

Riley Continues Family Tradition Of Lifelong Association With Rodeo

WINSTON-SALEM — As a song title, "On The Road Again" is one of country music singer Willie Nelson's greatest hits. In hardback, the same title would more aptly describe the life story of Kelly Riley, former pro rodeo cowboy turned pro rodeo businessman.

Riley, 32, oversees R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.'s sponsorship of professional rodeo as team manager of the Winston Rodeo Series. Riley averages between 80,000 and 70,000 travel miles each year, jetting back and forth from Reynolds Tobacco's headquarters here to Winston Salem events in Joseph, Ore., West Palm Beach, Fla., and 68 other cities in between.

It might be a cumbersome lifestyle for some businessmen. But for Riley,

rodeo and the travel that is so much a part of the sport, became a way of life the day he was born. The only noticeable difference today is the three-piece suit he often wears between his hat and boots.

Riley was reared in the tiny town of Aledo, Tex., (near Ft. Worth), the eldest child of Lanham and Mitzi Lucas Riley. From the start, Kelly was destined to love rodeo. His father was one of the top pro calf ropers in the 1950s. His mother, Mitzi Lucas, was perhaps even more well-known as a famous trick rider.

"I can remember going

with my dad to places like Phoenix, Cheyenne and Madison Square Garden when I was just four or five years old," says Riley. "My idol was Casey Tibbs (former world All-Around Cowboy champion) because he used to take me behind the chutes to meet the other cowboys. He took me under his wing and that was a pretty big thrill at that age."

Riley's rodeo blood actually goes back two generations to his maternal grandparents. His grandfather, Buck Lucas, was a champion steer wrestler in the 1920s. Tad Barnes Lucas, Kelly's grand-

mother, was one of the first trick riders of modern rodeo and developed many of the standard trick riding routines still used today.

"One of the well-known tricks she perfected was sliding all the way under the belly of the horse while the horse gallops at a dead run," Riley recalls. "She was in Tex Austin's Wild West Show which toured all over this country and also in England and Europe."

"My mother's the one who really grew up in rodeo," he adds. "She had already started performing with my grandmother in the wild west shows when mom was

very young."

Appropriately, Riley's parents started dating in New York City while he was competing and she was trick-riding at Madison Square Garden. Although Lanham Riley began his career riding bulls, he later turned to calf roping and nearly won world titles in both 1951 and 1955.

"Pro rodeo has changed in many ways since my father competed," says Riley. "Of course, there's a lot more money and major sponsors such as Winston are involved."

"But in dad's time, most of the top cowboys learned

their expertise on the ranch itself and just rodeoed in their spare time. Today, it's more of a business. High school and college competition prepares a cowboy for the pros, just like with other sports."

Riley attended one of the top college rodeo schools, Tarleton State at Stephenville, Texas, enrolling the year after the school captured the national intercollegiate title in 1967.

Although his father had specialized in the timed events, Riley opted for the danger and excitement of bull riding.

"I rode bulls in college

and then for five years in the PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association)," says Riley, who admits he made a living but not much else while on the pro tour. "I broke my arm three different times, my wrist once and my collarbone once. I had a slight problem with injuries."

With his future as a professional cowboy somewhat in doubt, Riley was understandably elated when Reynolds Tobacco offered him the position of assistant team manager in January 1977. He was promoted to rodeo team manager in May of this year

"Working with the Winston Rodeo Series has really been the chance of a lifetime for me," adds Riley, who is single. "The cowboys are easy for me to work with. And they have an awful lot of respect for Reynolds' sponsorship because we were the first major corporation to support rodeo on a full-time basis (beginning in 1972)."

"I must admit that I still have some desire to get back on those bulls every now and then," says Riley with a grin. "Then I start thinking about all those broken bones. Physically, this job is a lot easier."



Dr. Melvin T. Steel

Providence Church Revival Set

Providence Missionary Baptist Church, at 214 W. Church St. in Edenton, will hold their fall revival beginning August 24 through August 28. The services will begin each night at 7:30 P.M., with special music every night.

Dr. T. Melvin Steel, pastor of the New First Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Va., will be the guest minister.

The pastor, Dr. J. L. Fenner, and congregation invite all to attend.

Hospitalized

Richard Geist, active in politics in Pennsylvania, was flying a motorized hang glider at the Edenton Municipal Airport when it lost power and crashed at the south end of the runway.

The accident occurred on August 13.

Geist suffered a badly mangled right hand, apparently cut by the cable on the glider, and a fractured left ankle. He was taken to Chowan Hospital, then to Albemarle Hospital, and later transferred to Duke Medical Center.

Reports For Duty

Marine Pvt. Jeffery W. Vaughan, son of LASSIE G. and SARAH N. VAUGHAN of Route 2, Box 213, Edenton, has reported for duty with Headquarters, 8th Motor Transport Battalion, Camp Lejeune, N. C.

Letter To Editor

Dear Friends:
As I am unable to personally thank everyone who contributed to the William Burke Fund for my new legs, I am taking this means to do so.

Your show of love and concern has touched me more deeply than I can put into words.

My special thanks to Radio Station WCDJ for giving the time and to my friends of the Perquimans County Male Chorus, who assisted me in appearing on the benefit broadcast, and for the publicizing of my need in The Chowan Herald.

I appreciate the generous donations of area churches and individuals, who enabled me to go to Norfolk August 10 to obtain my prosthesis. Nearly \$900 has been given, which not only paid the balance on my prosthesis but will help with other medical needs.

May God bless each of you for your gifts of love, which were so bountiful.

Humbly,
William "Sing" Burke

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