

NEWS RELEASE

Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

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Announcer makes the calls of a lifetime

GUYMON, Okla. – It is one thing to do what your momma tells you. It's quite another when she dares you.

Enter Andy Stewart, a professional rodeo announcer for 14 years. He actually began calling rodeos, imitating announcers of the day long before he purchased his Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association card in 1995.

“When we were home watching videos of our team roping or rodeo videos, I would imitate the announcers,” said Stewart, a husband and father of two teens that calls the northeastern Louisiana community of Collinston home. “When my brother and I would rope the dummy, I'd announce it.

“On a dare from my mother, I started doing some small play days and horse events. I didn't know what I was doing, but apparently I had the gift of gab.”

It's a gift he shares with others 43 weeks a year all across this land, calling rodeos and bull-riding events. This year he returns to Texas County, Okla., the first weekend in May for the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, Oklahoma's Richest Rodeo.

“Guymon's just special,” said Stewart, now in his third year of calling the annual rodeo. “To me, it's the epitome of what rodeo is. It's part of cattle country, with the Hitch Ranch and other ranches still there. The people that come to watch are rodeo-savvy. There's such a great dedication in that area to supporting the rodeo.

“Everybody there is Western-oriented and cowboy-oriented. It's a laid back, relaxed atmosphere with world-class action.”

Performances take place at 7:30 p.m. May 1, 2 and 7:30 p.m. May 2 and 2 p.m. May 3 at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena, featuring the very best competitors in ProRodeo. But Stewart won't be alone, working with Guymon's Ken Stonecipher, also a ProRodeo announcer who has been a longtime member of the Pioneer Days Rodeo committee and the organization's past chairman.

“Ken really helps me in understanding the community,” Stewart said. “It's always good that there's someone involved that knows things at the local level. Ken brings that element to the table.”

But there's so much that Stewart brings to the table himself. For years, he's been the official voice of the Championship Bull Riders, a bull-riding-only organization whose president is world champion Tuff Hedeman. Until this year, he also served as the play-by-play announcer for CBR telecasts as well as several televised rodeos.

“I'm probably as big a rodeo fan as there is in the world,” said Stewart, a longtime team roper who, with his father, won the Louisiana championship in the United States Team Roping Championships organization, which has its world finals in Oklahoma City every fall.

“I enjoy the camaraderie of the cowboys, the lifestyle. Rodeo is a true a sport there is. There are not big contracts. These guys are doing what they do because they love it, and they're not guaranteed a dime to do it.”

He spend much of his year either traveling or living away from home, but he's chasing his dreams. There's a blessing, he said, in being able to make a good living doing something one loves.

"Andy knows rodeo, and he's a big part of the production of the Pioneer Days Rodeo every year," Stonecipher said. "Andy brings a lot of excitement and energy to our event. It's a lot of fun working with him."

Over his career, Stewart has been selected to call the Southeastern Circuit Finals Rodeo three times, the CBR World Championships twice and the National Circuit Finals Rodeo. He's been able to share that lifestyle with his family.

He's grown around the sport he loves, and he gets to share his passion for hundreds of thousands of spectators each year.

"If there's one thing I love about it, it's the individualism that you have in rodeo," Stewart said. "Everybody that's there, especially when you're talking about the cowboys, there is the passion that they have for it. Every ride could be their last ride, and they ride to win. I appreciate that aspect of it.

"I heard this, and I believe it: If you do something you love, you'll never have to work another day in your life."

Others have seen it. Bret Franks of Goodwell, a three-time National Finals Rodeo qualifier in saddle bronc riding, works for stock contractor Carr Pro Rodeo and travels the country doing his job. He's seen Stewart at work in many arenas and knows what the Louisiana cowboy brings to the microphone.

"Andy brings a lot of energy," said Franks, who grew up in Guymon. "He's passionate. In the past, we had a more old-school announcer, but in today's entertainment world, you've got to bring energy and excitement. Between Andy, Ken and Benji Bendele doing the sound, it's a hard combination to beat."