

Integrity, honesty and self-sufficiency: the cowboy way

Since 2002, the Kansas Cowboy Hall of Fame has been recognizing legendary Kansas cowboys for their significant contributions to western heritage and to the preservation of the cowboy culture in Kansas. Located at the Boot Hill Museum, the Hall of Fame honors working cowboys, cowboy historians, cowboy entertainers and artists, rodeo cowboys and ranchers/cattlemen. Each inductee personifies the cowboy ideals of integrity, honesty, and self-sufficiency. Three former Kearny County residents have been inducted in the Working Cowboy/Cowgirl category.

Otis Jennings, rodeo legend and stock contractor, was selected posthumously for the Hall of Fame in 2004. Otis's interest in working with horses and cattle began when he was hired by a race-horse owner and horse trader to retrain soured horses. Though Otis later recalled the danger his job entailed, the training allowed him to build a solid reputation that led to other horse-breaking jobs.



OTIS JENNINGS

Otis and his wife Shirley shared a love for horses and horse breeding. They purchased a quarter section of land west of Lakin in 1962 and vowed to do "whatever they had to do to make a living in the horse and cow world." Otis worked as a contract cowboy and for the State of Kansas as a brand inspector. He and Shirley also kept busy riding neighbors' colts. In 1972, they built their indoor arena west of Lakin, a labor of love and source of pride for Otis who mentored many young cowboys along the way. The duo purchased a string of rodeo stock in 1978 and created J-J Rodeo Company. Their legacy lives on through this family operation which produces Little Britches, High School, KPRA and Ranch Rodeos.

Vicki Lohman Johnson was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2016, the year of the cowgirl. The oldest daughter of LeRoy and Ruby Lohman, Vicki spent

her childhood and early adult life near Kendall and helped her family farm 5,000 acres and raise short-horn cattle. She was very involved with 4-H livestock and horse projects as a member of Peppy Workers, and Vicki was crowned the 1964 Kearny County Rodeo Queen. She attended Garden City Community College. In 1975, she went to work for A.I.D. Feed Yard in Syracuse. Vicki was offered a job in 1982 with Lobo Cattle Company in Garden City (now Irsik and Doll Feed Yard) where she excelled and became a mentor to women in the cattle industry. Vicki retired as the feed yard's office manager in January.



VICKI JOHNSON

2019 inductee Jim Arnold rode and trained horses for Harry and Hazel Shepler of Shepler's Western Wear in his younger years. He also hung out at the Wichita stockyards when he was a teenager until they finally hired him. The first in four generations of rodeoing Arnolds, Jim competed in bull riding, bareback bronc riding, and calf and team roping. He began his ranching career in Montana at the Matorador Ranch owned by Wichita's Koch brothers, then he returned to Kansas as a foreman and cowboy for the Young & Cooper Cattle Co. at Ashland. He eventually moved to the Young and Cooper Ranch near Kendall, later partnering with Tony Beaty to form Rawhide Cattle Company. After Tate Ranch annexed the Beaty Ranch, he was foreman of 41,000 acres spreading across Kearny and Hamilton counties. Jim now lives in Ashland.



JIM ARNOLD working cattle at Tate Ranch. Inset picture: Jim with his Hall of Fame trophy.