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## Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

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# Trail riders bring history to Pioneer Days

GUYMON, Okla. – For as long as Taylor Rankin can remember, he has taken part in the annual trail drive from Elkhart, Kan., to Guymon for Pioneer Days.

In fact, this year's drive will mark the 23<sup>rd</sup> time in Taylor Rankin's life that he has been horseback for the cross-country ride. He's just 22 years old.

Yes, he was just a month and a half shy of his first birthday the first time he sat in the saddle with his mother, Melinda Rankin, one of the organizers of the Point Rock Riders. She's been taking part in the annual trail drive since 1985, when she and her husband, Troy, rode together for the first time as newlyweds.

They will return to Texas County during the two-day drive from May 2-3 to again be part of the Guymon Pioneer Days celebration, including the community's championship rodeo, set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 3; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 4; and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 5.

"This is our only family vacation," said Rankin, who, with Troy, has been one of the organizers for the past two decades. "We take the time off from work for this and our county fair. You get to just sit and relax, and you get to visit with your neighbors that you don't get to see much throughout the year."

They also continue a longstanding tradition for those from Morton County, Kan. The first drive took place in 1948, organized by group called the Elkhart Trail Riders. The drive features a varied size group, from a few dozen to as many as 250 people participating.

The Point Rock Riders leave Elkhart on Thursday morning, stopping a few hours later for lunch at an area farm. From there, they will continue the trek southeast, stopping for the night in a ranch's pasture northwest of Guymon. When the Rankins first began the trail ride nearly three decades ago, many participants utilized tents to sleeping in the back of horse trailers during the campout. Now a number utilize RVs and more comfortable accommodations.

"I think it's an important part of the Western lifestyle," Melinda Rankin said. "It's family oriented, and we want to keep it that way. Whether you're enjoying a nice, pretty day or fighting the dirt blowing, you enjoy yourself and your time on the ride."

"We've been rained on, ridden through sleet and snow. The wind's blown 60 miles an hour. Usually it's so dry that time of year, we're just spitting dirt the whole time, and there have been plenty of times when we've all had sunburns. But no matter what, we're going to go."

Part of it is the legacy that was created 65 years ago when the Elkhart Trail Riders rode to Guymon to be part of the Pioneer Days Parade.

"It's just who I am," Melinda Rankin said. "It's tradition, and you get to shut off what's going on at home and just being a group. We're a family. We're all close. There are several people that come from other towns, but still they belong."

"We have a common thing; we like to ride, and we love our animals. This is where we can leave work and go do what we love for a few days."

The group votes on the Point Rock Riders queen, king, prince and princess each year, and those are the younger members who lead the group along the Pioneer Days Parade route.

The riders try to arrive in Guymon around 11 a.m. Friday, then they will take in many of the Pioneer Days festivities. They will gather at the Texas County Activity Center for the annual Rotary

Club Barbecue. They will take in the carnival, the mercantile and rodeo, while also being a major piece of the parade.

“We get rooms every year, and most of us stay in Guymon all weekend,” Melinda Rankin said. “It’s something we all look forward to every year.”