

The Legacy of a Rodeo Family – Celebrating our Elizabeth Stampede Pioneer of the Year

Ron Vermillion and Mary Louise Jacobson

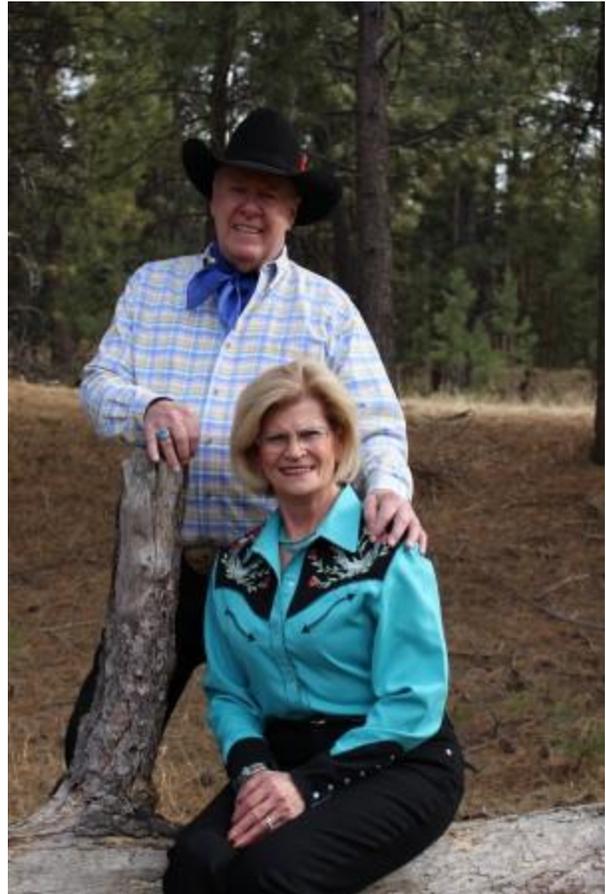
By Lea Anne Russell, Editor

“The Elizabeth Stampede Rodeo is the largest event in Elizabeth each year and continues to promote the western way of life beyond our community. This rodeo provides an education, so people understand the basis of this way of life.” Ron and Mary Louise

What does the daughter of a Minnesota reining horse trainer and a man who, not once, but three times, rode wild horses for fun have in common? The love of all things rodeo. And that love of rodeo is what brought Mary Louise Jacobson and Ron Vermillion together, when they met at a rodeo dance at the Evergreen Rodeo in 1995. They got married and moved to Elizabeth shortly thereafter, and Ron and Mary Louise have been part of the foundation of the Elizabeth Stampede ever since.

Ron, a financial advisor, got his start in the Stampede twenty years ago when he was recruited by Dick Kirpatrick, Bill Snead, and Norm Almquist. He started by running gates with the Production Committee and moved into many roles including nine years as a Board Member of the Rodeo. He still helps manage the investments for the Stampede Foundation and has been instrumental in helping shape the focus of the Foundation support. “We originally set up a fund to support breast cancer patients and we then recognized that there were so many other needs in the community. We are proud of the expansion of the program and love helping people.”

Previous experience with the Evergreen Rodeo and as a competitor himself, including team roping for more than ten years and the three times he thought that riding in the wild horse race at Cheyenne Frontier Days was a really good idea, prepared Ron for his experience at the Elizabeth Stampede. “One of my favorite memories is when I was running a gate and had to pull a cowboy out of the way of an irate bull who was set on taking him out when he couldn’t get his footing in a big puddle of mud. That’s the best thing about this rodeo – the hands-on volunteering.” That volunteering has been incredibly valuable to the Stampede, and Ron has been recognized for his contributions as the past recipient of the Top Hand volunteer award for his work in reshaping the Sponsorship Committee and the Most Valuable (MVP) contributor to the Advertising Committee in 2018.



Ron is the father of four kids and was a “rodeo dad” when they were young. Two of his three daughters and his son chose to compete and were active in Little Britches Rodeo including barrel racing and bull and bareback riding respectively. Rodeo dad duties included being the president of the Evergreen Little Britches Rodeo. Ron recalls the many rodeo trips fondly, “we traveled in a motor home and hauled horses all over. The rodeo life was an amazing experience for all of us. The memories last a lifetime and so do the friendships.”

Traci McClain, Stampede President, commented, “I truly value Ron’s perspective and focus for the rodeo and for the Foundation. He brings a unique perspective to the team and continues to be dedicated to the success of both organizations. More importantly, he truly cares about the legacy that we leave in the community and with the people who live here.”

Mary Louise, a well-known leader in the Colorado rodeo royalty structure, has supported the Hospitality and Royalty Committees and was the royalty coordinator for neighboring Elbert County Fair and Rodeo for 12 years. Her experience with the National Western committee and other royalty programs has helped shape the advocacy and dedication of numerous queens. Indeed, there is a place of honor in her house for all these young ladies and Mary Louise is proud of all their accomplishments. One of her previous royalty ladies is the reigning Miss Rodeo Colorado and attributes her success to the people who have coached her and provided immense support along the way.

Mary Louise, a hairdresser in Parker, is a perfect mix of agriculture experience and royal expectations. From driving a tractor and managing the milking of the cow herd with her two sisters when she was young, to creating pageants and competitions for horsemanship, speech, and modeling, she leads by example. “My goal has been to bring our royalty programs to a place where the young ladies know they are very special to the community, to the rodeo and fair, agriculture, and to the western way of life. I am so proud of the fact that most of our past royalty have remained active in agriculture.”

The Elbert County Royalty Program, according to Mary Louise, “has really worked hard to create a reputation in the royalty community as an amazing experience. The program teaches each girl that they can step up to the plate and hit a home run.”

With all of this focus and dedication, one thing is for sure: come June 3, 4, and 5, Mary Louise and Ron will be at Casey Jones Park, cheering on the contestants and the visiting royalty from their hands-on volunteer positions.

This commitment to rodeo and community service over the past 20 years is why Ron and Mary Louise have been recognized as the 2022 Elizabeth Stampede Pioneer of the Year!