

DOC MARSHALL

WILD HORSE CATCHER & BRONC BUSTER

BY HOLLY ZEMAN



"We'd all get saddled, and we'd open that corral gate and all out we'd go. Maybe we'd go every direction, but we'd finally all get back to the corral." A long time cowboy from Yampa, Colorado, telling how he broke his horses. His name? Lawrence "Doc" Marshall. "Doc" is a nickname he got later in life from treating other people's animals.

Doc came to Yampa in 1898, in a covered wagon from Black Forest, Colorado near Colorado Springs. He was two and one half years old at the time, but was able to remember parts of the trip. It took his family a month to get to Yampa with about 130 head of cattle traveling behind. When they reached Wolcott, his father ran into a man who told him that there was plenty of grass and water in and around a place called Yampa. So they came to see for themselves and sure enough found great grazing land for the cattle.

During the time Doc's family lived in Yampa, Doc started school. There were about nine kids in the entire school. Doc remembers some things that happened his first year at school.

"The first school I went to was the Lancaster school house up the river here. It was about two and one half miles from where we lived, and everybody had to walk about the same distance to get there. We had to either walk or ride a burro, most kids rode a burro then. Anyway, I was five years old, and my brother, Virge, was six and they (their parents) had to start him to school, so they thought they'd start me too and just send us both. They had this burro, and one rode in the saddle and one behind it. Course I was the littlest so I always rode behind. When school was out the bigger kids would saddle our burro for us so we could go home. One day this girl there, she saddled our burro, and we started to leave when the saddle turned. I fell

off 'em and broke my arm. Well, I went home and they didn't think there was anything wrong with it. But by morning, why my dad got up and brought me here to town to the doctor. Anyway, I fell out of the school bus, that burro was our school bus."

Doc's family stayed in Yampa for five years, and when his father died in 1905 they (mother and two brothers) moved to a place called West Creek near Cripple Creek, Colorado. Doc recalls moving, "My mother's brother come over and we all went over to West Creek. We started out in a covered wagon again. Got up to Breckenridge and that pass was snowed up; it was in May so we couldn't get over the pass in the wagons. So we rented a couple box cars on this narrow gage; loaded the wagons and drove our eight head of horses on the track." Doc's family made the trip between Yampa

moved right along with us. Once in awhile we'd see him at night, but we could never catch him. So we got over there where we was going, we decided we'd all dress up -- put on the best we had. When we got those hats out, why the rat, he'd eat round the rim of the brown hat. So my stepdad, he says I'm goin' to take yours and you can have that, but I wouldn't let him have it. So I remember mother taking a pair of scissors and trimming it off and evenin' it all up. That rat, boy!" Not long after this Doc's family moved back to Yampa in 1908.

From the time Doc was a small boy he loved to ride horses, especially horses that would buck. When asked if he always had ridden in rodeos he replied, "Yeah, I always was tryin' to ride some-thin'." The type of riding Doc liked



"Yampa, 1920's."

and West Creek by covered wagon several times, for his mother would get homesick for the people that lived in both places. During this time of moving, Doc's mother remarried and Doc told me a somewhat humorous story about his stepdad, himself, a rat, and a couple of hats.

"I was going one time in a covered wagon. My mother got married again so I had a stepdad. Him and I didn't get along just too good. We was all going over to that country (around Yampa), and we wasn't going to wear these hats 'till we got there. My stepdad had a brown one and I had a black one. We got over to Rock Creek, an old stage stop, and we camped there that night; us kids slept under the wagon. So that night we saw this rat running around on the running gears of the wagon. I guess he got in the wagon,

best was saddle bronc riding. The horses used for the rodeos were owned by neighboring ranchers and usually bucked out of meanness. Or as Doc says, "Some horses just don't have any buck in 'em, an some are chuck full of it." Nowadays the rodeos are held in certain places and chutes are used and the bucking, calf roping, etc. takes place in an arena. In the days when Doc did most of his riding, the cowboys would hold their rodeos in the streets of Yampa or set up places a little ways out of town. So, of course, they didn't have arenas and chutes, this made the process of saddling and getting on the horses a lot more difficult. Then it took approximately three men, rider included, to get the horse to stand still long enough to get saddled and allow the rider to mount. But Doc said that one man by himself could rope, sad-

dle, and mount one of those ornery bucking horses if he had to.

There are several methods of getting a horse to allow a cowboy enough time to get on. One is "snubbing" (tying) a horse's head to the saddle horn of another horse to keep him still. Another, is standing alongside the horse and pulling the horse's head in your direction with one hand. With the horse's head turned in your direction, he can only go in a circle if he chooses to move. A cowboy can keep the horse circling until he wears him out. Now you can saddle and mount him without too much trouble. But the most common method was called "earin' a horse down." Doc tells how it was done:

"Well, they used to ear a horse different than they ear 'em today. Most people eared a horse from behind; they'd get an arm hooked over the horse's head, right back of the ears and hold an ear in each hand. Then maybe set their teeth into one, and that'd keep their hand from slippin' off. Now they could rest on the arm, and if the horse reared up, why they'd just rear up with him, and wherever he went they'd still be with 'em."

Doc not only went to see a lot of rodeos, but he was usually in them too. One rodeo



"Doc's horse, 'Red', gettin' ready to bust out buckin'."



"Doc wins first money in Yampa, 1921."

that Doc likes to tell about was the first one he went to when he was a kid. The hero of the story was a famous bucking horse, Pin Ears....

".... First one I ever went to, back when they had a famous buckin' horse: Pin Ears -- really the worst buckin' horse that'd ever come to this country. There was a celebration down here and I was just a kid, my first rodeo, and I can still remember it plain. This guy was goin' to ride this Pin Ears that day. He (Pin Ears) very seldom got rode so it was a big affair. Everybody had been up here at the Antler's Cafe; Antler's Bar then. So this guy that was going to ride Pin Ears, why he walked all around all day with his big chaps on, and just a walkin' around bow legged and lookin' tough. So finally came time for him to get on. They eared the horse down and got him saddled. So this guy, he walked up lookin' like he was goin' to get on, but got up to the horse and just couldn't quite get his nerve up. He never got on, course as I said they'd all been drinkin', so they decided that they'd have some fun out of that guy. Us kids had a bunch of burros around there, so they picked this guy up and put 'em on a burro and rode 'em clear around the corral and showed 'em out.

"Then after that, there was an old fellow there, I guess he was probably 60 years old, and he'd been up there to that place

and had 'em some of them drinks. So he decided that he could ride old Pin Ears, he'd show that guy how it was done. However, he was a good old rider, but he was gettin' too old for it. His name is Pete, used to drive stage here. And then this Walter Laughlin who was a big man, weighed about 220 lbs., and he could get a horse by the ears and hold 'em. So he eared old Pin Ears for old Pete, you know they had to ear 'em down out there in the flat, and old Pete got on 'em. Turned 'em loose.

"Pin Ears was a horse that would always act like he was goin' to go over backwards; that is, when he'd buck, he'd buck so high, he'd be in that shape, and then he would hit the ground, and they just couldn't stay. He'd loosen them up you know, and that's where he got 'em. He threw, I think it was fifty some men before anybody ever rode 'em.

"But anyway, Pet had his spurs hung in that cinch pretty good, and when he left the horse, both boots stood in the stirrups. Well, they still didn't have Pin Ears rode, so they took up a collection and a man named Henry Clark who was about

the best rider at the time around this country, rode 'em. But even he had to pull leather (grab the saddle horn). We just didn't have anybody in this country that could ride 'em." So Pin Ears traveled throughout the U.S. and as Doc said threw fifty some men before he was finally ridden."

Yep, Doc did a lot of riding, anywhere there was a rodeo you'd find him there. He was good too, like at one time here in Yampa, he won first money for his bronc riding abilities. But Doc quit his bronc riding for awhile and joined the army.

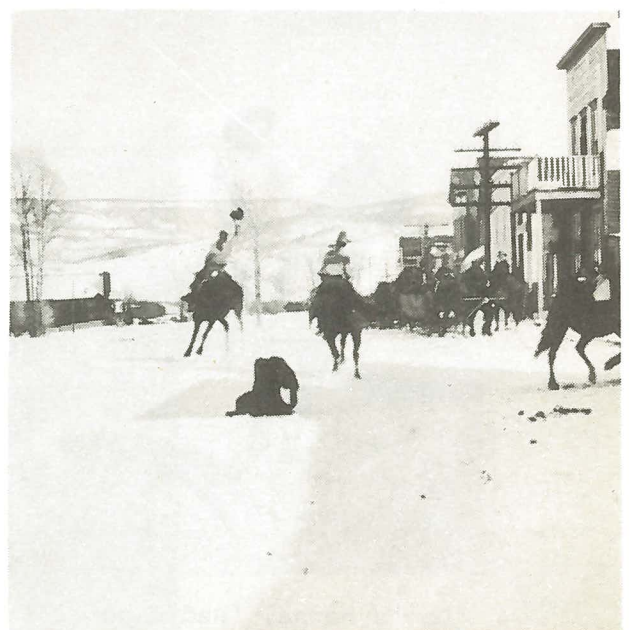
During World War I, he trained at Camp



"Heigh-ho Silver."



"This cowboy is about to pull leather."



"Sunday in Yampa."



"Fannin' 'em pretty good."

Carnie, near San Diego, for a year and then went overseas. "I remember going across 'the pond' (Atlantic Ocean) and when we sailed out there was thirteen boats in the convoy. We went in convoys on account of the submarines. Anyway, we sailed on the 13th and that made everybody superstitious, you know. And we was thirteen days then going from New York to Liverpool, but nothing ever happened." From the time Doc told me that story I've decided that thirteen was probably a lucky number, his wife also agrees.

Doc returned from the war the same way he went, with narry a scratch on him. But Doc didn't get to come right home, he had to wait eight months before he could get on a boat that didn't have too many people on it. When he finally got back in the summer of 1919, he took up his ridin' again. Only this time he not only rode ornery horses but went out and caught wild horses too.

Doc's first experience happened one spring not too long after he returned. His brother, Virge, a friend, Vern Codwell, and he left in April. For this was when the new green grass was coming up and it makes the wild horses tired and weak. The three cowboys with pack and saddle horses went on over to Wolf Creek 45 miles below

Meeker, Colorado, and set up the horse camp. Down in that country, there are lots of deep washouts where the horses would hide in or jump across when chased. This made it more difficult for the cowboys; especially, if while chasing a group of wild horses they jumped over a washout, then the cowboys would have to find some kind of crossing, and this would slow them up. Doc recalled that they usually used a relay system to wear the horse out. The three men would station themselves in the area. One would chase the horses for awhile



"Doc in his Sunday best."



"Wild horses headin' out towards Yampa."

then another cowboy would take up the chase while the first dropped out of sight and rested. If this method didn't work, then they would build a trap or find a box canyon that they could chase the horses into. This was called "laning them in.", one man behind the horses and the other two on the sides. By using these methods, it took the three cowboys about a month to catch the wild horses.

From the sixty head of horses they caught, Doc, Virge, and Vern picked out the good ones they thought worth keeping, the rest they turned loose. Now everybody was about to leave when something happened. "The day before we left my brother and I went over to watch and herd the horses. My brother had a wild stud that he'd caught the year before. He was riding him, and when he got off at this gate and opened it up, his horse didn't want to lead or something. Anyway the horse struck him in the head and knocked him down. He was unconscious and bleeding, and I didn't know what to do. So I run back over to our camp -- we had a little flour over there -- that's about all we did have... we were just about out of grub. I grabbed that sack and went back and wadded some of that into the wound, it was right above his eye. Then I took the sack and wrapped it around his head, and by the next day we were ready to leave. He was still pretty weak

though. During the next couple of days traveling he got worse and finally quit us, went on to Oak Creek, Colorado to a doctor." Doc and Vern stayed with the horses and brought them back to Yampa. All and all the trip took two and one half months.

Now came the fun, but also the difficult time of breaking the horses. Doc owned some land up in the hills where they took the horses, built a corral and started the process of breaking them. Three men would get on three horses in the corral, then another cowboy would open the gate, and those three horses would come flying out. After wearing the horses out till they wouldn't buck anymore, Doc and the rest of the cowboys would return for three more horses. Doc said he rode ten different horses in a day.

Some of these horses were used for rodeoin', or sold for four or five dollars per head. The ones that Doc picked out were usually used for pack trips. Doc would take tourists up into the mountains for camping, fishing, and hunting. He says that the horses were kind of scrawny, and after catching and breaking them, they lost a lot of their spirit. Doc sometimes did keep the mares for breeding. Once he tried to break a stud and keep him for breeding, but he wasn't too gentle, so Doc only bred him



"Peck & Doc, 1920."



"Which way we goin'?"

one year.

The best lookin' wild horse that Doc ever saw, was his brother's -- the same one that kicked Virge in the head. This horse was a black stud about nine or ten years old. Virge had Doc break him, and says Doc, "He never had any buck in 'em. The first time I took that horse out he just threw his ears out when he was runnin', looked where he was a steppin', and wiggled his ears all the time -- and a horse that does that'll hardly every buck." But he was still ornery at times like when he'd stand and paw his saddle up after Doc unsaddled him. Other than that he was the



"Not so wild horses, going out on a pack trip after a month of being broken in."

best wild horse Doc had ever seen.

Horses were sure a plenty then, but even so there was still a lot of horse stealing. Like one time, Doc, Virge, and Vern were riding into a part of the high country called the Flat Tops. They were getting ready for the tourist season and were on their way to set up camp. The summer



"Holly and Doc laughin' about the good 'ole' days."

was late that year, the snow didn't leave until the 25th of June, 1920. It'd been snowing up there since the October before. Anyway, this is what happened...

"We got to the top, eleven or twelve thousand feet, and we looked back about two miles and we saw a horse right close to a rocky rim. So we decided to go over. We knew he had to have wintered up there, but we couldn't figure out how. The only reason that he had lived, was that he'd stayed where the snow blew off close to that rim. We looked around there a little, and while get-

ting this old horse we saw another horse, but he was dead. So we decided that somebody had lost them huntin' or somethin'. We drove 'em down to where our pack string was. Our horses was all shed off -- course from down here (in Yampa) -- but this old horse still had hair on 'em, four or five inches long.

"He acted plum crazy; he didn't want to go in the bunch, he didn't want to do nothing. We thought it was because he'd been there so long. We brought him over here to Yampa with us. He was branded seven, so we decided that he belonged to an outfit in the lower country called the 'Sevens'. We sent word to them 'bout havin' a horse with their brand on it, and they said that late in the fall, why, a couple fellows had stolen two horses, and they rode 'em over to Dot Zero (near Bond, Colorado), toward the railroad and turned them loose. The horses missed their route tryin' to get back home, and so ended up in the Flat Tops."

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Doc bought his ranch in 1928, where he still lives with his wife, Lucy, and where he raised his four children.

Though Doc doesn't do any wild horse catching or bronc bustin' nowadays, he still likes the outdoors, horses, and fishing. If you happen to catch him out on his ranch sometime, he might just tell you a few tales... "We rode over to Juniper Springs that day ..."

