

ALL COWBOY & ARENA CHAMPIONS

HALL OF FAME

Lemuel “Lem” Reeves

Calf Roper and All-Around Cowboy



Lemuel “Lem” Reeves was a prominent professional rodeo cowboy whose career spanned the golden era of American rodeo in the 1940s. Competing during a time when rodeo was evolving from regional stock shows into a nationally organized sport, Reeves earned a reputation as a formidable calf roper and all-around cowboy, respected by peers for both his toughness and authenticity.

Reeves competed on what was then known as the National Circuit, appearing at major rodeos throughout Texas and neighboring states, including Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Fort Worth, and other prominent rodeo centers. Newspaper coverage from the Valley Morning Star (Harlingen, Texas) in October 1944 lists Reeves among event winners confirming his competitive success during World War II era rodeo seasons. Additional coverage in the Corpus Christi press in June 1945 and the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in July 1947 further documents his continued presence and standings in professional competition. Reeves was an original member of The Cowboys’ Turtle Association (CTA), known for being “slow to organize” but willing to “stick their neck out” to force better terms and lay the foundation for the modern Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA).

By the mid-1940 Reeves had reached the highest levels of the sport. He competed in championship rodeo events at Madison



Square Garden in New York City, a premier national venue that hosted elite rodeo talent from across the country. Participation at Madison Square Garden placed Reeves among the top cowboys of his generation and underscored his status as a nationally recognized competitor.

Beyond statistics and placements, Reeves was remembered as the embodiment of the traditional American cowboy. Contemporary accounts describe him as exceptionally tough, physically powerful, and unafraid of confrontation - traits forged through years of riding dangerous stock under grueling conditions. A widely retold story from the post-World War II era re-counts an incident at the Garden Finals in which Reeves defended his honor after being questioned about military service, reinforcing his reputation as a man who would not tolerate disrespect and who lived by a strict personal code.

Reeves' influence extended beyond the arena. He was later described by family members and journalists as “the epitome of a real cowboy”, a figure whose life and character represented the values of independence, resilience, and grit associated with the Western tradition. His legacy directly inspired the next generation, including his niece, artist Linda Sue Henley, whose Texas-based Western art studio, A Little Touch of Texas, was named in reference to one of Reeves' oft-quoted remarks.

In his later years, Reeves remained closely tied to ranch life and the outdoor traditions that shaped him. Those who encountered him in the late 1950s recalled that even in advancing age, he retained the physical presence and toughness that had defined his rodeo career.

Lem Reeves stands as a genuine representative of mid-century American rodeo - a national-circuit competitor, Madison Square Garden champion-level rider, and living symbol of the working cowboy whose legacy continues through family, art, and preserved historical record.