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Kerrie Booher, Director of Communications
kbooher@nationalcowboymuseum.org
(405) 838-1867

The Cowboy Announces 2026 National Rodeo Hall of Fame Inductees and Honorees, Debuts New Rodeo Legacy Award

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum to honor rodeo legends and unveil renovated National Rodeo Hall of Fame during National Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend, Nov. 13 – 14, presented by Bobby and JJ Norris & The Dellora A. and Lester J. Norris Foundation

OKLAHOMA CITY (Aug. 18, 2026) - The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum has announced the 2026 class of National Rodeo Hall of Fame inductees and honorees, recognizing individuals and organizations whose achievements, leadership and dedication have helped shape the history and future of rodeo.

The eight-member inductee class will be celebrated during National Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend, presented by Bobby and JJ Norris and the Dellora A. and Lester J. Norris Foundation, Nov. 13–14, 2026, at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

The weekend will also include presentations of the Ben Johnson Memorial Award and Tad Lucas Memorial Award, as well as the debut of the new Rodeo Legacy Award. California Rodeo Salinas and the Pendleton Round-Up have been selected as the inaugural recipients.

This year's celebration will also mark a major milestone for the National Rodeo Hall of Fame with the unveiling of its newly renovated space. Phases 1 and 2 of the renovation will be complete in time for National Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend, with Phase 3 tentatively scheduled for completion in spring 2027.

The transformation reflects the Museum's renewed commitment to preserving and sharing the stories of the extraordinary men and women who have shaped rodeo, while ensuring their achievements and legacies remain a vital part of the Museum experience for generations to come.

"The National Rodeo Hall of Fame exists to preserve the people and stories that built rodeo, and this year's class represents the remarkable breadth of that legacy," said Pat Fitzgerald, president and CEO of the Museum. "From champions in the arena to performers, historians, horsemen and people who have devoted their lives to preserving the sport, each of these inductees and honorees has helped make rodeo what it is today. We are proud to give their stories a permanent home in The Hall."

Nomination and Selection Process

Rodeo members nominate individuals for consideration by the National Rodeo Hall of Fame Advisory Board, which reviews the submissions and selects a slate of finalists. Ballots for the 2026 class were mailed to eligible Rodeo members beginning June 1, with members voting by secret ballot to determine the final class of inductees.

2026 Inductees and Honorees

LIVING

- Jess Franks
- Marvin Garrett
- Gary Ledford
- David Motes
- Marvin Paul Shoulders
- Gail Woerner

DECEASED

- Hoss Inman
- Bobby Kerr

TAD LUCAS MEMORIAL AWARD

- Lindsay Rosser Sumpter

BEN JOHNSON MEMORIAL AWARD

- John Miller

RODEO LEGACY AWARD

- California Rodeo Salinas
- Pendleton Round-Up

About the Awards

The Ben Johnson Memorial Award: Chosen by past recipients with support from the Museum's Rodeo Committee, the award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the Western lifestyle as lived by screen and rodeo star Ben Johnson.

The Tad Lucas Memorial Award: Presented each year by the family of Tad Lucas, the most decorated cowgirl in American history whose career spanned seven decades, the award recognizes a living woman whose actions promote the values Lucas embodied.

The Rodeo Legacy Award: Established in 2026 by the National Rodeo Hall of Fame Advisory Board, the Rodeo Legacy Award recognizes rodeos for their historical significance, lasting impact on the sport and commitment to preserving Western heritage. Honorees are selected for their contributions to rodeo history, their communities and the continued growth of the sport for future generations.

Beginning with the next award cycle, nominations for the Rodeo Legacy Award may be submitted by Jan. 31, 2027, and should include up to 200 words explaining the rodeo's significance and legacy.

A Weekend of Celebration

The 2026 inductees and honorees will be recognized during National Rodeo Hall of Fame Weekend, Nov. 13–14, at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. Weekend events include the Rope 'N' Ride Cocktail Reception on Friday and the Champions' Dinner, Induction Ceremony and Benefit Auction on Saturday.

The weekend will also offer guests the first opportunity to experience the renovated National Rodeo Hall of Fame. The unveiling marks a new chapter for one of the Museum's cornerstone spaces and reinforces its commitment to honoring rodeo's history while introducing its legendary people and stories to new generations.

Tickets and information are available at nationalcowboymuseum.org/national-rodeo-hall-of-fame..

About the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is the nation's premier institution dedicated to the history, art and culture of the American West. Founded in 1955, the Museum houses an internationally renowned collection of more than 35,000 Western and Native American artworks and artifacts, including extensive collections of American rodeo photography, barbed wire, saddlery and early rodeo trophies.

Through its exhibitions, programs and scholarship, the Museum preserves and interprets the continuing story of the West, illuminating the people, traditions and ideas that continue to shape American culture. With more than 10 million visitors from around the world, it stands as a leading authority on the enduring legacy of the American West. For more information, visit nationalcowboymuseum.org.

About the National Rodeo Hall of Fame

Established in 1955 and located within the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, the National Rodeo Hall of Fame is the original, preeminent and most iconic location for honoring, celebrating and preserving the heritage and legendary names of the West's original sport: Rodeo. Regardless of an individual's background, professional affiliation or chosen event, induction in the National Rodeo Hall of Fame remains the highest honor to which a rodeo participant can endeavor.

Inductee and Honoree Bios

LIVING

Jess Franks

Bullfighter, Barrelman, Rodeo Clown, Rodeo Producer

Born in Texas and raised in Farmington, New Mexico, Jess Franks began working around rodeo almost as soon as he was old enough to enter an arena, loading roping calves at age 11, picking up broncs as a teenager and fighting bulls by 15. While competing in roughstock events in high school, he worked as a pickup man and bullfighter to pay his entry fees.

After serving in the U.S. Army, including in Vietnam, Franks embarked on a professional bullfighting career. In 1983, he transitioned to barrelman to focus more heavily on comedy and entertainment. His career took him to the NIRA Finals, Montana Circuit Finals, Turquoise Circuit Finals, Indian National Finals and Columbia River Circuit Finals, among many others. He was selected as an alternate barrelman for the National Finals Rodeo in 1988 and worked the NFR in 1989.

Known for memorable acts including his pink car, chariot race and mule Sally, Franks also produced the Farmington Pro Rodeo for 10 years, served on the PRCA Executive Council and worked as a stuntman and actor. He later built a museum dedicated to preserving the history of rodeo bullfighters, barrelmen and clowns.

Marvin Garrett

Bareback Riding

Marvin Garrett knew early that he wanted to be a cowboy. Born in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, he began riding steers at age 12 and soon discovered bareback riding — the event that would define one of rodeo's most successful careers.

Garrett joined the PRCA in 1984 and was named Bareback Rookie of the Year. He went on to capture four world championships, in 1988, 1989, 1994 and 1995, as well as National Finals Rodeo average titles in 1989 and 1995.

In 1988, Garrett competed for Team USA during the Winter Olympics Arts Festival in Calgary, helping bring home a team gold medal. His accomplishments have also earned him induction into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame, Wyoming Sports Hall of Fame and South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame.

Garrett and his wife, Lisa, live on a ranch near Rozet, Wyoming, where they raise cattle and bucking horses. He continues to pass his experience to the next generation as a college rodeo coach.

Gary Ledford

Tie-Down Roping

Gary Ledford began competing full time in professional rodeo in 1969 and made an immediate impact, qualifying for the National Finals Rodeo during his rookie season and recording the fastest tie-down time of the Finals at 9.0 seconds. A year later, he again recorded the fastest time at the NFR.

Ledford ultimately qualified for the NFR nine times. In 1978, he finished third in the world standings and won the NFR average. His major victories included Cheyenne Frontier Days in 1971 and the Copenhagen/Skoal roping in 1977, along with wins at some of the sport's best-known rodeos across the country.

Ledford competed for five decades, from 1969 through 2003. After retiring from competition, he spent another 20 years giving roping lessons before turning his attention more fully to ranching.

Known throughout rodeo for his quiet demeanor and extraordinary work ethic, Ledford and his wife, Carol, live in Comanche, Oklahoma.

David Motes

Team Roping

A native of Mesa, Arizona, David Motes was born into a rodeo family. The son of three-time National Finals Rodeo qualifier Glenn Motes, he won his first all-around saddle in 1965 while heeling for his father.

Motes joined the PRCA in 1973 and built a remarkable career highlighted by 22 NFR qualifications. In 1977, he and his brother Dennis captured the World Team Roping Championship, and Motes went on to win the NFR average four times — in 1977, 1981, 1984 and 1991.

His longevity has been as impressive as his championship record. Motes maintained his PRCA card and continued competing for more than five decades. Even after a serious 2018 accident left him with 11 broken ribs, he returned to competition just months later.

Today, Motes remains active in the saddle and on the rodeo trail, driven by the sport, the horses and the lifelong friendships that have defined his career.

Marvin Paul Shoulders

Bareback Riding, Bull Riding, Pickup Man

Born and raised in Henryetta, Oklahoma, Marvin Paul Shoulders carries one of rodeo's most recognizable family names — while building a distinguished career of his own.

Shoulders earned his permit in 1968 and competed in bareback and bull riding until an injury forced his retirement from competition in 1980. In 1969, he captured RCA Bareback, Bull Riding and All-Around titles. He qualified for the National Finals Rodeo four consecutive times from 1972 through 1975 and was the 1973 NFR Champion Bull Rider.

Following his competitive career, Shoulders remained deeply involved in professional rodeo as a pickup man with the Jim Shoulders Rodeo Company, an instructor at the Jim Shoulders Riding School and a member of the PRCA Board of Directors. He has also devoted significant time to mentoring young competitors and preserving rodeo history.

Shoulders is the son of legendary rodeo champion Jim Shoulders and Sharon Shoulders, who served for many years on the Museum's rodeo board.

Gail Woerner

Rodeo Historian, Author

Gail Hughbanks Woerner has spent much of her life making sure rodeo's stories — and the people behind them — are not forgotten.

Raised on a ranch near Willard, Colorado, Woerner became one of the sport's most prolific authors and historians. She has written 11 books and conducted more than 500 interviews with rodeo legends, preserving firsthand accounts from some of the most important figures in the sport's history.

During her decades of work in rodeo history, Woerner chaired the Rodeo Historical Society's Oral History Project for 21 years and organized 18 Rodeo Clown Reunions at major rodeos across the country. She also spent 11 years as rodeo historian for RodeoAttitude.com and has served as a hostess in the Gold Card Room at the National Finals Rodeo since 1982.

Her writing and historical work have earned numerous honors, and her articles have appeared in Western publications in the United States, Europe and Australia. Woerner lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband, Cliff.

DECEASED

Hoss Inman

Rodeo Producer, Stock Contractor, Horseman

James Allen "Hoss" Inman built a career that bridged rodeo production, livestock and horse racing.

Born in 1929, Inman spent his early years ranching in Colorado and competing as an amateur before developing his skills as a horse trainer. In 1954, he founded the Flying I Rodeo Company after purchasing stock from Lester Hines and became a prominent rodeo contractor throughout the Midwest over the next 23 years.

An innovator as well as a stockman, Inman was among the early rodeo producers to recognize the value of giving individual bucking stock memorable identities, and he supplied nine head of stock for the first National Finals Rodeo. Among his best-known animals was Jesse James, a longtime Finals horse and 1961 PRCA Horse of the Year.

Inman also served as secretary-manager of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association and produced its Finals during the 1960s. Later in life, he returned to horse racing and was inducted into the Nebraska Racing Hall of Fame in 1992.

Bobby Kerr

Horseman, Trainer, Rodeo Performer

Bobby Kerr grew up inspired by the cowboys of television Westerns and turned that childhood fascination into a life devoted to horses and Western culture.

His first job was with a neighbor's Wild West horse show, and as a teenager Kerr competed in saddle bronc riding, bull riding and calf roping. He later established himself as an accomplished trainer and horseman in reining, working cow horse, cutting and other Western disciplines.

Kerr became especially renowned for his work with American Mustangs. His ability to develop extraordinary trust with the horses — and showcase their intelligence, athleticism and versatility — became the foundation of nationally recognized freestyle and rodeo performances. He was named PRCA Specialty Act of the Year six times.

In 1997, Kerr and his wife, Susan, founded the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame to honor outstanding horsemen and women and preserve Western heritage. His influence continues through the horses he trained, the audiences he entertained and the countless people he introduced to the enduring spirit of the American cowboy.

2026 TAD LUCAS MEMORIAL AWARD

Linsay Rosser Sumpter

Linsay Rosser Sumpter is a recognized leader in the rodeo and western sports industry, known for advancing opportunities for women and honoring the traditions that define the sport. As the granddaughter of ProRodeo Hall of Famer Cotton Rosser, one of rodeo's most influential figures, she carries forward a legacy deeply rooted in excellence and innovation.

An accomplished rodeo athlete, Linsay has competed at the highest levels, earning qualifications to the Mountain States Circuit Finals, Women's Rodeo World Championship, Women's Professional Rodeo Association (WPRA) World Finals, and the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR). She continues to compete professionally as a breakaway roper, bringing firsthand perspective to her leadership and advocacy work.

Linsay currently serves as Commissioner of the Premier Women's Rodeo (PWR), where she plays a pivotal role in expanding opportunities for female athletes, increasing visibility for women's rodeo, and helping shape the future of the sport through strategic partnerships and national platforms.

A leading advocate for equity in sports, she is a prominent voice driving progress and visibility for women across the rodeo industry.

In addition to her industry leadership, Linsay spent 17 years as Head Rodeo Coach and Agriculture Business faculty member at Otero College, where she built competitive programs and mentored student-athletes to succeed both in the arena and in their professional careers.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and a master's degree in business communication from Southern Utah University. She is also a television analyst, providing expert insight and commentary for rodeo audiences across the country.

Outside of her professional work, Linsay is a dedicated wife to National Finals Rodeo steer wrestler Wade Sumpter and a proud mother of two.

2026 BEN JOHNSON MEMORIAL AWARD

John Miller

A member of one of rodeo's most distinguished families, John J. Miller was born in McAllen, Texas, in 1942. His grandfather, Ben Johnson Sr., earned championship honors during the 1920s, while his uncle, actor and rodeo champion Ben Johnson Jr., won the world team roping title in 1953.

Miller competed in several events but built his greatest success in team roping, calf roping and steer roping. He won major titles throughout the West and captured back-to-back World Champion Team Roping titles in 1970 and 1971. He also won the National Finals team roping championship in 1973 and was PRCA reserve world champion steer roper in 1972 and 1973.

Following his competitive career, Miller became a respected rope-horse trainer, clinician and American Quarter Horse Association judge. He spent a decade as resident trainer at the Lazy E Ranch/Arena in Guthrie, Oklahoma, and earned a reputation as one of the sport's finest teachers of team roping.

Miller was inducted into the National Rodeo Hall of Fame in 2009.