he never let go of the horse. Those type of mix-ups, plus lap and tap starts often determined race winners before cheering crowds. It's said that there were over 4,000 people attending Heppner rodeos in those days.

Besides fast horses, the Swaggert name became synonymous with a herd of Cream-line horses bred by Gerald's uncle, Ben Swaggert. That herd of golden dappled horses became widely known and were sought by Hollywood cowboy stars.

Enjoy the Competitive Presentations on Friday



Cameron Krebs in the 1995 presentation contest

"Extracting Honey," "Hog Wash" and "Swish, Swish: A Horse's Tale" were 4-H presentation topics at the 1995 Morrow County Fair. "We don't know what the topics will be for the '96 fair," says Carol Michael-Bennett, Oregon State University Extension youth and family agent. "Members have registered for individual and team presentations and there should be a topic of interest to most everyone." Competitive presentations (called demonstrations in past years) will take place on Friday, Aug. 16, on the kitchen stage

in the 4-H annex. "One of the most important goals of the 4-H youth development is to improve public speaking skills. Giving a short presentation in the project group is an expectation for every member. From there, it is a natural move to the larger stage of county fair competition," continues Michael-Bennett. Most youth select a topic related to their 4-H project, which adds to their self-confidence.

Excellent acoustics in the 4-H annex, interesting topics and comfortable seating out of the elements combine to make the Presentations Contest an enjoyable activity.

Presentations will begin at 9 a.m. and continue until around 2 p.m. The Beef Ambassadors Presentations, a combination of illustrated talk and food preparation, will conclude the competition. Contestants always appreciate an audience. Stop in the 4-H annex on Friday morning, watch a presentation and encourage the speakers with your presence and your applause.

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MC Chronicles now available

"Morrow County Chronicles," published annually by the Morrow County Historical Society (MCHS), is now available.

This year's edition features "The History of the Morrow County Sheep Industry," by Darlene Hoskins; "A Granddaughter's Glimpse into the Home of Franklin Dee and Lizzie Cox," by Francis Cox Griffin; and "Early Churches of Morrow County," by Lorene Griffith. Other local stories of interest are also included.

This is the 15th year that the MCHS has collaborated with current and former residents of Morrow County to research and share recollections of

stories of Morrow County. Lucile Peck has served as editor of the Chronicles since its inception. Doris Brosnan will become editor in 1997.

"Morrow County Chronicles" is available at the Morrow County Museum, Murray Drugs, Twice Upon A Time... and at the Historical Society's booth at the Morrow County Fair. Copies of most past issues are also available, as is an updated index of all 15 volumes.

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Morrow County Fair & Rodeo

WOW

PRCA Rodeo
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Morrow County Rodeo
 Sun. Aug. 18
 1:15 p.m.

- * 4-H Fashion Revue, 7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 15
- * Competitive Presentations all day, Friday, August 16
- * Rodeo Dance, 9:30 p.m., Saturday, August 17



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