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For the Red Bluff Round-Up

FAMILY LEGACY

Idaho man is Red Bluff Round-Up volunteer, finds satisfaction in following in family's heritage

Red Bluff, Calif. (March 27, 2017) – Every year, Brett Ortland gets in touch with his family's past.

Each April, the Caldwell, Idaho man comes to the Red Bluff Round-Up and spends his time volunteering for the same event, where his great-grandfather Roy Owens was president.

Ortland, the son of Pat Owens Ortland of Chico and the late Robert Ortland, has been coming to the Round-Up for the past thirty years. He started volunteering at the Round-Up as a young adult, untying calves and opening gates. For the past twenty years, his job has been to pull the latches on the chute gates. When the bull rider, bareback rider or saddle bronc rider is ready to come out of the gate, the cowboy nods his head, Ortland pulls the latch open, and Rod Moore, a director with the Round-Up, pulls the rope to open the gate.

It's a fun place from which to see the Round-Up, Ortland said. He sees the action from close up, and has gotten to see some big name cowboys ride, like world champions Tuff Hedeman and Ted Nuce. He was the one who pulled the latch for the famous bull rider Lane Frost, when Frost rode the bull Red Rock. (Frost got bucked off that time.)

Being around 1,200 lb. horses and 1,500 bulls can be dangerous, too. Three years ago, one of Donnie Kish's bulls chased Ortland up the gate. The bull rider was bucked off and landed on Ortland, pulling him off the gate. The bull hit Ortland in the leg, but he wasn't injured.

And about fifteen years ago, Ortland was catching the gate after it flew open, and just then the horse kicked towards the gate and split his finger open. It required about fifteen stitches. Pulling the latches is a high adrenaline job, but one Ortland loves.

He takes great pride in helping with the Round-Up. He moved to Caldwell in 1998 and has only missed one year of volunteering with the Round-Up. It's a connection to his past, "my family heritage," he said. Great-grandfather Roy Owens was president of the Round-Up for twelve years, from 1928-1940. Pete Owens, his mother's cousin, used to work behind the chutes, and Bert Owens, another cousin, was manager of the Tehama Distr. Fairgrounds, where the Round-Up takes place. Another cousin, John Owens, opened latches before Ortland; Craig Owens was an arena director and Kenneth Owens helped with the roping chutes.

It's about a 600 mile trip to Red Bluff, and Ortland stays in a borrowed RV. He brings his wife and six-year-old son, and gets a chance to visit his mom, Pat, in Chico.

The Round-Up isn't the only rodeo that Ortland helps with. He's instrumental with the Caldwell rodeo, having served as a director since 2006 and as president two years ago.

One of Ortland's favorite parts of the Round-Up is each day, when the rodeo is over. He heads to the Red Bluff Round-Up Museum, where the directors and volunteers gather, and as he visits with his friends, his great-grandfather's photo looks upon the crowd. His family's memorabilia is in the museum: cousin Jim Owens' saddle, a hat owned by Craig Owens, and a halter given to Craig Owens by the Round-Up, in appreciation for his service. "It's like a family reunion," Ortland said. "I get in touch with things I don't see every day, and I enjoy that."

The first performance of the Red Bluff Round-Up kicks off April 21 at the Tehama District Fairgrounds at 7 pm. The second and third performances are April 22 at 2:30 pm and April 23 at 1:30 pm. Tickets range in price from \$14 to \$30 and are available online at RedBluffRoundup.com, at the gate, and through the office at 530.527.1000. For more information, visit the website or call the office.

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Cutline: Brett Ortland, to the far left in front of the Green Barn chute, volunteers with the 2013 Red Bluff Round-Up. The Caldwell, Idaho man, a Chico native, has been helping with the Round-Up for the past thirty years. His mother's family, the Owens, was instrumental in the Round-Up. Photo by Hubbell Photos.