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NEW SPONSOR

The WPCA welcomes Eagle Creek GM as the title sponsor of the Equine Spotlight feature during the WPCA Pro Tour live broadcasts. Eagle Creek GM offers quality GM-certified GMC Chevrolet and Buick cars, trucks and SUVs as well as parts and services to clients throughout the west. The Eagle Creek GM Equine Spotlight will feature the equine superstars of the WPCA.



One from the Archives



The Final Four at the 1980 Calgary Stampede. Drivers from right to left: Herman Flad (Troy and Darcy's dad), Roy Bremner (Jerry's dad), and Allan Bensmiller and Alan Smith (Kurt's grandfathers). Herman Flad won the 1980 title.

Photo courtesy of Billy Melville Archive Collection



Wagon Family Connections

CHUCKWAGON RACING HAS a long history in mostly small, rural communities in western Canada. Drivers and outriders come from places like Dewberry, Westeros, Hand Hills, Bodo, Bashaw and Paddle Prairie. It's a family-oriented sport, with fathers passing on their passion and often their outfits to sons. It's an all-encompassing activity for the whole family all summer, if not all year. The history of wagon racing is filled with familiar names as grandfathers turn the reins over to sons and grandsons.

There are three distinct ways that chuckwagon drivers get started in the sport. By far, the majority of wagon drivers get their start through a family tradition of wagon racing. A father, grandfather, brother or uncle (and in some cases all of the above) were involved in racing and the driver just had it in his genes to follow those footsteps.

The second type of drivers has its origins on the pony chuckwagons or chariot racing circuits. Many of these drivers also learned from or raced against their fathers and sometimes their mothers or sisters. They eventually succumb to the lure of the big wagons and arrive on the circuit with a multitude of driving skills.

Then there are the drivers who do it their own way. From the outside, that also appears to be the hard way. Sometimes it takes longer to achieve success. That's another story for another day, though. This story is about the families who have spent generations in the sport and are the basis of its heritage that we talk about so reverently.

If there is such a thing as royalty or a First Family of chuckwagon racing, it's the Glass and Cosgrave families, the first four-generation families of the sport.

Driver **Colt Cosgrave**, his outrider brother **Chad Cosgrave** and their driver cousin **Jason Glass** can all trace their racing heritage to the earliest days of wagon racing. Combined, great-grandfathers **Tom Lauder** and **Dick Cosgrave**, grandfathers **Ron Glass** and **Bob Cosgrave**, father **Richard Cosgrave**, uncle **Tom Glass** and cousin **Jason Glass** have 11 world championships, 24 Calgary Stampede Rangeland Derby championships and 9 Calgary Stampede Aggregate championships.

The Glasses and Cosgraves have been involved with chuckwagon racing for nearly a century. Jason's great-grandfather Tom Lauder rode in the first Calgary Stampede in 1912. At the 1923 Calgary Stampede, Tom Lauder competed in the strange new



Ron Glass (top) and Dick Cosgrave in the 1940s.

Photos from the Billy Melville Archive Collection



Richard Cosgrave (1987).

*Photo from the University of Calgary
Calgary Stampede Archives*



Wagon Family Connections, continued

event of chuckwagon racing. In 1924, Tom and partner **Ray Bagley** entered a chuckwagon at the Calgary Stampede and won the second Calgary Stampede Rangeland Derby championship. Tom Lauder became wagon racing's first superstar and first multiple winner at the Calgary Stampede, winning in 1924, 1927 and 1928.

Colt Cosgrave's great-grandfather was the incomparable Dick Cosgrave, who won the Calgary Stampede 10 times in an 18-year span. Dick Cosgrave was also a pioneer in the wagon racing field. He competed at the Calgary Stampede as early as 1925 and won his first title in 1926.

Tom Lauder's daughter **Iris** married Ron Glass, who is seen as one of the greatest drivers of all time. Ron won four Calgary Stampede and three world championships. He started driving wagons at age 15. In 1931, at 16, he entered a team in the Calgary Stampede. He continued to drive chuckwagons for 46 years, winning the world championships in 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1965. He was also a four-time Calgary Stampede champion in 1941, 1946, 1947 and 1949. Tom Lauder's grandson Tom Glass was a three-time world champion and four-time Calgary Stampede champion before retiring to focus on his movie career. Tom Lauder's granddaughter **Tara Glass** married chuckwagon driver Richard Cosgrave, thus connecting these two families. Dick's son Bob Cosgrave had his own successful career as a driver, winning the Calgary Stampede twice.

Dick Cosgrave's grandson Richard started outriding in chuckwagon races when he was 14 years old. By the time he was 16, he had moved into the driver's seat. For Richard and Tara, being part of the chuckwagon racing circuit was simply an extension of their family life at home, as everything in their home life was related to the family racing traditions. Sadly, Richard Cosgrave was just 36 years old when he lost his life in a chuckwagon accident in Kamloops, BC, in 1993. The front axle of his wagon broke, and Richard was tossed onto a track where the entire rig rolled over him.

Buddy Bensmiller is a name with a long and storied connection to wagon racing. He is a two-time WPCA world champion, eight-time CPCA champion, nine-time Cheyenne Frontier Days champion and three-time Calgary Stampede Rangeland Derby champion. He began racing at age 12 as an outrider for **George Normand's** father and his own father **Allan Bensmiller** on small Canadian circuit shows, such as Moose Mountain, Meadow Lake and Onion Lake. By 16, he was driving his own wagon and competing against his father and future father-in-law **Alan Smith**. In the last few years of his career, Buddy often found



From top to bottom: Buddy Bensmiller (1987), Allan Bensmiller (1983), Alan Smith (1984).

Photos from the U of C Calgary Stampede Archives



Wagon Family Connections, continued

himself racing against one of his sons as **David Bensmiller**, **Chance Bensmiller** and **Kurt Bensmiller** all raced on the Tour at one time. Kurt has carried on the family tradition of excellence, winning the last two Calgary Stampede titles and his first world title. Another WPCA rookie is veteran driver **Vern Nolin**, whose family connection to the sport includes his wife **Lisa Bensmiller** and also his brothers: recently retired CPCA driver **Shane Nolin** and CPCA outrider **Mick Nolin**.

The family connections can become quite complicated. **Cody Fraser** is a fourth-generation driver with a family resume that includes nine world championships. His great-grandfather is the legendary **Tommy Dorchester** and his grandfather is former world and three-time Calgary Stampede champion **Dave Lewis**. Cody's father is two-time world champion **Rick Fraser**. Former WPCA driver **Barry Hodgson** is one of Rick Fraser's cousins. Cody, Rick and driver **Troy Dorchester** are part of the Dorchester tradition.

In 1939, Tommy Dorchester ran the first chuckwagon race in his 42-year career. He won four world championships and two Calgary Stampede titles in that illustrious career. He left a legacy that includes his sons **Gary Dorchester** (one Calgary Stampede championship title and one world championship title), **Dennis Dorchester**, **Gordie Dorchester**, and **Dallas Dorchester** (two Calgary Stampede titles and a world championship), grandsons Troy Dorchester and Rick Fraser, and great-grandson Cody Fraser. In 1968, they made history when, for the first time, a father competed against three of his sons at the Calgary Stampede. Gary Dorchester won the Rangeland Derby that year. Troy Dorchester is the only Triple Crown winner in the history of the sport, winning Ponoka, Calgary and the Calgary Aggregate in the same year.

Chanse Vigen and **Rae Croteau, Jr.**, are also third-generation chuckwagon competitors connected through marriage. Chanse is a five-time world champion outrider, so winning titles runs in the family. His father **Mike Vigen** is well known as the "Little Grizzly" on the WPCA circuit and a four-time world champion outrider. Chanse's grandfather is one of the true legends of the sport: **Ralph Vigen** was a five-time world champion and three-time Calgary Stampede champion.

Rae Croteau is a nephew of Mike's and has a lengthy family history in the wagons as well. His grandfather **Ray Croteau** competed for many years and brought the rainbow wagon to prominence. Rae's father **Bert Croteau** retired early after a



From top to bottom: Dave Lewis (1987); Tommy, Gary and Dallas Dorchester (1968); Ralph Vigen (1987).

*Photos 1 and 3 from the U of C Calgary Stampede Archives
Photo 2 from Dauna Dorchester*



Wagon Family Connections, continued

successful career to run his business. The Croteaus were the first family to have three generations all qualify for the Calgary Stampede Final Four.

Kelly Sutherland is the most successful driver in wagon history and has been racing for over 40 years, winning 12 Calgary and 12 world titles. Brother **Kirk Sutherland** took time off from an early racing career to build a very successful business career. Kirk is a threat to win every time out as evidenced by his 2014 world title and his top placings the last three years. Kelly's son **Mark Sutherland** is now considered to be among the elite drivers as well. His nickname on the circuit is the High Tech Redneck. That refers to his use of a GPS system in his wagon. Kirk's son **Mitch Sutherland** is one of the sport's rising stars. Mark's son **Dayton Sutherland** has been outriding for three years and plans on joining the Tour as a driver as soon as he can qualify his wagon.

Current drivers **Gary Gorst**, **Logan Gorst**, **Dustin Gorst** and **Luke Tournier**, as well as outrider **Quaid Tournier**, are the key characters in another of these multi-generational family stories. Someone who got hooked on racing around those barrels started every one of these family traditions. One of these old timers was **Art Gorst** of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, who started driving wagons in 1967. Luke's daughter **Shalyn** is married to Logan Gorst. This means that there can actually be as many as five members of this extended family in a single race.

As well, brothers Luke and **Leo Tournier** were known to race "wheel to wheel, banging a little steel," as **Les MacIntyre** describes it, when they faced each other in a heat prior to Leo retiring a few years ago. Luke has several show titles to his credit, including two wins of the \$100,000 final at the Calgary Stampede.

This family connection gets extended further when you consider cousin **Layne Bremner**. Layne's mother **May Gorst** (sister to Gary) was the first full-time female outrider.

It is a fact that not all family connections are positive all of the time. Brothers **Troy Flad** and **Darcy Flad** have been known to clash on occasion. Some of that fiery personality can probably be traced back to their father, the late **Herman Flad**. Herman had an illustrious 35-year career, winning the Calgary Stampede and Cheyenne Frontier Days among his 12 titles. Troy just finished his 25th year of wagon racing. His son **Blaid Flad** is following the family tradition and is on his third year in the Western Chuckwagon Association. Herman's older son Darcy didn't start racing until 2004, when he was declared the WPCA Rookie



From top to bottom: Ray Croteau (1987), Kelly Sutherland (1987), Herman Flad (1987).

Photos from the U of C Calgary Stampede Archives



Wagon Family Connections, continued

of the Year. This family's chuckwagon racing involvement also features cousin and two-time world champion outrider **Chance Flad**.

Layne MacGillivray is the son of former driver **Dennis MacGillivray** as well as the great-nephew of the legendary promoter and former driver **Cliff Claggett**, who took wagons far and wide to popularize the sport.

Cody Ridsdale's father **Glen Ridsdale** is a former Calgary Stampede track record holder. His uncle **Bruce Ridsdale** was also a driver, and his older brother **Wendell Ridsdale** competes in the Western Chuckwagon Association.

Evan Salmond is following in the wagon tracks of his uncle **Ray Salmond** and his cousin **Rod Salmond**.

John Walters was a successful rodeo rider for many years. Before that, his chuckwagon family roots were firmly established when his father **Worden Walters** competed as a driver. John's brother **Ken Walters** is also a driver; he's currently on the CPCA circuit.

Chad Fike and **Jordie Fike** are the latest members of their family to follow the path to wagon driving. Great-grandfather **Wilbur David** started the family tradition, followed by his sons **Roy David** and **Ron David**, Chad and Jordie's grandfather.

Jim Knight is the older brother of fellow driver **Ross Knight**, whose son **Casey Knight** is an outrider. They are also cousins to **Wayne Knight**, who races on the CPCA.

Outrider **Reo King** is another second-generation wagon man. His father **Joe King** drove wagons in the 1970s and 1980s.

Not every driver starts out as a young barn hand helping his dad or friend, or even as a young outrider. **Codey McCurrach** made his name on the pony chuckwagon circuit racing with and against his sister and father for 10 years. Together they decided to sell their pony outfits to finance a big wagon for Codey to use as he followed his dream.

Chad Harden is another driver who followed family footsteps in pony chuckwagons before moving to the WPCA. His grandfather **Leroy Harden** and father **Robert Harden** laid the groundwork for Chad to become a driver.



Art Gorst (1980).

Photos from the U of C Calgary Stampede Archives



Wagon Family Connections, continued

WPCA rookie **Curtis Morin** follows his dad **Bruce Morin** and brother **Kelly Morin**, former WPCA drivers, in his dream of winning a Calgary Stampede title.

Eddie Melville has been outriding for 25 years, carrying on the family tradition started by his grandfather **Orville Strandquist**.

The Strandquist family has had three generations in the sport. Each generation's ties came in a different form. Only the legendary Orville was an actual wagon driver. Orville competed in the Calgary Stampede as a rodeo participant in 1937. That was the start of one of the greatest chuckwagon careers in the sport. His career, which lasted from the late 1930s to the early 1990s, is the longest chuckwagon career of any driver. He made 50 appearances as a chuckwagon driver at the Calgary Stampede between 1940 and 1991. He was not only a driver but one of the greatest outriders of all time, winning the Calgary Stampede Outriding championship a record 12 times.

The second generation of the Strandquist family took a different direction on the chuckwagon circuit. Orville's oldest son **Ron Strandquist** was a champion outrider in his own right but went in a new direction when the Calgary Stampede asked him to become a judge at the Rangeland Derby. He may be the only cowboy to outride with his father and then later act as a judge while his father competed as a driver and an outrider.

The third generation of the Strandquist family to participate in the sport includes Orville's grandsons **Eddie Melville** and **Billy Melville**. One of the links to the family history that longtime fans will recognize is that Eddie has playing card symbols on his helmet. That is a personal tribute, as it is the design used by his grandfather Orville on his wagon for many years. Billy Melville has compiled the WPCA *Spectator's Guide and Yearbook* every year since 1998. Billy is also the co-host of "WPCA Pro Tour Live," which broadcasts every race night during the season.

These are just some of the families that have kept the western heritage sport of chuckwagon racing alive and well for all these years.

From top to bottom: Ron David (1987), Jim Knight (1987), Joe King (1987), Orville Strandquist (1987).

Photos from the U of C Calgary Stampede Archives





Rising Star: Layne Bremner

LIKE SO MANY of our drivers, **Layne Bremner** grew up in the sport of wagon racing. It started with his grampa **Art Gorst**, who began racing in the late 1960s. His mother **May Gorst** was the first woman to ride as a full-time outrider. Over the years, she rode for her dad, brother **Gary Gorst**, **Jim Knight**, **Dick Dye**, **Ray Croteau** and **Herman Flad**, among others.

Layne's uncle **Gary Gorst** and cousins **Logan Gorst** and **Dustin Gorst** are looking forward to Layne joining them on the WPCA Tour this year. Another relative to have been part of the sport is Layne's cousin **Jerry Bremner**, who has numerous championships to his name.

Layne was born in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1983. When he was growing up, he liked to play hockey. He got involved in pony chuckwagon racing at a young age, following his mom on the circuit. When he was 15, Layne picked up the lines and started driving himself with the North West Saskatchewan Pony Chuckwagon and Chariot Association. He travelled and competed on the pony circuit for 10 years, winning the overall championship three times, before making the move to the CPCA in 2009.

While Layne is a young driver, he's still considered somewhat of a veteran, having already had a successful career with the CPCA. Layne won the Calgary Stampede's Orville Strandquist Award for Top Rookie Driver in 2011 and was the CPCA's High Point Rookie Driver in 2009.



Above: Layne Bremner in action.

Photo by K. Pethick Photography

Left: Layne's horse Muiredach, part of 2015's Equine Outfit of Excellence.

Photo from Layne Bremner Racing



His most successful season to date was 2014, when he placed second in the CPCA standings, qualified for the championship final heat for the CPCA championship, had a horse named to the CPCA Equine Outfit of Excellence and received CPCA Family of the Year honours.

In 2015, while competing on the CPCA circuit, Layne posted 17 top-10 runs. Of those, he had nine that cracked the top five. He placed in the top 10 in seven CPCA show championships, with a pair of third-place overall finishes at CPCA stops in Onion Lake and St. Walburg, making those his best of the year.



Rising Star: Layne Bremner, continued



The multi-generational Bremner racing team going down the road.

Photo from Layne Bremner Racing

Layne says his favourite racetrack is the one at the Calgary Stampede because of the size and quality of the track. He says it seems like every day there is a new challenge to overcome as a wagon driver. He thinks the most challenging task as a driver is dealing with all the different personalities of his horses. Animals are like humans, he says, and each one has their own likes and dislikes. Finding a happy medium can sometimes be a real challenge.

Everyone has their own secret tips and tricks for looking after their horses. Layne says feeding them well and keeping them healthy year round is important. Wagon racing is not just a four-month sport. It is a year-round job. Layne says he is very fortunate to have a supportive family, along with good friends and neighbours. They help him with everything from spring training to barn cleaning, and are always there following him down the road.

Layne says he doesn't really have a favourite horse. They are all favourites to him, as it takes more than one to win and takes a team to bring it all together. Two of his horses have been CPCA Equine Outfit of Excellence



Layne joined Logan Gorst and Rick and Sue Fraser for a visit at the Alberta Children's Hospital last year.

Photo by Ed Wittchen

winners. In 2014, his Left Leader **Franklin** was given this honour, followed by his outriding horse **Muiredach** in 2015.

Layne and his wife **Bobbi** have two boys, **Carter** (age six) and **Cruze** (age two). The family lives in Rapid View, Saskatchewan. Bobbi works as an administrator for the local health region.



Layne Bremner's outfit. Check out that colourful wagon!

Photo courtesy of Bryan Hebson