

Dan Atkisson – Lady Luck Ironworks

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

As the rodeo queen rides by, the light flashes from the fancy spurs which she wears on her boots. These attractive spurs were created by a couple of cowboys from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Dan Atkisson and Tyler Brown are the co-owners of Lady Luck Ironworks, the maker of rodeo queen spurs and more. Dan and Tyler grew up near Stockton. They are capable cowboys, having grown up working on farms and ranches.

Dan went to K-State where he studied ag technology management with a minor in animal sciences, and Tyler went to North Central Kansas Technical College in Beloit. After graduation, both came back to Stockton.

Stockton is a rural community of 1,535 people. That's rural – but there's more. Dan grew up on the family farm where his parents still live, located on the Rooks-Graham county line. That farm is twenty miles west of Stockton, north of Nicodemus and northwest of the town of Damar, population 154 people. Now, that's rural.

Dan and his wife Amanda and a young son live in Stockton. He is involved in his community and the farm business. For example, he was selected for the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership program. Dan and Tyler continue to work together.

"We've been best of friends since we were little kids," Dan said. While working on ranches, they also cowboied together.

"We like those fancy bits and spurs," Dan said. "Of course, being cowboys, we didn't have any money to buy `em, so we decided to try to make some."

They got a forge and started tinkering around with making bits and spurs in a garage. As their skill increased, they started making custom knives and fancy belt buckles.

"We made one for my nephew, and it turned out so well we thought we could sell `em," Dan said. They went into business together, but they needed a name for the new business.

"I got married five years ago, but Tyler's still a bachelor," Dan said. "We decided to name our business Lady Luck Ironworks because he had no luck with the ladies."

Lady Luck Ironworks made its first buckle in January 2011. Today, Lady Luck Ironworks is a custom made-to-order producer of bits, spurs, knives, and western belt buckles. They can even make metal money clips, rings, bracelets, conchos, and buckles for horse headstalls.

The guys started a Facebook page and started building these products. Each item is handmade, using polished steel, nickel, silver, and more, which can be overlaid with silver, brass, copper, and/or sterling silver.

For spurs, the shanks begin as half-inch plate steel. The rowels are handcut and filed to shape. Lady Luck Ironworks has built spurs for Miss Rodeo Kansas and Miss Rodeo K-State. In fact, the company has become the sponsor of the Miss Rodeo K-State spurs.

Through Facebook and word of mouth, the company's products are now being sold from coast to coast. Their Facebook page has nearly 800 likes.

“We’ve sent things as far west as California and as far east as Georgia,” Dan said. Most of their bits and spurs are sold to working cowboys in the central and southern plains. The fancy buckles are a growing part of their business currently.

In addition to the custom designs which Lady Luck Ironworks creates and sells, the company has also donated items for worthy causes. For example, they made an FFA Alumni buckle to support the local chapter as well as one for the KARL program.

Dan was elected to the National Sorghum Producers Board of Directors. He made a custom buckle which was donated to the PAC auction. This beautiful buckle from rural Kansas was sold during the auction at the Commodity Classic in Phoenix, Arizona.

For more information, go to facebook.com/LadyLuckIronworks.

The rodeo queen rides by, and the light glints from the fancy spurs attached to her boot heels. Those spurs are built by a couple of entrepreneurial cowboys from rural Kansas. We commend Dan Atkisson and Tyler Brown for making a difference with their craftsmanship and entrepreneurship. We hope their success can spur other rural businesses to succeed as well.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.