

July 5, 6, & 8, 2022

# The LEGEND of RAWHIDE

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RAWHIDE

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Platte County Record-Times & The Business Farmer



WYOMING NEWSPAPERS INC.

Members of the Legend of Rawhide Board are Teresa Tucker (Back row L-R) Danny Matney, Chantry Filener, JV Boldon, Jerrad Blaire, Jim Pontarolo, Dean Nelson and Shaylee Love. Front Row (L-R): John Sampers, Ron Nelson, Ben Hansen, Jerit DeGering, Kyle Gruwell, Hunter Dockery and Twila Barnette.

## Legend of Rawhide awards annual scholarships

**LUSK** – This year the Legend of Rawhide awarded nine scholarships. Each scholarship winner has been involved with the Legend.

This year's recipients are: Abby

Kottwitz, Marina Sherwood, Bryn Bruch, Renae Marker, Courtney Rowley, Cali Klein, James Cushman, Riley Shaw and DeAnna West.

### Enjoy the

# LEGEND OF RAWHIDE!

Play a round of Golf at the  
Lusk Golf Course!  
Take a swim at the Lusk  
Tiger Plunge!

THE TOWN OF LUSK

## True Value is found in their support of community, not just their hardware deals

Herren family this year's Legend of Rawhide honorees

BY HEATHER GODDARD  
hgoddard@luskherald.com

**LUSK** – Herren Brothers True Value in Harrison and Crawford have always been there to support the Lusk community and Niobrara County residents. Whether it is parts for a septic system, lumber for a ranch project or donations to support community-based projects the Herren family has always come through.

For their important role and support of the community for over 70 years, this year's honored family for the Legend of Rawhide is the Herren family, John and Terry Herren and their children and extended family.

Herren's has been a long-time supporter and donor to the Legend of Rawhide. The production has been supported by supplies from their hardware store for as long as most participants can remember.

When interviewed, John Herren stated, "I am so honored that they even considered us. We have always supported the Legend and been willing to donate. For me, that is one of the ways I can support my community and your community. I'm not a cowboy and

can't be on a horse."


While Herren might not be a cowboy countless farms, ranches, and community members have relied on Herrens for their outstanding customer service and commitment to providing products to the Niobrara and Sioux county communities. Having access to a store like Herren's without having to drive all the way to Casper or Rapid City, as well as the competitive pricing, hometown customer service and personal investment makes a big difference for small towns like Lusk, Harrison and Crawford.

The family business truly is family-run. John and Dick have worked side-by-side for decades and children and grandchildren have grown up in and worked at the stores.

Herren was, "Privileged, honored and dumfounded" when he found out they would be honored by this year's pageant. He says, "Lusk is a great supporter of our business and they have been very good to Herren Brothers. I feel like I should be saluting the community for all their help and support of our business."

Thank you to this year's honored family, the Herrens.

Enjoy the Legend  
of Rawhide

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# “Legend of Rawhide” pageant born in 1946

Originally printed in the Lusk Herald August 17, 1961

Doc Reckling walked through the browning prairie grass, snapping his galluses. His eyes, look-araing above his half-moon specs followed the humped form of a pine-darkened hill. The germ of an idea sprouted in his head. That was in 1941. For twenty years the Pageant of the Rawhide Buttes has grown in length, polish and importance. This year the 16th and 17th presentations will be given as the main feature of Niobrara County Fair, and the celebration of Lusk’s 75th anniversary.

To go back twenty years: The start is not easy. Doc Reckling wanted a civic celebration for his community, unlike one ever staged before. He also wanted to help raise the price of a much-needed community build-

ing in Lusk. He started talking and using his medical influence. Many were the versions of how the Rawhide Buttes got their name. All roads into Wyoming lead upward. Travelers and freighters uncurled their long rawhide whips and tickled the backs of the oxen to hurry them on the westward climb. They called this “rawhid-ing it.”

But there was another, more dramatic version - that of an Indian hater who shot an Indian squaw. When the enraged Indians swooped down on the wagon train and demanded the killer, this man finally gave himself up to save his sweetheart and fellow-travelers. He was skinned alive - rawhided - by the Indians. This version had been known to George Earl Peet all his life.

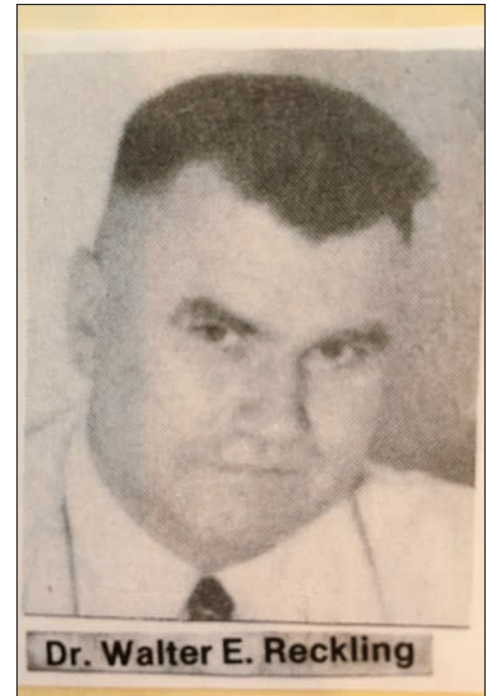
But the war came and all was laid

aside until after VJ Day in 1945. T. A. Godfrey, president of the Fair Board, wanted a good program to start off the first fair in this new age. He remembered the pageant idea.

Eva Lou Bonsell (now Mrs. Paris) needed a historical plot around which she could weave a play as part of her master’s degree thesis. She was a talented graduate of Lusk High School and Colorado Woman’s College, and was working toward her master’s degree in drama at Denver University, and “The Legend of Rawhide” was just what she was looking for. Mr. Peet told her all he knew and she did many hours of research to augment the story.

Once written, the pageant had to be brought to life over the doubts of

see *BORN* page 5



## The Logistics of Legend

BY HEATHER  
GODDARD

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luskherald.com

Over a dozen trees and shrubs, four full-size pine poled teepees, one waterfall, half a dozen fish and that is just what the audience sees. That is the list that it takes to begin setting the stage for the Legend of Rawhide. The process of creating the set, setting the sound and bringing the Legend to life takes a lot of helping hands and heavy

equipment.

The set up/clean up crew will get started two weeks before the actual performance. They will meet at the arena on a Friday and begin the process of tearing down any corals and chutes that are not necessary or will be in the way. They must clear enough space on the sides for the full-size waterfall, timber, teepees and leave enough corrals to house the teams and a few of the Indian Brave’s horses

and of course, the milk cow.

As with many aspects of Legend, this process involves team work and the support of many local groups. Niobrara Electric Association, the Town of Lusk and Niobrara County all provide assistance with the process, which involves skid steers, bucket trucks, loaders, flat bed trailers and chain saws. Different parties donate trees every year. In 2019 the large pine trees that are “planted” for

the pageant will come off of the Barnette’s ranch southeast of Lusk. They will come from the Rawhide Buttes themselves.

In addition to planting full-size trees and shrubs a complicated working waterfall is assembled over a skeleton of scaffolding and tarps. It involves trees, boulders, rocks and of course, water and a water pump. At the base is where the kid’s fishing scene and waterfall scene will take place.

Following the legend, crews will take only two days to remove the entire set and then reset the arena so that the next event can take place.

This is what is visible. What can’t be seen is the sound checks and process of making sure the vocal actors and music can be heard but isn’t too loud. It will involve a sound engineer in the crows nest controlling the output for various points during the show. Additionally, a spot

light is used a points during the show and this must be checked.

Like any theatre production the Legend of Rawhide takes

months of planning and preparation. By the time the second performance is over board members will already be thinking about what went

right, what went wrong, and what they can tweak for next year’s production. Each show is 50-plus years of process and 12 months of planning.

An advertisement for Niobrara Electric Association, Inc. The top half features a photograph of a woman and a child, with the text "HAVE A GREAT LEGEND OF RAWHIDE VISIT!" in large, bold, orange and red letters. Below the photo, it says "Proud supporter of the Legend of Rawhide Pageant!". At the bottom, the company name "Niobrara Electric Association, Inc." is written in a serif font, with the slogan "OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE" underneath. The phone number "Lusk, WY 307-334-3221" is prominently displayed at the bottom right. There are small logos for "Touchstone Energy" on either side of the slogan.

# Have a great time at the Legend of Rawhide!

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participate in  
large gatherings  
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Niobrara County's vaccination rate is  
30.27% as of 5/17/22.



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# Born:

## FROM PAGE A3

many. Committees were named and meetings held night after night. Carl Bruch made a Conestoga wagon and a yoke for oxen. Ralph Larson spent many days training long-horned steers to pull the wagon. Forrest Van Tassell was chosen for the Indian-hating murderer. Doc Reckling made a plaster cast of Van Tassell's body, and painted it red. Elizabeth and Pauline Bruch sewed on the skin that was to be ripped off on the fatal night.

Ranchers with teams fashioned seventeen more covered wagons; their wives sewed old-fashioned dresses and sun bonnets. Bill Watt was the narrator; Bill Magoon was the boss of the wagon train that came winding down over the hill at sundown. Eleanor Witzemberger was the heroine, the girl Clyde Pickett (Forrest Van Tassell) loved. E. R. Whitman was the Indian scout. Jasper Seaman was an Indian brave; George Earl Peet,

the Indian chief. (See History article Peet Indian Head Dress). Mrs. Bunny Chard was the Indian maiden that got shot.

Many were the practices directed by Miss Bonsell, aided by Homer Paris, her fiancé and technical adviser.

Meanwhile, Doc Reckling was busy writing a souvenir booklet and a program of the pageant. It contained the histories and pictures of ranchers and farmers willing to contribute to the project; 2,000 copies of this booklet, printed by The Lusk Herald, were sold. Proceeds were given for the erection of the auditorium on the Fair Grounds, the booklet making his much-needed building possible.

Came the fair and the night for the first showing. Grandstand and bleachers were filled with spectators. Even the weather had its inning. Lightning flashed over the blue-black hills to the south. Rain poured on the encamped wagon train. But the Indi-

an maiden was shot. Naked Indians riding bareback attacked and burned a wagon. The guilty man surrendered and was skinned alive. The wagons escaped.

In 1947 another scene was added to the pageant; an Indian village with squaws and children busy setting up tipis and tanning hides. Hazel Seaman was the Indian girl shot while wandering through the pine trees that grew overnight on the Lusk Fair Grounds. Mr. and Mrs. William Watt were directors. Mr. Watt was again narrator. The entire cast with all horses, wagons and equipment moved to Douglas and camped under the cottonwood trees along the Platte River. The pageant was enacted one evening on the State Fair Grounds before a record crowd. Red Fenwick called it "hair raising realism" in his column in the Denver Post. That fall the Carl Bruch and Ralph Larson families took their covered wagon and oxen to Billings, Montana, to appear in a

parade.

In August, 1948, the pageant was again shown at Lusk. In July, 1949, it was put on for the State American Legion convention in Lusk. Other showings were in Lusk in 1950, and in Crawford, Neb., in 1951. Merritt Wallace of Harrison, Nebraska, was president of the Pageant Corporation at this time. George Clarke of Harrison narrated; Mrs. Ford Porter directed.

In 1952 George Clark again narrated at a Lusk showing. Bill Magoon played the part of Jim Farley; Donna Paisley was Kate, the sweetheart of Clyde Pickett, played by Charles Blagg. Shirley Seaman was the Indian maiden. C. E. (Blondie) Marvin narrated for the 1953 Pageant presentation.

Enthusiasm died down. It was hard to get men and boys to ride bareback as Indians. Teams to pull the covered wagons also became scarce. Rural

see **BORN** page 7

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# THE LEGEND OF RAWHIDE

## The Annual Celebration of the History, Legend and Western Heritage of Niobrara County

Thursday, July 7th, 2022  
Main Character rehearsal 5:30 pm  
Dress Rehearsal 7:00 pm

**Friday, July 8, 2022**

Pre-Show 7:00pm      Flag Ceremony at 8:15pm      Legend Performance at 8:30pm  
Concert - Opening for Jon Wolfe, Southern Fried at 9:30. Jon Wolfe to follow.  
No Animals allowed on the grounds, other than those used in the performance.

**Saturday, July 9, 2022**

-Volleyball Tournament 8:00 am - Closest to the pin in the arena 9:00-11:00 am - Pitch Tournament 9:30 am registration  
-Corn Hole Tournament: Register at 10, play at 10:30am - Ranch Feed/Team Driving Contest 1:30-4:00pm  
(The above events will be held at the fairgrounds)  
PARADE: 4:00 pm line up at the east side of the fairgrounds.  
Parade will go by the Niobrara Community Hospital at 4:30 pm, then proceed down Main Street.  
-Pre-show at 7:00 pm - Flag Ceremony at 8:15 pm - Legend Performance at 8:30 pm  
- Dance immediately following the show by Southern Fried - Auction and Gun/Money Drawing at 11:00 pm

For more information and/or Tickets  
1-307-334-4104

or visit the website at  
[www.legendofrawhide.com](http://www.legendofrawhide.com).  
Join us in Lusk, Wyoming  
for a western heritage  
experience!

**1946~2022**

# Born:

## FROM PAGE 5

people were busy with harvest at Pageant time. It was not presented in 1954.

Then George Gibson, with his community spirit and enthusiasm, aided by Dr. Richard Collins and many other Lusk people, decided to revive the Pageant and add color to its presentation. Doc Reckling was still an enthusiastic booster, but too busy with his medical practice to give the needed time.

The Seventh Cavalry was added. George Gibson made a purchase of blue trousers. The yellow stripes were sewed on in Lusk. After the mounted troopers became popular, more trousers were needed. So George made another buy; dyed the second batch of trousers to match the first; and more yellow stripes were sewed on.

With much work, Oscar Bostrom and many helpers constructed the water falls and stream near the grandstand. Indian and white children in turn fished in the flowing water. Indian squaws skinned an antelope and dried the meat. Coyotes roamed on the hill. When the wagon

train camped for the night, mothers put their children to bed with prayer; lovers strolled by the falling water; and angry wives dampened their husbands' love of chance. Tape-recorded, these scenes were played from the narrator's booth, while the action took place below. Ralph Olinger was director. William Watt again narrated in his Western drawl as sixteen wagons rolled down the hill. Velma Linford, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and an historical author, was an out-of-town guest among the 3,000 spectators at the 1955 presentation.

Rex Yocum directed the Pageant in 1956. A yoke of spotted steers was donated by the U. S. government and received at Fort Niobrara, Valentine, Nebraska. Vern Torrance trained the steers and drove them in the Frontier Days parade at Cheyenne to attract spectators to the Pageant showing. The Seventh Cavalry also appeared at Frontier Days. At the showing in Lusk, Father DeSmet, play by Coye Jennewein, appeared for the first time in a scene with the trappers, Don C. Taylor and Thomas J. Fagan. Mrs. Pete Briscoe was in charge of the Indian village scene.

Willadell Story play the part of the Indian maiden who was shot by Clyde Pickett, and Jim Thompson was the Indian hater who got skinned alive. Dick Pfister was captain of the Cavalry. Pete Briscoe rode on the hill as Indian scout. A check showed that cars from 20 States, the District of Columbia and Ontario, Canada, were parked at the Fair Grounds. Large delegations came from Goshen, Platte and Converse counties.

Wooden nickels were used for advertising the Pageant in 1957. Godfrey Broken Rope, an Indian artist, with Indians from Pine Ridge Reservation, gave nightly dances on the street preceding the Pageant. Salt and Pepper, the oxen, were trained by Aaron Eisenbarth. Jan Thompson was Kate, sweetheart of her father, Jim Thompson, Clyde Pickett. Governor and Mrs. Milward Simpson, William "Scotty" Jack and Mrs. Jack, Miss Lola Homsher and Miss Retaa W. Ridings from the Wyoming Historical Society were among the viewers.

In 1958 the Pageant of the Rawhide gained national recognition. Governor Simpson, an enthusiastic booster, hired William Bragg, Jr., to write national publicity advertising it. Carl

Iwasaki, a photographer, and Bayard Hooper, a writer, from Life Magazine, were present for the afternoon presentation on July 20th. The story of the Pageant and a picture of Jim Thompson being shinned alive appeared in the April 13, 1959, issue of Life Magazine. Look Magazine also featured the Pageant in an article "How the West Was Won." The Pageant was also given a second time in 1958 on a Sunday evening.

George Gibson pulled his famous "rifle hoax" for publicity purposes in 1959. The cache of old army rifles was "discovered" by George on a tip from Chief Broken Rope, buried in rotting wooden boxes. In reality George bought the old 11 mm Mauser rifles in California, and faked the well-planned discovery of them. They were wrapped in army blankets that George had dyed blue and soaked in acid, so they would appear well rotted. Claude Redding played the part of Indian Chief. Dale Fulerton was captain of the Seventh Cavalry. Jack Magoon was director. Governor J. J. Hickey and Velma Linford were present.

The 1960 Pageant was dedicated to George Gibson and narrated by Dr. Richard Collins.



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