



## 2024 PARADE MARSHALS

When the Festival had grown beyond what one club could manage, in 1965, other civic clubs joined in, and the name was changed to the Chilhowie Community Apple Festival. The aspirations of the new board were the same as the original board to strive to have a Festival for which the town and surrounding communities could be proud. Each club had members who represented the club on the festival board of directors. These representatives all signed the newly drawn up by-laws for the Newly Formed Chilhowie Community Apple Festival. The three remaining original signers of this document are our Community Apple Festival Parade Marshals.

They are Barbara Sturgill, Richard Walker, and Laura Etta Wilkinson. Thank you for helping us continue.

Below are some of the memories of past festivals that they shared with us.

Richard Walker was one of the representatives of the Seven Mile Ford Ruritan Club on the newly formed Chilhowie Community Apple Festival Committee. He is currently the oldest surviving member of that club. For many years the club entered a float in the parade competition.

Richard's favorite memory of past festivals is of any early float entry. It was a mule pulled float featuring local Ruritan members dressed in beauty pageant costumes. It was called "Seven Mile Ford Beauty Queen" and placed high in the competition. Richard was the driver of the mule team.

He says that on at least two occasions the Ruritan Club members made apple butter during the festival "to show the next generation how it was made historically".

Barbara Sturgill was a representative of another one of the other civic groups that joined in the formation of the Community Apple Festival Committee. She was the one of the Home Demonstration Club's representatives on the committee.

Barbara recalls several fond memories of past events at the festival. One of these is J.S. Walker's horse drawn wagon loaded with children going through the parade and then later through the neighborhoods. She also liked it when the Shriners brought their clowns and their miniature cars to participate in the parade.

When there was a Children and Youth Day on the Friday of the festival when the county schools were closed for all day parent teacher conferences, she enjoyed seeing all of the children competing in the various activities including the pet show. Barbara says she misses all of the fried apple pies that used to be for sale at almost every food booth and all of the different apple vendors. Overall though she enjoys the festival as it is now with new events and a variety of vendors.

Laura Etta Wilkinson was one of the representatives on the committee from the Chilhowie Garden Club. She says that her earliest memories of the festival are of the many bands that marched in the parade on Highway 11 and competed on the field at the Chilhowie High School football field. If they competed they had to march in the parade.

Laura Etta recalls the barbecue plates that the Young Farmers Club sold. They were so good. She said that originally the Apple Festival Committee manned the concession stand at the band competition. At that time the committee did everything. She said that Dixie Huff, a committee member, would make two huge pots of chili for the hotdogs.

Another committee member, Margaret Jones, mother of Sara Kegley, started the craft booths by advertising that people could sell handmade craft items at the festival. It started with just a few spaces beside the sidewalk adjacent to Lee Highway. Laura Etta remarked "Look what she started. We now have more requests for spaces than we have spaces."

Reflecting on the festival itself Laura Etta said that without the Bonham brothers who owned the orchards and the Jaycees who proposed it, the festival would not exist. She says that the Boham's would set up a huge display of varieties of apples in the Old High School Gymnasium. It was very pretty and similar to the display on their apple float that they rode in the parade.

The Old High School was used as a school until 1990 when the Middle School addition was added to Chilhowie High School. In order to accommodate the increasing number of entries in the inside exhibits, Laura Etta says that they put long thin boards across the desk tops to create tables to display the items. Berry's provided the boards. The boys in the agriculture classes from the high school would help set everything up. Musical acts and other entertainment were held on the old football field which is now the little league field area

Laura Etta remarked that looking back you can see how far the festival has progressed and what the many volunteers have accomplished over the years. "Congratulations on the 70th anniversary. Chilhowie - a good place to live."