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## **RODEO TOURISTS**

*Georgia couple is Elk City Rodeo fans; will attend for the second time this year*

Elk City, Okla. – August 23, 2021 – Guy and Valerie Fried enjoy the Elk City Rodeo so much, they're going to drive 1,100 miles from their home in Macon, Georgia to Oklahoma to see it this year.

The Georgia couple came to the rodeo in 2019 on a whim, after having spent two months traveling that summer.

That year, they were in the process of readying their house to sell, after having retired from the waste management business. But in March of 2019, the house burned to the ground, due to electrical problems.

They decided to go on a road trip, "to clear our heads," Guy said. Long-time rodeo fans, they traveled to Canada and were spectators at rodeos including the Calgary Stampede and the Cody, Wyo. rodeo.

It was when they were on the way back to Georgia that they stopped in Elk City. Someone had told Guy the Elk City Rodeo was worth attending, so he and Valerie bought tickets, planning to go to one night of rodeo then head on home.

But it was so enjoyable that they decided to stay a second day, to watch the rodeo again.

"The Elk City Rodeo was worth it," he said. "What's there not to like about it? It wasn't just the rodeo, but the people, the town, and the whole atmosphere."

They liked it so much, they're coming back this year.

"We're going to load up in my daddy's old station wagon and drive to Oklahoma, to come and visit you all again," he said.

They take the back roads, stopping to see interesting things and historical sites along the way.

"We are the kind of people who go out of our way to drive off the beaten path when we are traveling," he said.

Even though Guy wears a cowboy hat regularly and loves all things western, he admits he and Valerie don't live the western lifestyle. But they appreciate the lifestyle and its people.

“We enjoy being around that culture, particularly in recent times, when everybody's so divided. The western culture is not a culture that is confused about anything.

“Nobody in the western culture is confused about who they are, where they are, and what they are. And at the end of the day, Valerie and I are fairly simple people, and we enjoy it.”

At home in Georgia, the Frieds attend rodeos in the area. Guy even tried bareback bronc riding about twenty years ago, when he was forty, suffering a broken tailbone and ending his rodeo career before it got started, but giving him a great story to tell. It was on his bucket list, so he tried it. Valerie told him, “I hope that was fun, but if you ever do it again, I'm going to kill you,” Guy laughed. “But for about thirty seconds, I was a professional rodeo cowboy, and it was about 24 seconds longer than it needed to be.”

This year, the Frieds will spend about eight days on the road, traveling to and from Elk City, playing tourist on the way.

But the highlight of their trip will be Elk City and the rodeo.

“Elk City is one of those little jewels that we found,” he said.

The 83<sup>rd</sup> annual Elk City Rodeo of Champions will be held September 3-5 at Beutler Bros. Arena in Ackley Park.

Performances start at 8 pm each night. Tickets range in price from \$9-\$18 and go on sale August 30 at the Beutler Bros. arena ticket booth and at Circle A Western Wear. For more information, visit the rodeo's website ([www.ElkCityRodeo.com](http://www.ElkCityRodeo.com)) or its Facebook page.

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Cutline:

Guy and Valerie Fried, residents of Macon, Georgia, are Elk City Rodeo fans after having attended the rodeo in 2019 on a whim. The couple will return for their second rodeo this year.