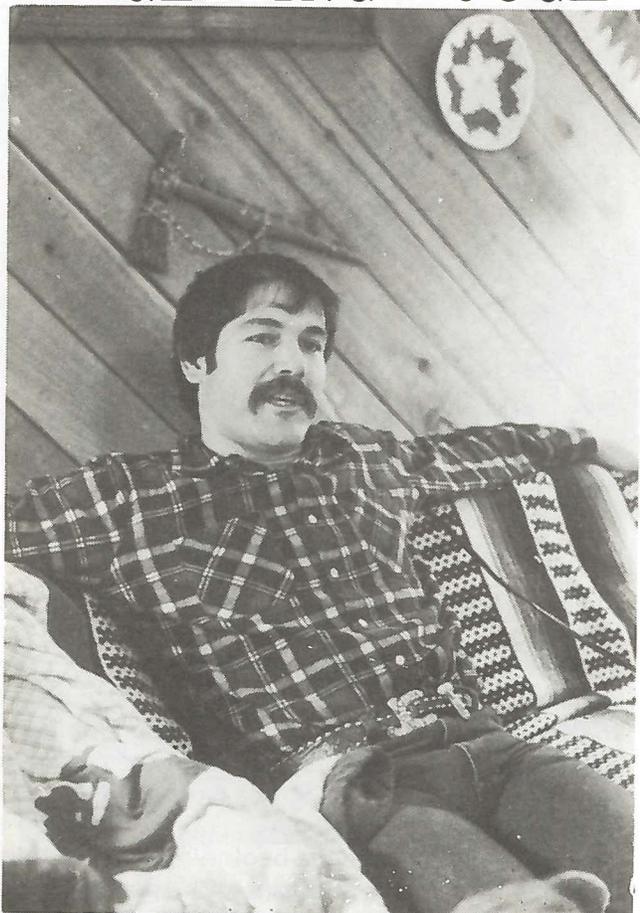


"GETTING TOUGH WITH THE TOUGH."

BY KEN BANGS, LARRY BALL
AND SCOT ANDERSON



J.C. TRUJILLO -

J.C. Trujillo, a top notch rodeo rider and avid sportsman, has an interesting goal-oriented philosophy of life. His money earning capacity as a rodeo circuit rider is an asset to his personal life style which involves many aspects of his own human development. He has a love for all sports: football, hunting, fishing and skiing, the last of which influences him to make his home in Steamboat.

We, Larry and Ken and Scot, talked to him about his many and varied interests, "I was raised in a rodeo atmosphere, a cowboy atmosphere. My dad was more of a ranch cowboy than a working cowboy. I was born and raised in Prescott, Arizona, spent my childhood, and went to school there. Later I went to college at Arizona State University, and to all college rodeos there are A.S.U.

"I can't remember when I saw my first rodeo. I was going to rodeos for as long as I can remember. My dad was team roping and competing. When I was six years old I entered the calf riding contest, and that was probably my first time.

While growing up when I wasn't rodeoing

during the summer I worked on different ranches punching cows. During school I played football, wrestled and ran track. As a matter of fact, my first year of college I went to school on a football scholarship. I found out that the players were a lot tougher than I was, but my coach never tried to discourage me. This was at Arizona Junior College where I played football, and at Arizona State I was on the rodeo team and went strickly rodeo then.

"I joined the R.C.A. (Rodeo Circuits of America) in 1967, the year after I got out of high school. I never did go to many amateur rodeos after I got out of high school, but went 'pert' near straight to the R.C.A., and I have been in it ever since.

"I think it is a good idea for a kid starting out if he or she has been in the junior or high school rodeo clubs. This really helps to be interested, and then in college he can go for the college association affilliated with the PRCA. When I first got out of high school I didn't know what to do. Some guys were going to work in amateur rodeos and some were going into the PRCA. I asked a friend of mine who was a professional cowboy then what I should do. I thought a young kid like me could starve to death before getting into the PRCA right away. He told me, 'If you're going to ride good, you've got to get tough with the tough. If you're going to ride good and be tough you have to ride the best horses and against the toughest cowboys.' I think it is the same in any sport. If you lollygag a little bit and slack off, then you're not putting out that 110% that will make you excellent.

If a rider is going to start young in rodeo he or she might go to school to learn what to do. J.C. told us about his rodeo school. "We have a manager who handles all the school organizations and does all the advertising. All I have to do is show up and teach. Actually the manager picks the town where we go.

I am affiliated with Shawn Davis who is a three time world champ bronc rider and John Davis who was in the bull riding national finals last year. We do all the schools together. Shawn does the saddle bronc riding, John does the bull riding, and I do the bareback riding training.

"When I was growing up there was only one school for rodeo training. That was the Jim Shoulders School in Henrietta, Oklahoma. To a poor kid in Arizona, Oklahoma was plum across the world, so I never did go to a school. Today I

think they are good for kids so they can learn how to ride. A good school will cost \$200.00 for tuition, a student can get on as many horses as he wants. The personal instruction helps with someone telling you what is right and what is wrong. Otherwise you might spend \$20.00 going to a rodeo and then be hurried, then after two or three jumps you land on your head and don't learn anything except how hard the ground is.

"We try to keep the enrollment limited. There are about 20 kids per event. Of course, I only teach the bareback horse riders, and we could get more in at school, but it's a lot harder to communicate with the kids if you have too many. I can do better with a smaller number. The school lasts three days, and we try to get across the basic fundamentals. A world champion isn't produced in three days, but the basic fundamentals do help. That's the whole ticket.

"We've had some famous guys go to our school. Danny Hoko is a former student of mine who went to the National Finals, so we have definitely had some world champions come through our schools."

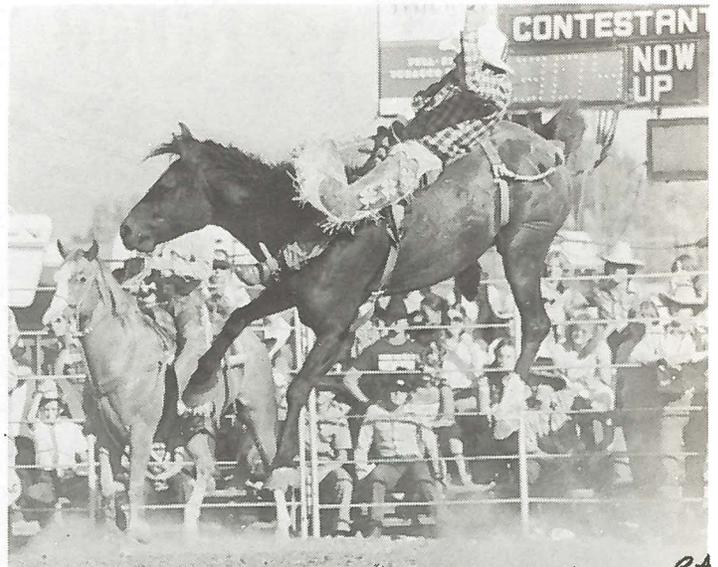
We asked J.C. how rodeo has changed since he has been in it. "It's really changed a lot. I've seen a big difference in the last 10 to 12 years. The cowboys used to be the guys that went to one rodeo a week and stayed the whole time, partying every night in the bar raising 'Cain' and fighting.

"That was the traditional rodeo cowboy of years ago. Now there's much more money and the competition has got to be so tough that a guy really can't do that anymore. The rodeo cowboy now is more of an athlete, what we call the new breed. He's more dedicated, and he has to be, in order to win. I think this happens through the years. I've gone through different stages, but not so much any more. I don't do the party scene anymore. I have to feel good to rodeo the next day, and I can't do that at my age anymore. I've seen it done and I've done it, but it's not a good idea. There's a time and place to party, I just like to pick the time and place.

J.C. told us about the first cowboy downhill held here in Steamboat. "It was great that year, of course, it wasn't near as big. I put the thing together now. It has grown a lot, but it was a crazy wild good time. Frontier Airlines chartered an airplane, filled it with cowboys and was quite a wild party, I'll tell you for sure.

"That was the first time I had anything to do with snow skiing. I ended up winning second, and then I really got into skiing. I stayed here four or five days after the ski race. I was living in New Mexico and I skied there a lot and then started skiing all the time.

We then asked J.C. how television has helped promote rodeo. "The sport itself has grown and



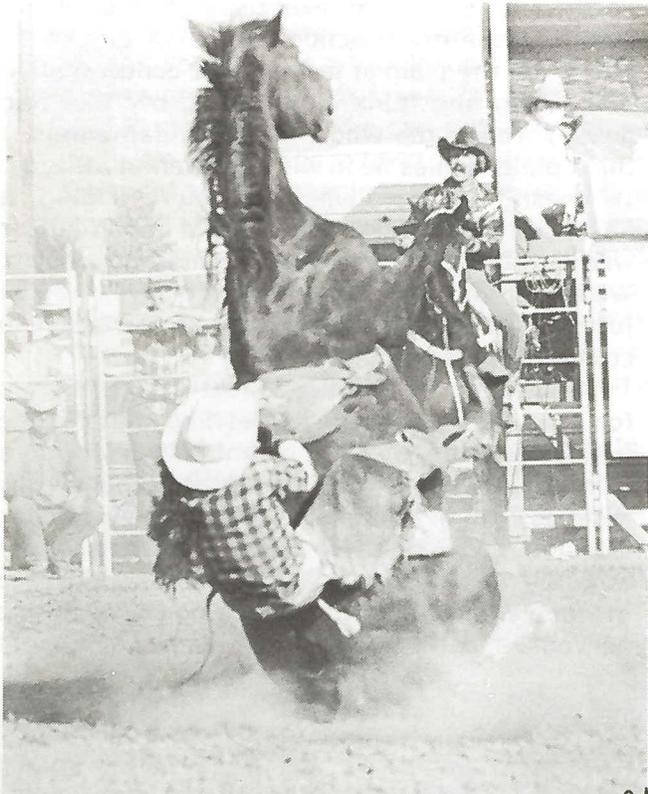
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J.C. FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

the Blair telecasts made it grow more. Of course, television is what made football and other pro sports. The Blair telecasts have added a lot more exposure to the general public. The more people that know about rodeo and what's happening, the more they associate names and faces because they have seen them on T.V. The sport of rodeo is really starting to boom now. I think I'm going to be a part of it and see the beginning of a big thing in rodeo. It's grown a lot since I've been in it, but I have only a few years left, and I think it will continue to grow. It's headed to be a major sport because rodeo is one of the only sports that is a true American sport.

"Rodeoing originated here in the U.S., and I think it really helps the sport that our whole country is starting to get united again, you know, getting more into **The American Way**. The cowboy scene is a big popular thing now and that is going to help the growth of rodeo. Now it's really going to boom.

"I love the sport of rodeo, and if I didn't I wouldn't be in it. I've made some money, but if I would have put as much money and effort into something else like a business I think I would have been more successful financially. Money is getting better in rodeo, but it's not like pro skiing, football, or tennis where we're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, plus having companies pay all the expenses for equipment. We pay out of our winnings our expenses and entry fees and everything, so I would like to see more money in rodeo. Of course, it's coming. Since the first time I've been in rodeoing, I went to the national finals. I was in about 8th or 9th in 1973, and I only won \$14,000. Of course, I've had a good year this year, and I've won in excess of \$60,000 in second place. But I would like to see more money in the rodeo



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J.C. RIDING THE ROUGHEST HORSES AGAINST THE TOUGHEST COWBOYS

business. Another thing I would like to see is more big companies getting into rodeo like Winston cigarettes and Coors beer. That's what is going to bring more money into rodeo. The bonus money that they have now adds to the rodeo business, but of course not big money. Expenses are a lot. It costs me about \$25,000 last year for airplanes, motels and entry fees. We need sponsors like the ski racers.

"I'm kind of down on the judging system in the rodeo business. Through the years I doesn't seem to be any better, and I guess it used to be a lot worse. I'm kind of stumped for changing it and probably that's why I'm down on it. I've judged a few rodeos, but I can't judge any amateur ones. I can't have anything to do with amateur rodeos, but I judge the jackpot finals at the end of the year. The first rodeo I judged was in Kansas City the year before last.

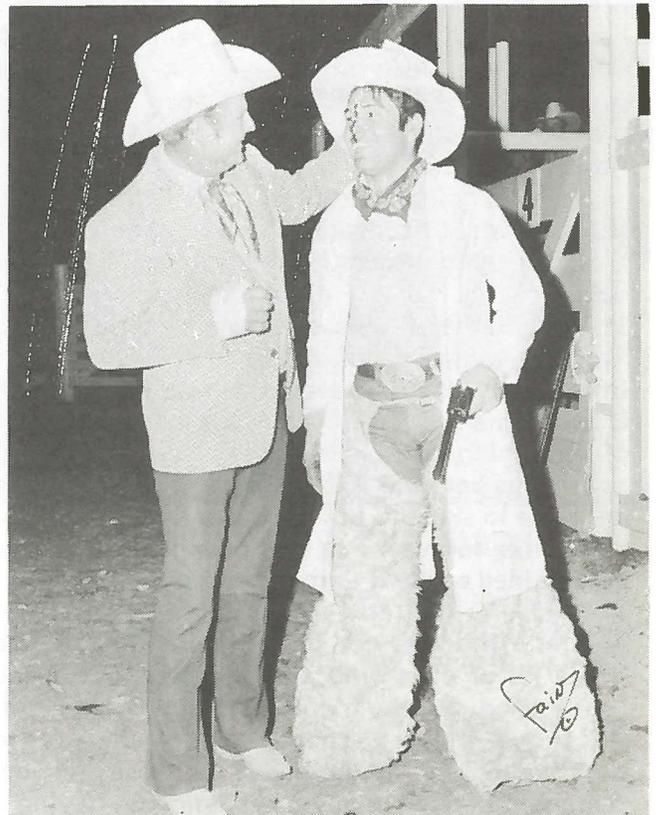
"Judging is really easy because I'm around the business the whole time. I've been critical of judging because there's been a lot of ignorant mistakes, and those mistakes I can't tolerate. There's not much cheating, but those mistakes are bad. Say a guy makes a certain ride on a certain kind of horse that is supposed to win yet he may not win. I'm not against the judging system, and I hate to be negative, so judging should be good and fair.

J.C. talked more about rodeo changes. "The atmosphere of rodeos has changed too. Maybe it has a lot to do with my attitude, but it seems around the bigger rodeos there is more competition. All the top cowboys are at it. It seems like everybody is a little more professional and serious about winning with not as much looseness. It is still a lot looser than most sports."

We asked J.C. how many rodeos he competes in a year. "For the last seven years I've been to at least 100 rodeos a year. This year I've gone to more rodeos than I ever have before. I think that this year I've been to about 123 rodeos, and this year is not over yet. I think I will end up going to about 135-140 rodeos this year.

Traveling on the rodeo circuit can be hectic. "I do a lot of commercial flying, and the last two summers I've done a lot of private plane flying. Last year I had my cousin fly me to all the rodeos. He doesn't rodeo but just worked for me. This year I have been flying with a friend of mine that does rodeo, John McDonald from Red Bluff, California. He's a bareback rider, and he owns his own plane."

We asked J.C. if he got lonely on the road. "The way I rodeo it is hard, as I rodeo sometimes two or three times a day and travel a lot, then I can't afford to take my wife with me. It's not feasible. We can't afford to buy the airplane tickets.



FELER '74

COTTON ROSSER WITH J.C. AFTER THE BUFFALO RIDE

Therefore, it does get really lonely on the road. That's why I am home now. I've been gone since before the first week of August.

"I went to a rodeo almost every day in August except for five. Six of those days I worked two rodeos a day. Most of September I spent on the road too. Of course, now in the fall the rodeos start slacking off, and that will give me a little more time at home. The rodeo trail is probably the most trying thing a guy can put up, with as far as the rodeo business goes, always gone, always on the go. Sometime I never know where I am at, and it does get lonely.

"It is especially hard on my wife, Margo. Margo doesn't go with me to all the rodeos, she can't possibly. She's been in the rodeo business all her life; her brother is a rodeo contractor down in California, and she knows the rodeo business really well."

J.C. told us about his rodeo record. "The money in rodeo is pretty good, and I think it's going to get a lot better. There are still the little rinky-dink PRCA rodeos around the country with small purses. I used to work a lot of those, but I don't anymore because there is no money in them. I have a little record book that I keep track of my big wins in. This year my first big win was in Odessa, Texas, at the first rodeo of the year. The next big win was at Fort Worth, Texas, one of the biggest rodeos in the country. I also won a little closer to home in Pueblo at the state fair. I have had a lot of good wins this year. I also won at the Astrodome in Houston. Maybe I didn't take first at all the rodeos, but I placed in most of them. In Houston I ended up winning fourth, and I think I ended up with a little more than \$4,000.

Training is important to rodeo riders. "In the summer when I rodeo every day I really stay in shape. Riding broncs keeps me in shape. Of course, in the fall and winter I keep active skiing. I belong to the athletic club up here, and I try to keep my weight down. I used to do some weight lifting, but I don't anymore because I don't think it does me any good. I try to stay toned with a lot of stretching exercises. Living here in Steamboat helps because there is always something to do. I like to ski, and I enjoy the individual sports. I also like to hunt, fish and backpack. I can be entertained easily if I am not rodeoing.

"Rodeo is like any other athletic event. The mental attitude is 95% of the whole thing. There are a lot of guys who are gifted enough to be really good, but the mental attitude is not right, it just doesn't work. There are different ways to get psyched up. My method is the loose and cool method. I believe in being realistic and having a positive attitude when I get on a horse. I worry about what I will do, how good it will be. Some guys worry about what the horse will do.

"I try to get loosened up before I get on a

horse. I do stretching exercises because if my body is loose my reactions are a lot quicker. I like to get my train of thought and concentration into riding and think about using my feet and going through the whole basic fundamentals. I think philosophies tie in with the mental attitude. It doesn't matter whether you're riding a bareback horse or skiing down a mountain or writing a book or selling something downtown. Whatever you do in life is competitive. You've just got to have the right attitude toward it to compete, to be a winner.

"Getting up for a rodeo is just like getting up for a football game or a wrestling match. The mental attitude is so important. When I go to a little rodeo where there is not a lot of money it is not easy to get pumped up. In Cheyenne or Houston there is a lot more money, and the amateur has a lot to do. I keep a good positive attitude and set my mind on trying not to get too nervous. I don't enjoy it as much when I get



BLACK VELVET TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS 1980

J.C. AFTER THE BLACK VELVET MATCH

nervous. I keep the loose and cool method."

We noticed a lot of trophies in J.C.'s house, so we asked him which he prized the most. "I don't prize one particular trophy, but valuewise that big bronze one there I'm really proud of. I won that in Las Vegas at the Black Velvet Match. They invited the top ten cowboys for the National Finals to that match. They had a bracket match like a wrestling tournament. That's not common in the rodeo business. It worked out great because it was nose to nose competition. That way just two guys go against each other. There was also \$10,000 with that trophy, and the PRCA emblem. I'd say that trophy is the most sentimental. My first belt buckle is the one that means the most to me. I won that in Arizona when I was 12 years old, in calf riding, and that was a long time ago. I've been to a lot of rodeos since then.

"I've been to a few jackpot rodeos too. I don't ride, but just watch, and it feels good to watch. In the summer my wife does a lot of roping with Bill and Sarah Buckles in Steamboat. Once they were going to an amateur rodeo in Aspen, and I flew in from Rapid City, and Margo picked me up at the airport in Denver. I didn't have the right horse for the next rodeo I was to attend, so instead I just put on shorts, Margo's glasses and took her camera and went to the Aspen rodeo. All the people and the other cowboys thought I was a tourist. It was great. I had a good time and went to the rodeo in Aspen and one in Eagle. I even went swimming for a while while the rodeo was going on. I took pictures and had a great time with no one knowing. I'm usually in the other space at the rodeo and always in the public eye. I love to get out of it once in while. That happens a lot to people like me, you work your tail off to become something, then as soon as you do, you try to get out of the recognition.

J.C. talked about injuries while rodeoing. "My worst injury, I guess, was my broken jaw which I broke at the National Finals a few years ago. Because of the pain, I consider it my worst injury. Of course, I have a bad knee and that might be considered my worst injury. It has plagued me for quite some time, but when I broke my jaw I got hung up on a horse in the finals in the third go a round, and after I got loose he kicked me right in the chin. It knocked me out. I bit through my lower lip and had 38 stitches. I rode ten more horses to the finals with a broken jaw. I ended up placing five times, and I won one go around."

We asked J.C. how he was seated this year. "Rodeo doesn't work that way like on what you did last year. They expect you to do well each year. That pressure doesn't bother me. I get pressure from the guys that I'm gonna compete against and right now I am placing more than

anybody. The pressure is there because the world championship is close. That has a big bearing.

"In 1981 I'm going to run the same way I did in 1980, and I'm going to try to win the world championship. Of course, mentally that's the most important thing now. I think I can do it, and now I need the right breaks. I've started out good in '81, and I've placed in almost all the rodeos that I've been in. The standings have just come in, and I am in third place, not far behind the leaders.

"Last year was the first really realistic shot at winning. It was quite a head trip to know I was in reaching distance of one of my lifetime goals. Winning that gold buckle and winning the world championship have always been two of my goals. I have really worked hard for it. I have rodeoed harder than I have ever rodeoed and ridden better than I have ever ridden. That's what it takes to win a world championship. Last year Bruce Ford won the world championship, and I took second and Mickey Young won third. It was really close.

"Of course, we all had good financial yaers. It had never been heard of that all three top mn would win over \$60,000. I was disappointed that I didn't win the world championship. At the same time we had our little baby and that was like winning the championship, like a pat on the back, or a feather in my hat. The financial part of rodeo has gotten much better, and all of us won. I can't really be disappointed and I'm gonna try to make it this year."

We wanted to know how many points J.C. missed the championship by. "Well, the way it boiled down I get throwed off a horse in the third go around. That's the only horse that threw me off in the last three years. If I could have ridden that horse I might have won, but he threw me at the start of the whistle. That disqualified me, but I was within a fraction of a second of winning the world's championship.

"The pressure of the finals was unbelievable this year. Margo was due to have her baby in California, so that was double pressure. It turned out that they were the best finals I ever had. I had a \$20,000 final, and we were far ahead of everybody else. I've been pretty successful in the rodeo business; I've done well and been real lucky. It's been a good thing for me and a great experience."

In conclusion, we really enjoyed talking to J.C., and we really liked to hear about his experiences. His information was informative, and he gave us a good story. Since we are amateur rodeoists ourselves and have followed J.C.'s career through the years, we especially want to wish him well, and we hope that he has the best of luck in winning the world championship this year. We'll be cheering him on!



**J.C. ON LITTLE DAN,
NATIONAL FINALS RODEO 1979**