

John Ledbetter – 2009 Morrow County Fair and Rodeo Grand Marshal

If you have ever brought a horse trailer or camper to park at the Morrow County Fair and Rodeo grounds during fair and rodeo week, it is possible that this year's grand marshal, John Ledbetter, parked your rig for you. "Cowboys can rope and ride, but they can't park," laughed John.



Born in Heppner, John lived all over Morrow County during his youth. He lived west of Ione for seven-eight years, starting first grade in Ione. He then moved to Boardman for two years before moving back to Ione for five more years. He later moved to Lexington for 1 ½ years before moving to Blackhorse Canyon in 1940, during which time he attended Heppner School.

John joined the Navy in 1944 and served for two years in Alaska. After his return, he worked on a road crew for a year. He then farmed for two years with his father on the Duvall Ranch on Blackhorse Canyon.

He married Lorene Van Winkle in 1948 and moved to Lexington to farm with his father-in-law for 13 years. John and Lorene later divorced.

In 1964 he moved back to the Duvall Ranch. In 1973 he began leasing the ranch from the Duvall family, before purchasing the ranch in 1977. It was on this ranch that he taught his grandsons to drive a truck and combine the farm.

He married Irene "Rene" Toll in 1976 and, although the couple has moved to Heppner, still own the ranch and are leasing it out. "I was born in Heppner and came back to Heppner," said John. The couple has been living in Heppner for the last 20 years. John is currently recovering from cancer. "I didn't lose my hair," grinned John.

John has one daughter and granddaughter in Texas, one daughter in Portland, two grandsons and a great-grandson in Vancouver, WA, a stepdaughter in Pendleton, a stepdaughter in Idaho, and one stepson in Prineville. He also has a daughter who died in 2000.

In the past, John has helped park the trailers and trucks for cowboys participating in the rodeo. He did get into a little trouble one year when there was not enough parking and he parked some campers and trailers in the school yard. "I got in trouble for that one," laughed John. "The school didn't like the manure in the yard." He has also loaned his tractor to be used for care of the grounds and has put out watering troughs for the horses.

At one time, John had a red horse named Troy, who was later renamed. "The kids called him Ketchup because he never would catch up," said

John. He loaned Ketchup to fair and rodeo princesses who didn't have a horse to ride. "He pranced for three years in parades with the girls," said John. Ketchup also rode in the Rose Festival in Portland with one of the princesses.

John hasn't been able to attend the fair and rodeo for the last few years because of his health. He hasn't been on a horse since Ketchup died about 10 years ago and, but says he just might get back on one for the parade.

This year we're beatin' the heat and moving the Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo to night!



Friday August 7th
Saturday August 8th
Starting at 7 p.m.

Mutton Bustin' will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Live Band!

Joe Shinkle and his band, 99 West, will be performing on Saturday night following the rodeo at the beer garden

Slack will begin at 7 p.m on Thursday night



Morrow County Rodeo Sunday, August 9th @ 1:00pm

VIP tickets are \$12 per day in advance and \$15 at the gate. A box for all three performances is \$360.

To purchase advance tickets call Camille Peck at 989-8351.



Fair volunteers needed

The fair always needs volunteers to help the superintendent's in each department. If you would like to volunteer your time you can call the superintendent or contact the Fair Office for information.