

# BEN JOHNSON



Jerry and Linda Johnson on Leopard Lady, Johnson's first Appaloosa. Photo was taken, June 1948.



Ben Johnson and Blossom posed for a photographer who kidded him about not being bow-legged enough for a cowboy at the Fifth National Appaloosa Show in Quincy, California. Blossom was the dam of Shavano and My Old Still.



This photo of Patchy 416 was taken at Herb Camp's ranch moments after he was taken from his broodmare band and prior to being shipped to the 1950 National Show where he was delivered to Johnson.

To people in the Appaloosa business, Ben Johnson is well known. Elected to the original Board of Directors of the Appaloosa Horse Club in 1948, he served in that capacity for 33 years — a test of endurance in its own right. During his tenure, he witnessed a roller coaster ride of successes and failures — in his personal life as well as with his association. Through it all, he has managed to hold on to a sense of humor as well as a sense of irony. Indeed, his life has been filled with an abundance of both. Even today, he seems equally at ease finding truth in the Good Book or in the lyrics of a Dolly Parton song. Truth is truth, regardless of where you find it.

As is often the case, Johnson's affection for the Appaloosa horse came about by accident. His love of horses, however, was as natural as it could possibly be. Born on July 13, 1916, on a homestead 13 miles from Provost, Alberta, Canada, Ben's earliest memories include stories told by his father. "My dad said I used to run out to meet him when he was coming out of the fields with a team of horses. I'd jump up and grab the lines, get tangled up, fall down and try again," Johnson remembered.

In 1918, the Canadian government insisted that Johnson's parents, who had moved north of the border a few years earlier from Oklahoma, give up their U.S. citizenship and become Canadians. Rather than doing that, they decided to return to the United States. They sold their property and boarded a train to Lamar, Colorado, where Johnson's grandparents had a ranch.

After spending a year in Lamar, Johnson's family moved to Wiley, Colorado, and in 1928, moved to the Grand Junction area on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. After graduating from Appleton High School in 1934, where he lettered in several sports, Johnson set out to see the country. Although the natural thing would have been for him to take root on the family farm, a country rebounding from the Depression gave him itchy feet. In 1937, he pooled his money with three other young men and headed