

RODEO AWARDS HONOR SPIRIT OF TWO MEN WHO HELPED BUILD FARM-CITY

Clayton Hass of Terrell, Texas, pulls down an 8.8-second ride in steer wrestling at a previous Farm-City Pro Rodeo. Since 1990, steer wrestlers have competed for the **Mike Currin Memorial Buckle** in Hermiston. The buckle will be retired after this year's rodeo.

FILE PHOTO



Mike Currin Memorial Buckle will be retired after this year's run

By **MATT ENTRUP**
Staff Writer

With more than \$200,000 in the purse, the Farm-City Pro Rodeo need do nothing more to bring out the best in the world's top cowboys.

However, there are some things cowboys value more than cash.

Two special awards unique to Farm-City will also be in play during the week — prizes coveted not for their monetary value, but the men they represent.

Mike Currin Memorial Buckle

The only thing larger than Mike Currin's rodeo talent was his heart.

The 1989 Farm-City steer wrestling champion was raised

just down the road on the ranch of his parents Ron and Judy Currin's ranch on Little Butter Creek and was pursuing the most lucrative season of his professional career when he was killed in a plane crash July 2, 1990 on Mount Rainer along with three other cowboys.

Also killed in the crash were Dave Smith of College Place, Washington; David Bowen of Yoakum, Texas; and Randy Dierlam of Seadrift, Texas — and their pilot — Harold "Bob" Card of Pendleton.

Currin was just 25.

"You know those people that just make you happy and you want to be around them all the time? Mike was that to a lot of people," said his widow Judy Currin Pederson. "He was well-liked, funny, had a great sense of humor and everybody just wanted

to be around him."

Looking to honor her late husband in the best way she could imagine, Judy created the design for the buckle and contracted Skyline Gold & Silversmiths to fashion a top-shelf keepsake for Farm-City's top bulldogger.

Judy's parents, Skip and Sherry Walchli, sponsor and present the buckle each year following the steer wrestling in Saturday's performance. The first buckle was awarded in 1990.

"They're a nice buckle and everybody that's won one knows it," said Sherry. "We've had some really nice responses from guys that appreciated the buckle."

One instance that stood out for Judy was the year she ran into steer wrestler Sid Steiner at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas and noticed a familiar design on his buckle.

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