

Gunning for a Wild West weekend

BY [CARA PALLONE](#),

It was a warm day in the valley.

A band of outlaws were rumored to be causing trouble in the territory; robbing banks and stealing cattle.

The Umpqua Regulators were called upon to clean them out.

Buckshot Shell-E— one of the fastest shooters in the West— and her husband, Mid Valley Drifter, rode down from Lebanon to help the locals take care of the gang.

Shell-E sensed trouble was near. She pivoted and drew her pistols from her holster, cocked the single-action revolvers and knocked down the herd of sick cattle blocking her from the bandits. After she fired a round, she pulled out a Yellowboy lever action rifle and went after some of the bigger steers. And then, she rotated in a shotgun, dropping the outlaws flat on their backs.

“Buckshot Shell-E,” aka Michelle Reagan and “Mid Valley Drifter,” aka Patrick Reagan, belong to the Oregon Old West Shooting Society in Albany. They travel once a year for the True Grit Regional Match, held at the Roseburg Rod and Gun Club.

The Umpqua Regulators, a Roseburg cowboy action shooting club that meets for monthly matches, gathered with cowboys and cowgirls from all over the state to shoot replicas of 1897 Winchesters, 1873 Colts and 1875 Remington Outlaws, among other pistols, rifles and shotguns.

Spurs were jingling and shotgun pellets ricocheted off the steel targets Saturday and today as gunslingers competed to see who could shoot the fastest, miss the least and still follow procedure as they created different scenarios at each “stage.”

“El Yid,” aka Neal Itzkowitz, of Roseburg shoots a 1875 Scholfield— one of the most popular revolvers of the Old West era. It’s among several replicas he has collected since he began shooting four years ago.

He said he joined the Umpqua Regulators after he read in the gun club’s newsletter about the annual True Grit match. The councilor-turned-cowboy said he has always been interested in pre-1900 guns and costumes.

“I came and watched and was enamored with the dress. As a kid I played cowboy and Indians,” he said. “It’s really just a fun time.”

Itzkowitz said in a standard match, shooters alternate between two pistols, one rifle and one shotgun. However, participants of True Grit were required to fire off rounds from four pistols, two rifles and two shotguns in a specific order, while a judge timed them. Hence the name of the event.

Spotters had the job of tracking the bullets as they punctured the cattle and cowboy-shaped targets. Shooters lost five seconds from their time with each miss.

True Grit dates back 15 years, according to “Oregon Gus,” aka Andrew Swanson, a member of the Umpqua Regulators.

Roseburg’s “Ruby Jim” aka Jim Henson and his wife “Ricochet Roxy” aka Peggy Henson started shooting in 2003 after a trip to Provo, Utah. Jim Henson said they were invited to a gun show while on vacation.

“We showed up at the range and a guy came over and strapped his .45s on me and said, ‘c’mon.’” said the gunslinger. “We were hooked. We’ve been buying guns ever since.”

He was dressed head to toe in maroon and red western garb with a bright yellow kerchief tied around his neck. The rubies in his hat band twinkled in the sun.

Jim shoots a .357 Ruger single action revolver and a .357 Ubertie rifle, both replicas of the firearms used in the Old West



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to disband outlaws.

"I just like dressing up in my cowboy outfit and shooting my six guns," he said.

The Umpqua Regulators call each other only by their aliases. They have regulations on the maximum velocity of the bullet and they are only allowed to use single action firearms. No tennis shoes or baseball caps are allowed either.

It was late morning and El Yid, Ruby Jim and Oregon Gus were gathered around, anticipating the arrival of an outlaw named "Just Bill," who was up to no good. There was talk he was headed toward the valley.

The three cowboys have been shooting together for a couple of years at least, but a nod would be sufficient if they ran into each other on the street.

"I shot for years before I knew anyone's (real) names," said Oregon Gus who paused as he thought about his statement and then turned to Ruby Jim.

"What is your real name?"

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