Dr. Charles W. Graham, D.V.M., was named the 2018 PRCA Veterinarian of the Year for the work he’s done with Rodeo Austin and many of professional rodeo’s top animal athletes since the early 1960s.

“I just can’t thank all of the people enough that ever helped me throughout my life and my career,” Graham said. “I just treasure them and that relationship. That special relationship and the honor and privilege of seeing them be successful is something I’m very proud of. I hope I live a long life and never let them down. You can’t dream you’ll have something like this happen to you.”

Graham graduated from veterinary school in 1961 and started working in Elgin, Texas. He later got other veterinarians involved and owned a regional complex, sale barns and ranches and feed yards.

“I worked seven days a week and was very proud of what I did,” Graham said. “I’ve always been out of the box and looking down the road and never told anyone I couldn’t do something. I had confidence I could do it and was somehow blessed with it. … I like it, and I’m going to do it until I pass on. I’m 86 years old but I feel 45 or 52.”

Winning an award is nothing new for Graham, but this one is special to him.

“I have so many awards, it’s unreal, but this is huge,” Graham said.

Graham was nominated by his peers and rodeo colleagues for his work not only as a veterinarian but also as a volunteer with numerous boards and committees. The Dr. Charles W. Graham Western Heritage Center was named after him for being one of the first to contribute toward it.

For the last 30 years, he’s provided free housing for more than 1,000 head of livestock at his ranch each year for 30 days during Rodeo Austin.

Graham also spent a few days each year helping to treat animals at the National Finals Rodeo from the mid-1960s until about 10 years ago.