

64 years of parade ridin' remembered

Written by Chris Lee

It's been a while since he has saddled up to ride down Interocean Avenue, but with the 2010 Fair parade just around the corner, this 92-year-old hopes he will get the chance to watch the parade.

Melvin Moon rode an estimated 12 different horses in 64 Phillips County Fair parades.

"We just lined up and went on through," Moon said. He guessed there was an average of 12 riders each year.

He is unsure of when he began and finished riding in the parade but his sister Velma Garretson said he broke his leg when he was 80 and believes that was his last ride. If that is true, Moon began riding in the parade in 1934 when he was 16 years old.

Moon was born on the family farm 13 miles southeast of Holyoke in 1918 and horses have always been a part of his life. He said he remembers riding upwards of 1,000 acres a day watching after his cattle. His family raised corn, cane and hay for their animals, along with raising cattle.

He wasn't a big rodeo guy but Moon had his fair share of horse experience. He said he broke many horses while out on the farm.

There isn't a memorable moment that stands out in his mind over the 64 years, he just knows he loved to ride in the parade and was eager to get on the horse each year for the fair.

Amy Einspahr said she remembers one year when Moon's pickup was unable to make it to town to haul his horse so he just hopped on and rode the 13 miles into Holyoke for the fair parade. Moon can't recall the incident but said it's possible it happened.

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Moon moved into Regent Park last year after having lived in the same house 13 miles southeast of Holyoke where he was born 92 years ago. He said he will do his best to watch the parade this year.

“Yes, I sure do,” Moon said when asked if he missed saddling up for a fair parade ride.