

**Oral History Interview of  
Marvin Schulte**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
June 2, 2009  
Nazareth, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Marvin Schulte as he discusses his love of rodeo. In this interview, Schulte describes how he got interested in rodeo and the rodeo that he and his wife put on in Nazareth, Texas.

**Length of Interview:** 00:47:32

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Introduction; Marvin's interest in rodeo	05	00:00:00
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Riding rodeo professionally; organizing rodeos	12	00:12:51
Rodeo's benefits to the community; wife Darlene's rodeo participation	15	00:18:15
Events the rodeo has for families	18	00:23:49
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### Keywords

Rodeo, Cowboys, Nazareth, Texas

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

So now we're going and as I said I'll preface it by saying this is Andy Wilkinson. It's the second of June, 2009. It's in the afternoon. We're in Nazareth, Texas, it's a home mark. We're getting ready to do an interview with Marvin Schulte. [Girl laughs] Just Marvin Schulte and we're going to be talking among other things about rodeo in Nazareth and maybe rodeo in all kinds of places. So let's—well and it's worth for people listening to this later on to also know that this is not just Marvin and I, but we have a whole group of interns and other folk from Ogallala commons that are with us today. So Marvin when did you first get interested in rodeo?

**Marvin Schulte (MS):**

[Laughs] I don't know Andy. I've always wanted to be a rodeo cowboy. When I was a little boy I didn't dream of being a fireman or a policeman or nothing, I dreamed of riding broncs and bulls and as soon I got out of high school that is exactly what I did. I got out of high school—I was still seventeen when I got out of high school and they had rodeo in July, I guess in Tulia. I asked my dad if I could go to that rodeo and enter in the bull riding, and I remember he was reading the newspaper and I don't think he read the paper anymore, but he just sat there for a long time and finally said, "I don't give a damn. Go and get your neck broke if you want to." [everyone laughs]

AW:

Had you ever ridden a bull before?

MS:

No, but I rode a lot of calves and horses and things like that. Around the farm—I grew up in the farm there and I rode, oh in the barn and everything we could get on well we were probably on it for a while. Our milk cows wouldn't buck very much. [laughs]

AW:

What was the—did they give cottage cheese after that? [everyone laughs]

MS:

I don't know, but I went over to Tulia that day and I didn't ride that bull, but I could've. I got some bad advice from my friends there. They said, "You just ride until you get out there and find a good place to get off." So when I did I thought well that's not quite the object of the game.

AW:

Where did you grow up? Where was this farm?

MS:

Oh it was about five miles out of—no about three miles of town here, right here in Nazareth.

AW:

Where did you see rodeo to get interested in it?

MS:

I don't know that I saw too much of it. They had rodeos in Dimmitt and Tulia and what not and books, and of course the very early TV's, the road riders and Gene Autry's, those weren't rodeos, but they were just the movie cowboys and what not. I don't know. I just say after that first rodeo then I went to one in Hereford and I rode, but I didn't place. Then I went to Canyon, I got one jumped and then I went to Silverton, Texas and won the bull ride on my first—on my fourth bull, so that ruined me. If he'd thrown me off and kicked me in the head I sure would have had a lot more money today then I had back then. [both laugh]

AW:

So the fourth bull not only rode but you won the ride?

MS:

I won first yes.

AW:

That's pretty impressive. You were seventeen, what year was this?

MS:

Oh about 1962.

AW:

Nineteen sixty-two. What was the rodeo circuit like?

MS:

It wasn't quite a little rodeo, amateur rodeo was started then right around here you could go to a rodeo every week and not drive more than a hundred and fifty, two hundred miles, which I kind of did that summer and of course you didn't make much money because the entry fees were like fifteen dollars.

AW:

So what would have first place taken one of those?

MS:

Oh I don't know. I think I'd win two hundred and fifty something like that at Silverton.



AW:

Well let me think back.

MS:

That was a lot of money.

AW:

Nineteen sixty-two, yeah that was a fair amount of money in '62.

MS:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

You could pay for your gasoline.

MS:

Yeah. [Laughs] Wages was about seventy-five cents an hour.

AW:

That was before '82 [?] [0:04:14.7] two hundred and fifty dollars with one win. I don't think we have that many rodeos now.

MS:

Don't have nothing close to it. No, every little small town used to have rodeo, you know I don't—like all around in here you could go to a rodeo every week almost and a lot of weeks you could go to two. I didn't that first year, but the second or third year I'd go to two sometimes a week.

AW:

Why was that?

MS:

Well I don't know why that was back—they still had drive-in movies and things like that. You know, I guess TV wasn't quite that prevalent back in '62 yet. It was—there was lots of TV around, but it'd get boring in a hurry and people just went out. Those rodeos were not only available. There was people there. I mean lots of people. They'd fill them grand stands.

AW:

Yeah you'd go to a roping today and mainly what you see are the people roping not anybody watching, but there are people in the grand stands like football. Well tell us more about your riding. Did you stay with bulls?

MS:

[Laughs] Well I just rode bulls the first year and then about the second year I started clowning with Dick Ratch over at happy, I don't know somewhere where he was and he said, "Why don't you get up there and clown this bull for me?" So I went out there and it was kind of fun to step around them things. Besides that he paid—you could pay for your expenses. So I started clowning and then I started riding saddle broncs and started steer wrestling too and so for several years that's what I did. In the summer time I rode broncs and bulls and clowned and that was pretty lucrative. You know I didn't start that much, but by about the third year I was drawing fifty bucks a performance to clown and you'd work all day for ten bucks.

AW:

Yeah.

MS:

And buck hay for ten bucks, I'd rather go clown for fifty. [Laughter] You know of course if you got ran over you know there was no insurance, no nothing else if you—if you ended up in hospital you're on your own.

AW:

What—for people that might be listening sometime in the future, clowning is not quite what we think just listening to that word when it comes to rodeo. Would you talk about that a little bit, what your job was as a clown?

MS:

Well when we worked for Dick Ratch we actually really didn't do not so much clowning as crowd entertainment. We had to—I had to do a lot of the acts and things like that, something to fill up dead spots between events and things like that. I did a lot of banner back and forth with the announcers and things of that sort just to fill up dead spots, but then of course when the bull riding comes then it gets pretty serious. You know you got to clear the cowboy whenever he gets bucked off or the whistle blows and that's you know it's what they call it cowboy saver job.

AW:

And by that you mean you have to help get the cowboy out of the way? Because cowboys in my experience and always have all their marbles working right once they get off that bull. [MS



laughs] Sometimes you get hit, you get thrown. What did some of that involve distracting the bull or physically helping remove it?

MS:

Oh just distract the bull is about all I did. I didn't—the only time you'd really have to help him if he was hung up, but that gets pretty hairy when they're hung up and you have to go up and un-belly their hand, but if he's hung up there ain't much else you can do except un-belly his hand. You're going to take hooking if he does. [Laughs] That's pretty obvious if—but that's why they pay fifty.

AW:

Yeah. Did you ever get hooked?

MS:

Yeah, by—I don't know, a lot of times. I've broke a lot of ribs and elbows and this and that and the other.

AW:

When you say distract that means you—the bull is mad at something and now it's going to be you?

MS:

Yes. [Laughs]

AW:

Just want to make sure that was real clear. [Laughs]

MS:

Well he can't move near as fast as you can though.

AW:

What it also strikes me Marvin that is fast as you picked this up and as good as you got at it in that amount of time. It would be logical to think that you might go in the pro circuit?

MS:

Well I did after I got—I spent about five years around the amateur deal here. Of course, I had a full time job too. I worked for an electrician in town and a plumber and things like that and then I went to college in, oh I don't remember in '68, something like that, and being around the college boys and the college rodeos deal there. I got my card that first year.

AW:

What college did you go to?

MS:

I went to South Plains in Levelland for two years.

AW:

Did they have a rodeo program?

MS:

Yes they had a rodeo program and then from there I went two years to Eastern New Mexico.

AW:

Did they also have a program?

MS:

Yeah I was on a scholarship. I went—the first semester at South Plains I wasn't and then after that I was on a rodeo scholarship for the rest of the—well I went to school and there's lots of—a lot of those college cowboys that had pro-cards.

AW:

Yeah. How did you—when you say you got your card, how does that—how do you do that?

MS:

Yes, how do you get a pro card? Well first you have to what they call permit rodeos, which are the smaller professional rodeos. If the rodeo is small enough then they'll say they accept permits, so the first you thing you do is buy you a permit and when you go to the smaller shows and then you have to win a thousand dollars in your event at the small permit shows. After you win a thousand bucks then you can apply for your card and once you got your card then you can go anywhere that professional rodeo guys go. You could go to Cheyenne, which I did, Madison Square Garden, the Cow Palace San Francisco, Calagary, Fort Worth, San Anton, El Paso, Houston, Phoenix, Arizona, Denver, Chicago, lots of nice places, Miami, Florida.

AW:

Yeah. That's a lot of rodeo travel.

MS:

Yeah, it was fun.

AW:

Yeah, what were your events when you got your card? Did you narrow down and focus on one thing?

MS:

No, I still—I rode broncs and bulls and bulldog steers. I never did haul a team. I always borrowed a horse in the steer wrestling.

AW:

Yeah.

MS:

Until way late after I quit riding broncs and bulls, then I started hauling a team.

AW:

Yeah. What—what did you place most often in?

MS:

Oh, I would say the bull riding. I didn't place that damn often Andy. You know it's hard.  
[everyone laughs]

AW:

No I was just—that had to be four first place to get that thousand dollars at the permit level, right?

MS:

Well you win a little bit, but it's pretty—I don't know, I sure wouldn't say that we made any money. I don't think anybody made any money back in the sixties and seventies rodeo except maybe 10 percent of the guys and I doubt they made very much. You made a little, but you know the road eats a lot up and the gas and the rooms and meals. You wouldn't—a guy wouldn't do it if he wasn't—if he didn't like it because you ain't going to make very much money. [Laughs]

AW:

I was about to ask that, unless you get hooked by the bull. You get your elbows broken. Your ribs broken and you don't make any money. Why?

MS:

Why? [Laughs] I don't know why. Some people—some people say—you know they've got guys [?] [0:12:06.6] psychiatrists and what not to try to figure that out. [AW laughs] I think they tried to tell us one of those college psychiatrists tried to tell us it was the adrenaline rush. He said

that's why you guys ride them. You know because he'd ask us, "Why? Why are you getting on the damn thing?" and we'd say, Well I don't know I like to do that, but he says—the night guy said it was the adrenaline rush. Maybe it had something to do with it, I don't know. You get a rush pretty fast. [Laughs]

AW:  
Yeah.

MS:  
I just don't know, why do guys—some guys climb the mountains and some guys swim the seas.

AW:  
Yeah, well it did have something to do with being good at it?

MS:  
Well yeah, it would be a lot—it's a lot more fun if you win once in a while. [Laughs]

AW:  
So how long did you ride in the professional—

MS:  
Oh Andy, I don't know. I got married when I was about twenty-nine and I got hurt. A bull stepped on me at Cheyenne and it hurt really bad, there by the time I was thirty and that wounded down quite a bit, and then Darlene and I started running the liquor store and we still—I still went to a lot of rodeos, but didn't go full-time anymore. I'd come home a lot.

AW:  
How old can you be and ride bulls?

MS:  
I rode them until I was about thirty-five.

AW:  
Really?

MS:  
Yeah, that's probably five years too low. I don't know. [Laughter]

AW:

Well one of the things that we're interested in is your—not only your personal story with riding in rodeos, but what you've done for rodeo in this community in organizing rodeos. Did that start after you got hurt and you started running the liquor store?

MS:

Yes that was at the store there. Of course we—there was enough room there when we bought that store that I had an idea in my mind then to put an arena there and shortly after we got the store going we went to work on that arena. Me and some of my friends and took us a couple of years to build it. There's a lot of steel out there on that arena and I think 1977 was the first time we had a rodeo here and it quickly turned into a pretty big deal here for Nazareth. We had quite a large rodeo. It was an amateur rodeo, it wasn't a professional rodeo, semi-pro I'd guess you'd call it, Texas Cowboys Rodeo Association approved it.

AW:

Yeah. How often did you have events?

MS:

Well we just had the one big rodeo here, but I had steer ropings and team ropings and things like that in that arena.

AW:

What's involved in creating a rodeo?

MS:

[Sighs] A lot. You got to have a Darlene to help you. [Laughter] It don't work. You can't do it. I don't know what you'd have to start with, mostly I just knew all that stuff then, but I had to get the people from TCRA. I had to call them and get approved.

AW:

What is TCRA?

MS:

TC—Texas Cowboys Rodeo Association.

AW:

Okay, yeah.

MS:

You need something like that so that you got some set of rules to go by or things like this. Otherwise, you get guys entering and don't show up and things like that, a lot of cowboys are a whole lot braver with a telephone in their hand than they are with a bull rope in their hand.

[Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, I can understand that. What other kinds of things regulate these? I mean what other kinds of organizations or government groups do you have to comply? [Object falls]

MS:

Oh hell. Everybody goes by the PRCA [**Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association**] rule book, you know that the competition standard all come from the PRCA rule book and they just do them according to that rule book and then in each association they'll have their little rules to it, but by having an association then they keep track of guys for a whole year so they can crown year end champions and give saddles away and things like that. It causes guys to come from quite a distance to this rodeo because it's an approved rodeo for that circuit.

AW:

Yeah.

MS:

But it takes—it just takes a lot. I mean you get started and then you got to take some money up front too, you know? And then you got to get a contractor, a stock contractor that, I don't know the first stock contractor we got probably cost three thousand dollars for three days. You hope you recoup that from your gate admissions and things like that. And then ours was always tied in with the fire department. For one thing we'd get the firemen to help us and we're doing a service through the fire department then they need a little fundraiser for their business, so we had the fire department behind us all the time.

AW:

So guys running the shoots and the pens moving stock in and out, those were the firemen that came out to help?

MS:

The firemen and the local cowboys. The firemen did as much as the—you know kind of the back work and my brother Bob and brother-in-law Keith and those guys, Nolan, they—guys that know what they're doing are kind of more or less in the front there. It's all volunteer work. It's all volunteer.



AW:

So it's not as you describe it. A way to—a pathway to riches to run a rodeo is it?

MS:

[Laughs] No, no that's probably why rodeo cowboys back then didn't make much either. Every rodeo almost was a fundraiser for somebody and you know as fundraisers go if there's very much money that goes to the charity, whatever it is.

AW:

Well what's the benefit of the rodeo to the community?

MS:

Well I don't know it—we had a lot of fun doing it I guess. [Laughs] And the fire department raised—they took in a fair amount of money. They bought—over the years they bought fire trucks and this and that and the other. Fire department would usually benefit from our rodeo about—they started benefitting about five thousand and got to seven or eight thousand a year.

AW:

What about it as a community event?

MS:

I mean a lot of people get together. [Laughs] A lot of people from you know other parts of the—Darlene had quite a little army that helped her to get the all the concession stand work going and things like that. You know it took a lot of deal, we had to get \_\_\_\_ [0:19:01.4] and cook the briskets and the girls would fix brisket sandwiches and all that. It just takes a quite a little army to get all that done.

AW:

Well, hold on a minute. It tells me my battery is low. So I'm going to replace the batteries, but in the meantime we're going to try to talk Darlene into talking just a little bit.

[Pause in Recording]

MS:

We used to get priests all the time to come out and see the invocation.

**Unknown Speaker 1 (US1):**

Did you bless the bulls or the riders?

MS:

I think mostly they just asked that [laughed] the riders didn't get hurt.

**Darlene (D):**

They all were blessed. These days you have to place the rules.

AW:

Well we're—we have fresh batteries so we're back going and of course like always there are great things said, but the batteries are gone and the tape recorder is off, but we were talking about all the work that's involved in this. Darlene I see that you brought some—

D:

I was going to pass this to Father Ken, so he could see that Father Stanley was brave enough to come and do the down there in the bottom. [Laughs]

MS:

Yes and where was the bull when he did that?

D:

Oh no, this was starting the rodeo. Everything's safe.

AW:

These are great notebooks. These cover—and for the machine we're looking at some large ring binders, the three of them with photographs, and I saw some list of events and program information for various rodeos. Is this a complete record of all the rodeos that you—

D:

Ninety-nine percent.

AW:

Really? Wow, that's quite a nice collection. Darlene, what—when Marvin said you had your army, what does that mean? [both laugh]

D:

It took quite a few people each night to put on the—the eating side of this. Everyone would come to the rodeo because we had sausage and there was not a rodeo concession stand ever that had sausage and sauerkraut, so anyway. [Laughter] After a while we were labeled, "Darlene's Diner," because I think it was just something to take up slack while they were waiting for some other event to get going or whatever. Just go see the people at Darlene's Diner. But we always had sausage that they cooked out at the arena because it would entice people to come over and

buy something and just entice a lot of things you would just start up conversation, sometimes with someone you hadn't seen in a while. Sometimes it was people totally strange to you.

MS:

And we capitalized on our German heritage there and served that, and like she says I don't think there was another rodeo that I've ever been to where they serve sausage and sauerkraut at the concession stand.

D:

We would always try to get there an hour and a half before it was the time for the performance and invariably you'd have somebody beating on the window there. "Are you ready to serve?", "No." [laughs]

MS:

Yeah the cowboys loved the concession stand there. They'd eat pretty good when they come to Nazareth.

AW:

Yeah I'd say that was well outside normal fair for most.

MS:

Oh yeah, enough form that beat hamburger and coke. [both laugh]

AW:

Yeah. Well that's good. That's really interesting. Of course, I think we were talking about this at lunch earlier. If you are hungry when you come to Nazareth it's your own fault. [Laughs] What a great place to eat. Well what was the social side of the rodeo event like. And I mean I know that's a big question, but we talked about people coming from a long distance. I would guess that you made friends that weren't from here, but from other places that were bound to come back from time to time?

MS:

Yes, I would say so. Of course, a great many of those cowboys in the early days I knew anyhow, but then we made friends for—gosh we was with—twenty-five years we put that thing on every year and it was a pretty big time deal for most of those years. We had wild horse race here, and wild cow milking.

AW:

You didn't see that in all rodeos.

MS:

Nah you don't see it. That's why we call this one the Nazareth Country Rodeo and Wild West Show. We had a calf scramble with—it could be a hundred kids in our calf scramble. These boys kind of remember some of that and there'd be sometimes a lot about a hundred of them out in that arena and turned four or five kids and loose. Of course, the kids you know just swarmed all over that arena ground—the rodeo grounds for all three days. They was everywhere you looked was kids. It was a big family deal.

AW:

Yeah that's—I think that's worth talking about. People in the future and people right now if you get into big towns are likely to think of rodeo as something much more adult and not necessarily a family oriented kind of event. Tell me some the things that were there for the rest of the family besides the sausage and the sauerkraut. [Laughter]

MS:

Well I don't know they just, like I said we just had a lot of people—a lot of kids around there ,and it may be you—today you couldn't do that no more because it probably wasn't real safe. There'd be kids running around back there by the—close to the bucking bronses and bucking bulls and this and that and fortunately we never did get one of them run over, but I know I've seen them wandering through the bull pen to take a shortcut to cross where they was going. [Laughs] And they're just being kids. They're just everywhere. We had an event that the kids liked a lot called the, “Saturday Night Bath Race.”

AW:

Okay what is the Saturday Night Bath Race?

MS:

Well you see you have to envision, Andy, like suppose it's about 120 years ago and herds were headed for the north. Me and you are cowboys out on a herd of cattle heading north. We've been out all evening—all week working cows, but it's Saturday night and it's time to clean up and go to the dance. So what the Saturday Night Bath Race is portrays the cowboys coming into the bunk house to take a quick bath and get on their house and get back up to town so they can get off to the dance hall and what not, you know so that the guys ride coming charging into the arena. We had a big tank of water on a trailer. They come and charge into the arena on horseback, jump off, get their clothes off down to their swimming trunks, run and jump in the bath—in the big water tank, back out again, and try to put their clothes on those wet bodies, and try to get on—get on those horses in a hurry and of course the horses ain't going for this nonsense. [Laughs] They're always running backwards and dragging those guys and it was a wreck looking for a place to have the event, a lot of fun watching it. [Laughter]

AW:

It actually sounds incredibly dangerous. [Laughter]

MS:

Really? Yeah we banged some guys up. We sure did that.

AW:

Did you drown anybody?

MS:

No we didn't drown anybody, but we run some horses over some people. [Laughs]

AW:

Well you might describe also what wild cow milking and wild horse race.

MS:

Wild cow milking at our rodeo was big time because we had a lot of strong young German boys who just loved to enter the wild cow milking contest. In the early years we could have twelve, fourteen, fifteen teams, three man teams, in the wild cow milking contest. In those later years when we get up around closer to 2000, the cowboys thinned out quite a bit. I think we had like—

D:

German. German boys.

MS:

Yeah, we had two or three wild cow milking teams at the end, but in the early days them young boys, man they was craving that action now. They'd come and—

AW:

Describe what that meant. What's a team?

MS:

The way we did ours—the way we did our cow milking was we put three men on a team and our guys were on the ground because in some places they put them—one guy on horseback, but our guys were all three on the ground and I run the cows, oh coming out of the roping box there somewhere. We let them put a rope on the cows in the box. Darrell was in the cow milking several years and yeah, and he got some blisters on his hand and things like that.

AW:

So the rope was already on the cow?



MS:

Rope was on the cow and when they blow the whistle they turn the cows loose, all twelve, fifteen of them at one time and the cows burst into the arena and the boys on the three man team, they got to stop her and one of them will go her head to mug her. The other one hold the rope to try to hold things down and a third one goes to milk her into a beer bottle and they've got to get enough milk to make that beer bottle fill a shot glass, at our rodeo they did. So when they got enough milk for that they'd run it to the judge and he'd pour that beer bottle into the shot glass and if it overflowed they declared that guy the first winner and a second place winner and third, and well then they got buckles out of it. You'll see buckles all scattered all around this town and pretty nice buckles for winning it. But it was a prestige deal for them guys to wear their buckles because it was a tough contest to win, and you're going to get—hell we broke guys—I saw a couple of broken arms and this and that, a lot of bumps and bruises. It was wild and I'd spend—oh I'd spend the whole spring months over at the cattle lodge looking for bad cows. [Laughter] And so when I come with fifteen of them there's fourteen of them going to be bad.

AW:

So there were—there were people that owned bad cows that are glad to see you show up.

MS:

There was people that took them bad cows to town to get rid of them and I bought them and brought them to Nazareth. [Laughs]

AW:

So what little experience I've had milking and it is precious little, even with a cooperative cow it's not easy to get milk in a beer bottle. [both laughs]

MS:

No, it was a—it was—it was fun. It was a mile a minute of action. I mean they—we had cowboys and wild cows scattered all over that full arena.

AW:

Well wild horse race, how does that happen?

MS:

At our rodeo, again we used to have, oh seven, eight, ten teams, three man teams in the wild horse race and I would buy the same thing, I'd buy wild horses, young horses preferably because I didn't want them older horses. Older horses are bad to hurt them guys. The young horses just seemed to cause a lot of activity. And I run those horses two at a time, two horses in one shoot, into the bucking shoots, and the boys put a halter and a rope on them in the bucking shoots and then when we blew the whistle we opened the gates and the horses charged out and the three



man cowboy teams had to get their horse slowed down and get him saddled, and the rider got on him and rode him to the back end of the arena and back to the front end, unsaddled him, and carried the saddle to the judge.

AW:

Unsaddle him and carry the saddle to the judge?

MS:

Yes and it was pretty much like the cow milk and it was—it was a wreck looking for a place to happen and those guys was loving it. Man they scraped—they'd enter it, there'd be a lot of—most years I didn't—I wasn't able to take them all. I had more contestants than I could take.  
[Laughs]

AW:

How many shoots, bucking shoots did you have?

MS:

Only three in mine, most rodeos have six or so in theirs.

AW:

So if you had two and you had two horses to a shoot?

MS:

I had two horses to each shoot and two in the kitchen so I could run eight horses.

AW:

What is the kitchen?

MS:

[Laughs] It's the shoot right behind the shoot, the gated shoots.

AW:

Yeah. That sounds like a real mess. [Laughter] Were—did you have any—did a lot of guys yearn them down to get—did you have any rules?

MS:

In the early days they'd bit the ears, but then they just after a few rodeos I don't know what they—again we kind of took a lot of that from Cheyenne. I've been going to Cheyenne for about forty years now and when I used to go to Cheyenne I used to enter the wild horse race in

Cheyenne and we'd bit the ears in the early days there, but then they abolished that, gosh a long time ago and by about—by in 1980 they don't bite ears no more. They made it against the rules.

AW:

Well you mind explaining why people ever did that in the first place?

MS:

Well I don't know, some of those cowboys thought that it—that it calmed that horse a little bit more. I don't know if it calmed him or not. I think all it ever did was tore a lot of teeth out of cowboys. [Laughed] And I never did like to bite the ears when I mugged horses. I just—like I said I wouldn't be more gentle if somebody was biting on my ear. [laughs]

AW:

Yeah, I never did understand the logic for that either.

MS:

I don't either, but I mean it's an old deal. They did it when I was a kid, that's all—all of them bit the ears when they went to the horses to mug them.

AW:

Well having a calf scramble and events like wild cow milking and wild horse racing, those had to been very popular with the audience too.

MS:

Yes.

AW:

And I don't remember, growing up out here, many community rodeos having events like that.

MS:

No, I don't—most places I went they didn't have them like that, Andy. Of course, then we had all the standard events. You know the bare back riding, the saddle bronc riding, bull riding, calf roping, team roping, things like that.

AW:

Did you do poles or barrels?

MS:

No damn poles and no—we did do the barrel racing, yes of course, but no pole bend and things like that. I tell you what a good measure of how popular those Wild West events, what we called

them, were. The girls at the concession stand say that as soon as the Wild West events come on then they didn't sell much anymore, didn't sell much groceries, but when it went back to other events then business picked up the concession stand again which would tell you what—which—the fans were paying attention to the Wild West events. Of course the bull riding, they all, you know, that's always a very popular event in this area.

AW:

Did you do like other rodeos, you know they always had that last everybody stayed until the end?

MS:

We had that last, yes. As a matter of fact, the first few rodeos I was still riding broncs and bulls and I announced that I had entered the bronc riding and the bull riding.

AW:

Now that's interesting. Did you congratulate yourself at the end of the ride or what? [both laugh]

MS:

Well I had another guy, as a matter of fact I've always had a partner there to announce with me and when I just talked until I got tired and then I'd go down and do my thing and come back and talk some more.

AW:

Yeah, well that's assuming you get back up and talk some more. You know there so many things about this that are interesting to me, the announcer, besides the events, announcers have a lot to do with how successful a rodeo is from the fans point of view, from the audience point of view.

MS:

Oh yes.

AW:

What does it take to be a rodeo announcer?

MS:

Gosh, I don't know, lots of rodeo experience would be the first thing I'd say you [laughs] want to do, I don't know. I always kind of like to hear the announcers, way back for like, when I was telling you when I was a clown I worked with the announcers then and when I got to work as a clown it's just natural progression and go pick up the microphone.

AW:

When you say when you got to where you couldn't clown, physically is that demanding?

MS:

They can't run very fast—if you can't outrun—[laughs] you don't necessarily outrun the bulls, you step around them. It's kind of dangerous to break and run from them.

AW:

What, again, if you're doing the announcing it's more than just reading the list of names and who's on what. What does a good announcer do besides let people know what's happening on the program?

MS:

Oh I think, as you say, you just follow the program and then you just kind of let things happen and explain them as you go and kind of fill the world up with words.

AW:

[Laughs] That's a great line. Can I steal that? [MS laughs] Fill the world up with words, I'm going to use that.

MS:

Well it directly—you know it'll—something will happen and you'll get to talk about it again. [Laughs]

AW:

The reason that all that questioning was leading up to—when I—I also remember the first time I went to rodeos is that I learned a lot from the announcer about what was really happening.

MS:

Yes.

AW:

You know especially if you grew up in town. You didn't automatically know what was going on and the announcers were—they were sort of a commenters on what was happening and why it happened.

MS:

That's right, what is fixing to happen, and why it's happening, and what kind of corner this guy got himself pinned into and what he needs to do, you know. This guy got a bull that has only been ridden twice this year, but he needs to bear eighty-two points to go to the lead and this is the calf that can take him there, but can this kid twist that cap? So round and round we go.

AW:

So there's a certain language that has to be learned too.

MS:

Yeah, well we just—

AW:

Twist this cap.

MS:

Yeah.

AW:

I like it. Well, we don't have all afternoon and all the week, I'd sure take it if it was up to me. Could you give us a couple of—or maybe even more than a couple of fun stories about happenings at this particular rodeo?

MS:

Oh, I don't know. There was a lot of them at this particular rodeo. I don't know. [Laughs] I don't know, we spent—I spent a lot of time in the pickup or cars with guys back when I was going to them pro rodeos and we just told stories all the while, that seemed like story telling is a big deal there, and of course if you get to drink a little beer you can always tell a lot better stories. [Laughter]

AW:

That's right.

MS:

I could tell you a story though, you know the songwriter Chris Ledoux?

AW:

Yeah.

MS:

I went to college with Chris Ledoux.

AW:

I didn't know that.

MS:

I spent a lot of time in the car with Chris Ledoux and he'd carry that old guitar with him and bang it around and we'd write some words to his songs and what not.

AW:

So I should look at some of these Chris Ledoux songs and see Marvin Schulte on there as co-writer?

MS:

[Laughs] No, you won't ever find me as co-writer.

AW:

That's too bad.

MS:

One time Chris Ledoux and Sid Savage and Butch Cody and I loaded up in a pickup, Portales, New Mexico to go to Miami Beach, Florida. Sid had a brand new pickup.

AW:

Portales to Miami Beach?

MS:

Yes.

AW:

That's a long way.

MS:

Nonstop and Sid had a brand new pickup and it was a short bed Ford, about a 1972 Ford with a three speed clutch on the floor shift. It was just the cheapest you'd get, had a radio and a heater, that's all, and so we found us a little old dog box kind of a camper to put on the back of that thing. It wasn't a camper because it had no windows in it, but it was kind of a dog box type deal. Anyway, we put that camper on there and put a plywood across the back and we each had a bronc saddle and a rigging bag, and a suitcase, stuffed them suitcases and all that stuff on that plywood and this and that left just room enough where you could slide two sleeping bags in that back of that pickup and you had to almost slide them in and out of there and then we close that end gate and closed that end gate and closed that deal. He was in there and it was dark in there. He was in there until the next time they gassed up. [Everyone laughs] Which was—which was alright because it was night time you know? We left in the day time so there's four of us.



AW:

What time of year was this?

MS:

Well it was in the spring I guess. Let's see, I don't remember, it was already spring, as a matter of fact it might've been in January, something like that because Chris—them guys— yeah it was in January I guess, that's why we wanted to go to Miami Beach anyhow. So there's four of us in front of this pickup and we left Portales and intended to drive—and we drove all day and all night and by night time well you know you could slip them two guys in and out of that, just cut across that country and we got down to Florida and then went down in there. Let me think, I think we drove—we drove all day and all night and then that next day sometime we pulled in there, in to Miami Beach and the palm trees and one thing another like that. So then we worked at rodeo there for three or four days, whatever it was, and come back out of there to come back to Portales. In the mean time we picked up another buddy of ours named, Mike Randall that we was going to bring back to Dallas. So now we're five in that little old pickup like that. That was he was—he was getting poured [?] [0:39:48.7] towards the end and there's three of us in the front and two in the back. Sid owned the pickup and he had hurt his shoulder and Sid and Butch was in the back of this pickup and sleeping, and Chris Ledoux was driving, and Mike Randall and I was sitting in the middle and we come up out of that top part of Florida and it was snowing up in that panhandle of Florida then. A couple of hippies, sitting there on that side of that road there and had a sign on it that they wanted to go to Los Angeles, California. And so we come by them and Chris was driving and Mike says, "Whoa Chris, turn around let's pick up them hippies!" [Laughter] Chris just whipped that pickup around out there and we blowed up there and these hippies sitting here with them backpacks on in the snow, holding this sign up to go to California and Mike rolled that window down and he said, "Where you guys trying to get to? Man we'd like to get all the way to California." He said, "High golly," he said, "You're in luck," he said, "We're going all the way to Portales, New Mexico." [Laughs] And they say, "All right!" Mike says, "Just throw your backpacks in the back and crawl back in there." He said, "We got a couple of dead weights back there already." [Laughter] He said, "You tell them guys to get out. That they rode long enough. You're going to ride from here on out." [Laughter] So theses hippies, man they were just jumping with joy. They done got a ride halfway across the nation. They grabbed them backpacks, up and ran over there, and opened that little tailgate deal up there. We was sitting in the front laughing so hard we couldn't hardly hear them, you know? They were trying to jam them backpacks in the back of that pickup and Sid is in there with a hurt shoulder and it's his pickup. Then all of a sudden they wake up you know and these guys, hippies were trying to get in there with them and they said, "Now what's going on?" You could hear these guys said, "Hey man he said for us to tell y'all to get out. That won't be necessary. There's room for all of us in here." [Laughter] Sid said, "Like hell there's room for all of us in here," he said, "I ain't getting out here. It's my pickup." [Laughter] And so this ruckus went on for three or four minutes back there. Finally, here they come back up there, their old faces fell down. They said,

“Aw man, this ain’t going to work. Them guys aren’t going to let us get in there.” So we went on, we didn’t haul the hippies to Dallas. [Laughter] That’s one story, I’ve told that one a lot of times over the years.

AW:

Well let’s see, I better check see how much time I’ve got. I don’t want to keep everybody too long. You know all my friends at rodeo did describe something similar, which is driving all day and all night and then it’s kind of like being a musician driving all day and night and you got to do a show.

MS:

Um-hm.

AW:

Except rarely do you get bucked off the stage and hurt, but you might not do a good show. How in the world can you do something as demanding, both physically and in terms of timing and concentration as rough stock events after having been in the back of that truck and sleep back for however many hours. [Laughs]

MS:

Yeah, youth is probably the answer. Youth helps that get—happen. But yeah we spent a lot of time there back state driving most of the day at night, then sleeping. I spent a lot of time in the car with Freckles Brown, some of those old guys like that that you might’ve heard.

AW:

Really? I mean those are legendary names, Chris Ledoux, Freckles Brown.

MS:

Yes. Oh I’d name a lot more of them, Leonard McCravey, Buck Weatherford, and all them guys just—well I see I didn’t—the first few years when I rode I didn’t really take a vehicle on the road because you can travel faster, back then you could, without a vehicle. When you go to rodeo you can just ask around who’s going to the next one and knowing somebody—

AW:

Right.

MS:

You catch a ride going that way you know and you can catch a ride here and there and yonder and then you can catch an airplane somewhere and then you can catch another ride from there

and yeah you can—as strange as it sounds you can go faster without a vehicle than you can with one.

AW:

Because if you had one you're having to give somebody else a ride, right? [Laughs]

MS:

Yeah and you're also going to have to leave it at the airport and what not.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

MS:

I left the pickup at an airport in Oklahoma City. One time I went to Lawton Oklahoma to a rodeo and then I went to Oklahoma City and then I caught an airplane to Calgary, Canada and I come back down from Calgary and end up Billings and then we worked Cheyenne, Wyoming and then—I don't know, a couple of little ones in Colorado, Loveland, and Longmont, and something like that. So I think I come from like Longmont, Colorado, Freckles Brown down back down to—Freckles lived not too far from Oklahoma City. So he brought me down there and this pickup in the airport there for like six weeks and he says, "Marvin," he said, "By God they're going to charge a hundred and fifty bucks to get that pickup out of that damn airport parking lot." I said, "Yeah I know, but we're going to have to give a little trick on them here." So Freck—and here's Freckles been hauling them down the road down for years and he don't know this trick yet, but so we pulled in there like he was going to go into the parking lot and that little arm comes out where it gives you a ticket to—that says you're going into the parking lot. I said, "Freckles you pull in there and when that little arm gives you that ticket you don't go in the parking lot. You back, back out. We'll go around the front." [Laughter] So he got that ticket and he brought me around to the front of the airport then and they let me out. I got my gear and what not and I went in the airport and drank a cup of coffee and went down and got in my pickup, fortunately it started I was really worried about that, but it started, throwed my stuff in there and I took that little ticket that Freckles got thirty minutes ago, and I put that ticket that was in mine in the cubby hole. I took that ticket from Freckles, and I went down there and handed to that guy and he said, "Well you've been here for about forty five minutes that'll be about a dollar and half, two dollars." [Laughter] So I didn't have to pay two hundred dollars, whatever it was to get that pickup out of there.

AW:

So there's a lot more you have to learn about rodeo than just staying on your animal.

MS:

Absolutely and I learned from some of those real veterans, a lot of those things. [Laughs]

AW:

Well, again well this is kind of a special interview because we've got a time limit for activities today and so we probably ought to wind up, but one of the things that struck me about just the short time we've had this afternoon is that you've been describing something beyond an event and beyond a sport. You've been describing a way of living.

MS:

That's right. [Laughs] That's right.

AW:

So could that have something to do with why you like to do it?

MS:

Well I mean yes, I've heard that deal. It's more than a sport it's a way of life. I don't know as—for a young man I was a pretty—it was a pretty adventurous deal. I got to go border to border and coast to coast. I drank a lot of cold beer and I kissed a few pretty girls. [Laughs] That's a pretty good life for a young man. [Laughter]

AW:

Well I think that's a great note on which to leave at. Thanks, I really appreciate it and we're going to have to do this some more because I know there is a lot of more stories that we'd like. [Laughs] All right.

***End of Recording***