

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Myrtis Dightman

PERSON

Dightman, Myrtis, 1935-

Alternative Names: Myrtis Dightman;

Life Dates: May 7, 1935-

Place of Birth: Crockett, Texas, USA

Residence: Houston, TX

Occupations: Bull Rider

Biographical Note

Admired cowboy and pioneer in bull riding, Myrtis Dightman was born on May 7, 1935, in Crockett, Texas. Dightman grew up on a ranch with his siblings. As he grew older, he left school to work on the ranch. His first introduction to the Prairie View Trailride was in 1957 and in 1958-1960, he worked as a bullfighter. It was not until 1960 that Dightman began bull riding for the first time with the help of James Francis, Jr. Francis and Dightman founded the Prairie View Trailride Association in 1957 with an emphasis on the

well-being and development of agriculture.

In 1966, Dightman became the first black cowboy to qualify for the Professional Rodeo Association National Finals. He went on to qualify six more times, missing just once between 1966 and 1972. Dightman finished third in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association World Standings in 1967 and 1968. He also won the Calgary Stampede in 1971 before appearing in the movie J.W. Coop with Cliff Robertson as himself. The following year, Dightman won the bull riding competition at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo and competed in his last Pro Rodeo Association National Finals, placing seventh overall. He also had a small role as himself in Junior Bonner starring Steve McQueen. In 1987, Dightman began working at the American Hat Company which manufactured and sold “Myrtis Dightman signature” hat designs.

After retiring from bull riding, Dightman was inducted into several Hall of Fames including the Texas Rodeo Hall of Fame as its first living African American, and the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1997. In 2001, Dightman was inducted into the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame and in 2003, he entered the National Cowboys of Color Museum and Hall of Fame. On top of these inductions, in 2003, he was also inducted into the Professional Bull Rider’s Ring of Honor. In tribute to his accomplishments, a bronze statue of Dightman is being erected in the PorthAgricultural Indoor Arena in Crockett, Texas, where they hold an annual rodeo named after him.

Myrtis Dightman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 10, 2010.

Related Entries

Crockett High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

American Hat Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1999]

Cowboy Hat Distributor

Professional Bull Rider [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1953 to 1989]

Best of Texas Rodeo Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board of Directors

Professional Bull Riders Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Prairie View Trail Ride Association [MEMBEROF]
[from 1957 to ?]

Founder