

And who are these "guys" anyway?

These two Heppner leprechauns on the 2002 button would be the St. Patrick's Celebration chairpersons, having a great time in disguise. The two have shared the challenge for the past seven years and both wanted to see the 20th celebration through before turning over the shenanigans to other willing and able bodies.

Cara Osmin, once mayor of Heppner and now a Heppner Elementary School teacher, has always had volunteerism in her blood. Her husband Frank cheerfully contributes to a number of volunteer tasks on St. Paddy's weekend.

Osmin first became involved in the celebration when she worked on the auction, which funds the entire event. Eventually, she was persuaded into co-chairing the celebration. Osmin has designed the Wee Bit O'Ireland brochure and prepared it for press for the past three years, and this year is chairing the KUMA Coffee Hour. It may seem like there is more than one of her as she moves from one event to another, singing, cooking, helping with the Cruz-In, and using her calming powers on the "detail leprechaun"!

Claudia Hughes became a

part of the St. Pat's Committee when the Hughes family was honored in 1987 and continued on through the years, becoming chair in 1989. When calving arrives on Little Buttercreek, where she has spent the past 37 years of her life, her husband Merlin knows he's going to see a lot less of her because she's thinking "green" before the bunchgrass of these Morrow County hills ever start to turn. "And I'm not even Irish," she confesses.

Hughes organizes the Ceili, oversees publicity, checks with all chairpersons, arranges for entertainment throughout the weekend, orders porta-potties, supervises booth set-up, goes over the brochure, answers endless phone calls, tries to think of all glitches before they happen and prays a lot, especially for sunshine on the annual weekend closest to March 17!

Hughes recalls when Jim Farley, instigator of the event, used to go business to business and Irishman to Irishman to collect funds for the celebration each year. He would contact KUMA, call a meeting of merchants, let the volunteers know who the Irish families were and the planning would begin. In later years Farley would drop by

the Heppner Chamber Office, where Hughes is executive director, to see how things were going, give Hughes the selected family names, reminisce, and share some new ideas. "We sure miss Jim Farley," said Hughes. He was an Irishman that had this approach to life: "Other people see things and say why? . . . but I dream things that never were and say why not?" —George Bernard Shaw.

The flags, they are a flyin'

By Claudia Hughes

Visitors inquire about the flags waving in the breeze along the great green parade route. Some years back, the St. Patrick's Committee decided to give the original Irish families the opportunity to purchase an Irish flag with their family name and county from whence they came. Gwen Healy volunteered to sew the flags and a group of volunteer painters did the artwork. Healy also made the windsocks and the large Irish flags. Each year, volunteers hang the flags the first of March. They are seldom in the same spot, so it's a game to see which family member can spot their flag first. Do you know where yours is flying?

Sheep dog trials feature top handlers

For the 20th straight year, sheep dog handlers from throughout the Northwest will compete on March 16-17 at the annual St. Patrick's Day Sheep Dog Trial, three miles north of Heppner on Highway 74.

One of the handlers entered in the event is Scott Glen of Buffalo, Alberta, who has won nearly every major championship in North America and who finished second in the 2001 national championship trial held last September in Klamath Falls.

Also entered is Patrick Shannahan of Caldwell, Idaho, who won the national championship in 1994. Both Glen and Shannahan have judged at Heppner previously.

Other top handlers from Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California, many of whom qualified for and competed in the 2001 nationals will be testing their skills at the St. Patrick's Day trial.

This is the ninth year that the trial will be held in a 30-acre alfalfa field at the Thompson family ranch near Heppner. Previous to that it was held in the old rodeo arena at the Morrow County Fairgrounds.

The sheep, perennially provided by Skye Krebs of Ione,

consist of yearling Rambouillet ewes straight off winter range. Competitors always expect Krebs' sheep to be wily, and they seldom disappoint (the sheep, that is).

Judging the approximately 60 handler-sheep dog teams will be Shawn Wells of Pincher Creek, Alberta. Wells has successfully trained border collies and horses for a number of years. He has been reserve champion at the Calgary Stampede Sheep Dog Trial at least twice and has won many open-class trials throughout Canada. This will be his first visit to Heppner.

The trial will begin at 7 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday and will continue until 5:30 p.m. Spectators are welcome and are advised to dress warmly.

The trial is sanctioned by the Oregon Sheep Dog Society and the U.S. Border Collie Handlers Association, meaning handlers can earn points toward qualifying to compete in the North American championship.

For further information, contact Mary Hamilton at (509) 522-2360; or e-mail Hamilton@wwics.com.

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12:00 - 2:00 Machines displayed in the St. Patrick's Day Parade
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