

Dave Jones

Cowboy at heart, rodeo in his blood

Dave Jones is proud to admit it. He's got rodeo on the brain.

That's a lucky thing, too, for the thousands who have enjoyed the increasingly popular rodeo at the annual Larimer County Fair and Rodeo.

Dave, president of the rodeo, heads up a committee that works hard all year to book top-name acts and see that spectators get their money's worth. Attendance at the three-day August event has drawn bigger crowds in recent years.

The rodeo culture gets into the blood, said Dave, who has always enjoyed horses. Even in his work clothes, it's easy to see the cowboy in Dave: He has a droopy white mustache and an easy-going, modest manner.

"I really like the environment and the people you meet," said Dave, 49. "To a large degree, that's a group of people who still make agreements with a handshake and a promise. I like that. We've lost a lot of that in our society today."

When Dave isn't working on the rodeo, he can often be found on a horse.

Dave has been a volunteer for the Larimer County Sheriff's Department Posse for 24 years. He par-

Recreation

ticipates in two or three searches every year and helps with crowd control at large events.

And Dave - atop his quarter horse, Duke - is a competitive team roper. The trick in team roping is for two mounted partners to lasso a steer at each end. He took up the sport at the tender age of 40.

Dave was born in Denver. He graduated from Loveland High School in 1964 and spent three years on an aircraft carrier off Vietnam before leaving the Navy in 1969. He then returned to Loveland.

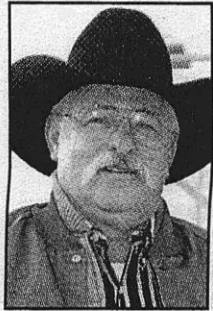
Dave has worked for Kodak Co. in Windsor for 24 years, where he's a contract administrator.

Ten years ago, he joined the Larimer County Fair Board, and the next year he took on rodeo committee responsibilities.

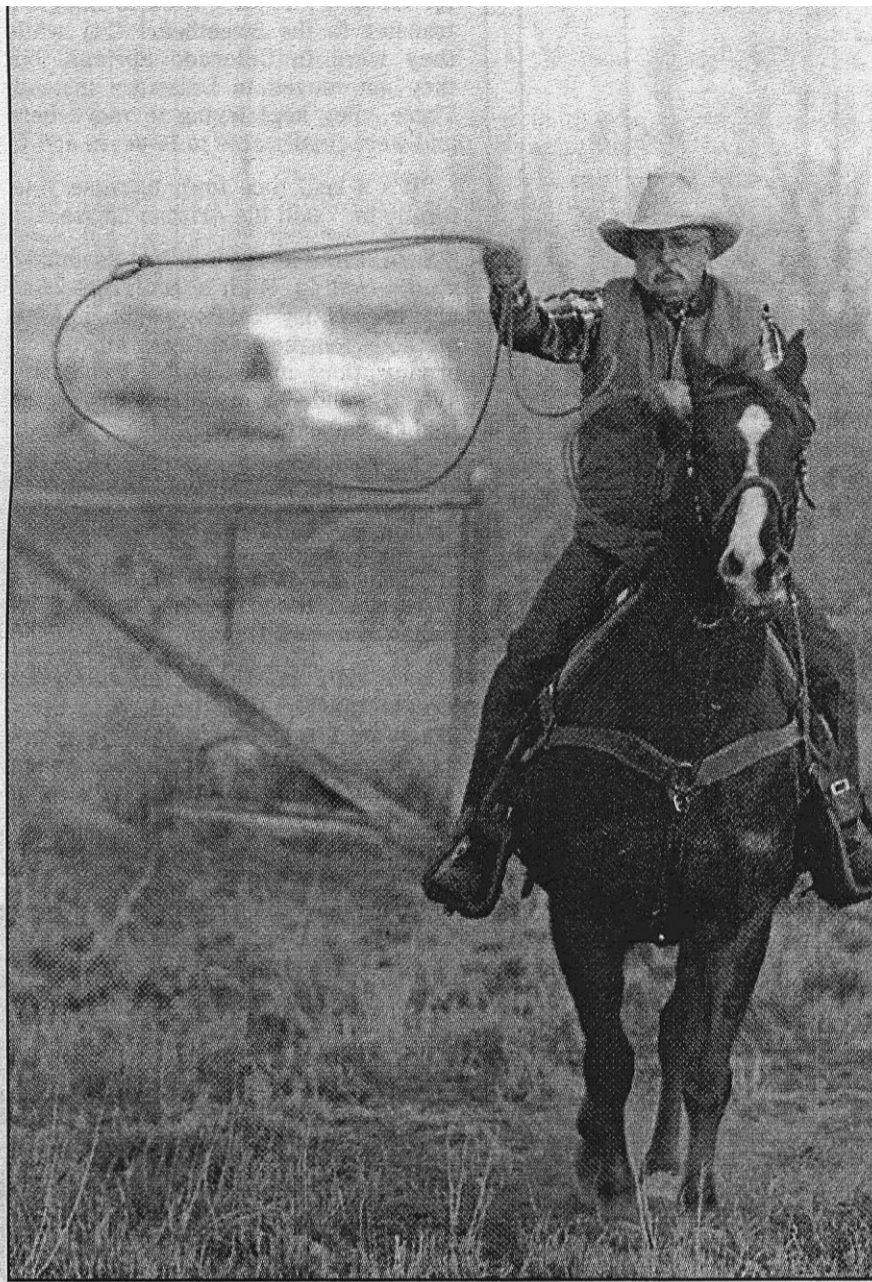
"He's really come on," said Dale Wiest, himself a longtime rodeo committee member. "He knew a lot about rodeo, but he didn't know a lot about the intricacies. He's took off and learned great guns since then. He took it and grabbed it and really run with it."

Dave instituted a yearly ticket program allowing rodeo fans to buy tickets in advance. Nearly a quarter of all ticket

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Age: 49
Birthplace: Denver.
Occupation: Contract administrator, Kodak Co. in Windsor.
Family: Wife Sandi, daughter Cindy 22,
Years in Loveland area: 40



sales are now handled that way, said Bob Holt, fairgrounds manager. When term limit rules were about to bump Dave off the Fair Board, Holt ask for a waiver to keep him on.

The Larimer County Rodeo is the largest three-day rodeo - based on purse - in the state of Colorado. The fairgrounds arena seats between 3,800 and 4,000 people and last year was crowded. Holt said,

"There was one night where we thought we were going to have to get a shoehorn out to get people in there," he said.

The arena itself is a big part of the draw; Dave said because spectators are so close.

"In Loveland, you get to experience rodeo; in Cheyenne, you get to watch it," Dave said. "You are right there. You can hear the grunts and groans. You can hear the guys hit the ground."

The rising popularity of country and western music, clothing and movies has also brought more interest to rodeo, Dave said.

"Rodeo is changing a lot; it's growing a lot," he said. "I think people are looking close to home to spend their entertainment dollars. I think today people are looking more for family entertainment they can afford."

Late last year, Dave was elected to the National Association of Rodeo Committees. As a committee member, he'll be able to promote the sport at a higher level and keep going in the rodeo.

He'll also keep competing as a team roper — he hopes — for a long time to come.

"We had one guy on our sheriff's posse that was still roping when he was 80," Dave said.

"With any luck at all," he added with a laugh, "I'll live to be 100 and die in a roping accident. That'd be the way go."

—Phillip Tardani



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