

# WORLD FINALS RESERVE CHAMPIONS



BY GLYNDA PHILLIPS

STATE BOARD MEMBER JAMES RASBERRY of Kosciusko has competed in team penning events for many years. Imagine his pride when his team was named Reserve Champions (second place) in the 2017 U.S. Team Penning Association's (USTPA) world finals in Texas this fall. His fellow team members included Katie McGuffin, an Oklahoma veterinarian, and Dustin Johnson, a Mississippian who buys, sells and trains horses.

"I started riding with both of these individuals when they were small, so I have watched them grow up," James said. "They are fine people and excellent team penning competitors. Dustin is one of the top five riders in the U.S."

Through the years, James has won over 25 belt buckles, a testament to his passion for and skill at this particular sport. In fact, he helped to organize the Mississippi Team Penning Association 30 years ago and has been involved with the Dixie Regional Team Penning Association for many years. The Dixie Regional TPA is the second-largest independent team penning association in the U.S. and includes members from the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Arkansas and Florida.

"I have watched team penning competition grow in participation and prize packages," he said. "The payback for USTPA world championship winners is fantastic. In recent years, the United States Team Penning Association has averaged about 2,800 teams at its world finals each year."

## A FAMILY SPORT

James says his daughters were barrel racers when they were in school. When they graduated from high school, he got a horse and began competing in team penning events. He is very proud that his middle daughter and oldest granddaughter are riding with him again.

"Team penning is a good family sport. We have kids, ages 4 and 5 years old, involved in it, and the age of the competitors just goes up from there," he said. "I will be 70 in July, and I am still riding."

"My horse is 21 years old, and he's a fine horse," he added. "I pretty much will keep doing this as long as he and I are living."

James has penned in events all across the U.S. He competed in Cheyenne, Wyoming, the first time it held a state team penning competition, and he wound up in third place.

"You meet a lot of friendly people at these events," he said. "They become like family to you."

## EQUINE INDUSTRY

James has a horse ranch and has worked as a building contractor since 1971. He was president of the Mississippi Homebuilders Association for three years. He served on the Mississippi State Board of Contractors for 10 years.

He is currently serving on the State Board of Animal Health, representing the horse industry, and he is serving as president of the Mississippi State Equine Association (MSEA).

James is especially proud of the "Saddle Up" tags, an MSEA fundraising effort.

"We raised enough money with the tags to make a pledge of \$25,000 to the vet school at Mississippi State University for scholarships, which are presented to worthy students every year," he said. "We have also pledged \$25,000 for the new Animal and Dairy Sciences building being built near the South Farm on the MSU campus. We will have our logo displayed at the concession stand."

## FARM & FAMILY

James grew up on a farm in Ethel then moved with his father, a carpenter, to Pearl and Clinton.

James' oldest daughter is an attorney and lobbyist. His middle daughter works in fundraising for Palmer House in Columbus. His youngest daughter provides guidance for wellness and fitness programs for Silver Sneakers in Mississippi and Louisiana. He has six grandchildren, ages 6 months to 21 years old.

James is a member of Open Door Baptist Church in Kosciusko. He is a past president of the Attala County Industrial Development Authority.

## CHICKEN STEW

James is known for his homemade chicken stew, which he has cooked for participants in the Dixie Regional Team Penning Association shows held in his area. Last year, he also cooked his stew for the Attala County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.

James is serving his third year as president of Attala County Farm Bureau and his second year on the state board. He is chair of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Equine Committee.



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