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AGGIE COWBOYS

Western spirit lives on in A&M clubs, Cavalry

Changes in the rodeo club set members' sights on nationals

By Chuck Lovejoy

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

With help from a new faculty adviser, members of the Texas A&M Rodeo Association are restructuring their club to reach several long-term goals, including sending a team to compete in national rodeo finals.

Dr. Warren Evans, a professor of animal science and the club's new adviser, said nothing will change radically in the Rodeo Association.

"It's not really reorganization," he said. "We're simply becoming a little more professional."

The Texas Aggie Rodeo Association was founded in 1949 when its ruling organization, the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA), was formed.

The club actually includes two groups within one, the Rodeo Association and the Texas A&M Rodeo Team.

Kennie Lawry, the club's president, said membership to the association is open to anyone with an interest in rodeo activities or the animals used in them. No experience is required. In fact, she said, several people in the club cannot even ride a horse.

To be a member of the Rodeo Team, one must first be a member of the Association. The team competes at 10 NIRA rodeos each school year in a system that resembles a tournament. The competing teams accumulate points for their performances at the rodeos.

The team that with the most points after the 10th rodeo advances to the national finals. So far, the A&M men are fifth in the NIRA southern region, which includes 10 competing schools.

The team's next NIRA competition is Feb. 17-19 in College Station in the Dick Freeman Arena.

The club also sponsors the annual All-Aggie Rodeo, which was held at A&M last fall. The event serves as a

fundraiser for the club, helping with the team's travel expenses.

On Feb. 4, the club will sponsor a rodeo in the Freeman Arena which will be open to anyone.

This year, the team also plans to send a female representative to the NIRA national finals with the title of 'queen.' She will compete with representatives from other schools in various rodeo events for the NIRA national title.

With the new plans, things will be different for members of the club.

Kennie Lawry, the group's president, said the association will try to work more with its alumni board, which helps with fundraising and acquiring sponsors for club activities.

Evans said plans are in the works to sponsor a series of "rodeo schools" at A&M. These training seminars will feature outstanding trainers from around the country who will teach proper rodeo event techniques.

To attract new members, the group will concentrate on recruiting high school students at the national high school rodeo finals. The club's alumni board has created several new scholarships for outstanding students recruited at the finals who plan to attend A&M, Lawry said.

The group already awards three scholarships in memory of former members and four semester scholarships for tuition and books.

Lawry said A&M's academic standards at times create problems in new member recruitment.

"Training for a rodeo takes a lot of time," she said. "For some people, it's not possible to keep up their grades and train for competition at the same time. This is one reason we can't attract some of the better competitors."

Kurt Kelso, vice-president of the Rodeo Association, said practicing for the competitions is complicated because the participant has to deal with animals instead of thinking only about himself.

"You have to remember that

you're dealing with a living being," Kelso said. "You have to take its well-being into account before your own."

Lawry said training for competition is physically demanding, especially for team members who compete in the rodeos' rough stock categories, such as bullriding. She said most rough stock riders have to worry about not only form but physical conditioning to prevent injury on the bucking animals, so most of them lift weights.

Most team members practice about two hours a day during competition season, Lawry said.

The club also is considering some longer-term projects.

A&M has allotted a parcel of land at the Dick Freeman Arena for the club's use, Lawry said. A barn and pens for the rodeo animals will be built on the land as soon as the University approves the project and enough money is raised.

Evans said he hopes the new facilities will be completed by this fall, although the project may not be finished until the spring of 1990 if funds are not raised soon.

"That kind of money doesn't come from fundraisers," Lawry said. "We're going to have to work really hard with the alumni board to raise the rest of the money."

The team has set another long-term goal. Evans said he would like to see an A&M rodeo team in the national NIRA finals within the next five years. He said that goal may be realized if the club's restructuring and the construction of the new facilities go as planned.

Kelso said the club's members are optimistic about the changes. Even though he is a senior, he said he is glad they are taking place.

"The changes are things we've all been trying to do for a while," he said. "Even though it won't affect some of us, we're willing to work to make things better for future members."



Photo by Jay Janner

Horseman's club brings riding, showing to A&M

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Most students need some kind of tension release or study break to maintain sanity in their lives.

For Texas A&M Horseman's Association President Jodi Murray, that release comes through riding and showing horses with the Horseman's Association.

The 161-member group consists of people from many different backgrounds.

"Some of our members have no knowledge of horses, and very few have their own horse," Murray said.

About half of the members are animal science majors, and many want to go on to related fields. Some want to be trainers, and some go to veterinary school, she said.

"The only prerequisite for membership is an interest in horses," she said.

Association members have access to horses used in A&M horse management classes.

The group was organized in 1972 by students who were interested in horses.

In addition to riding and performing, Horseman's Association members offer services to the community. One of their projects is the Special Students' Riding Clinic for the handicapped.

The clinic is offered in the fall to handicapped students who are interested in learning to ride a horse, Murray said.

The Association also sponsors events such as a quarter horse show, a donkey and mule show and a hunter-jumper show.

The size of the quarter horse show indicates many Texans' interest in quarter horses, she said. The show is a three-day event with a budget of about \$10,000.

Chris Egger, associate vice-president of the club, oversees the Quarter Horse Show committee's activities.

"Organizing the show requires

a lot of behind-the-curtain work and it's all volunteer," Egger said.

He said the show, which is approved by the American, Amateur and Texas Quarter Horse associations, is one of the biggest in the area, bringing in about 360 horses for the event. Reservations for the March show began arriving more than six weeks ago, he said.

The organization soon will get new stalls to house the horses more securely during the show.

The horses are judged in several categories.

The "confirmation" class judges horses on how they look compared with one another, Egger said. The "western pleasure" class judges horses on how they walk and trot, and in the "showmanship" class, the rider is judged on how he or she handles the horse.

In March, the group presents a Dressage Show, which is a more formal Olympic-style horse show. The riders wear English riding attire and participate in jump, western-pleasure and showmanship competitions, Murray said.

The club also takes care of the horses for the Children's Barnyard and has a 4-H practice judging contest, which involves about 700 children, she said.

The association also helps finance A&M's Horse Judging Team so it can travel to contests across the country.

A few years ago, the club had to reduce the number of classes they usually offered because of a lack of funds, Egger said. Last year, however, the group's financial situation turned around.

"We made about \$25,000 last year, and after we paid our bills we had about \$7,500 left," he said. Murray said that because the group is nonprofit, all event money it collects goes to next year's events.

"Sharing what you know" is a common theme in the group, she said. "We want all students to become knowledgeable about horses and the horse industry."

Parsons Cavalry rides in frontier spirit

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Nearly everyone has seen the old western in which the settlers have been surrounded by the Indians. Just when the end seems near, a bugle is heard in the distance and the cavalry saves the day.

At Texas A&M the spirit of the frontier continues with the Parsons Mounted Cavalry. Fancy drills and precision marching distinguish the A&M troop from the pioneer-day cavalry, but in other respects, they haven't changed.

"We do it like they did and wear the same type of uniform," senior member Matt Lindsey said.

Parsons Mounted Cavalry was organized in 1972 by Col. Thomas R. Parsons.

Only sophomores, juniors and seniors can be in the "cav," the common name used by members, Lindsey said.

Sophomores, who are in charge of cleanup, were first admitted to the cavalry five years ago. They and other new members serve as "scoopers" during parades, he said.

The cavalry's home, on farm-to-market road 2818, has about 25 acres and 30 horses.

By the group's choosing, all of the horses are brown, which makes the cavalry's appearance uniform, Lindsey said.

If a cavalry member does not own a horse, he is assigned one to ride. About half of the group's horses are owned by members. Others were given to the group and some are on loan. Each member takes care of his own horse and stall, he said.

When the horses get too old to use, he said, they are sold.

Junior Tony Mossman is in charge of the cannon that is pulled by the cavalry.

"Before I came out here, I knew nothing about horses," Mossman said. "About half of our new people don't."

"There is no cannon without the cavalry," he added.

Lindsey said the cannon was found covered with mud in a ditch about seven years ago by a cavalry

training unit. It was fixed up and has since been a part of the "cav," he said.

The cavalry was one of three A&M groups to march in the Jan. 20 inaugural parade in Washington, D.C. "We bid in November after the election and found out Dec. 15 we got it," Lindsey said.

Lots of last-minute preparation was needed, but everything went well during the parade, he said. "We are a good show unit," he said. "We put A&M in the spotlight."

Members learned that many spectators were impressed with the "scoopers" because other marching units didn't have them, he said. One reporter compared the Cavalry to the Queen of England's cavalry unit, which does not have its own "scooper" troops, Lindsey said.

During the fall, the Cavalry mainly marches and guards the cannon, he said.

"In the spring, though, almost all of our weekends are full," he said. The group keeps busy performing drills and going to parades and rodeos.

The group will go to Houston for the Livestock Show and Rodeo parade. The Cavalry recently rode in the "Go Texan" Parade in Bryan which was performed in conjunction with the Houston rodeo.

In April the group will ride in the Battle of the Flowers Parade in San Antonio during that city's Fiesta Days. The next day, they will go to a rodeo in Wimberley.

On April 9, during Parents' Weekend, the group will perform a special drill on the main drill field and transfer leadership to the next year's cavalry. The exercise is their version of the Corps of Cadets' Final Review, Lindsey said.

The group drills for about three hours a week. Among the drills they practice and perform are spirals and pinwheels.

For spirals, he explained, they start in a big circle, and the lead horse leads the circle inward. The lead horse then traces the design outward. To make pinwheels, the troop arranges itself in a turning cross formation.

Members spend about two hours a day at the cavalry's barn, brushing

the horses and working on equipment, Lindsey said. "Dues are \$180, so you have to want to be out here," he said.

Mossman agreed. He said the cavalry members are a close group.

"We do more than work together out here," he said, referring to the friendship among members.

Junior Sonja Henrikson, the only woman in the "cav," said she likes being a member of the group. She owned a horse when she lived in South Dakota.

"I'm not out here trying to be a guy," Henrikson said. "I just want to do my part. It takes a lot of determination for anyone to do this."

Aggies prove reliability, get chance at rodeo jobs

By Sharon Maberry

STAFF WRITER

Texas A&M students who enjoy the excitement that goes along with cowboys, bucking broncos and rodeo clowns can be paid to spend a week at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo.

Granada Foods, a division of Granada Corporation, hires A&M students to run its food booth each year.

"We like to hire Aggies because they're trustworthy," said Lynn Branecky, food show program director for the Granada booth.

"We like that Aggie bond. It actually creates a lot of sales because customers know the booth is run by Aggies."

Branecky, supervisor of the booth for the last eight years, said she hires about 12 students for each week of the show.

"Basically, they sell sandwiches to the public," Branecky said. "The job requires a lot of handling of money. It also will prove to the students if they're capable of working with the public."

"Sometimes there are 200 to 300 people all wanting sandwiches at the same time."

The Granada booth is open from about 6 a.m. to midnight every day of the rodeo. Students generally work eight- to 10-hour shifts.

Branecky said they try to work

around students' schedules.

"If students have a class or a test they have to come back to A&M for, that's no problem," she said. "We work around that. We're very lenient."

Branecky said Aggies were first hired to work at the booth 10 years ago when it was owned by 74 Ranch Beef. A&M graduate John Bellinger managed the booth and hired Aggie students.

In 1982, Bellinger started Texas Western Beef and again hired Aggies to run his booth at the Houston show.

Granada Corporation acquired Texas Western Beef in 1986 and continued the Aggie tradition.

Working at the Granada food booth provides students opportunities to make business contacts, Branecky said.

"The Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo is a very prestigious show," she said. "It's the largest in the country."

"Ours is a very visible booth. It's an excellent opportunity for students to meet people."

"We've had students write us and say they were hired by someone they met at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo."

"It's a lot of good connections. But it depends on what they make of it. Some students go out and party all night long and never make any connections. They're losing."

"It's a lot of hard work, but it's also a lot of fun."