

Everett Bowman

For those of you that don't know it already, Arizona has its own Bagdad. It is a small copper mining community in the mountains about 60 miles north of Wickenburg, and it figures prominently in the life of Everett Bowman. Or maybe I should say in his death. For it was just outside of Bagdad on October 25, 1971 that Everett crashed his plane and died.

He was born in Hope, New Mexico, on July 12, 1899, though the family actually lived near Weed. Everett was born a little late to be considered a true son of the old west, but as you will see he was a true cowboy and when I discovered his story, I felt he was more than worthy of a place in our series of stories.

His family moved to Safford, Arizona, in 1913, where they owned a ranch. When he grew up and left home it was to become a cowboy for the famous Chiricahua Cattle Company, a huge ranch on the Arizona-New Mexico border. The foreman there called him the best hand and the strongest man he had ever seen. Everett had grown into a six foot, two-inch man weighing around 210 pounds.

When he was twenty-three years-old he and his brother Skeet, with the help of a few other cowboys, drove a large herd of cattle more than 900 miles from Globe, Arizona to Ely, Nevada. The brothers remained in Nevada for almost a year before they decided the cold country was not to their liking. They returned to Arizona having made the entire 1800 mile round trip by horseback. It was possibly one of the last old west cattle drives.

Back in Arizona the brothers decided to make the rodeo a full time occupation. And what a career decision that turned out to be, especially for Everett. Skeet was a good all-round rodeo cowboy, but Everett became one of the all-time greats. In nine years he won ten official world championships, and quite possibly there were even more than that. Recordkeeping was not all that good in the early days. He was the Rodeo Association of America (RAA) World All-Around Champion in 1935 and 1937 and was second three times. He was also four-time Steer Wrestling Champion, three-time Calf Roping Champion and gained one Steer Roping title. These were all timed events and that was where he excelled. He did ride bucking horses for a few years, but gave it up to stick with the timed events. He did not compete in bronc riding after 1928, saying "Too many events and a man is no good in any of them." He is one of only three men in the history of rodeo to win the "triple crown" (three world titles in a single year) more than one time. The other two were Trevor Brazile and Jim Shoulders.



Plaques on the Hall of Fame Wall in the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City

Everett and his older brother Dick hand-built a wooden horse trailer, the first horse trailer ever used to take horses to a rodeo. Then he and his brother Skeet put one horse in the trailer and one in the bed of their pickup truck and drove from Safford, Arizona to Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1924. The trip took them a week and they received a lot of strange looks from the other cowboys. But it wasn't long before horse trailers were a regular sight at the rodeos. Then in 1929, he was the first to

charter an airplane so that he could get himself and his horses to more rodeos. In 1930, he bought his own plane and learned to fly.



In 1936, Bowman was in Boston, Massachusetts, for a rodeo. The cowboys were unhappy over several things, their fees not being added into the pot, the lack of professionals among the judges, and not having an input into organizing the events. They agreed to go on strike. The promoters were unsuccessful in obtaining replacement performers. The result was the formation of the Cowboy Turtle Association (CTA) and Everett as founder was the first president and his brother-in-law the secretary/treasurer. They called themselves the Turtles because it took them so long to get started in their move to have a voice in the rodeos.



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Everett served through 1945 when the CTA became the Rodeo Cowboys Association (RCA) and today is the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA).

Everett's nephew tells, "One year at Cheyenne, this fellow and Uncle Everett got into a heated argument about having to join the association to compete in sanctioned rodeos. This fellow took a swing at Everett, who blocked the punch with one hand and landed a crushing blow at the same time with his other - knocking the guy out and breaking his nose. He then threw fifty dollars on the man's chest and told two guys to haul him to the doctor and get him fixed up. A couple hours later, the guy returned with his nose all bandaged up. He threw twenty dollars back at Everett and said, 'Here's your change Bowman - Doc only charged thirty dollars. By the way, I'll join your dangd association.' Everett smiled, handed the man back the twenty and said, 'If you're going to join, keep this and put it towards your dues.' The two men remained good friends after that."

After retiring from the rodeo, Everett moved to his ranch in Wickenburg, Arizona. He served as a deputy sheriff in Pinal and Maricopa Counties. After losing a bid for election as Maricopa County sheriff he went on to become a captain in the Arizona Highway Patrol and then a Wickenburg constable. During World War II he used his own airplane to teach Air Force recruits low-level search techniques.



Besides the above memorial in Wickenburg, the rodeo and fair grounds are also named in his honor. The plaque on the memorial reads:

Everett Bowman
All-around Champion Cowboy of the World
Years 1935 & 1937
b. July 12, 1899 Hope, NM
d. October 25, 1971 Wickenburg, AZ
Known as the cowboy's cowboy
Admired and revered by townsfolk
Father and organizer of Turtle Association 1936
which became the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association
1937 Owned Heart Cross Ranch Hillside, AZ
Acquired private plane and license 1938
Took up golf 1947 – hit "hole in one" 1952
Champion mule trainer
Served as Head Wrangler at Flying – E – Ranch
Wickenburg, AZ 1960-1962
Thanks for Wonderful memories
Flying – E – guests, staff and friends.
Funding provided by the Wellik Foundation 2002

A special thanks to Sharla Bodioga of Wickenburg for the above photo

He was a natural-born athlete and he took up golf after he retired from the rodeo. At age fifty-five he hit a hole-in-one and retired from golf saying, "You can't get any better than that." At the age of seventy he was given the role of a pastor in the boxing movie, *The Great White Hope*.

He was 71 years old when he flew into the ground, possibly during a rain storm and low visibility, near his ranch. He and his wife Lois are buried in the Safford City Cemetery in Safford. The Arizona Cowboy Rex Allen sang at his funeral. Rodeo magazine editor Will Porter has referred to Bowman as "probably the most forceful man in rodeo history." In 1979 he was elected into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame.



Sources: **Arizona Sheriffs: Badges and Bad Men**, by Jane Eppinga; **Everett Bowman... Cowboy Leader** by Jim Olson found on the internet