Angola Rodeo, there's nothing like it

by STEVE CULPEPPER

Angola Rodeo, there’s nothing like it. They’ll tell you they’ve never seen anything like it.

In fact, compared to it, the best rodeos across the United States are all just rodeos—which is to say they’re some of the greatest, most exciting entertainment on earth.

But the Angola Prison Rodeo is a different animal all together.

And what the prison cowboys lack in experience and rodeo knowledge, they more than make up for in gutty determination and courage.

It’s hard to say just what makes going to the Angola Prison Rodeo such an adventure.

There’s the fact that you’re going to the largest maximum security prison in the country: a place where 4,600 convicts are serving sentences ranging from a few years to life (with a handful on death row).

There’s the drive down one of the most beautiful roads in the state during the most pleasant month of the year.

There’s the color, fanfare, pageantry and enthusiasm, the crowds, banners, swirling clouds of dust—stirred by some of the meanest, fastest, nastiest and heaviest four-legged beasts you’re likely to see outside of a cage—cheers, music and family fun.

And then, on top of everything, there’s the knowledge that some of these men will do just about any dangerous deed—because they don’t really have anything to lose. (When you face the prospect of spending the rest of your life behind bars, taking a chance on getting gored by a bull doesn’t seem like such a bad bet.)

The Angola Prison Rodeo gives all of the inmate cowboys plenty of chances to test their courage, too. Events like the wild horse race, the buddy pick-up, bulldogging, bareback riding, bull riding, wild cow milking and bust out are all aimed to make the Angola Prison Rodeo the fastest and wildest good-time to be found—anywhere.

And there are of course cold drinks, popcorn, hot dogs and hamburgers, nachos, candy apples and cotton candy all offered for sale by the well-mannered inmates in their distinctive blue work shorts.

You can also buy an Angola Prison Rodeo bandana, hat or t-shirt to show the world that you watched the toughest show on earth.

If you’ve never been before, you won’t find finer weather to take the drive out to the 19th annual Angola Prison Rodeo than the beautiful weather of the South Louisiana fall.

And all of the proceeds from the event go to the Inmate Welfare Fund. Because believe it or not the television sets, radios, library books, footballs—and just about anything else not having to do with the basics of life—are not provided for the inmates by the state. The prisoners depend on such events as the Angola Prison Rodeo to make money for such simple luxuries. And all of the money from the rodeo goes into the fund for just such things as televisions, radios, library books and footballs.

Warden Ross Maggio Jr., and his able staff of administrative employees—and the inmate rodeo committee—work hard in preparation for the month of October to be able to put on such a show.

The Angola Prison Rodeo is held every Sunday in October and it starts at 2 p.m. sharp. But come a little early. It’ll be an experience you won’t forget.