

The Life of a Rodeo Roper *continued from front page*

also allowed.

Pedersen says he attended some rodeo schools to learn more from experienced competitors and competed professionally on the Northwest rodeo circuit for several years. When daughter Sheyanne came along, and his career as a parts manager at Aero Air in Hillsboro got more serious, Pedersen slowed down a bit and competed in more amateur events. He has regularly competed at the Columbia County Fair Rodeo in St. Helens, has competed at the St. Paul Rodeo, and even traveled to take part at the Pendleton Round-Up several times, among other regional events. He says he's won a horse trailer, several saddles, belt buckles, and other prizes when competing. In 2009 he competed professionally on the Columbia River Circuit where he finished 4th at the end of the season. He helped coach Sheyanne through her high school years, helping her qualify at the state competition for the national regional competition in breakaway roping in her senior year. "I did more rodeos with Sheyanne because I wanted to experience it with her," says Pedersen. Sheyanne is now a junior at Pacific University in Forest Grove where she is studying to be a dental hygienist and occasionally competes in college rodeo events.

Since Sheyanne graduated from high school, Pedersen began competing again more seriously. He's currently riding a horse named Nevada, a 21 year old quarter horse raised on his dad's ranch in Montana. He recently retired his old horse, Blaze, now 30 years old, who also came from the ranch in Glendive. "I grew up training horses and Blaze was the best horse I've ever had," says Pedersen. "We've had Blaze since he was three years old," adds Susan. "Dale competed on him and then retired him, and then we used him to teach Sheyanne – Blaze is great teacher. Two foreign exchange students here in Vernonia have also used him to learn and compete."

"Team Roping is really huge in the United States," says Pedersen. "Out of all the rodeo events, it's one of the biggest, because you don't get off your horse and you don't get jostled around as much. You have people in their 70s who are competing in team roping. There's team roping events all over the place. We've traveled up and down the I-5 corridor."

Pedersen says there are two different associations that sanction and hold team roping events. He recently started competing in the World Series of Team Roping, which limits the number of entries and has higher entry fees, which in turn increases the amounts and chances to win prize purses.

"One of the things I really like about team roping is that you have so many different elements," says

Pedersen. "You have yourself and your horse, you have your partner and their horse, and you have the steer."

This past year Pedersen competed at two regional competitions sanctioned by the World Series, one in Pasco, Washington and the other in Wanatchee, Washington with his roping partner and good friend Paul Erikson. Pedersen is the header and Erikson is the heeler on their team. At Pasco they competed against 145 teams and finished in 5th place, winning \$1,200 in prize money. At Wenatchee they again placed 5th out of 160 teams, winning a \$1,300 purse. Those two wins qualified Pedersen and Erikson to go to Las Vegas and compete in the World Series of Team Roping national competition in December.

Just before the nationals, Erikson developed a blood clot in his leg and ended up having his lower leg amputated, and was obviously unable to compete. Pedersen was able to find another partner who qualified, Loren Heryford from Yamhill; Susan and Sheyanne also went to cheer Dale on. Total prize money was \$2 million, with 660 teams competing for the \$350,000 top prize. The Team Roping nationals took place at the same time as the National Finals Rodeo was being held, so it was a really fun time to be in Las Vegas if you're a cowboy or cowgirl.

Teams competed in six groups of 110 teams each, with the top 10 teams advancing to the next round. Scores are based on a combined time in two runs. In the first round Pedersen made his throw but Heryford missed his, so they received no time, but still had a chance to get into the consolation round. In the second round both partners made their throws and re-



Susan and Dale Pedersen in Las Vegas at the World Series of Team Roping.

ceived a time of 8.5 seconds, a very good time, which allowed them to get another try. On their third attempt they did even better and scored 7 seconds. At this point they had the 2nd best time in their group, and had one more chance to get back into the finals for the big prize money. Pedersen once again caught the steer quickly, but Heryford unfortunately missed his throw and they were eliminated.

"It was a great experience," says Pedersen about competing in the nationals in Las Vegas. "It's a beautiful facility and a really well run event."

Sheyanne will turn 21 this year which will allow her and Dale to compete together as a team this upcoming season in some events. "The tricky part is that Dale is a header, and he taught Sheyanne to head, so Dale is going to have to learn to be the heeler and switch ends," says Susan. "I've roped for so long and I've almost always been the header, but it's providing me with a new challenge," adds Dale. "My dream now would be to win a saddle with Sheyanne as my partner."

He says his roping partner Erikson is planning to come back and compete this year, after getting fitted with a prosthetic. "He's really got a great attitude," says Pedersen.

The Pedersens currently have seven horses on their place in Vernonia. Dale continues to teach young roping competitors in the Vernonia area, if they are interested in learning the sport. He and Sheyanne have been practicing two days a week this winter, driving to indoor arenas in preparation for the upcoming season. In the summer they'll lease five head of cattle so they can practice in their arena at home.



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