



MEDIA CONTACTS: Perse Hooper, perse.hooper@gmail.com, 858-337-6404

Donna Hoyt, donna_infr@hotmail.com, 406-338-7684

Website: www.infr.org

Tough Bucking for the Busiest Woman on the Rodeo Circuit by Lee Allen



Charmaine "Bull Girl" Brannan, Chukchansi tribe, feeds her livestock in Lewiston, Montana. She is the only female livestock provider for the Indian National Finals Rodeo.

Charmaine "Bull Girl" Brannan ranks at the top of her field -- she's the only female livestock provider for the Indian National Finals Rodeo. "I'm insanely busy, the busiest woman in this business," she told ICTMN.

At 5'4" tall, she often gets lost in the shadow of the 2,000-pound bulls she raises for rodeo. "I've been told that God protects children and fools, and I'm no longer a kid," she said. "But a lot of things rely on me to stay healthy, and if I don't show up with a hay bale, even in the middle of a Montana snowstorm, the livestock don't eat that night. "I wouldn't call my bulls 'pets' in the domestic sense of the word, but they're like family to me; and they'll live out their life with me. I feed my livestock every day by hand and I'm alone with them a lot of the time, so I talk to them frequently because they're good company. I can find solace and a feeling of serenity when I'm with them."

Brannan, a member of the Chukchansi tribe, was raised in a tiny California town and grew up in a 100-year-old cabin where her logging family was no stranger to hard work. "My stepdad was a bronc rider, my mom was an old cowhand. It was natural I'd grow up interested in animals and rodeo. "My mom was a strong cattle-woman who raised four girls on her own and I picked up her genes. Not that many women choose lady livestock contractor as a profession." And for good reason. While her two working cowboy sons, Grayson and Nathan, help when they're not competing, the bulk of the workload -- breeding, calving, feeding, watering, loading, transporting, etc. -- falls on her shoulders. "It makes for some pretty long days when you have to truck the hay, fix the fences, wrangle stock contracts and load bulls into the chutes by yourself."

“I’ve never opted for the easy path, and wouldn’t even recognize the easy way, as I’m used to taking the path less traveled,” Brannan said. “I was taught to create my own path instead of following someone else’s and raised with the philosophy of self-fulfillment among strong people who want to live life on their own terms. ” Brennan has been an invited stock contractor for Indian Nationals Final Rodeo since 2005 when she showed up with a single two-year-old bull, Back in Black. “I initially bought three bulls and five cows back in 2000 and I still have two old girl cows left from the original herd. [They’re] still with me, and still making babies. It’s tough bucking the ‘good old boy’ system, being a female in a male contractor world, but my bulls are well trained, well handled and frequently requested, and I take pride in that. ”

But, raising 50 head of cattle and contracting livestock for rodeo appearances doesn’t take up all her time. Brennan owns a boutique in Lewiston to generate funds to buy hay to feed her four-legged family. “You don’t make a lot of money supplying rodeo stock and you’re always in the hole because you have so many mouths to feed, so the boutique business helps to feed the bulls. ” The secret to being a successful livestock contractor is the same secret of success in other fields -- love what you do. “I’ve raised all my own animals and I appreciate every one of them. Although it would be easier to go out and buy new livestock, everything under my Bull Girl Bucking Bulls label is of my own creation. I take pride in my animals and want to showcase them. ”

Although it’s a lengthy drive from her boutique to her bulls and factoring in the harshness of the Montana seasons, the cowgirl says that she still loves the ruggedness and the rural nature: less traffic, less people, lots of wide-open spaces, and plenty of wildlife.