



Bobby Joe Bartley

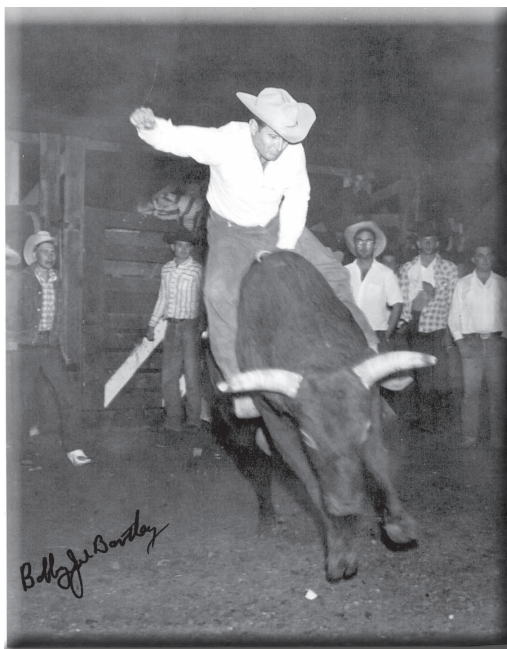
Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame 2000

Bobby Joe Bartley remembers his first hands-on experience in rodeo came during the years of World War II, when at fourteen Buck Steiner put him on his first bareback horse. Bobby Joe wore brogans, as he had no boots. In those early years, he'd often hitch-hike to local rodeos around Austin, Texas to see the cowboy's grit and the tough livestock they were matched up with.

Bobby Joe began his rodeo and livestock work for the Steiner Rodeo Company hauling with Buck's son Tommy. He hauled, worked chutes, fed and worked the livestock, thus gaining general experience in rodeo work which would continue in some capacity for all his years.

Remembering back to the early times, he's told of riding from Austin to New Orleans in a boxcar with steers and calves. For three days and nights, he rode with the cattle and slept on top of a work box. He came home much quicker though, by riding astride a saddle tank of a big truck through the pouring rain!

He had certainly proved himself tough-worthy enough to start



his career in riding bulls. He was seventeen when he won his first RCA bullriding event and from 1949 onward, he rode bulls and bareback horses alike. He won or placed in most major rodeos in Texas during the 1950s including Waco, Cotulla, Rocksprings, San Antonio, Stockdale, Austin and Bandera.

Back then, the Cowboy Capitol of the World centered in Belton, Texas and produced life-long friends and cohorts such as Bud Humphrey, Eddie and Johnny Boren, Cotton Proctor and Joe and Les Hood. They were good friends and cowboys who Bobby Joe aspired to emulate with his own rodeo talents.

Around 1960, Bobby Joe started competing in steer wrestling with a great influence from fellow steer wrestler and friend, Leon Bauerle. At thirty years old, Bobby Joe had retired from the rough stock events and began judging rodeos as well. Throughout the 1960s Bobby Joe bull-dogged and hazed equally not only in Texas, but in Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Michigan, California and Colorado.

To “Cowboy” was what Bobby Joe always remembered wanting to do, so it was natural that he remained in touch by working for ranches such as the Bud Marshall Ranch, the Heap Ranch and the Acrey Ranch.

Judging rodeos spanned from the 1960s through the 1980s for rodeo producers such as Cecil Hill, Don Miller, Lester Meier, Lloyd Woodley, Lester Davis and Sloan Williams.

Many miles, experiences and friends later, Bobby Joe found and married his 1950s rodeo sweetheart, Pearl Jenkins Keefer. Raising the kids proved to add a new sort of domestic spin to his previous rough life. All three children have said how fortunate they’ve felt when great cowboys they’d heard of told them “to live like Bobby Joe says and does and they will never go wrong.”

Bobby Joe has been a tested and true rodeo talent and role model for many aspiring cowboys and cowgirls for the last fifty years.

In conclusion he says, “All the many, many friends I’ve had and still have during my rodeoing years are a very big part of what’s important to me. Cause that’s all that’s left when the dust settles.” And God willing, much later on when the time comes for the last dust to settle on Bobby Joe, he says, “I don’t want sad singing-I want cowboy music. I want my friends to have a good time, and I want them to say I had a good time too.”