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Interviews with Pat North Ommert, Marguerite Happy, and Bonnie Happy

California Rodeo Salinas

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7-9-2021

### Interview with Pat North Ommert, Marguerite Happy, and Bonnie Happy

Robert Danziger

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# **Edited interview with Pat North Ommert, Marguerite Happy and Bonnie Happy.**

Edited and hosted by Bob Danziger.  
August 5, 2021



***Marguerite Happy***



***Pat North Ommert***



***Bonnie Happy***

## **INTERVIEW**

Pat North Ommert

Good morning. Good morning,

Robert Danziger

Marguerite and Bonnie should be joining us soon.

Pat North Ommert

I hear you fine. And I'm here.

Robert Danziger

Okay, good. Good, good. Well, how are you today?

Pat North Ommert

Well, I'm fine, Bob. I have been looking at two saved Salinas programs that I have. I know you've seen both of them -1952 and 1957, the 52 57 was when they featured the, the Roman riding acts, because I can see the picture that you got from that program,

Robert Danziger

Right. That's an amazing picture.

Pat North Ommert

That was taken for publicity. I have one at the Los Angeles Coliseum with 100,000 people in the background.



Robert Danziger

Wow.

Pat North Ommert

Amazing, I had so much fun.

Robert Danziger

Good morning. Did someone just join us?

**Catching up**

Marguerite Happy

Hi Bob. Good morning.

Pat North Ommert

I'm on the phone.

Marguerite Happy

Hello Pat. It's good to hear your voice.

Pat North Ommert

Well, same here - been awhile.

Marguerite Happy

Yes, it has been.

Robert Danziger

About how long has it been since you two talked to each other?

Pat North Ommert

Well, we had a visit in Lone Pine during the reunion.

Marguerite Happy

Was the Lone Pine Film Festival, Pat. That was so much fun. (note - around 2015)

### **History with California Rodeo Salinas**

Pat North Ommert

You know, it was wonderful. We had many chances during that three days to visit. It was great. I enjoyed it.

Marguerite - while we're just talking. Bonnie's stepsister - Danny Connelly Motes - they worked a lot of years when we were up [in Salinas] when your whole family were inducted into the California Rodeo Salinas Hall of Fame.

I'm looking at a 1952 and in the 1957, Salinas program. How many years did you work Salinas?

Marguerite Happy

I'm not certain exactly how many years that they worked Salinas, but Bonnie should be on the phone shortly. She'll remember. I think the last year was 19 77, 78, the last years that Bonnie worked it and Danny might've been even earlier than that.

Robert Danziger

I think Edith Happy is on the cover of the 2017 program.

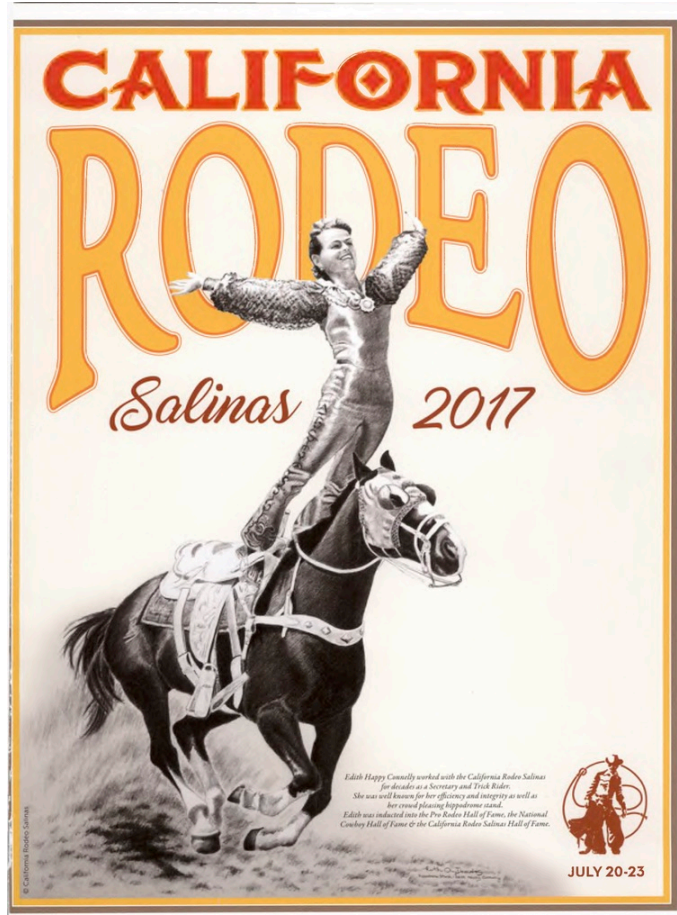
Pat North Ommert

That was a beautiful program - I have a copy of that. They sent me a copy. I have that picture of Edith, it's hanging in my collection.

Marguerite Happy

The California Rodeo President serves for two years. It is his or her decision to pick a poster to represent the California Rodeo each year. The California Rodeo President chooses the artist and subject for the cover. In 2017 The subject was Edith Happy trick riding and the artist was a well renowned local artist Ruth Deoudes. That year Mike Scarr was the President and he chose, for the first time ever, a track event - and they picked Edith trick riding for the poster, which was quite an honor.





Pat North Ommert

It was beautiful. And Bob oughta see that picture and maybe he has it.

Robert Danziger

I was looking at it yesterday.

Pat North Ommert

**Polly Burson and Edith Happy**

Polly Burson showed me how she liked to do the Hippodrome Stand. That's what that [trick] is called [that Edith Happy is pictured doing on the cover of the 2017 program]. It had different names. [Polly] just put her hands on her hips. So the few times that I did that in a major show, that's the way I would do it. I usually did

my one foot, one hand stands, or fly away - we called it - because of Polly. I have a picture of her and me in France, and she is going around - and with a big Hippodrome.

A Hippodrome stand is pretty easy to do, but not the way Edith did, she had a beautiful way of doing it.

And it depends on a lot of things, a good horse in a nice arena makes a difference. [It] was fantastic. Edith just did that. And here she was Secretary of Shows, and still she could get out and be in the arena, looking like that. That's amazing.



### Marguerite Happy

### **Don Happy . Other Trick Riders . One-Armed Bandits**

It was amazing. She gave Don Happy a lot of credit that he had everything ready.

### Pat North Ommert

Exactly right. Edith's horse was named Hobo and he was a beautiful horse, and Don would have him all warmed up. We worked many shows together. And here at Salinas, they had - I have a picture in front of me right now with 14 trick riders. And in that program they mentioned that there were 16. And I think that included Scotty and Sandra Black - they rode one horse together, a daughter and father combination. It was wonderful.



And the Salinas Rodeo actually had so many things going on on their tracks. It was like a separate show and you could go and see it. We met Polly there one year, but it was still really, really big with all the acts. And I think they had the one-armed bandit acts. And it was spectacular.

Robert Danziger

Who was Don?

Pat North Ommert

Edith's husband, Don Happy.

Robert Danziger

Edith's husband. Okay. So he would make sure the horses and everything were ready for you to do you're ride then?

Marguerite Happy

Yeah, he had Edith's horses groomed, saddled, warmed up and ready for her trick riding act; and he worked Salinas as a pick-up man.

[Editor's note: for more information on the amazing story of what pick-up men do at a rodeo, see [PRCA Rodeo Pick-Up Men](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwqgBSxHNRU)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwqgBSxHNRU>]

He always worked Salinas. He usually entered the Rodeo - steer wrestling and maybe bronc riding and such. And then he also was a hired pick-up man. So he would work as a contract act as well, and then help Edith. Edith secretaried and trick rode. And so he was helping with the horses as, as were the kids. Bonnie should be on this call because Bonnie was talking about how she and Clifford and Ann would cool the pickup horses down and they'd go off to the fair and get in trouble and ride off.

## Pat North Ommert

Exactly. Don also worked the picture business a lot. Didn't he double - who is he? He doubled one of the big strong actors. And once in a while you can see a shot of Don in the old Western movies when they're driving something. They all tried to do everything, you know - not too many specialists.

## **Rodeo work leading to movie work as stunt performers and doubles**

Marguerite did an awful lot in the picture business.





### Marguerite Happy

I think Don doubled Ronald Reagan and Elvis Presley, Robert Mitchum, there was quite a few to double back in the day. Edith Happy doubled, and did some stunt work as well. And it was the rodeo business and that specialty [trick riding, pick-up man, competing] that really helped them work in the picture business.

### Marguerite Happy

#### **Family**

Pat - you've been riding every day?

### Pat North Ommert

Well, pretty much every day, but not right now with all this heat. I've been riding about every other day. It is a bit of a heatwave, but we get a nice breeze. And if you get out there early, yes. And I love it.

I moved to a new apartment and I have a lot more space and I'm closer to where the horses are boarded. And so that's, that's nice, but I'm, a loner. In fact, Katie Hill, who that's first runner up to Miss Rodeo America in 2008, loaned me this horse. And then before that I had a big buckskin from their ranch. They're up in Paso Robles/Templeton. Their actual address is Templeton, which you probably know on River Road, - you know that area.

We're going up to, see Deanna, my granddaughter and three of the great grandsons. So [your] grandbaby . . .

Marguerite Happy

I'm so excited. She's just wonderful. Margot, Margot James Happy. Margot is five months old, Pat.

Pat North Ommert

Oh, you're just getting started. They get better every year. Every month.

Marguerite Happy

Better, and better. And she's been on a horse already.

Pat North Ommert

Oh, that's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Marguerite Happy

Thank you. Our boys are, are oh gosh, 35, 36 and older, [this is] the first grandchild. So we're very, very excited about it.

Robert Danziger

### **Family Lullabies**

That's wonderful. Do you have a family lullaby that you sing for your kids or anything like that?

Marguerite Happy

You love the music, don't you? My daughter-in-law, Erica Happy, and my granddaughter love the music. She starts babbling and talking and trying to sing

along. It's really adorable. I am not much of a singer and I couldn't do any of the songs justice, but we play music quite often and, and sing along, dance and have a good time.

Robert Danziger

That's fun. That's a lot of fun. There's something very special about the sound of kids' voices.

Marguerite Happy

My father-in-law Don Happy, always sang to Bonnie and Clifford ["Put Me in Your Pocket."](#) That will definitely be passed on to her. And then my Dad, Jim Martins, always sang the poem ["Preacher and the Bear."](#) So that's another one we'll pass on.

Robert Danziger

Wonderful. That's fantastic. Lullaby stories are the best.

Marguerite Happy

### **Bringing in the Soldiers**

Pat- did you trick ride on this track? You were talking about how busy Salinas is - so they have the arena going on - and it's a huge arena. One of the largest in all of pro rodeo at that time, especially when you trick rode and [did] events on the track. So there were things going on simultaneously. It's still like that at Salinas. Did you work California Rodeo when they'd bring the soldiers in?

Pat North Ommert

Oh yeah. God, we were delighted to have that wonderful crowd. They brought them usually on the first two days of the performances instead of the weekend. Oh yeah. They were always the best audiences. They liked the trick riding.

Marguerite Happy

They went wild. I was a young girl back then. And I, I remember the soldiers just standing and hooping and hollering. The stands were full of them in their uniforms. It was spectacular.

Robert Danziger

That's where my University is now, is at Fort Ord.

Robert Danziger

Hello? Hello. Hello Bonnie. This is Bob Danziger. Pat and Marguerite are on the phone. Sorry for the delay.

Pat North Ommert

Hello, Marguerite, Bonnie. We're just talking about all of the years that between us we've been going to Salinas Rodeo.

Marguerite Happy

Yeah. That's a fun one.

Pat North Ommert

The whole thing, right - that's right.

Marguerite Happy

Bonnie - Pat was asking how many years did you work Salinas? , Bonnie and then with your stepsister, Danny?

My first time was at 16. I think the last one I was 22. We worked it. I remember watching you in 77, I think when Clifford and I were married. Were you 22?

Bonnie Happy



Were we that young? Maybe? Yeah. I think so. Well you were 17 and I'm five years old, so maybe 23. Okay. There you go. A lot older. [laughter]

Pat North Ommert

1911 was the first year they had the Salinas Rodeo, isn't it?

Robert Danziger

Yes, that's correct. There were all sorts of things going back to the 1870s of that location. They had similar sorts of gatherings, you know, the ranchers and farmers and so forth would gather there for different kinds of celebrations starting in the 1870s.

Bonnie Happy

Oh my gosh. Yeah. So it has a long history.

Marguerite Happy

And they'd come by wagon. I remember Sammie Thurman Brackenbury talks about that. It was very interesting.

Robert Danziger

### **Background . Cal-State Monterey Bay**

Yeah. There's there's some good pictures. Just, you know, just briefly this has, this was all started by the Music Department at Cal State Monterey Bay, to scan the programs of all of the major music venues in Monterey county. The Rodeo is actually the oldest and largest music venue in the history of Monterey County - by far. And we previously had scanned all of the Monterey Jazz Festival programs. And we just finished the Carmel Bach Festival programs. And just yesterday we finished all of the Rodeo programs going back to 1911. So those are now available. They will be available to you where you could type in Happy, which I did the other day, and all the different appearances or references to your family would come up. And you could look in the programs, that sort of thing.

And the product of this discussion is going to go to the Rodeo for the Museum and then whatever else they choose to do with it. And we'll also go into our restricted archive at Cal State Monterey Bay, where if the Rodeo wanted someone to look at it, they could give permission for someone to use it as opposed to everybody being able to look at it. And then this conversation today will also be part of that archive where both the audio and a transcript that we will make of it will be available for people to listen to and do research, or students learn about it. And well over half of our students come from within a few miles of the Fairgrounds, and most of them grew up either going to the Rodeo or wondering about the Rodeo or participating.

And the reason for the call is that when we were doing the programs and for some reason in the 1931 program folder, there was a letter from Pat about Polly Burson. And that was how it ended up with this conversation taking place.

Pat North Ommert

**1931?**

May I inject a question? I couldn't have written that letter in 1931. I didn't, that date would be not correct where [the letter] was.

Robert Danziger

Yes. Very true. it references an obituary for Polly and Polly didn't die until well after 1931 (she died in 2006). So it was, for some reason, mis-placed in that folder. I don't really know why.

Pat North Ommert

I have one more question for Marguerite about the collection at Salinas. Edith Happy and my costumes were in there and I went up one day and it was still there. Are those costumes still on display?

Marguerite Happy

Yes. They are showcased in the California Rodeo Museum. You and Edith have a full showcase together. With your outfit, picture name, and a little bit of history.

Pat North Ommert:

### **Edith and Pat at the Cow Palace**

Edith and I carried the colors, she carried the American flag at the Cow Palace, all 10 or whatever performances there were [in the 1960's]. And she made our chaps. And I think I kept mine. She made those, they were out of that metallic stretch, and they were so beautiful.

Most of the trick riders did their costumes. I was never able to sew much, my mom always went with me. We did the horses, but that suit, that was my last really fancy parade suit. I didn't trick ride in that. We'd go down to B. Black and Friends in Los Angeles and buy fabric. Then before the stretch materials came, it was always wool. And then the satin shirts with the big sleeves. So then I was looking for somebody to make my costumes, I'd get a dressmaker. And I asked them there and they put me in touch with this woman. I found out she was in Inglewood. She sewed mostly for strippers. [laughter]. I think in the back of that [the label] is Gussy? That's what her label was Gusty, Gutsy.

And, you know, we're talking in the late fifties and. I quit in 62 was my last performance at the Los Angeles Coliseum Sheriff's Rodeo.

The costuming was something else for trick riders and mine. I just went on, but Edith's - those were so pretty - Edith did those. That's just the way from the Salinas Rodeo. But when we did the, we also ended up at the Cow Palace that year doing the trick riding for the Roy Rogers TV show that they did with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. I don't know if you would remember - that probably that was a long time ago.

### **Cooler-Outers**

Marguerite Happy

Yeah. It's full of the history.

Talking about family, being that so many of those students at the college there in Monterey and had grown up around the California Rodeo - It was all family oriented and still is. Like Bonnie and Clifford [Happy], going with their Mom and Dad. And Bonnie, you explain about how back then you and Pat's kids would maybe help cool out the horses. At a young age, you were busy involved as well.

Pat North Ommert

Oh, they were hot walkers - they were really cooler-outers.

Bonnie Happy

### **Carnival Kid Trouble**

We really got a good lesson. It was the carnival we got in trouble for one time - because we rode the horses over to the carnival and Dad's pickup horses were broncs and Moms [horse] Hobo, was not childproof. We rode over looking at the Ferris Wheels - we got in big trouble.

Pat North Ommert

Don't forget Clay Boss included in that.

Marguerite Happy

Yes, yes. He cooled May's horse out.

The lights and the music [of the carnival] attracted you to just go over there and look, see what you can do over there.

Bonnie Happy

Ferris Wheel was going in those days,

Marguerite Happy

The carnival was on the rodeo ground. It's no longer like that. It's at a different venue, but it was very close to you - close enough for you guys to go on over there.

When you trick road, dear Bonnie, what was some of the music you remember? Do you remember some of the music that they play?

Bonnie Happy

### **Soldiers Stomping Feet in Appreciation**

No. I don't remember the music I remember before they put the new stands in. It usually full of soldiers and they would stomp their feet and it was just really loud. I remember that, that, that was awesome to trick ride in front of them.



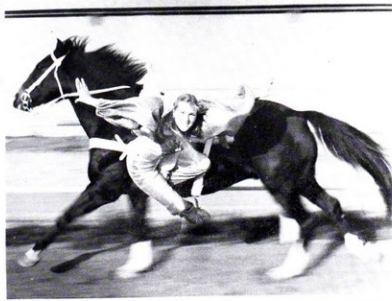


**BONNIE HAPPY** — A statuesque blond, 23-year old Bonnie is no stranger to California Rodeo fans. She is following in the footsteps of her trick riding mother Edith Happy, an all-time favorite star at Salinas. Bonnie's trick riding took her to Taiwan and Brazil last year along with many stops in this country, including Madison Square Garden, the Cow Palace, and the National Western at Denver.

*Grensted Photo*



**LIZ LORIMER** — Returning to the California Rodeo is lovely Liz Lorimer who made her first appearance in Salinas in 1973. Liz has travelled the world to show her fine trick riding technique and she is a welcome addition to the ranks for our 1978 Rodeo. Liz is shown here doing a Stroud Lay-out.



**SHERYL BROWN** — A new face this year at the California Rodeo, pretty Sheryl Brown comes from Sepulveda, California. She is sure to add extra color and excitement to our world-famous trick riding program.

**EMPIRE FURNITURE COMPANY      CALIFORNIA COASTAL FARMS  
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33

Group

Wow.

Robert Danziger

What did it sound like to you, when you were trick riding? You had the soldiers stomping their feet and cheering, and . . .

Bonnie Happy

And they were clapping.

Robert Danziger

What sounds got through to you while you were doing your act?

Bonnie Happy



## **Chunke Shows Off**

It made you want to do better, you know, and it was really loud. And the first time that we went down through there, my little horse Chunke, they started clapping and he looked up and I was in the Hippodrome and he looked at him like, "Oh, that's for me!" And slowed way down. And I was yelling at him and until we got like three fourths of the way down, he heard Dick Griffith yelling at him, " Chunke, get going." - his little ears went forward and he took off.

Marguerite Happy

That's funny, he slowed down instead of running faster, being afraid.

Bonnie Happy

He liked that. He was looking at everybody like, oh, this is for me!

Robert Danziger

So you were riding your ham, is what you were riding.

Bonnie Happy

Yes, yes.

Pat North Ommert

## **Long Straightaways**

The Salinas Rodeo - how long that track was. That was a long way - you can do two tricks on the Salinas Rodeo track.

Bonnie Happy

Yeah. Easy. Yeah. Yeah. Unless you're on Jimmy Medearis and you're on Pokey. Cause he ran so fast. It elevated his talent because Pokey ran so fast

Pat North Ommert

I don't remember that. But I remember most of our shows were straightaways for trick riding. We were in arenas that were big enough at that time, particularly to do a trick and just go straight away to one end and back up the other. And the first time when I went to New York - 1953, Polly came down and showed me how to work a circle. I'd never tricked in a circle - that's a different deal.

Bonnie Happy

Yeah, it is.

Pat North Ommert

I don't know if that's in the archives. Performing has, you know, moving from show to show any show is the same - certain props, certain things like with the Roman riders act, you had to get your jumps into the arena and that's show business. Everybody has the same thing.

**Pat's Music: Everything's Coming Up Roses, Poor People of Paris**

Robert Danziger

Yeah. Pat, you mentioned that the song you like to use for your Roman riding was "Poor People of Paris. I think this is it right here. [plays recording]

Pat North Ommert

[I like the] Les Baxter [version]. Because if you hit the jump at the time they had their crescendo, it was fine.

I was in a supermarket doing my shopping and they were playing that in the background all those years ago. I thought that would be a nice thing because it made me feel good. And I liked that.

When we trick rode for the Roy Rogers show, the band leader said, "what would you like for music?" I had no idea. So he played "Everything's Coming Up Roses." Oh, that was wonderful.

Robert Danziger

[playing "Everything's Coming Up Roses."]

Pat North Ommert

I love that. I don't know how you guys do all this technology, but I loved it. But their band [at the Cow Palace] didn't have have the singer. We just had the music and it was great.

Robert Danziger

Good. Pat, can I ask you when you were trick riding or Roman Riding, you mentioned the music, but what did you hear? I mean, there had to be rhythms and sounds of the saddle and the horses and so forth. What were you aware of when you were doing your act?

Pat North Ommert

Oh, I just love music and I had the tunes that I liked. I was busy getting them [the horses] over the fences. I didn't jump just one fence. I had two jumps and I went twice around the arena, besides figure eights, and bowing and getting back on. And you know, that type of thing.

I had a 10 minute act once the jumps are up and, you know, in show business, get in and get out, do a good job - because they like you not to be too long.

My mom's trick horse is fast. It's a schedule. [To be] a good show, it has to connect. People clap like, like Bonnie was saying, there were soldiers - you're just loved. It's the ham in you, you know, you have to have appreciation. And I don't think any of them went without it.

I grew up watching Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and I thought I wanted to be a dancer. And of course my Mom was around with her trick horses way back in the thirties. And so I just loved the glamour of showing. I just thought it was great.

Robert Danziger

How did your Mom get into trick riding?

**Pat's Mom**

Pat North Ommert

My mom, she learned to ride Roman and went to the Hawaiian islands in 1934 with a show called the EK Fernandez using their horses. There was a stable, but we didn't keep our horses there. We rode too, and during the big depression.

There was a circus trainer there. He taught her [while in] high school on a really wonderful black mare with stockings and everything. And he had a trick horse and they performed a little bit.

And then Mom trained Rex. That was a bay horse. My first Roman riding pictures were with a pair of bays. Then there were never a lot of rodeos, arenas and what have you, and circuses. But my Mom ended up performing since she had a trick horse. She doubled Joe E. Brown in a movie called Polo Joe.

Pat North Ommert

And the gag was, I have a picture that he had said, oh, I can ride. I don't know if you remember old Joe E. Brown, he was in "Showboat." He was the dad. I just saw that movie, not that long ago with Howard Keel. But Joe E. Brown at a distance, this horse, they gave him a circus horse. And instead of being able to play polo, she did a cruise and a cakewalk. And my Mom in a distant shot was the one they used to double. I have some wonderful Warner Brothers still shots of my Mom and Joe E. Brown. Yeah. So that was fun.

Group

Wow

Robert Danziger

Many, how many generations in your families have been doing trick riding and rodeo and so forth?

Marguerite Happy

**From Salinas**

My involvement with the trick riding is because of the Happy family, because I married Clifford Happy. So I only learned very little trick riding enough for like a couple shows. Bonnie helped me, and Dick and Connie Griffith helped me for the movie business, but nothing like contract acts like Bonnie and Pat and Edith and Bonnie's step-sister Danny.

I grew up in Salinas, so I was a local girl there. And my father, Jim Martins, was involved in my Mom's - Sally Wilson was her maiden name. She ran for hostess. But the Happy family, I think, is the ones that were inducted into the California Rodeo Hall of Fame. And it was because of their involvement for years in so many areas as contestants, as contract acts, pick-up man, secretary, rodeo secretary - Edith, she just did everything. And my brother Kearney Martins has competed at Salinas in the Team Roping and been involved on Committees....most recently with his wife Leslie Martins, on the California Rodeo Museum Committee.

It was phenomenal. I thought every rodeo was that big, but it's not the case. It's one of the largest.

Bonnie Happy

Wasn't Salinas the first televised rodeo?

Marguerite Happy

It may have been, Bonnie. one of the first.

Pat North Ommert

It could well have been.

Pat North Ommert

Salinas had all that. All of that coming down from Canada [including] those chuck wagon races.

Marguerite Happy

I know Pat and Bonnie talked about the performing in front of the soldiers and how loud it was and I'm sure your adrenaline was pumped. And Chunke slowed down.

Pat and Bonnie, did you ever have to put earplugs or muffs in your horses ears because of the noise?

Bonnie Happy

No. I never did that. Mom used blinders a time or two just so they could see straight down and not see right or left. But I, I never did anything like that with Chunke. He was just rock solid. He didn't need it.

Pat North Ommert

Blinkers. I had one horse, like a race horse. I didn't trick ride on him very long. A white horse, and he had to have blinkers. That's like the race horses - they're not looking at anything but in front. So that's important. It's a good point to bring up.

Marguerite Happy

## **Music and horses**

About the music and the sounds and everything. Some horses are very sensitive to that. Nowadays at the California Rodeo for the ropers. When you come in



under the grandstands through the moat to go and get into the heading box or the healing box, or to rope a calf or bulldog, a steer, you hear the crowd, if there's something else going on in the track that they're liking, they're stomping their feet - and they're metal bleachers - that sound can really scare some of those horses. Some like it and others the sound needs to be muffled.

Pat North Ommert

I never thought of that side Marguerite, but that's correct. I understand that.

Bonnie Happy

Weren't you a hostess of the Salinas Rodeo. Marguerite?

Marguerite Happy

No, I ran for hostess in 1977, and lost to Heather McCallion. Had a good time running, though. Had a great time.

Bonnie Happy

Oh, I thought you won. Nope.

Marguerite Happy

Nope

Bonnie Happy

Ryan got your hostess hat when he was little. [laughter] Ms. Margot's going to wear that.

Pat North Ommert

**Trick Riding Contests versus Contract Peformers**

You know, girls, this is good to be back to when I started. Hadn't been that long. Trick riding was a contest. Yeah. I think after World War II, or even before that, Polly in her era and all of the other gals and men were trick riding and to make any money they had to win a contest. We were contract performers, and that to me felt pretty good. It's just that's the way it was. You got ahold of your contract producer of whatever show, and you asked them for a job.

### **How Polly Lived When Young**

But Polly's family - and they had those kids, they had no motels, there were motels, but most of them camped, according to Polly. And now they're camping in those hundred thousand dollars motor homes. That's surprised the heck out of me.

Ann and I went up in the two thousands. It must've been 2011 or whatever. She was writing the story or something. And we went to the Salinas Rodeo. And all of that infield didn't have stock. Instead it was all of these beautiful motor homes and horse trailers. You have seen it, but I hadn't seen that for a long time. Time's change.

### Bonnie Happy

Buff Brady used to tell us about this at that time, that era where they contested.

### Pat North Ommert

Right. You get that. And Rex Rossi - remember Rex Rossi?

### Bonnie Happy

Yes. I rode his horse at Fort Worth one time.

### Pat North Ommert

**Buying the First Trick Riding Saddle . . . "They were judging the degree of danger" . . . Learning New tricks**

Right? Well, he'd been circus. He was from Florida originally. I bought my first trick riding saddle from him. And he came out to where we were and I started my Roman team. I've been riding them, you know. He got on my pair of horses. We had a quarter-mile track with an eighth of a mile straight away my Dad had built in Hollydale. And he just over and under, and I learned more from him in half a day or less about it. And he said, if you can do this one foot slick saddle stand for your whole string (arabesque) - that's what they did to win contests. That there was a whole different thing. They were judging - they were judging the degree of danger, difficulty of what you were doing. That's why it got to there, when you trick rode.

A lot of the [trick riders] did nothing but the Hippodrome, the one foot stand, or a Russian drag or a fender drag. Polly showed me an upside down. It wasn't a true shoulder stand, but an upside down. And of course I [learned] to do vaults and around the horn, but I had a horse that was 14 three, and very fast on those straightaways, I could not vault and do slips to the neck well - because of the speed. So, you know, everybody adjusts an act to what fits them? Am I right?

#### Bonnie Happy

Yeah. And you started to learn the one foot flyaway. You did the prettiest one I've ever seen. And that's really difficult.

#### Pat North Ommert

Well, the reason I learned it that way - I had taken a little ballet. That's called an arabesque. And so many of them [the other riders were] never able to. So I really practiced, but I also had it so I could let let loose of the mane. I could balance. And that's, that was my trick. Like Edith's Hippodrome, you couldn't compare to Edith, you know. I did some Hippodromes with my hands on my hip. When you're competing with that one arabesque, the flyaway somebody called it, and I did take some ballet.

#### Bonnie Happy

Not too many girls could do that. I don't think I ever saw [another] - you're the only one I saw do that.

Pat North Ommert

Yeah. I think I was.

Marguerite Happy

Yeah. I think so too.

Pat North Ommert

I know I was.

Bonnie Happy

I thought about it, but I never did let go of my left hand.

Pat North Ommert

I had speed with that little Shortcake - to go with Cupcake. I paid \$112.50 for Shortcake. He lived to be 33. I bought him when he was eight. He was a kid's horse. I kept him after I quit, he was a tremendous. One that you keep forever. And he was fast, and that's what made me good. That was fine going straight.

Remember the Hendricks brothers and all of the acts they did, Byron and Lee Hendricks? They jumped cars and across fire. Byron bought the white horse that I didn't, that I used blinkers on because he just wasn't honest. And he said, "oh, I can take care of him." He had a broken shoulder for awhile. But those two, those two performers, they were unbelievably good going way back. They jumped cars. Yeah. They jumped two Romans out over a car. Wasn't going one and one.

Bonnie Happy

Tommy jumped the moon, they made a paper mache moon and she jumped the moon in a hippodrome stand.

Pat North Ommert

She did a beautiful job.

Bonnie Happy

Yeah.

Pat North Ommert

There again, just has to be good. Whatever you do,

Robert Danziger

She jumped the moon in the Hippodrome stand?

Pat North Ommert

It was a paper mache moon, a big one and beautiful. I have a picture of it somewhere. And Connie Griffith and, and her son worked the show in Las Vegas for many years. That was Medieval Times at the Excalibur Hotel. I can't tell the date of that. And, and they, they went on and then her son produced a lot of shows and still did a lot of tricks. You girls probably remember Clay?

Marguerite Happy

Tad Griffith's children Gattlin, Calder, Garrison, Arrden are all trick riding also and performing at some of the rodeos. They performed at Fort worth and we're trying to get them to Salinas.

Bonnie Happy

Pat trick rode with Jimmy and Connie and Dani and I, when he was probably three.

Connie was the best ever. She taught myself and my step-sister Dani Connelly.

Pat North Ommert

Yeah. And that would be right. And having grown up in Las Vegas, actually, he grew up in Las Vegas on that show. And he learned more about producing a show. And I know at the first national finals in Las Vegas, he did one of the acts. Did you ever see that? And he, he was just great. And I don't know. Last I saw him was when I lived in Burbank for awhile and he was taking his kids to Fort worth. He said, no, if they want to trick ride, they have the job. And did you ever hear what they did? Did they keep going or just learn the act after they were exposed to all of it?

Bonnie Happy

The boys trick rode for quite a while, but I think they've slowed down now because Gatlin went to USC. He went to college there. So everything kind of slowed down. But they're still trick riding.

Marguerite Happy

The oldest boy, definitely still trick riding competitions. There's competitions again. And they're trying to work some, some pro rodeos and they're working in the picture business.

Pat North Ommert

Oh, good. Thank you. I'm updating.

Bonnie Happy

Yeah. They, they live in Agua Dulce, I think still. I know Tad and Wendy do. They have a really cool place up there.

Pat North Ommert

I remember that. Yeah. I remember, he told us, he knew all those people. And he said that they played 5 cents slot machines. They paid the expenses of those



places. Though the gambling, that's the whole thing I never got into. My dad loved the 19th hole. And when he played golf, he loved to gamble and play poker and stuff.

Bonnie - what are you doing these days?

Bonnie Happy

I'm a dog groomer. I retired from doing stunts a few years ago and I have my business B Happy Dog Grooming here in Saugus.

Pat North Ommert

Well, that that'll keep you busy.

Marguerite Happy

Yeah. Well, I've always preferred animals.

Robert Danziger

My father-in-law said the more he gets to know people more, the more he likes dogs.

Group

Yep.

Marguerite Happy

**United Stunt Women's Association**

And you're also really involved. Are you still president of the United Stunt Women's Association?

Bonnie Happy

Yeah, I am. Yeah. I'm still involved with that. Just, just so I can be an avenue for the kids that are coming up if they need advice. I don't know a lot, but I know a lot of people that do, so I'll get them hooked up with them.

Robert Danziger

Which association?

Bonnie Happy

United Stunt Women's Association. We started in 1984.

Robert Danziger

What movies did you work on?

Bonnie Happy

I mainly did TV when I started with Dynasty and Hart to Hart. And, and as far as the movies, I worked on Bad Girls, where Marguerite worked. Not many movies, mainly TV. What other TV shows? Oh, I can't remember. Oh, Dr. Quinn Medicine woman. I think that's the one. And the only time I got to trick ride through the picture business. Also I did a commercial for Disney.

Marguerite Happy

Bonnie doubled Linda Evans on Dynasty and she doubled Stephanie Powers on Hart to Hart. She doubled some of the really great actresses.

Robert Danziger

Do you miss it, Bonnie?

Bonnie Happy

I miss the people. I don't miss the actual trying to get to work. And I didn't like the hustle, but I miss the people. Stephanie Powers was my first lady. And boy, they

spoiled me. Her and Robert Wagner. They told me we're going to spoil you for the rest of your career. And they did. And they did. They were such nice people.

### Pat North Ommert

I'll inject my experience in the pictures business. They always called it that so many in Burbank industry movie industry, but it was still the picture business because that's the way it was. I got my SAG (Screen Actor's Guild) card because of Monte Montana. And I know you girls remember Faye Blessing.

He was scheduled to do the act on "A Star is Born" with Judy Garland. That was a stage act. And if you ever see the movie we had Fay Blessing, and Monte Montana's wife. We had Shirley and Sharon Lucas and Polly Burson. There were six of us. And Monte did his big horse catch on the stage of the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. And believe it or not, that that was in 1953. And that was a posh job because all we did was go and get the makeup. Try to see "A Star is Born." In the beginning act, James Mason has become a junker.

[Polly's] the star that's being born. And we spent two weeks. All we had to do is drive Monte's horses. We got the makeup. Then they had these beautiful Showgirls, I mean, feathers and oh, all made up. Also acrobats. The girls had to do the whole thing for two weeks. And that was a lot in winter of 1953.

And so our act, we were waiting and James Mason comes on and he's a little bit drunk, a lot. And George Cukor was the film director. I never knew that there were all these girls [as] these little acrobats and Mason sees the horses and he says, "a horse, a horse, a kingdom for my horse." So I happened to be standing, waiting to go across the stage. And Cukor had him get on the back of my horse and I got a line. I said, "you can't do that." Oh my gosh. You know, - you get more money for that. Oh my God, that was my first picture job. That was fun.

Then Polly, since I had a card, was gathering [me and] all of the girls. Of course, she was a ramrod for many of them, for the movie with John Derrick. We went up [later because the] kids were too new. It was 1954 - for The Adventures of Haji Baba. And it was two warring women, you know the Arabian nights deal. And so I got to take my Roman chain. They were there and they had the girls, other girls that could use them and we were fighting. So that was two weeks of a wonderful

show. That was in Lone Pine, Marguerite. That's one reason my friend Page Williams, a grip, who works at it said, "Well, you've worked some of those pictures in old times." Yeah, Adventures of Haji Baba. We were up there for over two weeks actually.

And then moon time and 1954. I've got one. She found Page Williams. She found one where I was in the Hippodrome stand and we're swinging these rocks - it's supposed to be rock fighting and everything. There was a lot of fun. And then after that, and like you said, Bonnie, I had family, I didn't hustle the business, but I loved it.

I was in a big show called Cimarron with Glenn Ford, about the Oklahoma land rush. And Edith was on that too. We were in Tucson at the hotel. It's not even there anymore, but that was two weeks of a really nice show.

While we were there, [you had to] call in everyday to Teddy. I don't know how they get their jobs now, but as far as the rest of it, it was, you had to be there.

### Bonnie Happy

Did you work on Westward the Women with Polly and Mom?

### Pat North Ommert

Directed by Bill Wellman. I missed that. I missed that. I did not. I think I might've been just a little bit pregnant.

### Group

Laughter

### Bonnie Happy

They chose Polly to be the first woman stunt coordinator on that. So she got all the gals together. Westward the Women

Pat North Ommert

That's exactly right like I knew about it. And I, I seen that movie and they said it was really a lot of fun. If you get on those big shows, it was like Cimarron. We were of course just a second unit. We saw them in Fort Worth. Then I did a chase for back in town. Polly wasn't there. And the actress [I was doubling] was there. But those, those were fun shows. Yeah. That's a lot of fun.

Marguerite Happy

Second unit is always the most fun. Cause that's when all the action happens, right?

Pat North Ommert

### **Staged but Real**

Oh exactly.

Well, I liked Cimarron. I had no idea how long it takes. Well, I had a pretty good idea to rig one of those wrecks and to have the ground soft.

You were around the picture much more than I, and they're staged, but they're real. That's for sure.

Group

Yeah. Yeah, that's for sure.

Pat North Ommert

That was fun. Good times.

Marguerite Happy

### **California Rodeo Salinas Contestants Working as Stunt Women and Men**

Bob, I think back in the day when there were so many westerns that were being made, it was the rodeo community that the producers and everybody went to to find experts. So a lot of the rodeo cowboys and cowgirls - that's how they got into the motion picture business. They would use the rodeo livestock and the cowboys and cowgirls that did that all the time. Now there's not as many westerns being made. But back in the day it was a lot of the contestants that performed at the California Rodeo Salinas that ended up working in the picture business.

Bonnie Happy

Clark Gable learned to rope calves on Mom's horse. On Lady.

Robert Danziger

Really?

Bonnie Happy

Yeah, at Andy Jauregui 's ranch.

Robert Danziger

Wow. My wife will love to hear that. Clark Gable. What a great history. It feels special to hear about it and learn about it from your points of view. You can read about your accomplishments any number of different places, but you can't get these kinds of stories that way.

Bonnie Happy

Well, thank you for doing this. I can't wait to check it out.

Pat North Ommert

I'm going to be very curious, Bob. This technology scares me, but it's been really fun. And knowing that you are a musician - you told me you were an amateur musician, but you love the music.

But there's just one more thing before I quit. I'm a Turner classic movie person. And this last week they've had Elvis Presley - those movies were great that he did. Yeah.

Robert Danziger

They're starting an Elvis Presley channel. So there will be all Elvis all the time.

Pat North Ommert

Oh, maybe that's why they're showing them. Well, they, they, they go. And you mentioned Clark Gable. They had Misfits, which was one of the worst movies I saw. [It was] with Marilyn Monroe as well. That was poorly done - saying it wasn't true. But then he did a Western too, That was just a week before.

So you see what I do when it's too hot to go out

Bonnie Happy

Dad doubled Elvis Presley [in the movie] "Flaming Star." Is that right Marguerite?

Marguerite Happy

Yeah, the "Flaming Star."

Pat North Ommert

It's been fun. Well, it's been wonderful. Nice to be back visiting with the Happy Family.

Bonnie Happy

Oh yeah. We missed you.

Pat North Ommert

Like I told Marguerite, it wasn't that long ago I would have just driven out to Santa Margarita. It's a busy freeway, but I drive. I've got a fast back and stuff, but I haven't gone out for a year [due to Covid]. There's no reason to go anywhere. But now I am going out. Anyhow, I loved it. Been fun.

Robert Danziger

Well, thank you very, very much. This was wonderful listening to you talk and you asked better questions than I ever could have, and I very much appreciate it. And I know the students will also, and, and I just can't thank you enough.

Pat North Ommert

You bet. Bye-Bye bye.