

The Grand Marshal of the 2008 Crooked River Roundup is no stranger to a rodeo arena. Larry Koops has been a contestant, pickup man, and rodeo committeeman for close to 30 years, and in 2008 will represent the Roundup in a new position. As Grand Marshal, Larry will lead the Parade through downtown Prineville. This is the highest honor that can be bestowed by the Roundup, and one that is well deserved by Koops.

Koops was born in Colorado. The family moved to Prineville when he was very young, and except short time, Prineville has been his home. Larry served his country in the Vietnam War and while not all the memory's are pleasant, he was proud to serve and says he got to see a lot of the world he would have never seen without the military service.

The Koops family has always had roots in the rodeo arena. Koop's wife, Diane, is an accomplished barrel racer and horse trainer. His father is still participating in the team roping event at the age of 80, and his brothers have also been involved in roping.

After graduating from Crook County High School, Koops stayed true to his western ways, getting a job for Boston Ranch Company as a cowboy. After a couple of years, he took a job working for Pine Products skidding logs. Later he took his skills and worked for Silvey Logging. In the early 1980's he was hired as a contract worker by LS Ranch and began pushing juniper trees. His coworker, Jack McCullough once pointed out that between the two of them, they had changed the landscape of Post!

One time, Koops decided he could win the All Around Buckle at the Paulina Rodeo. He entered every event he could, tie down roping, team roping, bareback riding, saddle bronc riding, and bull riding. He had many fans cheering for him, and at the end of the weekend, he was sore, beat up and had a big gash on his head from the horn of the bull he was riding. He didn't win the buckle, but he had a smile on his face because he knew he had given it all he had. He had hurt so bad on Saturday night that most people would have turned everything out on Sunday, but not Koops. He was and still is Cowboy Tough!

In the late 1970's, Koops took up the trade of horseshoeing. His mentor, Art Smith, was excited to find someone of Koop's talent and soon decided he should teach him more bad habits. Soon Koops found himself in the rodeo arena helping pickup bucking horses at the Oregon State High School Finals Rodeo. Koops' talent showed quickly, and he found himself working with Ratry Rodeo Company as the pickup partner for Duane Johnson. They worked together for close to 20 years at High School and NPRA rodeos across the Northwest. If you go behind the chutes at a rodeo of any level, the work of Koops is still recognized as being one to the best in the business. It isn't hard to find someone who will profess to Koops risking himself to rescue a cowboy from a hang-up or a dragging. In this world where passing on a skill is not the norm, Koops did his part. Dave McMichael **was** a local that showed some interest in shoeing. Sure enough, Koops taught him the trade, and then brought him to the rodeo arena and he is now involved in rodeo as a pickup man. Passing it on is important today to keep rodeo alive!

Koops is good at many things, but he is a great horseman. If you watch the horse he rides as Grand Marshal, you will see one of the horses he used as a pickup man. They are strong and fast, and not pets. They have, like Koops, worked for a living in one of the toughest parts of rodeo. They too have risked themselves to save cowboys from injury. But like Koops, they have retired from the sport and are taking it a little easier now.

There are many good stories about the time that Koops was shoeing horses and picking up horses, some we wouldn't want to discuss in this forum. One of the favorites goes something like this:

Koops was having problems with new boxes of horseshoe nails rusting. At first he thought it was the rain, then maybe the dew. He checked with others in the business and they didn't have the same problem. One day, Koops looked to the back of his truck, and there was his dog Bob, hoisting a leg on his shoeing box. The rust issue had been solved, but it didn't bring a smile to Koop's face. Did you ever watch someone shoe a horse? Where do they hold the nails?

Koops has served as an outrider for the races since about 1980. He knows horses and can anticipate what they will do. One may credit the many years in the rodeo arena for this skill. One Saturday night in the late 1990's, Koops was riding his big palomino pickup horse when a race horse lost it's rider during a race and was coming around the track toward Koops and another outrider. Koops was asked if he could catch the horse, Koops said sure, and was dispatched to do the job. The palomino was quicker than thought, and soon, Koops looked up to see he was nearing the finish line. He caught the loose horse, and finished fourth in the race. If he hadn't pulled up he **would** have won!

When asked to serve as the Grand Marshal of this year's events, Koops held true to his upbringing and modestly said there were others that would be more worthy. Only with the urging of the Board would he accept. Hank Simmons, President of the Roundup said "Larry Koops is excellent example of the people who have given of themselves to build the Crooked River Roundup into the premier event it is today. Look around the fairgrounds and you will see example after example of facilities that have been designed with Larry's knowledge of the sport built in." Doug Smith, Director of Racing for the Roundup added "I always feel secure with Larry on the track as an outrider. There is not a situation that he couldn't handle in the proper way."

If the Crooked River Roundup is about Crook County's heritage of logging, cowboys, horses and cattle, there couldn't be a better choice for someone to represent the Crooked River Roundup as Grand Marshall of the 2008 event. Larry Koops combines a toughness that is legendary with a heart that is as big as the country he lives in. He has volunteered his time for every western event in the area and is always one that would do his part and then some.

The entire Board of Directors asks you to join them in congratulating Larry for all he has done for the Crooked River Roundup and the community he lives in.