



ALL COWBOY & ARENA CHAMPIONS HALL OF FAME

Joe Spivey

(Deceased)

Champion Bullrider

By O. D. (Dean) Anderson



Joe Spivey was born in the San Saba area in the 40s and spent his early years on the ranch his father worked on. His father served in the military during World War I and after his father returned from the war they moved to the Austin, Texas area. Joe attended school at Del Valle High School and also Austin High School.

Joe didn't have any interest in normal high school sports.

Joe: At an early age all I wanted to do was start riding bulls. I met Cecil Ellis when I was nine years old and that is about when I got the desire to ride bulls. Cecil Ellis was a real good bullfighter/clown

and watching him work gave me the desire to do the same. At age thirteen, some friends invited me to go to an all-black rodeo at Six shooter Junction near Bastrop. One of the boys drew a big humpy Brahman bull who was a man eater (hooker means he will really put the hurt on you with his horns) and wouldn't get on him. He said, "You want him, Joe." I said, "You bet." I had never been on a bull in my life or one of those bucking barrels either. My friends



showed me how to put my hand in the rope and helped me put my spurs on and set me on my first bull, ever.

Dean: How did you do?

Joe: I rode him but not before he fell on me. I was so afraid that when he fell with me I just stayed on him. He went to the fence looking for a place to jump and I got off of him on the fence and won my first bullride. I'll never forget that bull, his number was "23" and he belonged to Ervin Slidel.

Dean: Now wait a minute Joe, you, at age thirteen, never been on a bull in your life, never practiced on one of those barrels, never had your hand in a bull rope, never had on a pair of bullriding spurs, mount your friend's bull because he is afraid to get on him and you ride him for a first?

Joe: Yes sir, I did and won \$18.00 on him.

Dean: Not many bull riders can state that fact, because it usually takes some years of practice or getting on a lot of bulls before most bullriders get accomplished at the dangerous sport.

Joe worked with and for Tommy Steiner's rodeo productions and met and became good friends with the All-Around Champion Bull and Bareback rider Harry Thompkins. Harry helped pull Joe's bull rope on #29 of Steiner's, a big Charolais bull, in the mid '60s, in Waco at the Heart of Texas Coliseum and told Joe, "Joe, if you don't ride this bull, I'm going to kick you right good in the rear." Joe said, "I didn't want that to happen so I rode the bull and won first on him.

Joe got his first real big chance to fight bulls around 1962 when one of the clowns got hurt at the July 4th Belton show and Steiner told Joe to get in there and fight some bulls. Joe did just that and from then on rode bulls and clowned. Also in 1962, Joe got his first big one of many wins at a major RCA show and that was at Fort Worth, Texas at the Will Roger's Coliseum. Mrs. Zunwalt had the show contracted and at that time along with Hoss Inman and the Steiner string. Of course, at any show at any time one contractor would and did use other contractors stock. Joe traveled all over the U.S. and Canada with the Steiner show and even went to Cuba with them in 1959.

In 1969, while clowning the San Antonio show at the Harry Freeman Coliseum, Joe attempted to jump a bad fighting bull that was turned out purely for pleasing the crowd. Joe had jumped this particular fighting bull many times but as Joe attempted to jump him this time the bull hit Joe, got on top of him and in all the storm

that ensued stepped on his knee. The accident messed Joe's knee up real bad and the doctor told Joe that was the end of his career. He could never ride or fight bulls again. This incident ended his rodeo career. Joe had a very serious accident in 2002, almost losing his life. He was airlifted to Wilford Hall and was in intensive care and rehabilitation for about six months. He did live with his nephew Mike and wife Connie at Austin, Texas. Joe loved bullriding (the sport) as attested to him starting a bullriding school with fellow bullrider.

Joe went to be with the Lord in the Spring of 2004.