



Dancing with bulls



Layton Woodbury, 16, is one of the youngest bullfighters in North Dakota. Inside, read more about the Carson bullfighter who made history recently.

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PHOTOS BY MERISSA MEYER

As he takes a dive, Layton Woodbury's role as a bullfighter is to keep the bull's attention away from the fallen rider. Layton's brother, Dylan, is behind the bull.

DANCING WITH BULLS

Layton Woodbury follows in father's footsteps as bullfighter

BY LUANN DART

As a bullfighter, Layton Woodbury tangos with nearly a ton of bucking brawn, dancing inches from danger with each eight-second encounter.

The 16-year-old from Carson recently made history as the youngest bullfighter ever selected for the North Dakota Rodeo Association (NDRA) Finals Rodeo. He is the son of Dick and Jessica Woodbury, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative members from Carson.

Layton paired with Justin Ward as bullfighters at the NDRA Finals Rodeo in Watford City in September, protecting cowboys as they slam to the earth.

Bullfighters must meet qualifying standards to be selected for the event, and the bull riders then vote for their top picks. Layton attended seven NDRA rodeos this year, and was selected in the vote.

During the two-day rodeo, Layton describes being jittery the first night, but finding his niche the second night.

"There weren't any wrecks. I did my job both nights, but the second night was definitely better as I settled in, because that first night, I was pretty jittery," he says.

"My role in the arena is definitely to keep the cowboy safe. There are pickup men out there, too, and we have to

stay safe when they have the rope on the bull, too. Keep everyone out there safe and the rodeo going nice and smooth," Layton describes. "I'm going to go out there and give my best ability. I'm going to put my life on the line."

Sowing rodeo roots

Layton knows there are probably saddles being cinched that are older than him, but the teenager has had rodeo dirt in his boots since he was born.

"I've been born into rodeo. My dad was fighting bulls when I was born. That's what got me started in rodeo," Layton says.

Layton started bullfighting in 2019 at just 14 years old, following in the footsteps of his father, Dick Woodbury, who was a bullfighter from 1994 to 2010. Dick also appeared as a bullfighter at the NDRA Finals for his first time 25 years ago, in 1996.

Layton's first foray into rodeo was riding calves when he was about 5 years old, then he became a bull rider himself for three years while still in junior high.

"I didn't really like riding bulls anymore, so I wanted to change it up and go my dad's route and start fighting bulls, and that's how I started my bullfighting career in 2019," Layton describes.

As a bullfighter, Layton's background in the sport offers an edge.

"Getting on bulls really helped me with my timing and understanding the movements a bull rider's going to make and understanding when to go and when to back away," he says.



Familiarity with both the bulls and riders is another advantage.

For example, “this one tends to get in a lot of wrecks, so I’d better be on my A game here,” he says.

Like other athletes, Layton first prepared by watching game film. On rainy days, he’s sitting on the couch, watching videos of his father fighting bulls, with Dick offering critiques.

Then, Layton started working as a third man in the arena, shadowing other bullfighters, before his first main event.

“The first time, I was definitely scared, but nervous at the same time. I had all that adrenaline running through my body. But I’m all padded up. I felt safe out there. I understood I’m out there for one role and that’s to keep the cowboy safe, so I knew to relax,” he shares.

Layton wears kneepads, a fortified hockey girdle, and a bullfighting vest that has a hardshell on the front, back and rib area. He’s been injured only once so far, landing on a knee after being hit by a bull, requiring knee surgery later.

“To get where I wanted to be, I had to run a lot and get in shape, mentally and physically, and then just being more in front of bulls and getting used to it, getting the feel of it. Getting hit the first time was a big thing for me and really made me feel comfortable, like, ‘Oh, it didn’t hurt that bad. This is going to be awesome. I’m going to make a career off of this,’” he says. “I got hit that first time and after that, it just all started clicking.”

Layton stepped into the arena in 2020 in Rhame and Hettinger with his father by his side, as Dick stepped out of retirement to work at the rodeos, too.

“I actually got lucky enough to fight bulls with him. At the age of 47 years old, he was in the arena fighting bulls with me at two rodeos. That really helped me out a lot,” Layton says. “It was a lot of fun fighting bulls with my dad.”

And even when Dick isn’t in the arena, he’s still with Layton.

“When I’m in football, basketball, anything I do, the one person I can hear is my dad, so when I’m fighting bulls, that’s all I hear is my dad. I can hear him in the background, telling me, ‘Get closer, settle down, relax,’” Layton says. “He was able to help me be in the right spot at the right time. Bullfighting is something you really cannot teach, it’s something you just have to do and the more you do it, the better you’re going to get. I’ve had a lot of opportunities to get better at the sport and he’s been there helping me a lot.”

And what’s the best piece of fatherly advice Layton has heard?

“He gives me a lot of good advice, but the one I take mostly is to slow down,” Layton says. “The most difficult part of the job for me right now is slowing down. I tend to

go too fast and the bull doesn’t quite pick up on me.”

“You want the animal to see you and not be a flash going by. You want the bull to think, ‘Oh, here’s an easier target, I’m going to go after him,’” Dick describes.

Layton has the mentality and athletic ability needed for the sport, Dick says.

“The odd part is, he’s 16 years old, but we’re in the world today if you don’t start at a young age, you kind of get left behind. You watch peewee football, peewee hockey, peewee rodeo. They start them at such a young age. I thought, ‘Well, if these contractors are willing to give you an opportunity to step out there, let’s do it.’ Does he understand the risk factor and the seriousness of it, I don’t know yet,” Dick says.

“I’m pretty proud. When I see somebody, I have to show them pictures or videos. I guess that’s one way of saying that I’m proud,” Dick says. “I think he’s doing really well.”

This summer, Layton’s older brother, Dylan, started bullfighting, appearing in two rodeos with Layton as well.

“I think that just puts a smile on my dad’s face,” Layton said.

“He’s really improving. That’s one more thing, having my brother. That’s what makes you good, having your siblings to battle it out with,” he said. “My goal is to hopefully fight the NDRA finals with my brother.”

Layton completed more than 30 amateur rodeos this summer, traveling from Timber Lake, S.D., to Killedeer.

“I like to meet new people and experience new things, but one of my main favorite things is the adrenaline rush that you get from being inches away from getting run over or simply being in the arena. ... It feels really good when adrenaline is pumping through your body,” he says.

And what do his teenage friends think of his sport?

“I’m nuts. I’m psycho,” he says with a laugh. “They don’t understand why I want to do it.”

As he continues in the sport, Layton hopes to start paying homage to the bullfighters who paint their faces and play a larger role in the entire show, just as Dick once did.

“I would like to take on that role and keep doing what he did and follow exactly in his footsteps,” Layton says. ■



Dick Woodbury gives his son, Layton Woodbury, advice during a rodeo.



Veteran recalls being in midst of history

BY LUANN DART

Perched atop a mountain on the shores of the Yellow Sea, LeRoy Weikum was in the midst of history in 1963. On Nov. 22, 1963, the night shift stretched before the young soldier stationed in South Korea, as he kept a keen eye on the radar, watching for any troop movement from North Korea or China.

His fellow soldier slumbered beside him, as they traded duty every two hours during the 14-hour night shift.

Then a call came through the switchboard. President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. Weikum was in disbelief for a moment, then woke his buddy to carry the message to the captain. Moments later, the radar showed troops in North Korea moving toward the border.

Waiting to exhale

Weikum, a Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative member from Elgin, was 22 years old when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in October 1962. He trained in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., attended radar school in Fort Huachuca, Ariz., then went to Fort Bliss, Texas. Then, he boarded the USS Breckinridge with thousands of other soldiers being sent to South Korea, and served in the 6th Missile Battalion, 44th Artillery Headquarters.

The Korean Armistice Agreement, signed July 27, 1953, at the end of the Korean War, was designed to “ensure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved.” However, no peace treaty was ever signed following the end of the Korean War in 1953. The signed armistice established the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the de facto new border between the two nations, put into force a cease-fire and finalized repatriation of prisoners of war. The DMZ runs close to the 38th parallel and has separated North and South Korea since the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed.

As the 10-year expiration of the armistice approached, “they didn’t know what would happen, so they put us in there by the shiploads,” Weikum said.

The Cuban Missile Crisis had occurred in October 1962, the Vietnam War was escalating and the world was not exhaling. At that intersection in history, Weikum stepped into his military boots.

“It was not the best times,” he said.

That’s when the North Dakota farm boy found himself



LeRoy Weikum aboard the USS Breckinridge leaving for South Korea in 1963.

on a mountaintop in South Korea.

“We were right on the bank of the Yellow Sea on the highest mountain, so we could look into China and Manchuria and North Korea with a long-range radar,” he said.

As the soldiers watched air and ground movement, the duty was both interesting and frightening, he said.

On that night in 1963, the soldiers a world away learned their president had been assassinated.

“They called and said the president was shot in Dallas, Texas, and we should spread the word. Of course, everybody was sleeping,” he said. But, within minutes, everyone was awake.

“When Kennedy got shot, boy, the North Koreans got active up there right now and it was around 2 o’clock at night. Boy, the North Koreans were moving. We could see it on the radar. We were figuring they were coming, but they came right up to the DMZ and the 38th parallel and they stopped there. That’s where the line is,” he said, describing the immediate reaction by North Korea.

“They stopped at the 38th parallel and we were glad they stopped,” he said. “At the time, you didn’t have time to think.”

Weikum recalls another harrowing moment, getting sprayed by gunfire as North Korean soldiers stole U.S. documents out of the officers’ barracks.

He was serving on guard duty, when gunfire began.

“One evening, it was just about sundown and all of a sudden the gravel was flying around us. They must have



"Sourpuss at 11 p.m. Christmas Eve," **LeRoy Weikum** wrote on the back of this photo taken by his locker in South Korea. "I felt tired as a dog, but didn't know I looked that bad. This was just before church."

had silencers on their guns," he said. The U.S. soldiers scrambled behind the buildings for protection, when they saw someone leaving the officers' barracks. The North Koreans had cut a hole in the fence and invaded the barracks while pinning down the guards with gunfire.

And there were other dangers. Along the mountain trails, the South Koreans and Americans had placed signs to guide soldiers. The North Koreans often removed the signs with hopes the soldiers would get lost so their equipment could be stolen.

Coming home

Weikum, now 81 years old, served a 13-month tour of duty from June 1963 to July 1964.

He arrived in the United States by ship under the Golden Gate Bridge on the USS Gaffey.

"We were packed in there like sardines. It was a three-week trip. Going over, we hit a big storm between Japan and Hawaii and that was an experience. You'd swear that old tub was going to break in two and leave us out there. It

vibrated like crazy, but we made it," he said.

"But, oh, was there a lot of people sick. ... At 4 in the morning, I joined them," he said with a chuckle. "You'd go over one wave and the thing would tilt and when the fantail came out of the water, it vibrated so bad because it picked up speed, then it hit the water again. That part was pretty scary. ... One guy said, 'One minute, I'm afraid I'm going to die and the next minute I'm afraid I might not.' That was true."

His first meal back on U.S. soil was Swiss steak, he remembers. Two lines formed – one to reenlist for Vietnam, the other for those who were leaving service.

"That getting out was a lot longer line than the other one," he said.

"This guy was going home, farming and ranching," he said with a laugh. He married his sweetheart, Ramona, whose photo adorned his locker while he served.

This spring, LeRoy was honored by the Missouri River Quilts of Valor during an awards ceremony in Elgin. The Quilts of Valor Foundation is a national organization



founded in 2003 to award quilts to qualifying veterans.

“The mission of the Quilts of Valor is to provide comforting and healing quilts to veterans and service members who have been touched by war and to say thank you for your service and sacrifice,” said Arlene Meissel, the group leader for the Missouri River Quilts of Valor based in Bismarck.

During the ceremony, the veterans were draped with a quilt by family and a short bio on their wartime service was read.

“The quilt has a three-part message. Number one, we honor you for your service. Two, our quilters and members know that freedom is not free. This quilt is meant to say thank you for your sacrifice. And finally, it is meant to comfort you,” Meissel said.

“You had a lot of experiences that you don’t forget,” LeRoy said. “The best part of that was to appreciate what we had in this country. The Koreans, their way of life was pretty tough. It was nothing we would look forward to, that’s for sure.” ■



LeRoy Weikum works the night shift with the radar in the winter of 1964 in South Korea.

Holiday closings

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative will be closed Thursday, Nov. 11, in observance of Veterans Day, and Thursday and Friday, Nov. 25 and 26, for the Thanksgiving holiday. Line crews will be available in the case of an emergency or power outage.

We thank all veterans and members of the military for their service and sacrifice!

JUNE 19 TO 24, 2022



WASHINGTON, D.C.

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
- If you have any questions, please contact Julie Armijo, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric, at 701-597-3301 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Dec. 10, 2021. You can email entries to Julie Armijo at jarmijo@morgransou.com or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, P.O. Box 297, Flasher, ND 58535-0297.

TOP 3 REASONS TO ENTER THE ESSAY- WRITING CONTEST

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol
3. A learning experience you'll never forget

ESSAY QUESTION:

If you were asked to help promote your cooperative's annual membership meeting, what ideas do you have for increasing attendance among young member-owners and students? Please provide specific examples for unique communications strategies, scheduling and special activities for member-owners and their families.



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
<https://ndyouthtour.com/>

MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

board meeting highlights



Meeting date: Sept. 29 , 2021

- Approved Aug. 25 board meeting minutes
- Approved work order inventories and a special equipment capitalization
- Approved capital credit refund applications to estates
- Reviewed the monthly directors' financial report
- Reviewed the MGS financial report for August
- Reviewed senior staff department reports and heard general counsel report
- Reviewed co-general managers/CEOs update and report on meetings attended
- Reviewed approved board meeting minutes from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and subsidiaries
- Heard update on new Mandan office remodel
- Accepted bid withdrawal for Mandan triple-wide building
- Reviewed governance policy on director compensation
- Approved director meeting attendance guide
- Approved bad debt write-off
- Reviewed transmission and substation maintenance work plan draft
- Reviewed draft minutes from Innovative Energy Alliance and Maintenance Solutions Cooperative September board meetings
- Reviewed acting secretary report to the board
- Discussed capital credit age-based retirements
- Discussed capital credit discounting terms
- Elected voting delegates and alternates for specific upcoming meetings
- Heard directors' recap on meetings attended
- Reviewed WDUS/3C Construction update

Upcoming regular board meeting date:

Nov. 17 - tentatively 10:30 a.m. CT/9:30 a.m. MT - J&L Building, Bismarck

Members are welcome to attend board meetings. Due to COVID-19, plans may change. Please call the office at 800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting status if you wish to attend. To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Casey Wells or Co-General Manager/CEO Donald Franklund at 701-597-3301 at least one week in advance. Members may obtain a copy of approved board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at www.morgransou.com, or contact the Flasher office to request a copy.

The holidays are just around the corner

Gift certificates are available at Mor-Gran-Sou. Light up someone's holiday season!

How long is your Christmas list? If a certain someone on your list is a member of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative and you need a bright idea on what to buy for Christmas ... why not wrap up a gift certificate he or she can use toward an electric bill?

Call Mor-Gran-Sou at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212 and ask for Julie or Jackie.

We can help you "lighten" up the holidays.



Power line pole testing scheduled

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative is currently pole testing, starting in Morton County south of Mandan, with plans to continue north and west to the New Salem, Almont and Glen Ullin areas.

The inspection consists of team members accessing all cooperative distribution lines using four-wheelers, and testing each pole for rot or other damage. We thank our members for their understanding as we work to make the system as reliable as possible.



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