

## **May 29-31, 1992 Pioneer Queen and Grand Marshal**

### **Queen Effie Ritchey**

Effie Ritchey, 93, was born Effie Torgerson near Mitchell, S.D., on October 26, 1898. She moved with her family to Milton in 1900. It was in this area that she grew up and attended school.

She graduated from high school at what was then Central School before McLoughlin Union High School was established.

Effie married Frank Ritchey in 1921 and they lived in Portland for about a year before moving back to Milton to the farm where she still lives. Frank and Effie had two daughters, Roberta Davis and Marie McQueeney. Frank is now deceased. Effie also has two grandchildren, two sisters (Stella Baker and Ida Kenoyer) and two brothers (Oscar Torgerson and Wilbur Torgerson).

Ritchey became a member of the Umatilla County Historical Society “when Mrs. DuPuis was president,” she said. Ritchey is now an honorary board member and cherishes that membership, being a woman deeply interested in history and historical events. She helped gather material for the book, “Umatilla County: A Backward Glance.”

Ritchey is also a charter member of the Milton-Freewater Area Historical Society and was on the original board that helped establish the Frazier Farmstead Museum in Milton-Freewater.

One of Ritchey’s most vivid childhood memory is the day when Ezra Meeker, an early pioneer famous for retracing the Oregon Trail, came to Central School in Milton during one of his trips to travel the trail in 1910. Ritchey shares the story of that day with young school children in the Milton-Freewater area frequently.

During that day, according to Ritchey, the school children gathered on what is now Elizabeth Street and watched Meeker mark the site of the section of the Oregon Trail which went through Milton-Freewater. The children then carried stones to mark the site.

Fourth grade students at Freewater School, after hearing Ritchey tell that story, began a project to mark that spot and erect a “tourist travel” marker along Highway 11 recognizing the Oregon Trail’s route through Milton-Freewater. The project culminated in 1990 with the dedication of the sign on the Milton-Freewater City Hall lawn and the stone marker in front of Mike Garton’s optometry office.

Ritchey is an active member of the Frist Christian Church in Milton-Freewater. She was, in 1916, on the Christian Endeavor State Board – the youngest member, at 18, of the board in the United States. She worked many years with young people in her church and has held many offices and received many awards. She continues her church work to this day.

Ritchey was named Milton-Freewater’s Woman of the year in 1956 for her work in the community. She also decorates for a great number of weddings and has shown the young brides the proper procedure for each wedding. She uses her own sterling flower bowls and candelabra from the refreshment table and when the bride is not able to afford fresh flowers, Ritchey arranges some of her own artificial flowers for the reception.

## **Grand Marshal Wendell Tucker**

Wendell Tucker's roots run very deep in the Weston area.

Tucker, 73, was born July 23, 1919, to Eaph and Juanita Bonewitz Tucker in the house on Weston Mountain where he currently resides. His grandfather, John Byron Tucker, homesteaded near Little Dry Creek in 1882.

Wendell's parents moved from the homestead to where the present farm is located, near the original homestead, in 1916. That location has been the family home since that time.

His maternal grandfather, John Bonewitz, moved to Weston in 1903, and finding there seven Brethren with no house of worship, built the local church which is the same one in use today. He pastored this church until 1929 when Wendell's father pastored the church until 1949. Wendell is a life-long member of the Church of the Brethren and has been the moderator for over 40 years.

Tucker attends school in Weston, graduating from high school in 1938. He attended Oregon State College for one year then, deciding he wanted to be a farmer, left college to return to his roots and started farming with his father. They farmed together until his father's death and he continues to operate the farm with part-time help from his son, Sam Tucker, and attorney in Milton-Freewater.

He also has been active in civic affairs, serving nearly 30 years on the school board, as past chairman of the Weston Potato Show, past chairman of the Board of the Eastern Oregon Electric Co-Op (REA) which brought electricity to rural areas in 1949 and past president of the Weston Chamber of Commerce. Tucker was named Weston's Citizen of the Year in 1971.

As an inventor of sorts, he has devised several pieces of farm equipment out of spare parts found around the farm as the needs arose.

Tucker married his high school sweetheart, Eudine Warner, in 1940. They moved to their present home in 1941 when his parents moved to town. They have three children including daughters Bonnie Sloan and Beckie Bronson, both of California, and their son Sam who lives in Weston. They also have seven grandchildren. Wendell has one sister, Lovena Erickson, who lives in Idaho. Another sister, Lois Suter, is deceased.

Tucker plans to ride in the Pioneer Parade in the same saddle his grandfather, John B. Tucker, rode when the family came west to Oregon.