



Pearl Jenkins Bartley

by daughter Ginger Keefer

2007 TRCHF Inductee

Pearl Jenkins started her rodeo days in 1945, competing in all the “bush arenas” in south and central Texas. Back then, barrel racing and flag racing were the main events for the local lady contestants. During those years, Pearl enjoyed many fun times at rodeos and school with her closest friend Cookie Foster Gay.

Pearl competed in all the Jaycee Rodeos at Story and Wood Park and other teenage rodeos in the late forties where Pearl won or placed in almost all her “runs”.

Those were fun rodeo days Pearl remembers when she ran with friends such as Sissy Allen, Maida Rose Hunt, Lula Rowland, Blanche Altizer, Ira Akers and many more! “We had to love the sport because there wasn’t much money in it back then.”

Having the time of her life, Pearl competed in rodeos such as Jess Akers’ “Buck-a-roo”, Mountain Top, Story Wood Park of San Antonio, Jourdanton, Johnson City, Poteet, Floresville, Somerset, Boerne, Seguin, New Braunfels, Beeville, Batesville, Bandera, Cotulla and more. Pearls says, “They were all good shows no further



than we had the means to travel.”

In 1949, Pearl joined the “Girls Rodeo Association”, the same year as the first “All Girl Rodeo” held in Corpus Christi, Texas. Pearl’s barrel racing mare was in foal at the time so she traveled with Jackie Flowers down to Corpus Christi, where she’d arranged to borrow a friend’s horse to compete in the barrel racing competition. Instead of running barrels, Pearl decided to try bullriding. The first night of the rodeo she placed third on a bull named “Cropppy”. The second night she drew a spinning bull called “V-Bar” that Jackie Worthington had won top points on the first night. Pearl doesn’t remember the ride on V-Bar clearly, but she does recall waking up in the hospital with cracked ribs! Her father Wesley Jenkins first heard about his bullriding daughter while drinking his coffee and reading the newspaper!

This “All Girl Rodeo” was a huge sporting event lasting four or five nights with a final Sunday afternoon performance with the “Movie Sports News” reels on location to film the action. There was a problem though...after four or five shows, injuries abounded and there certainly weren’t enough “able” cowgirls for the rough stock events. So in order to succeed with their publicity performance, they offered twenty dollars in “mount money” to any cowgirl who’d ride a bull for the news reels. Well, needless to say Pearl accepted the twenty dollar offer, taped up her ribs and rode her bull with success!

Times changed and Pearl married Buck Keefer, a race horse trainer, and had three lovely children. Twenty years and a divorce later, she moved back home to Texas and married her childhood sweetheart Bobby Joe Bartley, who still maintains he waited for her. It’s 2003 now and they’ve had thirty-three wonderful years together and are still both a part of rodeo. God has been good to Pearl, blessing her in countless ways. She is especially grateful that she’s been a part of horses ALL her life.

Bobby Joe and Pearl continue helping maintain, support and record the history of this wonderful sport of rodeo they both so dearly love. Rodeo has been a common thread for the two of them for many wonderful years. Friends of the rodeo family continue to enrich their lives. Pearl is grateful and proud to have played a small role in the early and colorful years of Texas’ rodeo history.

Her best friend was Cookie. Cookie married Neal Gay of the famous Gay family which included sons Pete and Donnie.