

Brad Hamilton

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

“God, family, America, and freedom.” Those are the priorities that rural entertainer Brad Hamilton believes in living, celebrating, and promoting. He also believes in public service, both in civic life and in the military. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Brad Hamilton is an educator and entertainer in northeast Kansas. His family came from Jewell County originally. Part of his ancestry is Native American Indian. Brad's father played football, ran track, and was on the wrestling team at Kansas State. Brad's dad went on to become the superintendent at Lovewell Reservoir.

Brad grew up with a love of music and of cowboy life. His grandfather had a farm and Brad rode whenever he could. “I grew up in the Roy Rogers era and those good guys were your heroes,” Brad said. He learned to spin guns and do rope tricks. Brad's grandfather also loved the song “Wings of a Dove” and he asked Brad to sing along with it every chance he could.

Brad's father served in the National Guard and then was transferred to Salina when Brad was nine.

One day while in grade school at Salina, Brad was seated next to a young man who would become a long-time friend. This young man's name was Bill Graves.

Brad and Bill Graves went through Salina schools together and then to Kansas Wesleyan. After Brad's football career ended due to injury, he got a teaching degree. He also played in bands and sang while in college. Bill Graves went into politics and was eventually elected Secretary of State.

Brad taught for a time and then worked twenty years for Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services. He met and married a Native American woman during that time and was involved in the activities of the Kansas tribes.

In 1994, Bill Graves was elected Governor. When he took office, he called on his long-time friend and experienced state worker, Brad Hamilton, to join him as a policy advisor. One of Brad's primary duties was to serve as a liaison with the Native American tribes in Kansas.

Brad had moved to Jackson County by this time. After serving on the Governor's staff during all eight years of the Graves administration, Brad was elected a Jackson County Commissioner. He served two terms and even was elected President of the Kansas County Commissioners Association.

One day one of his fellow commissioners heard Brad humming a song while working at the courthouse. The commissioner thought he sounded pretty good and encouraged him to sing at the newly opened Red Rock Guest Ranch which was producing a weekly cowboy music show. Brad laughed it off, but the guest ranch owner cornered him and insisted that he come sing. “Okay, I'll go and get this over with,” Brad thought. “Do you know any of these songs?” the owner asked Brad. “I know The Auctioneer,” Brad said. After he sang it, the next question was: “Can you come sing here next Saturday night?”

It went so well that Brad became a featured performer every weekend at the guest ranch. Eventually, he became the entertainment manager there.

Brad ultimately produced a CD of his cowboy songs. The guest ranch no longer offers regular shows, but Brad continues to sing and perform around Kansas while serving as a substitute teacher in the Royal Valley school district. He lives near the rural community of Hoyt, population 573 people. Now, that's rural.

Brad now produces a show called 4 Points West, featuring his four core values which he says are "God, family, America, and freedom." One day a friend came to Brad and told him how much his granddaughter enjoyed Brad singing "God bless the USA." He encouraged Brad to produce a CD of patriotic music, which Brad released in the summer of 2015.

"I do lots of shows for kids," Brad said. "We need to expose our kids to western culture, lifestyle and beliefs."

"God, family, America, and freedom." We salute Brad Hamilton for making a difference by sharing these beliefs with others through music, celebration of cowboy heritage, and his service to the citizens of Kansas and Jackson County. He makes some great points.

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