

## History of the Festival-Fair – A community Success Story

By

Don Fortune, later updates added by Ray Vining

Cal Coolidge was president – Roland Hartley governor in Olympia and C.A. (Charley) Miller was mayor of Grandview. The year was 1928. It saw the coming out of Henry Ford's sensational new Model "A" and of Grandview's very first Harvest Festival, which enjoyed the two day run on September 7 and 8. According to The History of Grandview, "This event included needlework, besides advertising booths and local midway attractions. A queen contest resulted in Miss Ester Bohlke being chosen Queen of the Festival. The best of the exhibits were sent to the Yakima State Fair and a number of premiums were won by them."

One founding feature of the fair was the "Team Pull" which event has continued under the direction of Howard Jackson through 1970<sup>i</sup> as a unique "crowd pleaser". Howard described that original event to me this way, "We obtained 4,000 pounds of sand for that first pull, and had to pinch hit by adding a number of 150 pound men when the teams continued past the two tons of sand. The contest was finally won by Frank Lyall at 5,500 to 6,000 pounds." Howard use a Rudy Vallee type megaphone to call the scores, but didn't croon any, as I remember. That first pull was held where John Sullivan's TV emporium<sup>ii</sup> now stands. Later they were held at any place in the business district wherever there was a vacant lot or two to provide space.

In early years, and up until 1948, canvas-covered booths were set solid down Division Street between Main and Second Streets. As the festival was held as late as the "Ides of September"<sup>iii</sup>, there was much more fruit and farm produce to display. Vacant buildings were pressed into service for various exhibits.

During the second festival Otto Ragsdale won the team pull, hauling 6,000 pounds. Miss Audry Blechschmidt was chosen queen of the event.

### Baby Clinic

The fourth fair in 1931 featured a baby clinic. No festival took place in 1934 due to a severe polio epidemic in the valley. The famous Bagpiper's Band from Vancouver, B.C., marched and skirled<sup>iv</sup> and wailed and flaunted their "mini-kilts" during the parade of 1939. Governor Clarence martin appeared at several of the celebrations, and Governor Arthur Langlie addressed the crowd in 1941.

The fair was again cancelled during 1943 and '44 due to other pressing business in WWII. But in 1945 a new feature was added by Byron Vance and Col. Evan Jenkins, who managed and auctioned a combined 4H and FFA Fat Stock Sale. Thirty-three head of steers, hogs and lambs were sold for a total of \$2640. The Grand Champion Steer was sold for 30 cents per pound and the sow for 31 cents both to Grandview packing Company.

Upon interviewing Bob Hamilton, who personally ran the last Harvest Festival up Division Street in 1947, and got rained out to boot, I learned how seriously the managers took their responsibilities. He said, "I set my water on every other row of corn at home and couldn't get loose to change it for a week. People told me that it would be ruined, but the ears got so big that the picker couldn't handle them" He further indicated to me that he had more corn of an acre and a half then he could get into two heaps, and that's pure corn!

The Senior Home Economics Building was added to the Ball Park-Fairgrounds in 1954, and in '55 a 125 head capacity cattle building was constructed at the materials cost of \$5,000. Labor was donated. In 1956 Grandview's Golden Anniversary was celebrated at the fair.

The highlight of 1959 was the construction of the new Quonset Home Economics Building. More buildings were added in '64 and the barns were re-roofed by FFA boys starting in 1968. These boys also seeded the area around the barns in early 1971.

### Festival Moves

In 1948 stock sheds were built and a concrete floor was poured for a display building in Grandview's city owned park. The Harvest Festival left its "home" and a lot of fond memories down Division Street as it moved to its present location (Note that location is now the YVCC Grandview Campus) in that year. A "Golden" Packard was given away at the same event.

In 1950 a Truck Rodeo was held. It included backing and jockeying trucks and semis around a certain fixed course – sort of like pole bending- only with a six legged horse.

The revered Harvest Festival name was changed to the Yakima Valley Junior Fair in 1951 as more and more 4-H and FFA youth participated.

1954-55 The Quonset Hut for 4-H activities and the livestock sheds were built

1988 The fair outgrew itself in town and moved to Grandview Country Park on 812 Wallace Way.

I asked Kathy Mears her favorite memory of moving the fair. Without a second's hesitation " Working together. The evenings and weekends of volunteers coming to the fairgrounds and working all evening was wonderful. No bickering no fighting just the enjoyment of building for the future".

2001 The name was changed to Yakima Valley Fair and Rodeo

2001 -2003 The rodeo was part of the ProWest Rodeo circuit

2004 -2009 Joined the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association circuit

2007 Foundation for the Yakima Valley Fair and Rodeo began

2010 Returned to the ProWest Rodeo Circuit to involve more local participants.

2011 to 2017. The Fair Foundation with the help of donations and grants purchased the rodeo arena bleachers. Volunteers assembled the bleachers as they became available. The overall cost of the project was \$200,000. Funded through a Washington State grant, the J.M. Smucker Company and donations from the community through the work of the Fair Foundation.

The Yakima Valley Fair and Rodeo enjoys wide community support. The YVF&R Foundation has raised funds for the arena bleachers project and other improvements.

A major fund raising event for the fair is the annual Farm Equipment Auction held the third Saturday of March.

In 2020 the show building was erected; A few 4-H members wanted a second show arena to speed things up when it was hot so they wouldn't have to wait their turn in the heat. To show how much it was needed they donated their livestock returns toward cost of new building. After due consideration The board decided to raise enough money to build a large building to house and show large animals. The new building emphasizes safety for both kids and animals. With 12 year old kids showing 1200 pound steers there was too much room for error and accidents moving animals to show and sales arena. With the help of Senator Honeyford and Representative DuFault we received grant from the Department of Commerce for \$200,000. We raised over \$50,000 locally to go with that to get the initial 84 X 110 ft. building constructed. Now (2021) we are raising funds for all the amenities needed. This is an all steel structure with no inside posts. It is modular so can be added onto as needed

Purchase of adjoining property for future development.

- 1927 The First fair was canvas covered booths lined the streets of Grandview became known as the Grandview Harvest Festival.  
Newhouse Brothers showed Dairy animals. Calvin Coolidge was President. A founding feature of the Harvest Festival was  
The team pull organized by Howard Jackson. Frank Lyall was the first winner on the streets of Grandview with 4000 lbs. of sand being pulled by beautiful teams of horses.
- 1931 A baby clinic was featured, where men participated in diaper changing contest. Along with pie baking contest and food preparation demonstrations.
- 1934 Fair was canceled because of the polio epidemic.
- 1939 Governor Clarence Martin attended the celebration.
- 1941 Governor Arthur Langley joined in celebrating the Harvest Festival.
- 1943-1944 Fair was canceled because of World War II.
- 1945 First Livestock Auction took place with 33 head of steers, swine & lambs bringing in \$2640.00. Bryon Vance, Col. Evan Jenkins and the Grandview Pack were the main contributors
- 1946 Keith and Peggy Jones started a 4-H club named the Grandview Livestock 4-H. Bob Fay 1st year of showing.
- 1947 Ray Vining's 1st year attending the fair. Bob Hamilton was in charge of the Harvest Festival.
- 1948 The fair was built on what is now the Yakima Valley College property. Paul Creighton Sr. was Fair Manager. Keith, Gordon, Forest, Robert, Florence & Dale Jones were instrumental in the move, to the new site.
- 1950 A truck rodeo was added.
- 1951 Named was changed to Yakima Valley Junior Fair.
- 1952 Green Valley 4-H Livestock was started. Irving Newhouse & Simon Martinez leaders. The Waneta 4-H livestock was headed up by Don McArthur, Stitch & Stir 4-H. Leaders was Karma Richards Frank, Also the Grandview Electric club, headed by Irl Grove was organized and had a display at the fair.
- 1954 The Home Economics building built Quonset Hut, with Clarice Grove and Marijean Kluth in charge of Home Economics Division.
- 1955 The beef barn was added for the livestock all by volunteer labor.  
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- 1956 Peggy Jones started the Horse show at the Yakima Valley Junior Fair. Peggy's 4-H club was the Rope & Rein club. Two members that we remember were Judy Borchardt & Heidi Howard.  
Marie Combelic was Assistant Superintendent of horticulture bldg and Gladys Wolf was Superintendent. These ladies were followed by Don Olmstead and Willard Mears.  
Roger Grove exhibited from 1956-1967, Neil Combelic showed livestock as well as along with Dolores and Mike Martinez. Cathy Combelic showed swine. Cathy also went to Chicago for her knowledge of horticulture and was on the state judging team. She won a National Horticulture Scholarship.
- 1960 Barbara Mandrel country western singer, performed two nights to sold out crowds. Courtesy of Dr. Jim Long, President of the fair board.  
Teenage 4-H builders club was organized by Karma Richards Frank and Gordan & Laura Jones.

- 1970 The Wenatchee Youth Circus performed. The Columbia Drum and Bugle Corps performed. Joanne Partch 4-H leader led Outlook Pork Producers to numerous awards, during the fair. Joe and Linda Mehrer were sheep superintendents, Dale and Barbara Miller were livestock superintendents. Elmer and Henry Anderson, Orrin Dybdahl, Alex, John and Hubert Benjert, Ed Williams and Danny Jones were all involved.
- 1976-1979 Gail Boose was the Director of Open Classes Home Ec. Department, Karma Frank was chair of the Sewing Department
- 1981-1982 Colleen Russell was the sheep judge
- 1986 Howard Jackson retired from the Team Pull
- 1987-1990 Ray Vining President
- 1987 Ray Vining Leases the entire future site of the Country Park and National Guard armory, so that the option to build the fairground was not delayed. Jesse Placios, John Alba, and Cliff Vining laid the irrigation pipe for the new grounds. Cliff Vining and Ray removed the cyclone fencing from the old fairgrounds and with the help of volunteers erected it on the new site. Cliff Vining and Ray remove the corrals from the former Grandview Packing Company for use in building the new riding arena. According to Mayor Carl Stevens these 3x12 cedar planks had been used in constructing the original Yellowstone road through Grandview.
- 1988 Decision was made to move the fair to 20 acres on Wallace Way. The City of Grandview provide the infra structure improvements so that power and water was available to each building. Simplot Soil Builders donated funds to build the livestock office. Keith Jones donated the funds to build the Jones building in honor of his wife, Peggy. Bleyhl Farm Service donated numerous trophy's and awards through the years. The first fair on Grandview Country Park Grounds. Henry Charvet donated a crew to erect new cyclone fencing to finish enclosing the grounds. The "Beef Barn", the steel Butler building is the only building moved from the old to the new fairgrounds. The move was engineered by Wayne Sylling. Wayne and Ray Vining poured the footings and set the bolts to lower the building onto. The scales from the old grounds were moved and installed.
- 1989 Board Members called in every favor that was owed them to prepare the fairgrounds for the August fair. Henry and Hal Charvet, John Alba, Gary Christianson, Phil & Alice Grant, Ann & Don Bentley, Gaye and Peggy Brewer, Mike Carpenter, Sharon & Ben Fisher, Volunteered to get the grounds ready. Phil & Brenda Freepons black topped north of the livestock barns. **Get the list from the Jones Building**  
**Keith Jones, Rick & Sharon Anderson, Ray & Freda Smasne, Will and Ken Winters, Bob Andrews, Armando Fernandez, Emil & Victor Roberts were instrumental in raising the funds, then erecting the sheep barn. Check this!**

Each barn has a list of the construction volunteers

- 1990 As a Boy Scout Eagle Project, John Davidson designed and built the large animal wash rack. Kelly Coursey spearheaded the construction of the riding arena. Cliff Vining headed up the maintenance of the Lions Building. A Scout Service project was to lay sod in the amphitheater and plant trees on the grounds. The Pomona Grange donated all the trees for the grounds. Ray Vining furnished cages that he refurbished for the small animal building. The small animal building was funded by valley 4-H clubs.
- 1991-1992 Pat Stegeman took over as president.  
 1993-1994 Vernon Bos President  
 1995- Pat Stegeman President
- 2001 The Pro West Rodeo was added to the fair and name changed to Yakima Valley Fair and Rodeo. Ben and Sharon Fisher headed up this endeavor. The wild cow milking contest added to the rodeo in memory of Vernon Bos. Renovations to the swing building were completed.
- 2003-2010 Mike Bradshaw president of fair board.  
 2003? The Car show was added to the fair.  
 2007 The Yakima Valley Fair and Rodeo foundation was formed as a 501 3c. The founding members were Martina Martinez Charvet, Cathy Combelic Mears, Willard Mears, and Karma Richards Frank. Later joined by Carol Box, Gail Boose, Barb merz, Joanne Vining, Jake Van Pelt, Dustin Tobin, Jessica Hansen, Elizabeth Osborn. In 2014 Junior members were added Erik Van Dyke, Hannah Bos, Quinn Yates, Amariah Osborn and Amarisa Osborn. Mike Everett was instrumental in the administration of the 501 3c. The first foundation project was the purchase of American swath flags for the buildings.
- 2009 Pathway construction started with financial help from Pacific Steel, The City of Grandview and the YVFR Foundation.. The completed pathway went all the way to the rodeo arena in 2010.
- 2010 Foundation started the Decorated Animal contest as a means to advertise the fair. It was well received. The contest won the State Award from the Washington State Fair Association. New Scales for livestock were purchased and installed.
- 2011 Paul Greighton writes "Fairs Are Fun" and donates his earnings to the Foundation from the sale of his book. The Foundation started replacing bleachers for the rodeo arena. 2 sections in 2012, 3 sections courtesy of the Employees of J.M. Smucker Company. 2 sections completed in 2014
- 2011-2013 Becky Loyd was first Board President  
 2013 Yvonne Graham became fair board president.  
 2014 Grandview FFA made metal signs for livestock buildings. Mazy the Clown started entertaining the children  
 2015 Small Animal Barn was refurbished by Elizabeth Emery Osborn and volunteers.

- 2016 Mathew Humphries as an Eagle Scout Project build a display to honor Team Pull organizer Howard Jackson.  
Fair board purchased property north of the fairgrounds,, and covered the open ditch.  
Fireworks were added tot he Saturday night at the fair, after the rodeo. They were provided by Milt Brown.  
Exhibitors enjoyed an evening in the Mud after the fireworks.  
The fair had 543 exhibitors.
- 2017 Lucy Desserault was the FFA Round Robin Winner and recipient of the Vernon Bos Award.  
The Bleacher project was completed . Volunteers included: Ray Vining, Gary Rhode, Henry and Martina Charvet, Eddie McMahon, Joanne Vining, Carol Bos, Rose Tayon, Randy Tayon, Cliff Vining, Bob Fay, Ruben Carrera, Willard Mears, Grandview FFA students.  
Remodeled bathroom in the Horticulture building.
- 2020 The show building; A few 4-H members wanted a second show arena to speed things up when it was hot so they wouldn't have to wait their turn in the heat. To show how much it was needed they donated their livestock returns toward cost of new building. After due consideration The board decided to raise enough money to build a large building to house and show large animals. The new building emphasizes safety for both kids and animals. With 12 year old kids showing 1200 pound steers there was too much room for error and accidents moving animals to show and sales arena. With the help of Senator Honeyford and Representative DuFault we received grant from the Department of Commerce for \$200,000. We raised over \$50,000 locally to got with that to get the initial 84 X 110 ft. building constructed. Now (2021) we are raising funds for all the amenities needed. This is an all steel structure with no inside posts. It is modular so can be added onto as needed



1988

Decision was made to move fair to 20-acres on Wallace Way. Vernon Bos was president of the fair board at the time. Simplot Soil Builders donated funds to build the livestock office. Keith Jones donated money to honor his wife Peggy, for the building of the Jones Building. Also, Bleyhl Farm Service has donated numerous trophy's and awards through the years. The first fair on Wallace Way for the first time this year. Pat Stegeman took over as President.

1988

Pat called in every favor that was owed her to prepare the fair grounds for the August fair. Henry & Hal Charvet, John Alba, Gary Christianson, Phil & Alice Grant, Ann & Don Bentley, Gaye & Peggy Brewer, Mike Carpenter, Sharon & Ben Fisher, Keith & Peggy Jones, Rick & Sharon Anderson, Ray & Freda Smasne, Willard & Ken Winters, Bob Andrews, Armando Fernandez, Emile & Victor Robert, Chris & Robin, Vicki Robert, Christopher & Kelly Mears, Willard & Cathy Mears, and many more volunteered to get the grounds ready. Phil & Brenda Freepons black topped north of the livestock barns. All the barns from town were moved with volunteers. Each barn has a list of the construction volunteers.

1988

1989

- i Howard retired from the job in 1986
- ii North East Corner of Wine Country Hwy and Division
- iii Ides of September – about half way through the month
- iv Skirling – The shrill sound made by the chanter pipe of bagpipes.