

NEWS RELEASE

## Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo

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### Harrison shares his rodeo legacy with entertainment

GUYMON, Okla. – John Harrison was born into rodeo.

The grandson of the great Freckles Brown, the 1967 world champion bull rider and one of the first inductees into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame, Harrison was raised around the sport.

A talented horseman, he spent years as a trick rider and a specialty act at rodeos all across the country. As he grew older, he knew he would need something special if he were to continue to make his living entertaining folks, so adjusted his life and livelihood.

He will bring his entertaining show to Texas County as the contract act and funnyman for the Guymon Pioneer Days Rodeo, which will take place May 1-3 at Henry C. Hitch Pioneer Arena. Performances will be 7:30 p.m. Friday; 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday.

“I started off Roman riding and trick riding, but it got to a point where with the economy, rodeos weren’t hiring specialty acts and a barrelman,” said Harrison, 30, of Soper, Okla., who travels with his wife, Carla, and 1-year-old daughter, Addison.

“The first thing they’d cut was the specialty act, so it became harder and harder to get jobs. So I was looking for a way to create an act that could keep me going, so I came up with my Miss Rodeo Universe act. It kept me on the road, then people kept pushing me to get in the barrel.”

The barrelman at a rodeo serves a dual purpose – he provides the protective barrel for the bull-riding competition and is the comic relief for the entire show. And since Harrison’s Miss Rodeo Universe act kept fans in stitches, it was a natural transition.

“He’s got a bunch of different stuff that I’ve never seen before,” said Bret Franks of Goodwell, Okla., who works for producer Carr Pro Rodeos and is part of the Pioneer Days rodeo committee. “He’s got a unique talent that really serves the fans well. They’ll get a kick out of him.”

Miss Rodeo Universe is a satire of rodeo queens and allows Harrison to show off his comedic skills and his work on horseback. It’s not only physical comedy but also visual comedy, something that can be best appreciated in person.

“Any rodeo you go to, you always hear a good rodeo queen story,” Harrison said, explaining how he came up with the act. “There are queens falling off horses or not acting very ladylike. I just exaggerate all that. I get dressed in drag with a big ol’ hat, big boobs and a big butt.”

In his young career, Harrison has worked some of the biggest rodeos in the country, including the prestigious Cheyenne (Wyo.) Frontier Days, RodeoHouston and the National Finals Rodeo. He’s been televised on Good Morning America, and rodeo has helped him get a special, late-night tour of the White House.

But there’s one thing that keeps him coming back, one thing that led to his tweaking a career so that he could continue to chase his dreams and follow his passion.

“It’s a way for me to be involved in our sport,” he said. “I’m a realtor, and we have a bunch of rental houses that keep me plenty busy. But we have so much fun on the road with the people we work with and the fans. I like entertaining.

“There’s nothing better than walking out of the arena and knowing the fans were having a good time.”

Harrison has been nominated as the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association’s act of the year five times, and his resume continues to build. In January and February, he worked one of the longest-running rodeos in the country, the Fort Worth Stock Show Rodeo.

“Coming up with something original is very difficult, because there are so many good clowns out there,” Harrison said. “But I try to keep it fresh wherever I go. But in Fort Worth, there were 34 performances. That’s a lot of repetition, and no matter what you do to keep it fresh and different, it’s still going to feel like the same old thing.”

He also likes to stay away from the stale jokes that have made their way around from one rodeo arena to another. In Guymon, for example, he plans to stay involved in the fans and work “off the cuff,” allowing the circumstances to dictate the entertainment.

“My comedy doesn’t consist of telling jokes,” Harrison said. “I like to ad-lib a lot and just take things as they come. I think the crowds like that, too.”