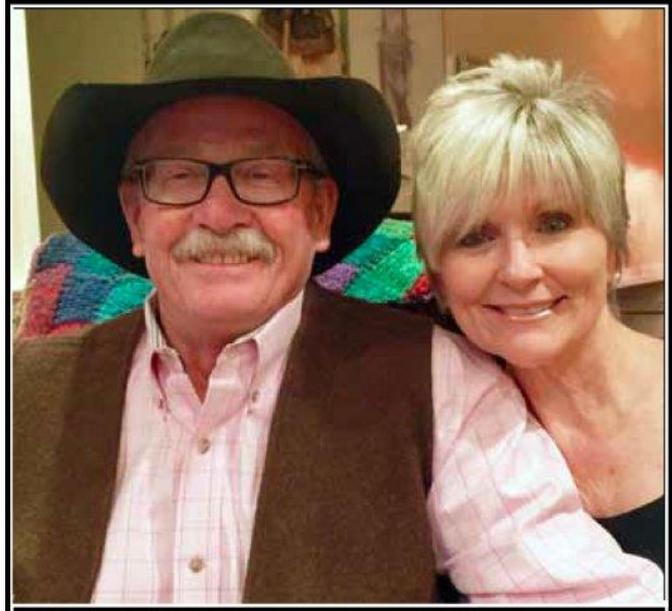


2015 Pioneers: Dennis & Susan Jay

Rodeo roots grow deep in Elizabeth, Colorado. The event we now enjoy started with a simple phrase spoken in July of 1965: “let’s have a rodeo.” The people who embraced that phrase and made the Elizabeth Stampede one of the finest rodeos in the country dedicated their time, energy, ideas, and passion to make it happen.



Celebrating these pioneers is a Stampede tradition. The winners of this year’s Pioneers Award are Dennis and Susan Jay of Centennial, Colorado. Dennis has been volunteering with the Stampede for more than 20 years, all of that time in helping run the timed events. What motivates him to spend his time here? “I love rodeo. I like horses and cattle and putting it all together.”

His experience with owning horses began with a trip to the stock show in 1997 when he sipped a bit too much brew and accidentally bought a stallion. That stallion helped launch a breeding operation that has resulted in a greater love of horses. He loves team roping and, with partner Larry Lewis, won a buckle at the Stampede Community Rodeo three years ago. The final two teams were called back to compete during the Sunday performance and Dennis and Larry took the buckle. “Anyone can win on any single day, that’s what makes this so exciting.”

The Stampede is made up of good people who make good memories. Dennis' first experience with Elizabeth was the rodeo in 1992, one of the wettest on record. "It rained from the time we opened the first gate in the slack performance on Thursday night and continued through the rest of the rodeo." But that rain didn't dampen any of his memories and he's been back to every rodeo since. "Putting on the rodeo is hard work, but you enjoy it. I look forward to this rodeo every year, to working with the stock, to making more memories."

One of Dennis' favorite memories is one that exemplifies the best of the people who work to put on this rodeo. It was when a cowboy was in trouble on a bronc horse that had gotten loose. "Every volunteer in the arena jumped in and held the horse down to get the cowboy free. It was an example of everyone working with the same goal and making things happen." For this rodeo, he says, "when the gates open on Friday night, everyone does their job and has a good time, and it just clicks. It is a very smooth operation." Because of the volunteers, according to Dennis, "this rodeo runs so efficiently during the performance — we deal with animal issues, we keep the rodeo clicking with no down time. The volunteers and production crews keep it running smoothly and we have a good time." Dennis and his wife Susan have six children, all of whom enjoy rodeo and support Dennis' passion for the Stampede. "I have two families," says Dennis. "One that I live with all the time and the other in Elizabeth at the rodeo."

We would like to thank Dennis and Susan for helping make the rodeo what it is today, and we congratulate them for being the Elizabeth Stampede Pioneers in 2015!