

Olson act will keep audiences spellbound



Jerry Wayne Olson and "Chief"

On the north end of the Black Hills, eight miles east of Belle Fourche, SD, sits the home of Jerry Wayne Olson. But during the rodeo season, his home is many different rodeo arenas across the country. He has performed from Mexico City to the Northwest Territory in Canada, from San Francisco to Madison Square Garden, San Juan, Puerto Rico to the Florida Keys.

Jerry is a third generation rodeo performer. His grandfather, Larue Olson, began the tradition with the renowned buffalo act, never to be duplicated. His father, Jerry, Sr., is well known throughout the country for his Roman

riding, bullfighting skills and the buffalo act. Jerry Wayne began his career at the tender age of 18 months, riding on his father's shoulders during the Roman riding act.

Jerry has always enjoyed training his animals to do the most unique tricks, as demonstrated by his talent and years in the performing arts. A highlight of his career was being chosen Specialty Act of the Year in Pro Rodeo in 1988.

The excitement will flow from the arena as Jerry brings us his highly trained horse, "Dude." Through many hours of training and bonding, this duo will amaze

you with their ability to communicate together as one. Dude, completely free of rider, bridle and saddle, will listen and watch as Jerry controls his actions from across the arena floor.

The third generation Olson has kept audiences spellbound with his performing expertise and the renowned buffalo act with "Chief." This stately and awesome animal from the Black Hills will execute a routine that you will remember for years to come.

The Olson family have brought to arenas across the country their unique ability to do the unusual. Through 40 years, the tradition has prevailed. Enjoy!

Hints for entering produce at fair

Summer is here and it is time for the Morrow County Fair. Have you ever had an urge to enter any of your produce to be judged at the fair?

To help you do so, Kathryn Kettel, Oregon State University Extension agent, has a number of hints for entering produce at local fairs this summer.

Get a copy of the fair exhibitors' handbook. This will contain the exhibition rules for fruits and vegetables - the "who, what, when, where and why" of your particular county fair competitions.

Choose a group of fruits or vegetables as closely alike as possible in color, shape and size.

Judges prefer uniformity.

Entries should be free of blemishes. Do not enter produce scarred by garden pests. Discard vegetables marred by disease, rough handling or careless cultivation.

Select normal-sized vegetables that are ready to be consumed or cooked, at their best and most flavorful.

"Vegetables and fruits should be what's excepted by industry," said Kettel. "Just go look at what is sold in the grocery stores and then pick your produce for contests accordingly."

Choose specimens typical for the variety in shape, color, and size. For example, tomatoes are expected to be evenly round -

don't select oblong tomatoes that look more like squashes in shape. Save the strange specimens for the "weirdest vegetable" contest.

For more information about entering produce for competition, contact the Morrow County Fair office, (541) 676-9474, or the Morrow County Extension Service, 541-676-9642 or 1-800-342-3664.

Tim Cundell to sing at fair

The Morrow County Fair Committee will have a local favorite back year--Tim Cundell, the singing cop.

Tim will perform on Saturday, August 16, from 7-9 p.m. and Sunday, August 17, at 8:30 a.m.



Jim Swanson, Nancy Snider, Stacie Miller

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Legacy of Wild West lives on with 75 years of rodeo history



First Queen Morrow Co. Rodeo 1922 MARJORIE CLARK

By Merlyn Robinson

The legacy of the Wild West lives on as Heppner celebrates 75 years of rodeo history during the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo, Aug. 16-17. Its colorful past began in September, 1922, when Heppner businessmen and ranchers organized that first four day event.

L.V. Gentry, one of those organizers, donated a field at the edge of town that continues to be the rodeo site. Volunteers built fences with netting wire and poles cut in the mountains.

According to the Oct. 3, 1922 Heppner Herald, "the track and arena were in splendid condition and the bucking and race stock were full of pep and action"

for the benefit of an estimated total attendance of 4,000. A band from The Dalles provided musical atmosphere. Dances were held each evening in the round open-air large pavilion that once stood at the lower edge of Main Street. The newspaper reported "all the trimmings of bar and gambling games attracted much attention and patronage--under the management of the American Legion Post."

Stock for those earlier rodeos largely came from local ranches. Potential broncs were brought to town prior to rodeo to be tried out by local cowhands. Minus bucking chutes, horse were snubbed and saddled in the middle of the arena using a strong saddle horse. As the blindfold was jerked off and the horse turned loose, the rider used his hat to fan that bronc with his free hand. Bronc riders were experienced at "biting the dirt" as pickup men weren't part of the action in those days.

Gerald Swaggert was only 12 years old when that first rodeo was held, but he remembers when free-running mustangs were rounded up for bucking horse soires before there was a sanctioned rodeo. Like his father, Frank Swaggert, he rode race horses in flat, relay and pony express heats. He was also daring enough to race horses Roman

style, standing on the backs of two horses.

The 1922 rodeo results show that J.D. Bellingbrock bested Jack French in the bucking horse contest. However, French proved to be the top hand when it came to riding bucking mules. Half-mile, quarter mile and relay race winners were Vic Eads, George Cason, Merle Kirk, Frank Swaggert, Antone Cunha and Barney Ward. Eddie Sheridan placed over French in the calf roping. But Ralph Reid bested French and Howard Lane in the steer roping event.

One of the promoters of that first rodeo was Charles Latourell, an enterprising local car dealer. He arranged to bring a touring Ford Exposition into town during the four days of rodeo. That caravan consisted of 26 trucks and tractors carrying or towing additional farm and construction equipment as well as a Delco light plant, pumping systems, hoists and many small tools and accessories. That entourage also featured a five piece live jazz orchestra plus nightly movie shows and a radio broadcasting set to air concerts.

The success of that first rodeo would appear to be a difficult act to follow. But the momentum of succeeding shows continued to build. To enhance the rodeos, large carnivals came to town complete with trapeze artists and high wire acts. An enterprising pilot gave some citizens their first airplane ride; a thrill for those who chose not to be airborne from

the back of a bucking horse.

Those earlier rodeo committees patterned rodeo rules and management after the Pendleton Round-Up. Heppner rodeo dates were moved ahead of the Pendleton Round-Up in September. Gradually the first professional cowboys' association was formed, called "The Turtles". As rodeo circuits developed, the name was changed to Rodeo Cowboys Association. This led to today's PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association).

The Heppner Rodeo changed affiliations during the years. It was sanctioned by the Northwest Rodeo Association for a time. Spectators seem to cheer the loudest for local contestants while the size of the purse and the luck-of-the-draw often attracts the most outstanding professional athletes traveling distances.

In conjunction with the 1939 Heppner Rodeo, the Morrow County Fair became part of the festive week. Morrow County fairs have been held since 1912, but not always locally. When held in Heppner, the county sheds next to the dance pavilion were used for livestock exhibits. The home economics wares were displayed in the former Braden-Bell building on Main Street that was home to John Deere machinery. The 4-H sewers used the Odd Fellow Lodge Hall and modeled their clothes on Main Street.

Historically, rodeo royalty is an important role. At first young la-

dies with riding skills were chosen as court members by the rodeo committee. Heppner's Eva Padberg Griffith was the 1923 queen. Only 14 at the time, Eva says she chose as her attendant Jane Allstott. They rode in the Heppner and Pendleton parades behind the mounted rodeo directors.

Later, the granges within the county selected court representatives from various areas. Dime-a-dance (jitney dances) tickets gave each purchaser a vote on one of those attendants to become queen. By 1940, the rodeo committee decided the queen should be selected from past princesses. Granges continued to select princesses and to finance their official attire.

An enterprising rodeo promotion in 1940 was a three county junket by a large group of Heppner businessmen. Drum majorettes from the Heppner school accompanied this tour. Stops were made at every town to sell rodeo buttons and promote the show. But the star performer was Rosie O'Grady, alias Frank Turner, disguised as a honky tonk gal in keeping with the Heppner Rodeo's logo, "She's Wild".

Turner had to wear this outrageous costume to a chamber luncheon that day as someone hid Turner's street clothes. Tom Wood was the 1940 champion bull rider. Pat Fisk won all-around honors by placing high in the calf roping and bronc riding events. The Warren-Depew brahmas were used that year. Newspaper accounts credit the race horses of Baze, Swaggert, Turner and Hughes of "being in fine fettle." And if anyone lost their shirt betting on these races, Wilson's Men's Wear on Main Street advertised western shirts priced from \$1.95 to \$3.95.

A cowboy breakfast held Friday morning on Willow Creek was started that year by Lee Beckner and Jim Kistner. Complete with cowboy singers, head cook Earle Bryant dished up steaks, hotcakes and all the trimmings to around 300 people who were charged .50 cents a plate. And Eddie Chinn's Long Horn restaurant was such a popular eating spot and Chinn recruited Chinese friends from Portland to help out.

In the early 1940s, the war in Europe cast dark shadows over America as young men were encouraged to enlist in the military to be prepared for national defense. Under the leadership of president Henry Aiken, the rodeo committee decided the show must go on. The Heppner Chamber secured over 60 guarantors pledging no more than \$25 in financial support. But following the 1941 show, due to U.S. involvement in a global war, rodeos were suspended.

The Heppner Rodeo roared back to life in 1945 after a three

year shutdown as there was an easing up on food and gas rationing. Big changes came as the county deeded the block on Main Street to the city in exchange for the site of the former Civilian Conservation Corps headquarters adjacent to the rodeo field. There, old wooden dormitory buildings were used for exhibits for a time.

In 1950, the large block exhibit building was built and other buildings and barns took shape. A new grandstand next to the highway was built. The center field of the rodeo arena was seeded to grass. Calf ropers no longer chased calves long distances from the west after crossing the racetrack. Cyclone fencing replaced wooden rails. The Wrangler Riding Club took over the sponsorship of a Morrow County Horse Show and the Sunday morning cowboy breakfast.

As professional athletes fine-tuned their skills, in 1950 Morrow County amateur contestants began competing for a champion calf roping saddle. It has since been traditional to have one rodeo performance limited to Morrow County residents and alumni.

In keeping with the 1990s, the rodeo committee headed by Jerry Gentry brought the rodeo arena up to speed for a PRCA show. A professional size arena was built and volunteers spent hours excavating clay dirt and replacing it with sandy loam. New lighting for both the rodeo arena and the football field grass area came from community efforts. Rodeo sponsors have enriched purse offering to attract PRCA contestants. And this year, new elevated permanent bleachers provide comfortable seating. So the years roll by. And as Jasper Crawford, editor of the Heppner paper in the first rodeo years wrote, "So we see the sun-tanned cowpoke atop the rearin' mustang as one of the outstanding examples of true Americanism." Rodeo, like Olympic athletic events, is a part of this country's heritage.

Enter fair flowers, Monday, Aug. 11

Are your flowers asking to be taken to the fair this year? The day to enter all flowers, plants and arrangements this year is Monday, August 11. The times will be from 1-8 p.m.

This change is being made because all judging will be done on Tuesday when the fair is closed to the public. Please took in your premium book for the various flowers and arrangements you may enter. There should be one just for you. Rene Ledbetter, flower superintendent, and her helpers are looking forward to a beautiful variety of flowers to display for the fairgoers this year.

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