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For Kansas Biggest Rodeo

RODEO DEDICATION

Former Phillipsburg committeeman instrumental with Kansas Biggest Rodeo

Phillipsburg, Kan. (July 8, 2019) – It takes dedicated volunteers, working long hours for no pay and little recognition, to keep rodeos going.

And the Phillipsburg rodeo has had some of the best.

One of those, Rod Innes, retired last year after serving on the committee for 38 years.

A Phillipsburg native who now lives in Olathe, Kansas, Innes followed in his dad's footsteps. Guy "Doc" Innes served on the committee from 1947 into the 1960s, helping with the parking and concession stand.

Rod remembers, as a third grader, selling rodeo programs and being paid a nickel for every program he sold. Born in 1945, he missed only a few rodeos, from 1966 to 1973.

When he and his wife Mary moved back to Phillipsburg in the 70s, he didn't get involved right away. But when the pump jack at the rodeo arena couldn't keep up with the demand for water during the shows, Innes volunteered to donate two submersible pumps, if the committee would run a water line between the two wells at the rodeo grounds.

So they took him up on his offer, and Innes began as a rodeo volunteer and became a part of the committee in 1981.

During his tenure, which spanned nearly four decades, he has helped with many remodels, renovations and new facilities around the rodeo grounds. As a contractor, he had the expertise and the equipment as the committee moved the bucking chutes from the north side to the east side; tore down and replaced the wooden grandstands; redid the arena fence; built the south grandstands; added a bathroom facility on the west side; and an office, bathrooms and contestant area on the east side. Nearly all the work was done by committee men; before another electrician came on the committee, Innes did the electrical, plumbing and heating, while other volunteers did the framing, sheet rock and other work.

Innes considers one of his biggest achievements was getting city water to the rodeo grounds. It was a two-mile pipeline from city limits to the rodeo grounds north of town. "One of the best things that happened is when we ran a water line from town out to the rodeo grounds," he said. It was in the late 1990s, and with the help of a state department of tourism grant and a Morgan Foundation grant, the water line got put in. Prior to city water, the rodeo operated off of two wells with water that was not fit to drink. To provide drinking water, the committee would bring in eight-foot stock tanks with spigots at the bottom, and fill them with water and ice.

He spent twenty-eight years as chairman of the rodeo, and he always strove to make it better. “There’s 89 years of this rodeo,” he said, last year, “and you always want to get bigger and better. We were always thinking about what project we would do next.”

He and Mary have six kids, five who volunteered alongside their parents. The girls: Valerie, Becky, Amy and Beth, were ushers. Son Chris, who lives in Chaska, Minn., helped in the concession stands. “During the rodeo, Shane Culbertson would work with Lloyd (Shane’s dad) on the west concession stands,” Chris said, “and I’d work with Cliff (Van Kooten) on the east side. We were gophers, moving food back and forth, to the side where it was needed.

“We were out at the rodeo grounds every evening in the summer, trimming and painting. It seems like we were always painting. Dad was there, wiring things, fixing things.”

The Phillipsburg rodeo was something Rod truly enjoyed, Chris said. “It’s always been his true passion. I think it was his release from work. He doesn’t have a whole lot of hobbies, and rodeo is his hobby. When he had free time, he was out there, working on something, helping improve it every year.” Innes retired from the committee after last year’s rodeo, and Chris said that was a tough decision for him. “The rodeo was one of the last things he hung onto in Phillipsburg.”

In addition to his time, Innes volunteered his help and equipment: his backhoe, crane and truck, tractor and the mower. Longtime friend Bob Quanz, who was also on the rodeo committee, said his wife, Mary, volunteered alongside her husband. He remembers her working in the concession stand and screwing on light switch covers during a remodel.

Innes has been involved in other civic organizations besides the rodeo. He served on the city council from 1987 to 2017 and served a term as mayor. He’s always been community minded, said Quanz. “He realized the importance of being involved in the community,” Quanz said.

And Innes always had the best interest of the rodeo in mind with whatever he did, Quanz said. “He always wanted to improve it and make sure everything went smoothly.

“He’s been a loyal trooper all the way through, for the community and the rodeo.”

The 90th annual Kansas Biggest Rodeo takes place August 1-3 in Phillipsburg, with performances starting nightly at 8 pm. Tickets start at \$12 for kids and \$16 for adults. Thurs., August 1 is family night; all kids ages 10 and under are free with the purchase of an adult ticket.

Tickets are on sale at Heritage Insurance in Phillipsburg and at the gate. They can be purchased over the phone by calling Heritage Insurance at 785.543.2448.

For more information, visit the rodeo’s website at www.KansasBiggestRodeo.com.

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Cutlines:

Longtime Phillipsburg resident Rod Innes rides in the rodeo parade in 2018. He followed in his dad Guy “Doc” Innes’ footsteps as a rodeo committee member.

Rod Innes (on the left) is on horseback with stock contractor Bennie Beutler, waiting for the 2018 Phillipsburg rodeo parade to begin. Innes spent more than 35 years on the committee for the Phillipsburg rodeo.

Rod Innes served the Phillipsburg rodeo committee for nearly fo

18 –on site pics –Rod on a horse.

16 – on site pics –Rod and fam with gun.

I should have a pci of him, aclose-up, that he’s used for his FB page.