

Van—Rodeo Horse
No. 1 before he became famous.

Rodeo Horse—No. 1

By JOE HEFLIN SMITH

OLD timers, who followed the rodeo game from 1919 to 1927, were familiar with a red and white spotted horse that streaked "down-front" of packed grandstands from Calgary, Alberta, to Madison Square Garden, and from Fort Worth to Belle Fourche, South Dakota. A slight acrobatic man, dressed in snow white pants and a tight fitting sweater, was going under the horse's belly, or standing erect in the saddle spinning two wide loops.

The rider was Leonard Stroud, who, at one time or another, held almost every professional rodeo record in the business, and thrilled millions with his daring exploits from the back of well trained rodeo horses.

The spotted horse, that carried Leonard Stroud to six world's championship titles in trick and fancy riding, was named Van.

Leonard Stroud named the horse Van in honor of a man named Van Cleave who gave the horse to Stroud.

The paint horse was only three days old on July 5, 1912 when Joe H. Smith of Floydada, Texas, traded a mule colt to George Fawver for the tiny spotted colt and his mother. The mother was a small tough Spanish mare and his father was a common black stud owned by the late Will Berry of Floydada.

Grover Smith of Floyd County broke the paint horse to ride and turned him

over to his owner to be used on Smith's ranch in Rickens County.

At that time, Joe H. Smith, father of the writer, and now of Silverton, Texas, was ranching and neighboring with the late W. H. Dougherty of Gainesville and his two sons, Newsome, now deceased, and Frank M. Dougherty now of Fort Worth.

Newsome Dougherty liked the paint horse and bought him from Joe Smith in the fall of 1918 for \$190. He took him to Gainesville and turned him out on the Dougherty ranch.

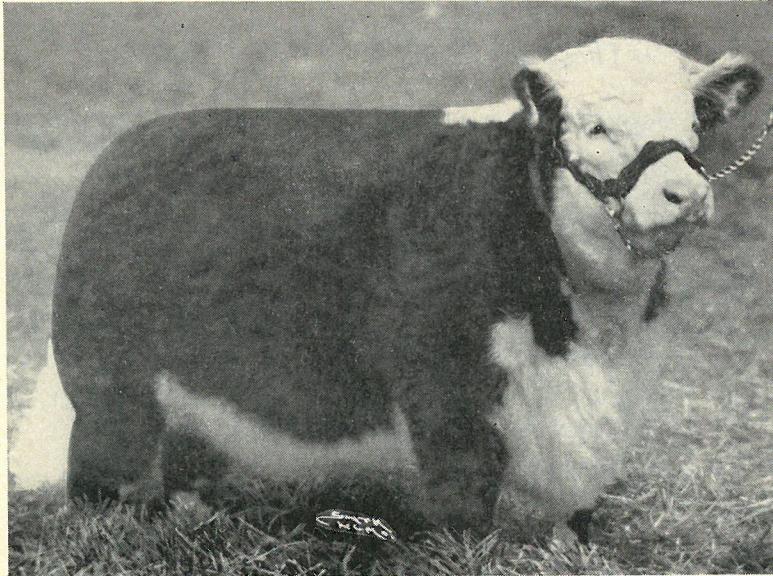
Van Cleave, an ardent rodeo fan, wanted to present Leonard Stroud with a fine horse and promptly bought the paint from Newsome Dougherty for an undisclosed sum of money.

Men who were familiar with the horse doubted that he would ever be satisfactory for trick riding. "He was the toughest horse I've ever ridden," Joe H. Smith said recently, "but he was high strung and I felt sure that he would never make a rodeo horse."

Sometime later, Newsome Dougherty explained to Joe Smith what happened when Leonard Stroud first saw the horse. "Van Cleave and Stroud came to Gainesville," Dougherty said, "and we went out to the ranch to look at the paint. Leonard saddled him, walked around him a few times, and swiftly mounted. Then he put his hand on the saddle horn and spun completely around in the saddle. He dismounted, patted the horse's head and said he would make a good one."

And a good one he was. When Van Cleave gave Leonard Stroud the paint horse, Stroud was America's most famous rodeo star. A few years before, he was named director of the rodeo at the

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