

Rawhide & Friends, The Making of A Showman

By Cindy K. Roberts



*Mark Lahmann aka "Rawhide" on
his trick horse, "Dusty."*

No one has the Wild West showman fever more than Mark Lahmann of The Rawhide & Dusty Show from Sullivan, Missouri. This cowboy's tough, bull-whipping attitude is just the exterior to his softer side. Getting past the leather chinks, the bandanna smile and his cowhide boots, there's a tender spot embedded into his eternal soul. This cowboy has a heart that's bigger than Texas . . . and deep down in his heart is a love for children that have a need for heroes. Mark, a.k.a. "Rawhide" wants to be that positive role model for young and impressionable children and his Wild West Show allows him to do just that.

Rawhide of the Rawhide & Dusty Show have been performing to audiences young and old at horse shows, horse fest/expos ,fairs & festivals, private parties for several years. I will take my hat off to a guy like that. Young cowboys and cowgirls run up to the side of the arena after each performance to greet the duo Rawhide and his trick horse named, "Dusty." This is what makes it all worthwhile for performers like Rawhide and Dusty. This is just a part of the making of a true wild west showman.

Rawhide's wife, Cindy gets some credit for the making of this Wild West show, after all, she has to go along with some of Rawhide's whip-cracking schemes. It's always the wife that has to stand out in the middle of the dirt packed floor of the arena to face a show-me kind of a crowd while her husband cracks his whip in an attempt to snatch a rose from her mouth. Personally, I think it should be the other way around, but Cindy doesn't seem to mind. Cindy does make sure their insurance policy is current and paid up . . . and she reports regularly to their insurance agent who is in the business to insure rodeo contestants. As the loop unfurls, I discovered that Rawhide's hunger for becoming a Wild West showman started long before he met his beautiful and devoted wife, Cindy.

As a child himself, young Mark Lahmann acquired his first pony when he was only five years old and he enjoyed watching his favorite westerns on TV. He faithfully watched every cowboy show of that time and was drawn to larger than life characters such as John Wayne, Gene Autry, Dale Evans and Roy Rogers just to name a few. This was all very exciting for little Mark who eagerly looked for his heroes on the cereal box of his Wheaties® while seated at the breakfast table every morning. Mark then told his parents at that young age that he had "cowboy blood" in him. That's just what a mother wants to hear from her young son . . . and that set the stage for little Mark's Wild West fever.



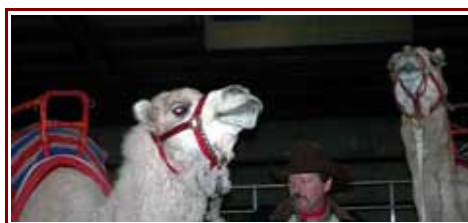
Ivan the Great



Whitey on his spanish horse, "Joker."

Now, an older and wiser cowboy renamed "Rawhide," has traveled around the United States to help feed his rodeo addiction. In doing so he was able to conjure up different ideas that would work for his own Wild West show. Some acts are "harder to follow" as they say and that is how Rawhide decided which acts would "fly" in his own performances and dismiss the ones that would be grounded. Some of Rawhide's Wild West acts include courageous performers such as "Ivan the Black," "Chief Iron Foot," "Texas T," the talented trick rider Linda Nealey, "Slim" and his donkey "Scooter," Jeff Lyle Animal Adventures with his leggy camels, and Cowboy Mounted Shooters. Independent acts will vary from show to show as they offer a variety of equine entertainers.

The show consists of trained horses that jump through a burning line of fire with flames blazing straight up, while firing cannons, shooting arrows and cowboy pistols all from horseback. This is what makes a Wild West show special for children. The kids are amazed to witness daring feats of bravery that require skill from the riders and their horses. It shows that it takes a special kind of horse to perform in these amazing acts of danger. The trust that Dusty the horse has in his owner Rawhide, shines through with every performance.



Jeff Lyle with his trained camels.



Slim at rehearsal with his paint horse.



Chief Iron Foot & Miss Kitty



Rawhide & Dusty

Showman Rawhide has been working with his buckskin gelding, Dusty for many years. Rawhide began training Dusty when the horse was only six months old before he put him on stage. Now Dusty loves entertaining the crowd. He will shake his head "yes," take a bow, lie down, and will also rear up on his hind legs; all to the amazement of the crowd. After this entertainment, Rawhide and Dusty will lope around the arena, performing different whip popping techniques. While on horseback, Rawhide will jump Dusty onto the back of the truck, and then jump him onto the top of the trailer. Once on top of the trailer, Dusty will perform on a teeter-totter. While Dusty is on top of the

trailer, Rawhide stands up on the saddle and cracks his whip. When the show culminates, Rawhide and Dusty ride out of the arena on top of the trailer. Rawhide and Dusty have been filmed for RFD TV's All Around Performance show. And to think that horse does all of this for applause and oats.

Rawhide himself is not a picky eater, but you won't find him at a sushi bar eating raw fish. No sir. Rawhide enjoys eating real cowboy food such as steak and potato or ham and beans. He still eats his Wheaties® every morning and he says his prayers every night. Yes, Rawhide is a true Wild West showman in his own right, a special kind of hero in every young child's eyes. Ride on Rawhide and Dusty! My hat is off to you. [To have The Rawhide & Dusty Show or The Wild West Show come to your town, contact Mark & Cindy Lahmann through www.rawhideanddusty.com or 573-860-4010]



Author Cindy K. Roberts is a contributing feature and column writer that has a lifetime experience with horses and mules. Cindy's equine heart, and passion for the wilderness rich in wild west history keeps her on the road with her paint horse, "Cowboy" and palomino mule in search of the cowgirl spirit. Cindy can be reached through her web site WWW.EVERYCOWGIRLSDREAM.COM or write cindy@everycowgirlsdream.com.