*CECIL JONES*

Cecil Jones began his rodeo career as a bareback rider and saddle bronc rider during the 1930s in his native Idaho. When first asked to ride a bull he said, “No way.” But when some rodeo officials, short on bullriders, pleaded with him, Cecil decided to give it a try. He was immediately hooked.

“When you get off that bull, you just feel like you’ve really conquered something,” he explained.

Jones’s rodeo career eventually led to him accepting a manager’s position at Harry Rowell’s ranch in Castro Valley. He ran all of Rowell’s enterprises, including the annual Rowell Ranch Rodeo, for years and is still President Emeritus of the rodeo.

Cecil met Rowell as a 20-year-old rodeo cowboy in 1937. His first job at the ranch allowed him to sustain himself as he competed in major national and international rodeo competitions, including the big one at Madison Square Garden in New York. He was chosen as a member of the American rodeo team that competed in Australia in 1940 where he won the bullriding and all-around championships at the Royal Easter Rodeo in Sydney. He is a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame in Colorado Springs and the National Cowboy Rodeo Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City.

Jones’s career was interrupted when he was drafted into the Army in 1941 at the outbreak of World War II. While stationed at Camp Swift in Austin, Texas, he met his future wife, Fannie Albright, and they were married in 1943. Stationed in Japan following the surrender of the Japanese armed forces, Cecil helped organize a rodeo with participants from the American military ranks. It marked the first time that most Japanese citizens ever saw a real American rodeo.

Returning to Castro Valley after the war, Jones resumed competing in rodeos around the state while managing Rowell’s ranch. He won the all-around cowboy title at the Bear Valley-Pt. Reyes Rodeo in 1948. But the birth of his daughter, Terry, in 1949 prompted him to retire as a rodeo contestant.

In addition to managing the ranch, Jones became Rowell’s rodeo secretary in 1948. He also served as secretary and coordinator for the Grand National at the Cow Palace from 1947 to 1979 and worked administration at other major rodeos, including those at Madison Square Garden for several years in the 1950s.

In 1956, Rowell asked Jones to manage Rowell Saddlery as well as to continue his duties managing the ranch. Cecil purchased the saddlery company from Rowell in 1960 and continued making world-class saddles, many used by contestants in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association world championships.