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For the Red Bluff Round-Up

RODEO LOYALTY

Red Bluff resident has attended 75-plus Round-Ups

Red Bluff, Calif. (March 2, 2020) When she was ten years old, Ruth Thornton went to the Red Bluff Round-Up for the first time.

Eighty-two years later, she's still going.

In fact, she estimates she's only missed the rodeo three or four times since then, in the 1950s, when her husband was in the military.

Ruth and her sisters grew up on her family's ranch west of Red Bluff, and moved to town when she was in third grade. Her parents took the family to the Round-Up, but it was Ruth and her sisters who really loved the rodeo, and never missed going to it.

They would ride their horses to town, tie them up to the fence or in the almond orchard which used to be on the west side of the fairgrounds, and go to the rodeo.

After graduation from Red Bluff High School in 1946, she worked in a bank in town for ten years.

She and Jay married in 1948, and after they started a family, she stayed home with their children: Patty, Gretchen, who is married to Phil Prinz, and John, who is married to Penni.

Jay went into the Navy after high school graduation, then came home to help his dad on the ranch, when his dad's health began to fail. A few years later, he re-enlisted, this time in the Air Force. He was stationed in Sacramento, then Waco, Texas, and Ruth went with him. Those few years, in the late 1950s, were the only times she missed attending the rodeo.

Jay ran heavy equipment and sold gravel, and he wasn't as fond of the Round-Up as Ruth was. So it was her who packed up the kids and headed to the fairgrounds each year.

The Round-Up has seen some big changes since she started attending it. It's gotten larger, with more people in attendance and it's gone from two shows to three. There were no grandstands when she first started going in 1937. But there's not a part of it that she doesn't like. "I enjoy the whole thing," she said.

Several of Ruth and Jay's descendants have been involved in the Round-Up or rodeo in some way. Granddaughters have competed (and won a couple of times) in the cowgirl horse race; a grandson-in-law is a steer wrestler who has competed at the Round-Up; a granddaughter is barrel

racings, and three of her great-grandkids, ages two, four and six, are currently junior rodeo contestants.

Ruth has bought the same eight season tickets for the past twenty years, always for the Sunday show. Whoever is available comes along with her: sometimes her son, sometimes her daughters, the in-laws, grandkids or great-grandkids. They bet between themselves on the horse races. "We get a kick out of the races," she said. "Everybody picks a horse they think will win, and we have a little bet that goes on between us." They never miss the parade, either, meeting by the announcer's stand and making a family gathering of it.

Jay and Ruth have been married 71 years. Jay just retired a few years ago and still hunts with his son and grandkids. Ruth still rides on trail rides, and helps move and work cattle on horseback.

And on Sunday afternoon of the Round-Up, she'll be in the stands, enjoying her family and the rodeo.

The 99th annual Red Bluff Round-Up is April 17-19, 2020. Performances begin at 7 pm on April 17, at 2:30 pm on April 18, and at 1:30 pm on April 19. Tickets are on sale online at www.redbluffroundup.com and range in price from \$16 to \$35.

For more information, visit the website or call the Round-Up office at 530.527.1000.

Cutlines:

Ruth Thornton grew up riding a horse to school and to the Red Bluff Round-Up. Since she started attending the Round-Up at age ten, she's rarely missed a year.

Ruth Thornton, long-time Red Bluff resident, still rides at the age of 92. She and her family have occupied the same seats at the Round-Up's Sunday performance for the last twenty years.

Ruth Thornton and her family at the 2019 Red Bluff Round-Up. Ruth's son, John, and his wife, Penni, flank her. On her lap is great-granddaughter McKenna Packard.