

# Roddy Lara

The Evolution of a Mule Trainer

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**R**oddy Lara (pronounced Lah-Ray) of Flagstaff, Arizona, is one of the more successful trainers of show mules. Certainly the regular attendees and aficionados of Bishop Mule Days know who he is.

Roddy grew up learning the old traditional methods of Western horsemanship. He was drawn to the sport of rodeo because it kept him close to animals, so he rode broncs and roped and hung around with livestock people.

Mostly he worked with Quarter horses, but on a few rugged hunting trips he developed an interest in mules. In 1989 he attended Bishop Mule Days and “after that I was sold on mules and their beauty really got in my heart.”

His first project was a 16-hand molly and she taught him that mules are not like horses. So, he started attending clinics and learning all he could from people he respected. He

doesn't follow any of them but he has seen most of the clinicians who are revolutionizing horsemanship. He has also been influenced by John Lyons, Ben Balow, Bret Walters, Les Vogt, Cal Cooper, Teddy Robinson, Ray Hunt and many others.

Although Roddy enjoys backcountry riding, his greatest thrill is winning a reining class or trail class. He loves all of the competitive events and was 44 years of age the first time he sat in

an English saddle. But, he learned to jump and says that it provides an adrenalin rush that is second only to saddle bronc riding.

Even though he and his wife, Connie, started showing mules less than fifteen years ago, they have done very well in competition all over the U.S.A. Nowadays he rarely rides horses, mostly mules.

Roddy does not give the impression of a highly competitive person. He is very unassuming and soft spoken. Two observations that he has made sum up the man as a mule trainer.

1. "We should all pray forgiveness for the way we have treated horses in the past."
2. "I guess I like mules because they seek kindness and friendship with people."



*Roddy in a reining class at Bishop Mule Days 2004*



*Connie Lara riding "CR Rachel" in the Green Western Pleasure Class at Bishop Mule Days 2002*



*Rod and Connie at The Great Celebration Mule & Donkey Show in Shelbyville, Tennessee 2002*