

The rodeo world has suffered a tremendous loss as Mark Bennetch passes away

Mark Allen Bennetch, 49, passed away on Thursday, July 29, 2010 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Mark was born on November 6, 1960 in Lebanon Pennsylvania. Mark grew up in Lebanon and Annville Pennsylvania and graduated from Muhlenberg High School in 1978.

He started riding ponies at the age of 18 months and not long thereafter started riding in speed events. By the time that Mark was in grade school he was winning many of the local quarter horse speed events and made such a name for himself and his pony that they were featured in Western Horseman. Mark's love for anything that involved horses continued in high school when he worked as an exercise rider at the Penn National Race Course.

After graduating from high school, Mark owned and trained race horses while he worked in the various family enterprises located around Reading, PA. During this time Mark and his brothers lived on the Schuylkill River and their favorite activities were boating and slalom skiing on the river. In fact Mark met his future wife, Suzanne ("Sue") while boating on the river in 1979. Mark and Sue were married in 1986. Mark and Sue moved to Florida in 1990 to follow their love of horses, water sports and to start a family.

Mark began team roping in the early 1980s in Pennsylvania. He continued team roping after moving to Florida

primarily with his brothers, Mike and Mitch. Mark, Mike and Mitch became well known at team ropings throughout the Southeast and they won many events. Even during this period Mark loved helping local kids learn to rope and spent countless hours roping with them.

After moving to Florida, Mark started a successful Farrier and Equine Dentistry practice. Mark's knowledge and skill as a Farrier and Equine Dentist are proven by his long list of happy and appreciative long time clients from many equine disciplines.

Skyler Jordan, his daughter was born in 1993. For much of the last 17 years, Mark and Sue have supported Skyler's participation in rodeo through Florida Junior Rodeo Association, Florida Wrangler Junior High Rodeo Association, Georgia-Florida Youth Professional Rodeo Association and finally, Florida High School Rodeo Association where Skyler most recently competed in the National High School Rodeo Association Finals. Along the way Mark served as Vice President, Director and President of the Florida Junior Rodeo Association and has been a valuable supporter, tireless volunteer and guiding influence for all of these rodeo associations. Mark lived the rodeo saying that it is "all about the kids."



Mark was always on hand during weekend rodeos to encourage and guide kids in and outside of the arena. Nearly every child who has participated in Florida rodeo during the last eleven years has memories of how Mark has helped or motivated them in some way that has made their lives richer. Mark will be remembered by all of these kids and his example will live on through these memories.

Mark is survived by his wife, Suzanne; daughter, Skyler; parents, Nelson and Joanne Bennetch; older brother, Michael (Kathy) Bennetch; and younger brother Mitchell (Eileen) Bennetch, nephews Blaine Bennetch and Ryan Greenawalt and niece Cierra Bennetch.

A memorial service will be held for Mark on August 15, 2010 at 1:00 PM at the Ocala Breeders' Sales complex located at 1701 SW 60th Avenue in Ocala, Florida. Memorials may be given to the Skyler Bennetch Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 273, Fort McCoy, Florida 32134.