

The heart of a stuntman

By Craig Rullman
Correspondent

Sisters resident Jeff Ramsey is a passionate man.

As a Hollywood stuntman and stunt coordinator he has been lit on fire by Drew Barrymore, kidnapped Mel Gibson, and been bashed over the head with a break-away lamp by Julia Roberts' stunt double. He's crashed cars on purpose and been blown off of more horses than he can count, but above all, Ramsey says, "I love to be on fire."

Ramsey, who split time as a young man between the deserts of Arizona and Southern California, came to movie and television stunt work after riding bulls and working as a bullfighter in the California rodeo circuit. He is also a highly trained professional novillero, having performed for nearly 10 years in Novilladas in old Mexico.

Over the course of his career Ramsey has amassed an impressive résumé that includes more than 80 movies and television shows, from "Ocean's Eleven" to "Wild Wild West," from "Firestarter" to "Conspiracy Theory."

"I spent six seasons as a stunt coordinator on 'Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,'" Ramsey told *The Nugget*. "A coordinator is responsible for the safety of the entire company. So we have a lot of safety meetings. For the safety of all concerned, when a coordinator says 'Hey, we're about to blow up an entire city block,' that's probably a good time to shut up and listen."

Ramsey is now turning his experience and passion for hair-raising stunt work into a new project, defeating what he calls the "illusion of non-choice" by supporting young women in athletic arenas commonly dominated by men.

"The illusion of non-choice is the idea that women can't compete," he said.

It's difficult for women to compete, Ramsey says, when far too often they aren't even given the option.

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From his experience as a bull-rider in American rodeo to his performances in the

bullrings of Mexico, Ramsey has developed an abiding interest in the ancient sport of Recorteo, or bull-leaping. His current project will put together a team of women skilled enough at leaping bulls to defeat the men who presently dominate the competition.

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Recorteo is immensely popular in wide swaths of northern Spain and southern France, and has ancient roots in the Minoan civilization of Crete. Known today as "The People's Bullfight," because the animals aren't killed at the end of the performance,



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Sisters resident Jeff Ramsey has had a remarkable career as a stuntman.

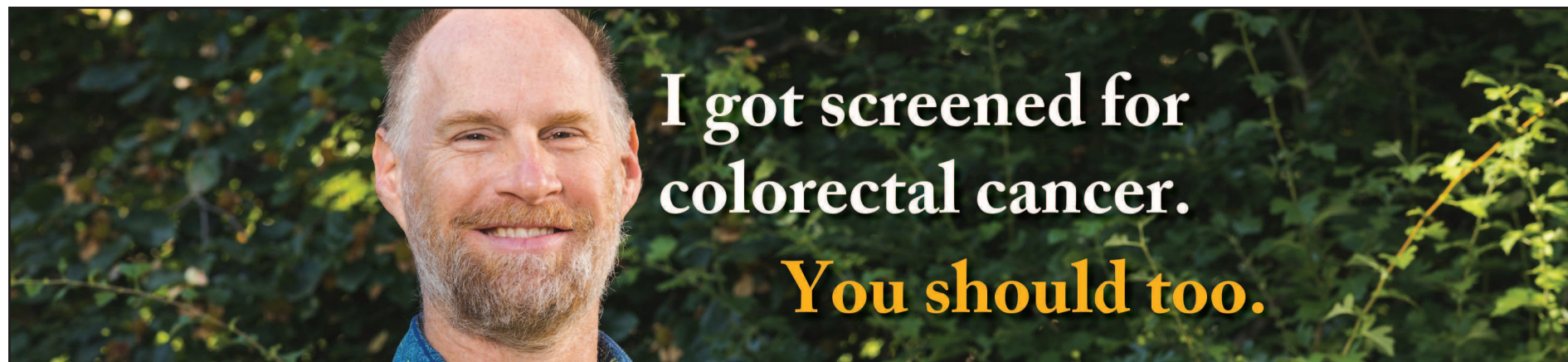
ancient depictions of Recorteo were discovered by archaeologists in 1917, when numerous frescoes were uncovered in the palace of Knossos. Those frescoes depict leapers flipping over the heads of charging aurochs, an extinct species of European bull that stood six feet at the shoulders.

"I want to find three women who have a desire to compete directly with the male teams leaping over bulls," Ramsey said. "It's a male-dominated sport, and

females do participate. But there is only one female that has ever leaped over a charging fighting bull. She did that last year. This is an opportunity to show that women not only are capable, but sometimes excel at sports, in some cases better than men."

Ramsey cites Serena Williams, Rhonda Rousey, and Danica Patrick as examples. "Those are just three names. These are male dominated environments where

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Paul Blackburn,
Hood River, Oregon

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