



# KEEPING IT REAL

Back in the '70s, a group of cowboys came up with the idea of having a "working cowboy's rodeo," like there used to be in the 1920s. Unlike mainstream events, the Arizona Cowpuncher's Reunion Association rodeo in Williams is based on the real-life activities of a working ranch, and it features real-life cowboys and real-life cowgirls.

A cowboy stretches out to fire his lasso at a calf during the calf roping competition at the Arizona Cowpuncher's Reunion Association rodeo in Williams. "I like the action, of course," photographer Bev Pettit says of the rodeo. "But witnessing the skill of these cowboys and the agility of their horses is awesome. They're true athletes."

A Portfolio by Bev Pettit





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**

Officials wait at the chutes for the opening of the rodeo. "These cowboys and cowgirls use their own gear, ride their own horses and don't compete for money," Pettit says.

Pickup men Carter Williams (foreground) and Miles DeWitt attempt to catch a feisty bronc as it rears up during a bronc riding event. A pickup man's job is to pick up a rider thrown from a bronc, then secure the loose horse.

Williams entertains rodeo spectators between events. Watching the cowboys in action, Pettit says, reminds her of "what goes on for these working cowboys on a daily basis on the ranch."





**LEFT:** A cowboy uses his slicker to protect his young son from the rain. The event now is held during a less rainy time of year, Pettit says.

**BELOW:** A cowpuncher rides high on a bronc, hoping to make his time, during the bronc riding event. "For the most part, I like to convert my rodeo photos to black and white," Pettit says. "The grounds are generally quite busy with trailers, overhead wires and poles. By taking out the color, I feel I can diminish those distractions. I always want the focus to be on the action—the riders and their horses."







After the entry parade on the first day of the rodeo, children race each other as they leave the arena. "The weekend is meant to be a way for ranch families to get together outside of the rigors of their daily work life," Pettit says.

For more information on the Arizona Cowpuncher's Reunion Association, call 602-510-4940 or visit [www.azcowpunchers.com](http://www.azcowpunchers.com)