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## Cheyenne Frontier Days: You banned cell phones. Was SHARK right about abuse?

The PRCA cowboys and the other contestants at Cheyenne Frontier Days take what they do very seriously. In this day and age, everyone views video of their performances in an effort to do better.

The bull riders from Hillsboro and Rice Lake, Wisconsin, have to put out some serious money to make the trip to Cheyenne. Barrel racers from Oklahoma and Texas don't get here on their good looks (although some should). It's an expensive sport and many of the participants, especially those who don't reach the NFR regularly, need amateur video to try to sharpen their skills.

Will Cheyenne Frontier Days not allow even contestants to videotape rough stock and timed events? The ban announced on videotaping at CFD did not list exceptions. No one can video.

Other rodeos are overtaking Cheyenne with prize money. Cheyenne Frontier Days has had a mystique. An image. So did the Miss America Pageant. Montgomery Ward had pretty good staying power. As did W.T. Grant's, F.W. Woolworth and S.S. Kresge. But, good things can end.

This publication has not weighed in on the accusations of a group called SHARK. Both the daily newspaper and the local television station have given the dispute between the animal protection group and CFD adequate coverage, in my opinion.

Rodeo is a violent sport. So is boxing. And football and hockey. The difference from rodeo and all other sports is the involvement of animals. You could believe that athletes in the other sports make a knowing choice whether to participate or not. Animals, of course, cannot. And, their reward for a job well done is to be fed. Maybe if that had been Mike Tyson's only reward, he wouldn't have that garish tattoo on his face. And maybe the great Muhammad Ali would speak clearly today and move about with agility.

CFD had maintained that cattle prods weren't used on bucking stock. That was not true and CFD came down quickly on stock contractors who used that "enhancement" to get their animals to buck harder and quicker.

I am not a big fan of rodeo. As a boy growing up in northern Wisconsin, we had a rodeo nearby that still perseveres but it held no interest to me. In fact, the first time I attended that rodeo was a couple years ago when we were in the area for another reason. As we drove through the crowd walking into the rodeo arena, a guy hollered at us, "this ain't Frontier Days," when he saw my plates.

It wasn't but rodeo fans are rodeo fans. They'll tolerate almost anything. Still, I'm not sure locals (or visitors) will accept being without their cell phones because CFD is afraid a single group that embarrassed them with footage from recent Frontier Days' events will do it again.

To some who attend CFD, not me but some, it is an event of importance. In the Midwest, you hear people talk about attending the "rodeo" in Cheyenne. It is a big deal to those who either enjoy rodeo or, at minimum, tolerate it. The history of Cheyenne Frontier Days is truly incredible. Cheyenne is, for all intents and purposes, a very small city. To have an event known around the world from such a small community is remarkable.

Will visitors now remember Frontier Days more for the ban on cell phones than for the rodeo? What inconveniences will be caused to attendees who did not know they couldn't bring cell phones into the arena? Look at the scorn heaped on legislative bodies who considered a ban on cell phones for drivers of moving vehicles. "You'll pry my cell out of my dying fingers" - a rallying cry similar to guns.

There have been memorable events at Cheyenne Frontier Days. How many rodeo fans with camcorders caught the horrendous final seconds of Lane Frost's life? Nobody has been accused of trying to profit from that amateur footage, have they? One of those angles could have been helpful in determining just what happened to Lane. And how. Many use cell phones for both still and action shots.

What if you're in the seats this year and B.J. Schumacher scores a 96 on his bull - and you couldn't have a camera or cell phone video to record the record-breaking event? How many fans in the arena on Finals Day of 1989 have video of Marty Staneart being the first to ride Mr. T - for a score of 93 that has been the CFD record? Imagine if you had wanted to record both the Mr. T ride and the one that followed - the successful but fatal ride of Lane Frost - and had been told to take your camcorder back to your car.

However CFD tries to spin this ban, it will come back to an animal protection group, SHARK, putting them in a corner. To prevent one group from getting footage that might embarrass them, CFD is prepared to prohibit 10,000 paying rodeo fans who only want to get action footage of events they paid to witness, from doing so. In this economy, the worst possible decision would be one that limits spectators enjoyment and recording at a rodeo with the reputation of CFD. Not to mention depriving people of cell phones for calls.

## Never a meth lab Only in a police chief's imagination

When the mayor enlisted the local police chief's assistance in "parking" HUD money intended to help Cheyenne's needy, the die was cast.

Always on the lookout to divert funds to pet projects, and not considering the needy a pet project, \$60,000 of HUD money the city might lose if not allocated to a specific need resulted in three local houses being identified as ones "needing" to be demolished.

A house at 211 E. 3rd Avenue was one of the three. The other two were on Ames Avenue. The house in the Avenues was known to have been lived in by people who used methamphetamine. This became known not through good police work but because of caring people at Laramie County School District No. 1. The LCSD1 folks asked for a welfare check because the health and welfare of a student using that address concerned them. The police stumbled onto a house which had been inhabited for a considerable length of time and gave all the outward signs of being a "meth house."

Two adults were arrested as the result of the welfare check requested by LCSD1. As a result of those arrests, court appearances by those two individuals, and subsequent interviews and telephone conversations they agreed to with the Cheyenne Herald, much has become known about that house.

When the arrests were made, certain equipment was seized. That equipment is similar to that which is used to manufacture meth but was just a small part of the equipment necessary for actually making meth. At sentencing, an assistant district attorney stated that the activity in the house fell short of making it a clandestine meth laboratory.

But, the chief had already taken the position the house was used for the manufacture of meth. It is unlikely that Bob Fecht has ever set foot in the house and he may have reached his wrong conclusion based on what he was told by officers. Chances are that Fecht's experience is limited on how to identify a meth lab or how to differentiate a "lab" from a house where only smoking meth has occurred.

When the Cheyenne Herald questioned the use of HUD money intended for the needy on demolition of a house, stories started to fly. Included in the false stories was that the house was a known meth lab; that it had to be posted with a "No Entry" sign for safeguarding the public; that the owner was unreachable, uncooperative and unconcerned; and that the City could demolish such a house

without notice to the owner.

I can tell readers from firsthand experience that the owner is readily available, easy to contact and very concerned about the condition of the house. For example, if the police department needs to reach him to tell him about weeds in yard, they have had no problem. Yet, when "someone" decided to remove the water meter from the basement of the house, no attempt was made to contact him and police officers broke into the house so a BOPU employee could remove the meter. (See page 5 for that story.)

The individual who was the authorized tenant in the house while the issue of meth use transpired has since died. So, it has been impossible for the owner to get reliable and credible information as to the amount of meth use and the level of contamination to the interior. (But, I have.) The police chief has exaggerated and lied about the property for so long and so often that the owner can no longer rely on anything the chief says about the house. Plus, the police department has never tested nor done sampling from inside (nor has DEA or DCI) to determine the extent of the contamination.

Now, the owner has. He now knows the levels of contamination throughout the house but still does not know what is required for clean-up because Wyoming has no standards that he must meet. Colorado does and that has been a guide.

There is no denying that there was heavy meth use inside that house. But, the difference in contamination from smoking meth and manufacturing meth is day and night. A single "cook" of meth (depending on the method used) can produce a level of contamination that smoking for an indeterminate length of time by a large number of people will not. Research on this subject has been very interesting. The purpose of the research was simple: To determine whether the contamination levels from samples taken from the house could possibly rise to the level of manufacturing or whether it is positive that only smoking meth transpired in the house. (See page 9 for more on that research.)

Based on conversations with people who have smoked meth in Cheyenne, and based on the results of controlled studies done of "cooking" meth and just smoking meth, it is my belief and prediction that, based on the results of the house at 211 E. 3rd Ave., there are hundreds of houses, apartments and/or motel rooms in Cheyenne that would yield results as high or higher than the meth contamination at 211 E. 3rd Ave. Hundreds. Not one. Not ten. Hundreds. In my opinion.