

Vince Hayes

By Sandy Clouse, Thermopolis, WY

Vince Hayes of Thermopolis founding member of the Outlaw Trail Ride (OTR) Committee, passed away December 27, 2008. Over 500 mourners attended the memorial service which was held in the local high school auditorium – quite a tribute in our small community of around 3,000 people.

Standing six-feet, five-inches tall, Vince was a giant of a man with a sense of humor and heart to match. The “gentle giant” was well known in Thermopolis for his work over the years as a volunteer fireman, county sheriff, county commissioner, and for his work with troubled youth.

Vince’s cowboy philosophy and way of life came naturally. He was a rancher and had worked on the family cattle ranch. Early on, he competed in college rodeo as well as the professional rodeo circuit. The Hayes family, long-time supporters of the Quarter Horse breed and active in the AQHA, received the Fifty-Year Breeder Award from the AQHA in 2000. Vince was also a recipient of the Legacy Award. Their horses of the Leo Hancock Hayes line, can be found all across the country. Vince was active in his Quarter Horse business at the time of his death. His niece, Heather Hayes, hopes to carry on the family tradition of breeding fine Quarter Horses.

Over a twenty-year period, Vince was the driving force behind the OTR. His sense of humor, tenacity, and enthusiasm for the ride carried OTR through the challenges of keeping an organization of volunteers working and productive. Under his leadership, the OTR donated \$37,000 of proceeds from the ride to various organizations. Although the committee made the final decisions regarding distribution of the funds, Vince’s love for the youth of the community was evident. The OTR has an annual scholarship for a graduating senior. Contributions were made to help in the support of many local youth programs – such as the Now-Cap Program, the Head Start Program, FFA, 4-H, and athletic groups. Other local entities such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Hot Springs County Library, and Hot Springs County Museum have benefited from the ride. The OTR also helped fund the erection of a historical monument at the Hole-in-the Wall.

Vince was the OTR Trail Boss to several thousand riders who hailed from all parts of the country, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Vince worked year round to make sure they had a vacation to remember. For example, this past year in response to high fuel cost, Vince led the committee in a major restructuring of the format for the 2009 ride. Just weeks before his death, Vince resigned from the OTR due to his health. Vince was honored for his many years and countless hours of service at the OTR Christmas meeting.

Rumor has it that there is a new cowboy in heaven. He is a big guy, riding a good Quarter horse – and he has a big smile on his face. His name is Vince. I believe that this rumor is true.

Following Vince’s resignation, Jim Schwalbe, another long time committee member, was elected as the OTR Trail Boss. Jim reports the committee is working hard to ensure a successful 2009 ride – one that would please Vince.