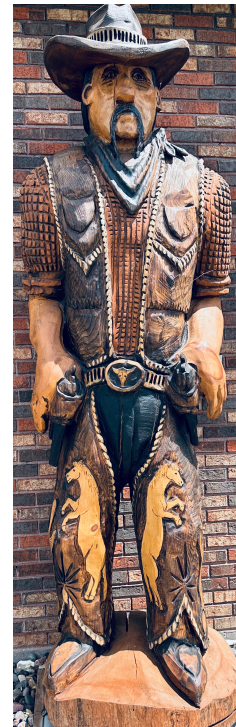


Chicog News for September, 2024
JoAnn Malek

It **was** my first time at the rodeo. At eighty years of age I attended the Spooner Heart of the North Rodeo on Thursday, July 11, 2024. After twenty years as a Wisconsin resident living near one of America's top-sanctioned professional venues, I decided it was time. Turns out I had a lot to learn.

Modern rodeos owe just about everything to Mexican *vaqueros* of the early 1800's. Horses arrived in Mexico in 1519, cattle followed in 1521. Vaqueros were itinerant freelancers, carrying all they owned on horseback as they moved from ranch to ranch looking for work. They perfected the sport of roping and riding, innovated the rodeo fashions of leather boots, chaps and big hats, and gave it all a name. Rodeo is derived from the Spanish word *rodear*, to encircle or round up.

These vaqueros were *Mestizo* people of Native American and Spanish ancestry, Black people, Indigenous people and *Criollos*, Spanish people born in North America. In the decades after the Civil War it is estimated that as many as one in four American cowboys was Black. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which began in North Platte, Nebraska in 1882, reflected multicultural roots despite the racism of the era, with Mestizo, Black and even female competitors, including famed sharpshooter Annie Oakley



Bull-related rituals have long been a part of human culture. In Bronze Age Crete these were exhibitions of human agility and bravery in harmony with the power of the bull. Spanish bullfighting was different, a direct combat between the matador and the bull, symbolizing life, death and honor, often resulting in the death of the animal. Bullfighting is watched in silence.

Rodeo is commotion. Rodeo emphasizes skill in mastering and controlling the bull. While not as ritualistic as early ceremonies, rodeo maintains a cultural connection to the bull and emphasizes harmony and athleticism. Rodeo is a celebration of cowboy culture and heritage.

“Courage is being scared to death—-but saddling up anyway.” John Wayne

Where does one purchase rodeo tickets? I learned that going on-line to Heart of the North Tickets brings one to Event Tickets Center, which re-sells tickets at a

very high price and charges an extra \$20 in transaction fees. Instead, be sure to go directly to the official Heart of the North Rodeo on-line site to purchase tickets, or walk into the Washburn County Tourism building.

What does one wear to a rodeo? There were many in tall leather boots, jeans and cowboy hats but most wore sundresses or shorts on this hot evening. I was surprised to find parking lots already filled when I arrived, picnic tables near the concessions area packed with people and food. I had forgotten about the 6:30pm Exceptional Rodeo, when children with special needs compete in mock-rodeo events.



Folks with blue paper bracelets like mine were gathering in stands on three sides of the arena. I chose my seat on the shady west side, glad to have my Crazy Creek stadium chair along, a comfortable way to sit on backless bleachers.

The rodeo was great. Horses were beautiful and spirited. Real-life cowboys and cowgirls demonstrated their strength and skills. Young ones climbed onto lambs and hugged them tight in the mutton busting event, with cowboys nearby to catch when they tumbled. Professional trick rider Lindy Lica balanced, standing with feet on two horses that were racing around the stadium and across flaming torches. After each event riders circled the arena carrying flags that announced the next competition. I chose to leave early, thus probably missing the most exciting challenges. Unfortunately, I missed the after-rodeo music of Savannah Rae, too. Her *a cappella* rendition of the national anthem was astounding. Next time I'll stay longer.

A SHOUT OUT to my silent partners Michael and Katy. Chicog News is way better thanks to the two of you.

BOOKS AND BREAD is part of the Compassionate Kitchen program. It is a pop-up pantry offering free food and library resources, delivered by bookmobile. It is sponsored by Spooner Memorial Library, Community First of Washburn County and Feed My People Food Bank of Eau Claire. A choice of meats, bread, fresh produce, packaged food, and snacks are available at no cost to households. There are no identification, residency or income requirements.

IMPORTANT SEPTEMBER DATES

Wednesday 9/11, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 9/11&25, Namekagon Transit service

Wednesday, 9/25, 10:30-12, Books&Bread, Beaverbrook

Thursday, 9/26, 11-1, Bibliodragon, town hall

Town Website: www.townofchicog.com

Thank you for reading the Chicog News