

# Vance Reed

## *Hospitality in Service*

By Carolina Walden



*Dale, Elma, Bill and Vance Reed*

Within a world full of self-promoters and attention-seekers, perhaps what characterizes Vance Reed's greatness is what he's not. Unselfish, unsung, and unassuming, he quietly operates under the radar, building up others, giving back to the community, and helping wherever he can.

A successful businessman, proven leader, and strong pillar of Amarillo, Vance has undoubtedly worked decades to make our city hospitable and welcoming to events and businesses. He is unquestionably the type of guy that one wants to follow, but no one will ever go through a door behind him.

"Truly, Vance Reed will stop and let everyone else go ahead of him. We've literally stood outside doors for several minutes because neither one of us would go in first. It's just the way he was raised. He's always put others in front of himself not only physically, but in business, and in life in general," says long-time friend Gregg Mitchell of Toot N Totum Food Stores.

Joe and Elma Reed, raised Vance (b. 1943) and his two brothers, Bill and Dale, in Borger, TX. Papa Joe, as he was known, was a local butcher. "My father was raised in Claude but moved to Borger in 1935 from Amarillo. He was working there at the Pinkney Packing Company as head butcher on the kill floor. During the days of prohibition, he did a little bootlegging horseback at the dances on the weekends," Vance shared. "Back then, Borger was really rough. They called it Borger by day and Bugger by night. At one point, my dad was a part-time deputy sheriff. He hauled a lot of people to jail in Stinnett. That's where the county courthouse and the jail were."

However, Papa Joe's primary role was that of a butcher at his own meat market and slaughterhouse. It was a group effort, as all the boys helped out, and Elma did the books and administrative tasks. "When I was a kid, knee-high to a grasshopper, I'd work there selling watermelons during the summer," Vance recalled. "Back then, you could buy the best they had for about a dollar and a

quarter, a big black diamond watermelon that I couldn't even hardly carry."

In 1952, when Vance was still in elementary school, Papa Joe went into business with his cousin Arley Barnett. The two became partners on a wholesale beer distribution company selling Coors brands such as Carling Black Label, Falstaff, Schlitz, and Pearl that covered the entire Texas Panhandle.

In those days, Borger was over the height of its oil field days, but it was definitely a black, smoky, not-so-sweet smelling town. "The carbon black plant was really in full swing back then. Of course, it was way before there were EPA or other kinds of standards. So, we'd get up in the morning, and the car looked like it was covered in black snow. They released all the carbon black at night when people were asleep," Vance explained. "Despite that, Borger was a very nice community and still is to this day. I enjoyed growing up there."

In 1957, as Vance was just entering high school, the brewery said there needed to be a warehouse in both markets. Vance's father owned a third of the business and his cousin owned two thirds. "That was also about the mixes of the sales," Vance explained. "So, they decided to split the markets. My dad's cousin put a new warehouse in Amarillo and my father had the one in Borger."

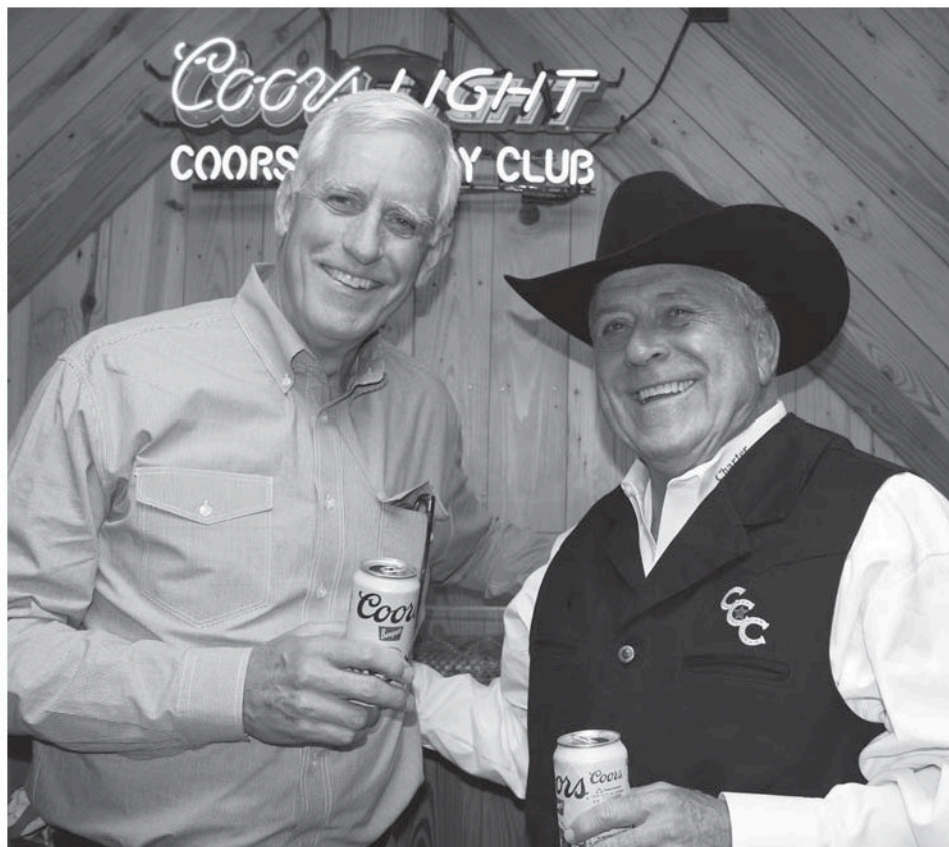
Vance went to work for his dad and started out loading trucks and sweeping the warehouse. He sold his first case of beer when he was 16 years old. "It wasn't exactly legal, but my dad didn't care," Vance shared. "He said that was better than stealing hubcaps."

Vance graduated from Borger High in 1961, knowing he wanted to be in the beer business. As a young man, Vance went to work for Coors in Golden, Colorado for about three years. He started out in the merchandising department as a field rep. It wasn't long before he met Pete Coors, former chairman of Molson Coors Brewing company and chairman of MillerCoors, by happenstance. The two hit it off and became good friends.

"I really, truly enjoyed that time," Vance recalls. "I remember when I first met Pete. I hadn't been working there long and had just got this brand new 1966 Ford LTD station wagon company car. I had it parked out in front of the brewery and was walking out to the car. I ran into Pete but didn't know who he was. He was looking at the car and me and sure was curious. We shook hands and introduced ourselves. He said, 'Whose car is that over there?' I told him, 'It's actually yours, but I'm driving it.' He said, 'You're kidding me,' and I said, 'No, sir. It belongs to Coors. It's my company car.' He said, 'Well, I'll be... You got a brand-new Ford station wagon. I just got my grandpa's '57 Chevrolet Bel Air.'"

The two had a good laugh over that, and it became something of a long-running joke. "I'd see him around the brewery some, and we'd talk. I'd ask him when he was going to get a little better vehicle," Vance smiled. "We traveled a lot together. We both loved rodeos and drinking beer - always have a great time together."

In 1969, Vance moved to Amarillo and bought the distributorship with his brother Dale and their father Joe in 1972. Soon thereafter, Papa Joe had to sell the Borger business because of rules that Coors had at that time prohibiting ownership of multiple distributorships.



Pete Coors and Vance Reed

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*Dale and Vance*

bonded us the most was our love for Amarillo and its people.”

Vance Reed has worked tirelessly for Amarillo. “Vance has quietly given his time and money to many different organizations, all for the betterment of our city. He has always done his fair share and more. Well, that’s not exactly true. He never helped pay my alimony when he got me kicked out of my house. I’m sure for anybody wondering, Vance will be happy to explain,” Jerry laughed. “I am very fortunate, as are many in Amarillo that consider Vance a friend, in spite of that one shortcoming. I am truly blessed to call Vance Reed my friend for the last 50 years.”

A few years later in 1975, Dale purchased the Waco distributorship and operated it until the early 2000s when it sold to Glaziers Wholesale. In 1978, Vance bought back the Borger operation that his dad had originally owned. Their brother Bill was also a distributor, owning the business in Abilene. Vance and his brother Bill joined forces to form Reed Beverage in 2011. Sadly, Bill passed away in 2014 after a long battle with cancer. Today, Reed Beverage is still a family business, with Vance as Chairman, and his son Chris as President/CEO.

Professionally, Vance has held numerous leadership roles. He is a Past President/Chairman of Wholesale Beer Distributors of Texas, Coors Product Supply Committee, Molson Coors National Business Council, and is the 2021 President of Rudisno Jockey Club. Vance was inducted as a Molson Coors Legend in 2010 and is a former board member of Maxor National Pharmacies.

Through the years, Vance has certainly done a great deal for the Amarillo area and beyond, all the while forging friendships and making great memories. “Vance Reed, Glenn McMennamy, and I started running together nearly five decades ago,” said long-time friend and former CEO of Maxor National Pharmacies, Jerry Hodge. “We have been down many roads together, a couple of them interstate, but most of them were rough and unpaved. Our friendship began with a mutual love of horses and western heritage, but I think what really

His civic contributions include service as Past President/Chairman of Amarillo Economic Development Association, Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, and Tri State Fair & Exposition. He is a past board member of Amarillo Airport Board and currently serves on the Amarillo/Potter County Events Venue District Board of Directors and is Nominations Chair of the Tri State Fair & Exposition Executive Committee.

Vance was given the Western Heritage Award from the Tri State Fair & Rodeo in 1997. It honors those who have made significant contributions to the agricultural community of the Golden Spread Area. “Vance does as much for this area as anyone I know and is the best kept secret in town. That’s the way he wants it to be,” said Johnny Trotter of Bar-G Feedyard at Hereford.

Additionally, Vance Reed has always been supportive of first responders. In 2004, he took that support to a new level by forming the 100 Club of Amarillo, now expanded to the top 26 counties of the Texas panhandle, to stand behind our local men and women behind the badge.

Suzanne Talley, Immediate Past President of the 100 Club Board, expressed her gratitude in saying, “On behalf of area firefighters, law enforcement officers, 100 Club members, and volunteer Board, we are forever grateful for Vance’s initiative to see that this area is able to take care of those serving and protecting us, our property and our families.”

Vance's charitable contributions through the Khiva Shrine are numerous, including service as Past Potentate – Khiva Shrine Center of Amarillo, Past Chairman for the Shriners Hospital for Children – Houston Unit, Chairman Emeritus – Shriners International Dispensation & Charters Committee. He was also a co-founder for the Khiva Muleskinners Unit locally.

"Throughout the last four decades, Vance has helped numerous charities. One time, about 36 years ago, Richard and Tisha Ware along with my wife Julie and I were working on a project to start a local chapter of a children's charity. I called Vance to see if he would help make a connection with a national company. I knew he would, because that's just the kind of guy he is," recalled Greg Mitchell. "After a two-minute conversation, Vance had agreed to get on a plane with me to go ask this corporation to see if they would get involved. Long story, short, that resulted in a \$1 million gift toward this particular campaign.



Chris and Vance Reed at Spicer Gripp

"He has the most integrity and honor of any man I've ever known. By that I'm saying, I have more faith in a handshake with Vance Reed than in a contract with most anybody else. His word is his bond. When he says it, there is no doubt in your mind that he is going to do whatever he says he is going to do. Things may have happened that cost him money, but when he gives you his pledge, he is going to do it, no matter what. Still to this day, that's the way he is."

## RODEO

Vance's love of rodeo started at a young age. "My dad loved horses. He used to ride when he was a kid but didn't much as an adult. He owned three or four race horses, and when I was kid, probably nine or 10 years old, we'd go to a dirt track down by the Canadian river every Saturday and Sunday to run the horses. My job was to get the horses ready for the jockey to ride, and then after the race, getting them back to the trailer and cool them off," recalled Vance, who is current President of the Jockey Club at Ruidoso, NM.

"My dad went to the 6666s sale and bought two cattle trucks full of horses one year. He brought home about 60 some horses, and he started a cutting horse business. They ate more grain than they cut cattle," Vance laughed. "My brother Dale loved horses, and he rodeoed. I ended up meeting guys like Glenn McMennamy, Digger Howard, and Jerry Hodge. Of course, they were always around horses. So, I kind of got the bug and started to want to team rope. I bought some horses. Then Chris got interested in team roping and bulldogging. So, we always kept about four to six horses around."

Back before the CCC Ranch Rodeo days, there was a group in Amarillo called "The Outfit" made up of guys like Glenn, Digger, Wiley Hicks, Jr., Quien ["Cutter"] Stapleton and Vance. "We were a bunch of guys who really loved rodeo and decided at one point in time to produce a Seniors Rodeo Finals here in Amarillo," Vance relayed. "We did that for a few years. It wasn't super popular in terms of attendance, but there were some great senior cowboys."

That was going by the wayside and The Outfit had plans to simply drop the rodeo. Vance then had the idea to start a ranch rodeo. The first was held in 1985. "We just always thought there was nothing in the world that was neater than a cowboy. They mean what they say, they do what they say. They dance with whoever brought them," Vance smiled. "There are so many really neat guys

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# HOME

around here that we knew would enjoy coming to compete. We decided we'd give those cowboys a chance to come to town, and blow off a little steam."

"When we started to see that the ranch rodeo could really kind of work into something and be extra special, Digger, Glenn, Chris and I took it over and produced it about a dozen years ourselves. It got to be a bigger job than we had time for, and there were a lot of guys who wanted to help with it," Vance explained. "One day, Chris and I were drinking beer and said to each other, 'How about starting a club? You know, for guys to drink beer and maybe put on a rodeo?' That was the start of the Coors Cowboy Club, back in 1998. Our motto has always been to promote Amarillo, the cowboy way."

Proud of his dad, Chris Reed added, "Vance was instrumental with Digger on founding the Original Team Roping Association and bringing team roping to where guys like us could start team roping. He played an instrumental part in making team roping what it is today."

"What we did was start the handicap system, like in golf. Back then everyone roped against everyone. It didn't give us guys who had a better degree in beer drinking a chance," Vance laughed. "Johnny Trotter is a great example. He was one of the best team ropers in this part of the country. So, you know, at the end of the day, guys like us got to sit on the fence, drink a beer and watch Johnny win the roping."

The Coors Original Team Roping Association started in Amarillo in 1986. "Then we got the West Texas Coors distributors involved, which was Amarillo, Midland, Odessa, Fort Stockton, Lubbock, San Angelo, Abilene," explained Chris. "Each town had their own ropings and qualified people to go to a finals that was held in one of the cities. It was a big deal for the weekend team roper to go and compete and helped a lot of really young kids come on and learn how to rope and compete. Now, there are multiple associations like the USTRC and World Series doing the same thing."

### CHUCKWAGON COOKING

Vance's mother was an excellent cook. "My dad loved to cook as well. So, I think Chris and I both got our love of cooking from my father and mother," Vance explained. "My brother Bill loved to cook, too, at one point in time.



We were just dumb enough to buy a chuckwagon in 1984. We still have it today, but we don't cook off it like we used to."

Through the years, the Reeds have cooked for numerous ranch gatherings, weddings, and business events across the country simply for the love of it. "We enjoyed cooking and sleeping on the ground and doing things like that," Vance recalled. "For a long time, during the ranch rodeo, we hosted the World Championship Chuckwagon Cook-Off in Amarillo. We've taken our chuckwagon all over, cooking for people. Jerry [Hodge] hired us to go to New Hampshire one time to cook for Blue Cross Blue Shield, as he was working on their pharmacy card business. "We shipped the wagon up there and 26 of us jumped on an airplane to go cook for 3,200 people," Vance smiled. "That was pre-cowboy club. Just friends of friends. Great memories."

Long-time friend Dean Roper who was along for the ride 30-some years ago when they started the Coors Chuckwagon recalled, "The one thing that everyone will tell you about Vance is that he is the most generous person there ever was. Whether it was contributing or cooking, Vance was there to help. There are a lot of people that will say Vance is their best friend, because he is a best friend to everybody. I mean, how can you ever say enough nice things about Vance Reed? You just can't do it. You could sit here all day and it would just scratch the surface. There's no one who is more of a gentleman in everyday life, all day, every day, to everybody. We should all take note and follow his lead." *AW*