

HONORING RODEO COMPETITORS, VOLUNTEERS
St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame class is announced

St. Paul, Ore. (May 7, 2018) – The St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame has announced its 2018 class of inductees.

The class is headlined by team roper Charly Crawford and includes former bull rider A.J. Swaim, the Christensen Bros. bareback horse Smith and Velvet, Sam and Claudia Smith, and Dick and Eileen Buyserie.

Charlie Crawford, who won the team roping at the 2006 and 2017 St. Paul Rodeo, grew up attending the rodeo as a kid. Born and raised fifteen miles from St. Paul, in Canby, he competed at peewee rodeos in the St. Paul Rodeo arena and has never missed a year of pro rodeo competition there, since he got his PRCA card 22 years ago.



Crawford remembers sitting in the stands during slack, watching legendary team ropers like Leo Camarillo, Jake Barnes, Dee Pickett, and Mike Beers compete. “I watched a lot of runs in that arena,” he said. He also remembers, as a kid, chasing down the paper American flag that was shot out of the cannon during the national anthem each year. One year, he got it, and “I had it hanging on my wall for forever.”

Crawford’s favorite parts of the St. Paul Rodeo are the victory lap around the trees, the wild horse race and the wild cow milking. He loves the fans as well. “Every year that rodeo is packed. It’s electric in the arena. They do a good job of keeping the crowd into it. It’s fun.”

Crawford is a nine-time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo qualifier (2005-07, 2009-10, 2012-14, 2017) who won the Oregon High School Rodeo team roping title in 1996. He is married to seventeen-time Women’s Professional Rodeo Association all-around winner Jackie Hobbs Crawford.



Former bull rider **A.J. Swaim**, Canby, Ore., grew up in Arlington, Ore., moved with his family to Redding, Calif., and came back to Oregon to attend college.

In 1972, his first year of rodeo, he competed in St. Paul, and he was there nearly every year till he quit riding bulls in 1985.

The two-time National Finals Rodeo qualifier (1975, '77) won the St. Paul rodeo in 1982 and still wears the buckle. “For us, at that time,” he said, St. Paul “was our hometown rodeo.” He loves the small-town atmosphere at the big-time event. “I think it’s just great that such a little town can put on such an amazing event. During the rodeo, the town is like a balloon. It expands.”

In 1985, while sitting in a motel room in Denver, Swaim decided to quit rodeo. He was tired of the down time between rodeos and had been involved in residential construction. He went to work with fellow cowboy Bob Koch, who had introduced him to the building industry.

Swaim’s father, Bob, a bareback rider and steer wrestler, won the bareback riding at the St. Paul Rodeo in 1954, tying with Harry Tompkins. Swaim is a director on the Canby Rodeo board.

The Christensen Brothers horse **Smith and Velvet** is the animal inductee into this year’s St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame.

The big palomino was purchased by Bob and Henry Christensen in the mid 1960’s from the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Indian Reservation near McDermitt, Nevada.



The gelding started his rodeo career as a saddle bronc horse, but after he gained a reputation for bucking for five or six seconds, then spinning, Bobby Jr., the son of Bob, turned him out to pasture for a year.

In 1975, Christensen loaded Smith and Velvet up and brought him back to rodeos, this time in the bareback riding. The horse, a late bloomer, had found his niche. "He was spectacular," Christensen said.

Smith and Velvet started his rodeo career with a different name. At the time, the St. Paul Rodeo was the Christensen Brothers' biggest contract, and Gene Smith, secretary for the rodeo, "had a lot of influence" with the committee, Bobby said, so the horse was named Mr. Smith after Gene. When Black Velvet Whisky began sponsoring pro rodeo stock contractors' awards, the word "velvet" was added to the horse's name, and the "mister" was dropped.

Smith and Velvet won the PRCA's Bareback Horse of the Year four times (1977, 79-80, 82). He died in 1983 in a truck accident, as he was coming home from a rodeo in California.

Smith and Velvet joins Henry and Bob Sr. in the St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame. The horse was inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame last August.

St. Paul residents **Sam and Claudia (Ernst) Smith's** involvement in the rodeo began when both of them were children.



Sam remembers riding his Shetland in the arena and running livestock out on horseback. Claudia recalls picking strawberries to earn money for a rodeo outfit: new jeans and a shirt, to wear to the rodeo.

They married in 1959 and their involvement continued. They helped with the trail ride breakfast, and worked on regular rodeo committees as well.

Sam served as a rodeo director from 1975 to 1979. He was co-chair of the gates committee for twenty years, beginning in the 1990s, and Claudia joined the Wild West Art Show committee in 2001.

Their children: Jennifer Crosby, Kay Ford, Jeanne Zielinski and Monte Smith are also rodeo members. Jennifer and her daughter Jackie are both past St. Paul Rodeo queens.

Dick and Eileen (Hiller) Buyserie are the second director and member-couple to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. Married in 1969, they began their time with the St. Paul Rodeo the next year. They helped with the gates and ticket office committees and worked as co-chairmen of the trail ride breakfast.



Dick was well-known for his meticulous grounds-keeping of the stadium and grounds, as well as serving as concessions committee chairman, while Eileen distributed brochures and organized the first banking committee for the rodeo. Dick was a rodeo director from 1998 through 2012, serving as president in 2007-2008, and was in charge of the Wild West Art Show for several years. Eileen passed away in 2013, and their son Jeff and his wife Melissa are now co-chairs for the trail ride breakfast.

The 2018 class will be honored during the rodeo's annual Hall of Fame barbecue on July 2 at 5 pm at the rodeo grounds. A meal will be served and a silent auction will raise funds for the Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund. Tickets for the meal are \$32 and are not available at the door; they must be purchased in advance. They can be purchased online at www.StPaulRodeo.com.

This year's rodeo runs July 3-7, with performances each evening at 7:30 pm and a 1:30 pm matinee on July 4. Tickets are on sale online.

For more information, visit the website or call the rodeo office at 800.237.5920.

###

Cutlines:

Charly Crawford, a member of the 2018 St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame class, grew up attending the rodeo. He won the team roping at the rodeo in 2006 and again last year.

Former bull rider A.J. Swaim, a two-time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo qualifier, competed in St. Paul several times. He won the bull riding there in 1982 and still wears the St. Paul buckle.

Dick and Eileen (Hiller) Buyserie began their married life in 1969 by helping at the St. Paul Rodeo. They are part of the Hall of Fame class of 2018. Eileen passed away in 2013.

Sam and Claudia Smith are part of the 2018 St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame class of inductees. They each got their start with the rodeo as youngsters, and after marriage, continued to volunteer with the rodeo.

A cowboy gets bucked off the bareback horse Smith and Velvet. The horse, owned by Christensen Bros., won numerous titles and will be inducted into the St. Paul Rodeo Hall of Fame this July.