

Johnsons honored as parade grand marshals

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Brady Days starts Friday

Five generations of the Johnson family have lived in, worked in and built, literally, the community of Brady with a sixth generation well on its way to continuing the tradition.

“It’s kind of surprising that so many of the kids have come back here,” said Annette Johnson, matriarch of the family which will serve collectively as grand marshals of the Brady Days parade on Saturday.

The Lions Club selected the Johnson family to lead the 2012 parade partly because of the multiple generations who still live in town.

Annette’s sons, Steve and Rocky, both live in Brady and her daughter, Jeannie Sheets, has a house southeast of town. Another son, Michael, died several years ago.

There are a good number of Annette’s grandchildren with homes in Brady as well.

“I think there will be a bunch of us in the parade,” Annette said. “We’re honored to have been chosen.”

Some of those intending to ride along will be a few of Annette’s 20 great-grandchildren.

“It’s fun to have them so close by,” Annette said, naming North Platte, Cozad, Holdrege and Brady as their hometowns. “There’s certainly a bunch of us when we all get together.”

The first members of the Johnson family to homestead at Brady were William and Thelma

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Johnson.

Later, their son Oliver and his wife Eunice made their home south of town on Brady Island.

That's where Wayne Johnson, Annette's late husband, was born.

"Oliver was a jack-of-all-trades," Annette said. "He did some farming and all kinds of other odd jobs."

After Wayne was born, Oliver built a house and the family moved into town. The home still stands at the corner of Locust and State streets.

In his adult life, Wayne Johnson became well known in Brady as a skilled carpenter.

Annette said he worked many years building and remodeling homes with Allen Fickenscher, who now lives north of Gothenburg.

Wayne later purchased land and developed housing in Brady, having built or helped build at least 20 of the homes in the northwest portion of town.

He also constructed metal Chief buildings in and around Brady as well as at Arnold, Gothenburg, North Platte and Lake McConaughy.

Sons Steve and Rocky picked up their construction skills from their dad early in life.

"The boys helped from a young age," Annette said. "They always got right in there."

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Wayne Johnson died 23 years ago but his legacy lives on in a variety of ways.

“We’re proud of this little town,” Annette said.

The Johnson clan will lead the Brady Days parade, which is set to begin at 10:30 a.m. Saturday from the school and run south through town.