

Big Bend RANCH RODEO

Ten west Texas ranches competed to raise money for the Sul Ross Rodeo Team.

By Barney Nelson

Photos by Nita Holman

WITH GRASS stirrup deep, creeks running bank-full, and fat cattle ready to ship, the cowboys of far west Texas were ready to have some fun when the Big Bend Ranch Rodeo rolled around in September 1986. Ten local ranches competed for braggin' rights and pretty impressive prizes donated by merchants from Nevada to Colorado.

With the closest big town over 200 miles in any direction, the people of Brewster, Jeff Davis, and Presidio counties like to do things "western." Local newspaper editor Bob Dillard cooked briskets and announced, bank president David Moore took tickets at the gate, feed store owner George Johnson hauled portable panels and bleachers, and junior high student Jim Larremore drove his wagon and team around selling soft drinks and giving kids a ride. Tired or retired ranch cowboys sorted stock and chanced black eyes pushing judges' pencils.

The highlight of the rodeo was the performance turned in by Dow Jones of the Gage Holland Ranch, who honorably bucked off a tough, high-diving bronc and then proceeded to ride his wagon through a higher dive in the wagon race. Seems each of his team of semi-broke horses decided to take a different route around a marker barrel that bounced Dow's wagon skyward.

Like a pebble in a slingshot, Dow shot on up out of the wagon to the end of his lines but when everything came back to earth, Dow was still aboard and whipping.

Although the wild action got the most



Cody Crider, representing the Paisano Cattle Co. of Marathon, reaches for his hat to start fanning his bronc.

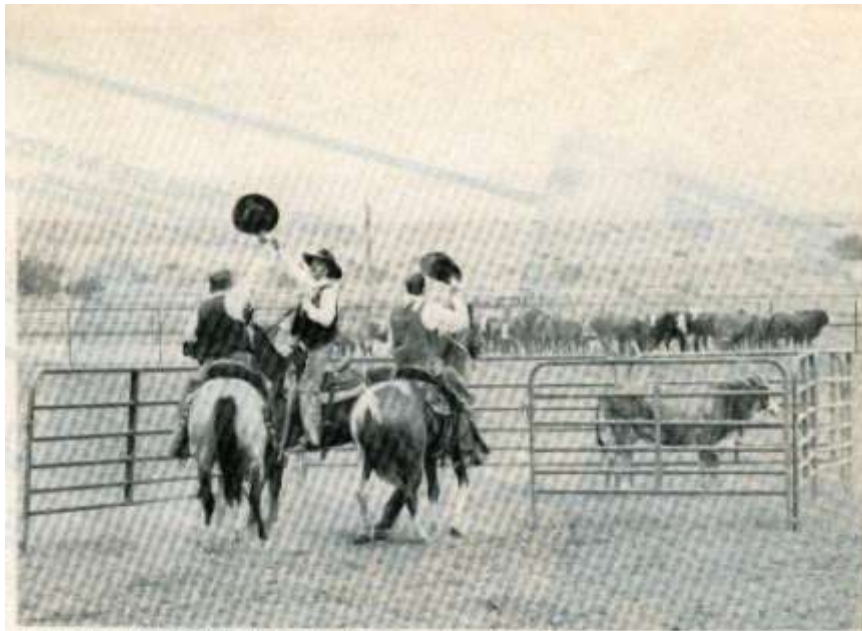
attention, the ranch-oriented audience also enjoyed watching good cowboys competing on good horses and handling their livestock well. Each team nominated an all-around horse who was then paint-marked with the ranch brand on both hips, and a team of three judges watched his performance throughout the rodeo.

Jim Seaney, representing the Long X Cattle Company of Kent, rode a good seven-year-old bay who was calm, quiet in the herd, and tracked cattle well. Another of the top horses was Six-Pac, trained and ridden by Rod DeVoll of the Big Bend Day Workers team. Corazon, a nine-year-old Quarter Horse bought by the Means Ranch and ridden by Bodie Means, was a top horse, but the Means cowboys—winners of the last Big Bend Ranch Rodeo—were plagued by bad breaks. Several other good horses were having the same kind of luck and therefore didn't have a chance to show their ability.

A composite team made up of the Adams and Kimball ranches of Alpine and South Brewster County took home the first-place Del Varney belt buckles with team members Brad Wilson, Monty Kimball, Apache Adams, David Adams, and Roddy Schoenfeldt. Brad won the all-around cowboy honors and a pair of custom Mercer boots, due mostly to a 92-point, hat-fanning bronc ride that also netted him a pair of Jerry Cates spurs.

Monty's horse, a 13-year-old grade Quarter Horse named Oso, was judged all-around horse and received a custom bit made by Bob Lowe at the Ed Sims Spur Company. Monty and Brad also won the team roping, so they could use the Big Bend Saddlery rope bag prizes in that event to carry all their loot home in.

The Mulhern Ranch of Fort Davis won the team penning and a set of Mark Dahl silver-engraved conchas. As runners-up in the rodeo, Mulhern team



Members of the Big Bend Day Workers team signal for time in the team penning.

members Curtis Evans, J.W. Bub Evans, Bill Fort, Jean Anne Fort, and Tres McElroy also took home framed Mike Capron art prints. They barely nudged out the third-place Rancho Espuela team of David Dean, Jimmy Martinez, Jim Dyer, Carmon Henderson, and John D. Henderson, who won the horse-catching event and some Tony Lama boots.

Team branding champs Steve Creech, Jim Scaney, and Bill and Hal Evans of the Long X Cattle Company took home \$100 Resistol hats for their efforts. Wild cow milking trophy saddle blankets from the Marfa Feed and Supply were won by the Hughes Cattle Company team of Jeff Davis County, which consisted of Sergio and Pepe

Navarette and Vance Manion. A hard-luck breast collar was presented to Ben Lara of the H.C. Espy Ranch, whose snubbed bronc fell on him, sending him to the hospital during the first event.

Second-place teams in each event were presented free steak dinners at Sutler's Restaurant in Fort Davis with the stipulation they all show up the following Saturday night to collect and bring their ranch branding irons to burn into the restaurant's walls.

A cool, cloudy day, challenging livestock from the Barrel Springs Ranch and Ryon Wash, and excellent facilities donated by the High Frontier school for troubled teens contributed to raising more than \$4,000 for the Sul Ross State University rodeo program. 🐾



Members of the Hughes Cattle Company team take the rope off the calf and are ready for the brand to be applied.