

METRO

and the Colorado state fair

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Unreal cowboys help Fairgoers find laughs

Since the rodeo left town, Cousin Jeb and Dusty Bottoms may be the last unreal cowboys left at this year's Fair.

If you saw them, you would know what I mean by unreal. With their cowboy hats, boots, leather vests, neckerchiefs and lassos, they look like regular cowboys.

What separates Jeb and Dusty from other cowboys is they are "vertically challenged" and ride miniature horses they call shortland ponies. Even on horseback, they stand only about 6 feet tall.

You can see them riding their horses around the Fairgrounds doing what most cowboys do at the Fair — patting little kids on their heads and flirting with their mothers.

Jeb rides a black horse with a white mane named Shadow. Dusty confides that Jeb used to call his horse Skunk.

Dusty said he wanted a name for his horse that was original and easy to remember so he calls his gray horse Silver (as in "Hi Ho Silver"). "One out of two ain't bad," he says.

I knew there was something strange about the last two cowboys on the Fairgrounds, but when I showed up a few minutes early for my interview with them, I was in for the shock of my life.

We met in the basement of the Ag Palace where they keep their outfits and horses. As I entered the room, I saw Jeb and Dusty before they saw me. They looked like two normally proportioned men. Their lifeless "horses" lay on the floor.

When they saw me, they tried to jump into their horses, but it was too late. I had discovered Jeb and Dusty are two regular cowboys who put on their horses one leg at a time, just like every other cowboy who walks around wearing a stuffed horse-like girdle.

I was relieved. I was afraid they were satyrs — you know, mythical man-beast relatives of the unicorn.

Their horses may be stuffed carpet remnants with glass eyes, but the illusion is pretty convincing, especially to young children.

Rather than blow the whistle on the two phony ponies, I decided to go along for the ride.

"Are those real horses?" asked 7-year-old Taylor Wheeler.

"They're real fun," Jeb answered.

Taylor's dad, Eric, explained later that Taylor was just going along with the joke. "He knows better; he has seven real horses," said Wheeler.

Another admirer asked, "Where can I buy one?"

"Oh no," Jeb answered. "I can't sell him, we're too attached."

Dusty asked the group of Fairgoers crowded around, "Do you want to learn some cowboonics?"

"Yes," the crowd answered in unison.

"Knock, knock," said Dusty.

"Who's there?" answered the crowd.

"Yah," said Dusty.

"Yah who?" asked the crowd.

The funny duo are full of one-liners about their rugged riders.

"Something's wrong with this horse, I ride him all day and MY feet get tired," said Dusty.

"This horse dances like he has two left feet," said Jeb as Shadow danced to the music.



JUAN'S WORLD

Silver Queen heads senior contingent



Adalaida Martinez reigns over Senior Day festivities on just her second-ever visit to the Colorado State Fair.

By JOHN NORTON
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Adalaida Martinez visited the Colorado State Fair for the second time ever and she was looking forward to seeing as many exhibits, including the animals, as possible.

Her only concern was attracting attention with the banner she wore proclaiming her the Fair's 2006 Silver Queen.

"I hope they don't ask me too many questions," she said.

Martinez, 93, grew up on a ranch in Costilla, N.M., and now lives in the Pavilion at Villa Pueblo Senior Living.

Following a brief appearance on the Pepsi Stage with her court, the wheelchair-bound Martinez said she was off to see as much of the Fair as she was able, adding "I've got a pretty good pusher," in her son, Joe, who lives in Denver.

Seven of the 15 contestants, all nominated by the nursing facilities in which they live, turned out for the official presentation. It was part of the Fair's Senior Day festivities.

The nominees and their friends from area nursing homes gathered around the stage at midday for a Minnie Pearl tribute, followed by the presentation of



CHEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES
Carol Reese, 50, a resident at the Minnequa Medicenter smiles as she enjoys her outing to the Colorado State Fair on Senior Day.

the award for 20 years, also pointed out that Sophie Belarde, 78, of Minnequa Medicenter, had received a marriage proposal during the competition several weeks ago. Stuart asked her when the date was but she would only reply, "Soon enough," flashing her engagement ring.

Among the audience members was Lena Stilwell, 88, who has attended the Colorado State Fair for 57 of the 58 years she has lived in Pueblo after moving from her native Texas. She only missed one Fair because her daughter was ill.

A resident of Belmont Senior Care, she said she still looks forward to seeing the handcraft displays and even won a ribbon one year for her crocheted table cloth.

Queen Adalaida. Paulette Stuart, director of promotions at *The Pueblo Chieftain* and presenter of

Young'uns take on Mutton bustin'

By NICK BONHAM
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Little Gage Genova grabbed his father's cell phone Wednesday night and started yelling.

"I won, Tanya, I won!" he shrieked with delight to his dad's girlfriend.

His grandmother handed the 5-year-old another cell phone. It was his Papa, or grandfather.

"Papa, I won!" he said.

The jovial tyke slapped high fives and hugged folks who came to congratulate him. Gage had won Wednesday night's Mutton Bustin' competition at the Colorado State Fair. He rode that fast sheep practically the entire length of the dirt-clod arena, located outside of the Comcast Amphitheater.

A student at Vineland Elementary School, Gage was all smiles. He qualified, like other winners of this year's Fair, for the "World Championships" which is scheduled 6:30 p.m. Monday. The winner of that event receives a belt buckle and \$1,000 savings bond. Those wanting to participate and qualify can still do so every night this week at 6:30 p.m. and three times a day (2:30, 4:30 and 6:30 p.m.) on Saturday and Sunday, according to organizers.

Daily winners also receive a belt buckle and certificate. There is a \$12 entry fee, and to compete boys and girls must be 6-and-younger.

Darting out of a rodeo chute on the back of a sheep, decked out in protective clothing but with only the animal's wool to hold onto is a lot of action for a kid who has just been potty trained.

Gage looked up at his Grandma, Susan Genova, and asked "Did I do good?"



CHEFTAIN PHOTO/BRYAN KELSEN
Adrian Hogan, 6, of Colorado Springs, does his best to hang on while attempting to ride a sheep for six seconds in the State Fair's Mutton Bustin' competition.

Grandma was as elated as grandson.

"Oh my God," she exclaimed. "I can't believe this! How cool!"

The proud father, Mike Genova, said his boy did a "good job, for a little farm boy" by besting the field of 12.

Mutton Bustin' is a fan favorite. The arena is always lined with folks and on Wednesday night, there were so many that the arena fence started to bend inward from the weight of the crowd leaning in to watch.

Gage competed last

Saturday, but bailed halfway down the arena. This time, however, "I was running so fast," he said.

The Genovas are looking forward to Monday, but there is one slight problem.

"What's a championship?" Gage asked.

Ag Pavilion exhibits highlight farm, ranch life

By GAYLE PEREZ
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

So, you don't know much about agriculture in Colorado?

Then the Agriculture Pavilion at the Colorado State Fair is the place to go to get a quick lesson on the basics of farming and ranching.

Geared toward children, the pavilion offers a variety of booths and hands-on activities to acquaint city slickers with the lives of farmers and ranchers.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture along with the Colorado chapter of the Future Farmers of America and several other agricultural agencies in the state offer a close-up and hands-on look at agriculture in the state.

Various display booths offer facts about agriculture and ranching in Colorado.

Hands-on activities for the children also give a feel of what it's like to live and work on a farm or ranch.

From picking apples to roping cattle, children can get a look at where food comes from and how it is gathered.

The booths are maintained by officers from the state FFA chapter.

"I think this gives kids a better idea of where their food comes from," said Abby Frank, an FFA officer from Ridgway.

"It's good to show them that a potato comes from a field and not grown in a grocery store."

PLEASE SEE PAVILION, 8A

Tour company highlights farm life

Barn Tours gives city slickers glimpse of agriculture business.

By JEFF TUCKER
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

It turns out that Big Bird is a Polish chicken.

If finding out the heritage of one of the country's most beloved children's television characters doesn't impress, then take a

barn tour and find out more.

Lots more. For the first time, there's a place for city slickers in the various livestock and poultry barns at the Colorado State Fair.

Sondra Wallace, founder of Barn Tours, has brought some new illumination to the original purpose of this annual exhibition: finding out more about the animals and agriculture that affect daily life in the U.S. and around the world.

"I like to think I do more than educate," she said with a wry grin. "I like to say I

empower people."

Even if it's just to impress at cocktail parties or watching Jeopardy, she adds.

But Wallace's tours come from experience.

Barn Tours is a national company that has been at various fairs and expos throughout the country, as well as Canada and Australia, for the past 16 years. The company has grown large enough to operate at 10 fairs simultaneously.

Wallace is also a rancher and farmer.



CHEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES
Sondra Wallace (right), gives a Barn Tour at the Colorado State Fair.

PLEASE SEE JUAN, 8A

PLEASE SEE TOUR, 8A