



# ALL COWBOY & ARENA CHAMPIONS

## HALL OF FAME



## Johnny Boren

The Belton Journal, Thursday, June 25, 1981

While many local cowboys have done well in the arena, one Belton man has managed to make a name for himself not only inside the pen but in the management circles of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

Johnny Boren rode in the then RCA for many years, competing with top hands across the country and winning his share of the big rodeos. But it wasn't until he quit rodeoing professionally that he made his biggest contributions to the sport.

A few years ago, Boren founded the Old Timers Rodeo Cowboys Association after a reunion of area cowboys was held in Temple. The idea started with the desire to have a jackpot-type roping each year at the reunion but developed into a full blown rodeo for old timers. That one rodeo soon worked its way into a whole series of old timers rodeos. With the number ever increasing the OTRCA was formed and Boren was elected president.



Then at the National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City, Boren was approached by six-time world champion bullrider Donnie Gay (Boren supplied the world champ bull rider with a vehicle while he was owner of the Ford dealership in Belton and the award went to Gay several years in a row) who asked if he would consider the job as Lone Star Circuit manager. (The PRCA is divided into 12 regions or circuits. Each region has its own finals and at the end of the year, awards buckles and saddles to the champions in each event, just like the National Finals.)

“It was hard to say no,” Boren admitted. The Belton cowboy told them that he might consider the idea.

Before the Finals ended, 25 or 30 of the top cowboys encouraged Boren to take the job. Neal Gay owner of Mesquite Rodeo Company and Donnie Gay’s father and Monty Henson, former world champion saddle bronc rider, were among the cowboys who wanted Boren for the job.

Top 15 hands Bobby Brown and Rusty Riddle met with Boren over dinner and also added their support.

Boren returned home after the Finals and promptly forgot all about it. Unknown to him, he was approved as circuit manager at the PRCA board meeting in Phoenix in March.

“Then, one day I was headed out of the house,” Boren said, “on my way to an OTRCA show in Bowie when the phone rang. It was the PRCA office in Colorado Springs asking for information on me. I asked why and they told me I was now the Lone Star Circuit manager.”

Boren held his first board meeting for the circuit at the Wichita Falls rodeo. The four hour meeting was held in a building provided by Budweiser for the meeting.

The president of the Lone Star Circuit is Bobby Brown; vice-president, T. J. Walters; directors, Rusty Riddle, R.L. Bland and Jimmy Powers. Event directors are bareback, Cotton George; bullriding, Donnie Gay; saddle bronc, Gene Reed; steer wrestling, Bob L. Walker; calf roping, Bob Blandford; team roping, Mack Altizer and cowgirls barrel racing, Delsie Edmondson.

The Lone Star Circuit, Boren said, consists solely of the state of Texas and is considered the “biggest and best circuit of the 12 in the U.S.” The circuit system was initiated in 1975 by the PRCA to give cowboys more recognition in their own areas. It allows top cowboys to compete on a part-time basis or stay close to home. Formerly, many of the top hands who didn’t travel as much as others received little or no recognition.

Cowboys can only count money won in their home circuit

towards circuit championships. Thus a cowboy who stays home all summer and hits only Texas rodeos can win a circuit title over a cowboy who travels out of his circuit to shoot at the national title.

Bob Blandford, calf roping director for the circuit, won the all around honors on the Lone Star Circuit last year. Other 1980 circuit champs include: saddle bronc, Monty Henson; bareback, Curtis Molder; bullriding, Vern Smith; calf roping, Ken Kelly; steer wrestling, Tommy Puryear; team roping, Tee Woolman and steer roping, Walt Arnold.

To give you an idea of how tough the Lone Star Circuit is Henson was the world champion in 1975 and 76, was third in 79, fourth in 78 and third this year. He also picked up the circuit championship in 77, won \$4,014 at Cheyenne this year and the average at the Finals in 1976. He has gone into the finals in the number one spot three times and has qualified for the finals seven times. Blandford is a three-time NFR qualifier, 1973 Rookie of the Year, Bill Linderman Award winner in 1973 and 76, ended up 14th in the 1980 standings and won the bullriding in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Finals.

Puryear was the world champ in 1974, is an eight-time qualifier for the Finals and was runner-up to the world title in 1975 and 77. He holds the record for the fastest time on a steer at the Texas Finals, 3.4 seconds in 1979; is co-holder of the fastest time on a steer, 3.5 seconds at the 1977 Finals; was the circuit champ in 1976 and won the NFR average that same year.

Woolman won the team roping championship and Rookie Team Roper of the Year in 1980. He also set a single season winnings mark by picking up \$49,983 and holds the fastest team roping time, 4.8 seconds in Las Vegas.

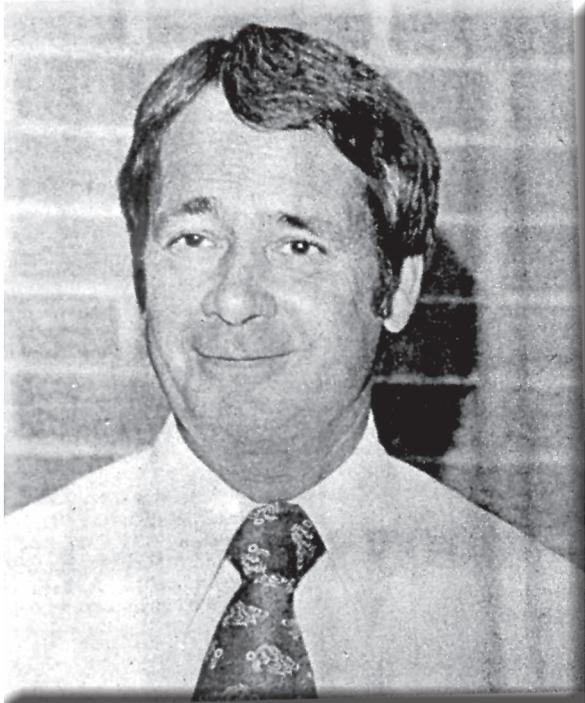
Arnold is a 13-time NFR qualifier, ending up second in 1978 and 79. He was also the circuit champ in 1979, won the Finals steer roping average in 78, was steer roping director for the PRCA from 1974-77, is a past president of the Cowboy Chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and was the West Texas team roping champ in 1956 and 57.

Smith was a qualifier for the 1980 Finals, was the runner-up in the NIRA in bullriding, saddle bronc riding and bareback riding in 1975 and qualified for the NIRA finals in bareback and bullriding in 1975 and 76.

One of the reasons the Texas Circuit is so tough is that many top cowboys from more northern climates migrate to Texas because of the number of rodeos held in the state and also because of the central location for rodeoing it offers.

The circuit also offers some of the richest purses in the PRCA, with three of the top six PRCA rodeos of 1980. Houston was third richest rodeo in the PRCA last year with \$216,526 in prize money, overshadowed by only Denver and Cheyenne. Houston was the number one rodeo as far as added money by the committee goes. Ft. Worth was fifth with \$183,946 and San Antonio was sixth with \$148,078. The Dallas and Pecos rodeos were also listed in the Top 25 rodeos of 1980.

Because of the size and richness of the Lone Star Circuit, Boren has his job cut out for him. He not only handles and presides over the board meeting, he is also responsible for awards and sponsors, keeping track of the standings of circuit



cowboys and informing them if they qualify for the circuit Finals and promoting the circuit, the PRCA and rodeo in general.

He works closely with large sponsors such as Coors, Nestea and McDonalds and with local sponsors such as B bar D, Cochran, Blair and Potts.

He solicits saddle and buckle sponsors for the Texas finals champions and, in general, just stays atop professional rodeo in the state.

So, just about the time most rodeo contestants have decided it is time to hang up the rigging and ropes, Johnny Boren is just starting to make what may turn out to be his biggest contribution to the sport that he and many other Belton area residents love.

## Johnny Boren 1997 Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame

Johnny Boren was born December 14, 1927 in Sparta, a small community near Belton, Texas. At an early age Johnny began riding calves and horses. Because of his love for riding and his small size, 5'6", 108 pounds (but big heart), Johnny became a professional racehorse jockey at the age of 16 in the year of 1944. Johnny started racing in Texas and moved on to California. He traveled from Del Rio, Texas to Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona and back to Eagle Pass, Texas. The most famous person he ever rode for was Barbara Stanwyck. Johnny rode approximately 10 races for her in the summer of 1946. During his jockeying, Johnny also found time to do some rodeoing.

Aside from being a racehorse jockey and rodeo athlete Johnny also found time to make his way to Mexico in 1949 where he displayed a talent for fighting bulls. Johnny spent his time there with two Mexican Matador compadres Felix and Louis Eriones. It was through the Eriones family that Johnny was able to rub shoulders with two of the most famous bullfighters Manolete and Lorenzo Garza.

In 1947, Johnny received his Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association card, (PRCA). During his rodeo career, Johnny traveled across the United States and Canada. Johnny won his first Buckle at the Temple Fair and Rodeo in 1950 and in 1949 he took first place in Russell, Kansas taking home \$250.00 in prize money. Also, in 1949 Johnny placed first in bullriding in Waverly, New York. Johnny participated in all three riding events, bareback, saddle bronc and bullriding although bareback and bullriding were his favorites.

Johnny and his wife Vickie have two boys Bill and Steve both of whom went down the rodeo chute (Steve was a high school and college champion) and a daughter Laura Boren Haun that lives in Academy, Texas.

It is Johnny's life after his rodeo days that make him even more unique. Johnny, along with the Bell County Sheriff's Posse, formed the Old Timer's Rodeo Cowboys Association (O.T.R.C.A.) in 1975 and their first rodeo was in Temple in 1976. He was president of the O.T.R.C.A. along with Vernon Kerns, Vice President and Wheat Whitfield as Secretary/Treasurer. Johnny kept his position as president for 10 years and received the honor of "Rookie of the

Year” of 1977 from the O.T.R.C.A. and received a beautiful belt buckle for this honor and in 1978 he also won the Eddie Boren Memorial Award Buckle. In 1978, Johnny was voted Texas Pro Rodeo Circuit Manager and held that title for 15 years along with his rodeo secretary Dee Mecom Sheets.

In 1989, the Pro Rodeo circuit members gave Johnny a plaque and in 1990 Johnny received the National Western Stockshow Award for Texas Pro Rodeo Circuit Manager. In 1991, Johnny received the “Texas Rodeo Man of the Year”, an award presented at the Texas Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals Banquet in Dallas, Texas.

“Johnny probably did more for the sport of rodeo than anybody I know,” says his son Steve. Johnny’s love for the sport and people can be seen at his personal arena on his ranch in Belton, Texas where he schools, produces rodeos and has helped many a kid get the right start. Johnny has said that he enjoys giving back to the sport that has been so good to him.

Johnny is truly a legend in his own lifetime. (now deceased)