

Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Grand Marshal, Joe Yocom is a familiar face



Joe Yocom

This year's Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Grand Marshal, Joe Yocom, is a familiar face around Eastern Oregon. With Sugar and Spice, his two powerful Belgians, pulling his wagon, Joe has hauled court royalty, Umatilla Indian Reser-

vation elders, city politicians, grand marshals and many other personalities, as part of special events all over Eastern Oregon.

Joe moved to Morrow County in 1939, where he was raised for a short time by his grandparents. He later moved back to Sherman County and was raised on a cattle ranch. He graduated from Wasco High School. After graduation he continued his education at Oregon Technical Institute in Klamath Falls. While there, he met Hilda Stanley. "She was my best friend," Joe remembers. In February of 1953 Joe was drafted into the army. He married Hilda in November of

that same year. Joe was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne, based in North Carolina. After his discharge from the military, he returned to Eastern Oregon where he and Hilda raised four children. Debbie, Millie, Jack and Marie were all active in Wranglers, 4-H and high school and college rodeo. They even did their paper routes on horseback. All four still reside in Eastern Oregon.

Joe and Hilda both worked very hard for their family. They accomplished, and experienced, many wonderful things over the years. Joe worked for Morrow County Grain Growers for 33 years before retiring

in 1998.

Joe's involvement with the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo began around 1960. He enjoyed participating in cow riding, pony express races, relay races, wild horse races and chariot races. "My son Jack has my fancy buckle, but I still wear the one I won for cow riding in 1970," Joe grinned. As time went on, Joe went from competing to volunteering. He served three terms (nine years) on the rodeo board. He took part in everything from grounds keeping to being race director and chairman. He was also on the fair board for three years and had a part in install-

ing the new pipeline and in the development of the Wilkinson Arena. Joe feels that the rodeo is vital to our community and is an excellent attraction. "I take my hat off to the fair and rodeo boards," Joe commented.

Joe loves pushing the limits and can't say "no" to anyone or anything. In 1993, Jerry Schubert (wagon master), asked Joe to participate in the 1,000 mile sesquicentennial wagon train, which began in Wyoming and ended in Oregon. Joe, his children and his friends refurbished an 1864 John Deere wagon. Sugar and Spice made the trip with him. Joe is proud of these accomplishments and enjoyed the "Welcome Home" signs greeting him in Cecil. Joe, Sugar and Spice have traveled more than 7,000 miles together.

Time has taken its toll on Joe - he lost Hilda in 1992 - but, with the love and support of family and friends, he continued to do the things he loves. You can still see him every year at events such as the "Festival of Lights" in Hermiston. He is involved in the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon wagon train, which is celebrating its 27th anniversary this year. He is on the wagon train committee and has been wagon master eight times. He also participates in the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon festivities every year.

Joe met Dwyla Reynolds about seven years ago and was hooked on her after their first wagon ride together. "The harness broke off the horses and the wagon jackknifed. I told her to jump for it! That didn't bother her much, so I knew I liked this gal!" remembered Joe.

Joe can't imagine a better place than Morrow County to live and be a part of. He and Dwyla raise paint horses here. He delights in his nine grandchildren and his new great-grandchild. Sugar and Spice are still a familiar fixture in the pasture. Joe is proud to have been selected to be Morrow County Fair and Rodeo's Grand Marshal for 2008.



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