

D. J. Gaudin-aka-Kajun Kid

1998 Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame
By El Deano



The Kajun Kid was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana around 1929. When Kajun was around fifteen or sixteen he ran away from home and joined a Wild West show. He and a friend, Ted followed and worked the Wild West show for a time all around Louisiana, Arkansas and other states around the general area until they decided to quit when they were at Wharton, Texas.

“We were tired of eating dry corn flakes and water and being broke so we thought there must be a better way to make some money,” said Gaudin.

They went to Ted’s home at Dayton and Kajun started making the local circuit in the general area and soon joined the Southwestern Rodeo Association (SRA) as it was called then. This was somewhere along the late forties-maybe 1948 or so. In 1950 or 1951, Kajun was named “Bullfighter/Clown of the Year” for the SRA and given a nice buckle to go with the award.

“All of my friends wanted me to join the (then RCA-now PRCA) but the SRA people were trying to keep me in their association. I was little bit leary of going the RCA route because I didn’t know anyone there but I did want to try and progress and better myself,” he said.

About this time Bobby Estes came down to see Kajun work a show even though he didn’t know Estes was watching him work the bulls. Estes came up to Kajun after the show and wanted Kajun to come with him to work all of his shows—which was about thirty at that time. Kajun thought it over and decided to go with the Estes offer. “I worked for Bobby Estes around two years, plus or minus. We were at a rodeo at Ranger, Texas and Mr. Everett E. Colburn of Dublin happened to be there watching his daughter Carolyn perform her famous horse trick riding acts,” he said. Bobby Estes told Colburn to stay and watch Kajun do his clown acts and fight bulls. Colburn said he had to leave immediately after his daughter finished her acts on her horse. Estes just wouldn’t take no for an answer and Colburn saw Kajun perform and was very impressed. This happened in the summer and later that same year Colburn called Kajun and offered him a chance to follow probably one of the greatest rodeo strings of that day. Colburn had most of the bigger shows, including Chicago, Ft. Worth, New York, Cheyenne, just to name a few. This was really the big break that the Kajun Kid needed to hit the big time of all of the big name RCA rodeos of that day. “When Mr. Colburn called and offered me that job I didn’t waste any time replying, yes!” said Kajun.

As mentioned earlier, Colburn had most of the bigger shows of those days, and he was also associated with Gene Autry and the Flying ‘A’ Ranch. Colburn’s daughter rode horses trained by Benny Reynolds (also a great bullrider). Benny also trained horses for Roy Rogers. His other daughter, Rosemary, married the great World and All-Around Champion bull and bareback rider, Harry Thompkins.

“When I wasn’t working Colburn’s rodeos I was traveling all over the U.S. working the other big rodeos the major stock contractors had. The job with Colburn’s shows opened up a big opportunity for me. One of the reasons the opening with Coburn’s shows happened was because, George Mills, the famous bullfighter/

clown who worked the shows was retiring. George Mills had been my idol for years and here I was getting an opportunity to fill his shoes!”

“I started working for Tommy Steiner circa 1960 and worked all of his shows around fifteen years and also traveled nationwide when he didn’t have a show scheduled. I had the Houston, Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Waco and all of the big Texas and other shows for probably around 25 years. I quit fighting bulls in 1979 at fifty years of age,” said Kajun.

“A lot of people asked me why I quit fighting bulls when I could still move pretty good. I said, ‘Well they bring in new bulls every year, but it’s the same ‘ole Kajun every year!’ When I was younger and got run over by a bull I’d just jump up again and meet him head on, but the older I got it took me longer to get up and I got up a lot slower,” he said. (So, you want to be a bullfighter or bullrider, eh?)

Kajun said, laughing, that when he fought bulls they didn’t wear all of the protective padding and things the bullfighters wear today.

“No, all we had were the baggy pants. We were at one of the big name rodeos recently and someone laughed and said, ‘With all of the protective gear these guys wear today the bulls can run over, stomp on, and chew on and hardly get hurt!’ Of course we all know they can get hurt, but it is not as easy to be hurt as it used to be,” said Kajun.

Kajun started clowning and bullfighting over 50 years ago. “I had started riding bulls and bareback horses in 1948 and had gotten my card to RCA somewhere along in there. I never made the finals in the riding events but Buck LeGrand and I worked the first finals at Dallas in 1959. Buck and I met and had our picture taken with Johnny Carson (which Joe Spivey and I were privileged to look at) about 1960 or so.

“I got to taking the bulls off the cowboys and got to liking it so I started doing it and became good at it. It seemed like it was a way to make a living doing what I liked to do,” added Kajun.

Kajun moved to Teague, Texas to be closer to family.

“Joyce, my first wife’s mother, was from Teague and we moved there to be close to her. My first wife died in ‘91 after we had been married 42 years. My first wife and I had three boys and the boys traveled with me quite a bit in the summers but I didn’t want them to rodeo so I told them to work from their neck up (use their head). My oldest son, Todd, is the president of a bank in Houston, my next son, Jack, is a Chaplain at a prison in Colorado, and my third son, John, works and has a good job in the prison system at Huntsville,” said Kajun.

In all of his years of bullfighting, Kajun has had some pretty funny moments. “The most humorous event was with a little muley Hereford-type bull. They turned him out and the producer said ‘go get him Kajun’. I led him to the barrel and tried to get him to circle around and he wouldn’t take the bait. I finally started around the barrel and he met me head-on in my stomach. He was smart, he wouldn’t come at you until he had you in the middle of the arena where you couldn’t get away, then he would get you,” said Kajun.

But the fun times didn’t come without the occasional wreck. “One of my worst wrecks was from #101. I first saw him at Corpus Christi where they were trying out some young bulls and Ronnie Webb drew him. He just mostly ran to the end of the arena and Ronnie jumped off, but the bull kept



Cajun Kid working to protect the cowboy.

going. The pickup man roped him outside the arena but in the process he jumped into the back of my brand new station wagon caving in the whole back glass and my two youngest boys were in it sleeping. He nearly demolished my new wagon.

“He would fight so bad that Jim Shoulders and Harry Thompkins would put a match box in front of him and he would just bury his head and slobber all over fighting the box. Anyway they would pay mount money on him and the cowboys would get off on the gate as it opened and then we fought him. At one of these, I was trying to take him to the barrel and just as I got my hand on the barrel he caught me on the leg, hooked me under the leg and threw me so high and I landed so hard I didn’t know where I was. The only thing that saved me was that he kept on hooking the barrel and that gave the guys a chance to help me out. Buck was in the barrel and of course couldn’t get out to help me. They finally put him back in the draw and I told them to bail that flank in him and he got to spinning. A cowboy could be right under him but he would be looking for any movement so I would get his attention and here he came. He was a bad dude,” said Kajun.

Kajun said, “The best bulls were just as good in those days as they are today. They have a bigger selection now to select from as everybody has gone to raising bucking bulls. As far as the hooking and fighting ability of the bulls themselves, they were just as bad or worse as they are today in my opinion.”

Kajun met his current wife Ruth in Teague. “Well, I knew her deceased husband, Hank Schumacher, real well as he had a place close to mine at Teague. I never had met her but one day after my wife, Joyce, had died Ruth came up to check on their place, and we met and I offered to take her to eat as there was nothing open at Teague, and so from that chance meeting we went to eat at Sam’s in Fairfield. Over a period of time we saw each other and finally got married,” he said.

Kajun and the writer of this story also had and have a couple of mutual friends. Kajun helped “Lil” Jim Hunt who gave the bullriding and bullfighting a try in the sixties until he got a pretty good head injury. The way I found out where the Kajun lived was by asking our personal friend, Pat Massey Wilkins, to do a story on the Kajun Kid for me. She then told me that he lived in Boerne, that I was much closer than she was. D.J. Gaudin was a close personal friend to Ralph and Pat Massey when he lived at Teague. Ralph and Pat purchased the Rocksprings newspaper in 1989 and then sold the paper to the Andersons in 1991. Ralph passed away about three years after the Andersons purchased the paper after a long fight against cancer.

The Kajun Kid also told of a Rocksprings local who in his own words was “an outstanding roper” He asked about Loyd Mitchell and how he was doing. After being reassured that Loyd was doing well, Kajun said that Loyd was a member of the SRA and that “he was some calf roper.”

Kajun said, “I had a very good career, loved my work and was never seriously hurt.” The Kajun Kid was inducted into the Pro-Rodeo Hall of Fame in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1979 the same year he retired. He was also inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame at Oklahoma City in 1996. He is also in the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame at Belton, Texas and the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame in Fort Worth.

In his free time now, Kajun loves taking his three grandsons to the lake and rivers and spending time with them doing the things they like to do.

Personally speaking, this writer alias the “Ole Deano”, believes that the Kajun Kid has had a God-blessed career.

Well, you could fill a book on Kajun and his clowning/bullfighting days and maybe we will some day, but it’s goodbye folks, for now.

Bill George

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In most stories, he would have ridden in on a white stallion, dressed in a gleaming silver suit of armor. In mine (according to Bill George’s wife), “He drove a new Pontiac, wore a dark western-cut suit, a cowboy hat and the only thing gleaming was a freshly shined pair of cowboy boots. He became my hero nonetheless.”

Bill is the epitome of an American Rodeo Cowboy. He grew up on a cattle ranch in the Texas Panhandle, joined the United States Armed Forces during World War II and Korea, was a champion bullrider, champion saddle bronc rider and champion steer wrestler. Bill has made a career in the Western Industry (he and his wife Billie own the