



Congratulations to
George Eidsness
for being Inducted into the
2023 USTPA Hall of Fame!



Hall of Fame

Congratulations to this Year's Inductee!

George Eidsness grew up on a wheat farm in north-eastern, North Dakota with a small herd of beef cattle and a feedlot. His first experience riding horses was around age 5 when he rode draft horses while feeding cattle and cleaning the barn. He then moved up to a Shetland pony, who bucked off everyone who got on it. His first horse was a not-so broke



Mustang that his dad purchased for him for \$25 when he was 11 years old. George showed and judged Horned Herefords growing up in 4-H. In addition to showing steers, he had extensive practice riding steers in the feedlot using his makeshift bull rope. A memorable riding experience came at the age of 14 when he was attempting to ride a bucking 3-year-old when his cinch broke sending him to the ground on top of a tree stump. George spent a night at a hospital after he was knocked out with a bad concussion and he received 72 stitches on the back of his head. After graduating from high school, George's focus was on racing snow-

mobiles and cars rather than on riding horses. Between 18 and 45, George's riding was limited to an occasional trail ride and annual elk hunting trips on horseback in Montana and Colorado. After graduating from the University of North Dakota with a degree in Business Administration, George worked for a dealership in Fargo, North Dakota, where he worked in various capacities for 17 years. In June 1990, George and his wife Barb purchased Transwest Trucks in Commerce City, Colorado. George, Barb, and their two children packed up to



move to Colorado. In 1996, they bought a majority interest in Steamboat Lake Outfitters, which came with 65 dude horses and 6 mules. SLO features trail rides, pack trips, and hunting on horseback. In the fall of 1998, his daughter Meredith convinced him to abandon plans to build a new home in Westminster and purchase the Flying E Ranch near Fort Lupton. The ranch came complete with an indoor riding arena. A team penning had been scheduled for New Year's Day in what was now their arena. George agreed to allow them to put it on. At this time, George had never seen or heard of the sport of team penning. After observing penning for a couple of hours, George joined the Rocky Mountain Team Penning Association. He saddled up his daughter's rope horse, which he had never ridden before, and entered the event. At the end of the day, George had won a third-place check at 47 years old and he was hooked on the sport. George continued to pen at local RMTPA events around the Front Range of Colorado. He participated in Chuck Pancost events and eventually took a trip to Kremmling to compete in a penning put on by the Hills, which was a much tougher competition. Team penning allowed him to compete with daughter Meredith and son-in-law Andrew Lyons as a family. George became a lifetime member of USTPA and enjoyed the sport for many years. With his new group of friends Duane Kent, Bob, and Adam Tregemba, he traveled to events earning enough points to qualify for the USTPA finals in Amarillo, Texas. After competing on three or four different horses in his first year, his son-in-law

Andrew advised him if he was going to win he had to ride better horses. George purchased his first good horse, a 14-year-old

grandson of Cutter Bill for \$11,000, which he thought was a crazy amount of money to pay for a horse. Over the years, George purchased 16 more good horses, but the horses didn't get any cheaper. His best horse was CD Nurse, sired by CD Olena and out of Nurse Rey. He purchased the Quarter Horse gelding when he was just 4 years old as a talented prospect. Andrew told George that he better enjoy him because he would never own another one as good and he was right. CD was voted the Region 6 Horse of the Year multiple times. George enjoyed the sport for many years traveling with friends across the country. He traveled a lot to Texas and Oklahoma and to penning as far as Kalispell, Montana, Reno, Nevada, and Monroe, Louisiana. George particularly enjoyed the stock shows, including Denver, Rapid City, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston.

In 2000, George started putting on a winter series team penning at the Flying E Arena. He also enjoyed hosting team penning clinics and putting on several events using Mike Van Zant, Roger Braa, and 13 events with Bobby Atwood. George's good friend and mentor Gary Fletcher would haul up for almost every show. Gary helped put on what was believed to be the first USTPA-sanctioned team sorting at the Flying E. The team penning series was a family-run event with Barb and her sister running the kitchen while Meredith and Andrew were helping put on the show. In addition to Gary Fletcher, Dick and Sharron Jarrard from Wheatland, Wyoming, Troy and Peggy Hayden from Rapid City, South Dakota, along with Henry and Cathy Herrman from Syracuse, Kansas were regular out-of-state attendees at the Flying E. It takes a lot of people to put on a good event and George always seemed to be fortunate to find good help, a great cattle supplier, announcer, and bookkeeper. The Eidsness family continued producing team pennings for the next 14 years. When the liability insurance increased to \$21,000 for the three shows, George elected to end his productions.

His company, Transwest, has been a long-time sponsor of the equine industry, supporting team penning, cutting, roping, barrel racing, jumping, Little Britches, and high school rodeo. For a few years, they partnered with Hart Trailers giving away trailers at the USTPA finals, and later had a sponsorship agreement with Cimarron Trailers. George was also instrumental in bringing his friend David Dean and Cinch Jeans to USTPA as a sponsor. Over the years, Transwest has purchased hundreds of belt buckles, spurs, many saddles, and a few trailers sponsoring team penning events. George

and his family continue to support the youth in rural Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska. They sponsor and support 4-H and FFA events and purchase animals at 10 county fairs, in addition to the National Western Stock Show.

In around 2003, George was elected to the USTPA board as a director for Region 6 until January 2016. When George attended his first official meeting he was asked if he knew how to read a financial statement. When he answered yes, he was soon appointed to be the Director of Finance, a position he held for many years. George wasn't told that one of the position's responsibilities was ensuring there was enough money in the bank to make payroll in the slow months. George helped other board members steer the organization through some turbulent times and some great times. It's always been amazing for him to watch other board members step up by donating their time, money, and other resources to do what is right for the organization. One of his proudest accomplishments was leveraging his corporate sponsorship and personal relationships to help his great friend Gary Fletcher bring team penning back to the National Western Stock Show and running the finals during the PBR event. The best deal that we could negotiate was to allow us a maximum time of 15 minutes to set up the pen, bring in the cattle, run the top 10, and move out. The first year, they wouldn't believe it could be done and only allowed us to run the top seven teams. We proved them wrong and were out in under 13 minutes. This event went on to become what was probably the best crowd-pleasing event in



team penning. The contestants loved it as well, and many traveled a long way in January to compete. After many years of competing across the country, associating with many new friends, and having a lot of fun, George's back

condition forced him to quit riding competitively. His last competition was at the 2020 National Western Stock Show finals during the PBR performance. After riding over 6,000 miles through the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, he continues to enjoy trail riding.

Even though a back specialist told George in 1990 that if he didn't get his lower back fused he would be in a wheelchair in less than a year. He hasn't had to buy a wheelchair yet. George was able to ride for 30 years and he is hoping with the help of modern regenerative medicine and pilates he will be able to compete again. He has kept a couple of team penning horses around to be ready, just in case.

George is honored and humbled to be recognized by the USTPA as one of this year's Hall of Fame inductees.





USTPA Hall of Fame Mission Statement

1. Honor the Heroes of Team Penning and Ranch Sorting. We shall recognize and honor those individuals who have made an impact on our sport and our members.
2. Celebrate Excellence. We shall enshrine those who excelled and made our sport better.
3. Preserve our History. We shall honor those who sacrificed and worked whenever they were asked without personal reward.
4. Promote USTPA Values. Family, teamwork, leadership, excellence, horsemanship, community and sportsmanship.

