

My Old Still. By Apache F730 and out of his old reliable mare Blossom, My Old Still set a new world record at 870 yards at Centennial Race Track in Littleton, Colorado. Johnson Appaloosas thrived during this time, shipping horses all over the United States. Problems with arthritis, however, began making the grueling training life more difficult and Johnson began thinking of other ways to make a living.

Although Johnson began making wood carvings as a young boy, he never, even in his wildest dreams, thought he would make a name for himself as an artist. He learned the basics of wood carving from a furniture maker in Grand Junction and carried the basic tools of the craft with him on his trips to California. While working in a liquor store in Saugus, he found himself with a lot of time between customers and he filled his time carving clear pine planks of 1 by 12's into western scenes which he gave to friends and relatives for birthday or Christmas presents. "Sometimes they would look at me like I was too cheap to buy them a real present, so I kind of lost enthusiasm for that," Johnson laughed.

A friendship with western artist George Phippen, which came about rather ironically, is credited for giving Johnson the confidence he needed to pursue sculpture. Johnson remembers very well the Sunday morning that he opened the *Denver Post* to read along with his breakfast and the anger that swept over him when he pulled out the *Empire* magazine section of the paper that had a painting by Phippen on the front cover. The painting, titled "Three Seconds To Go," depicted a salty bronc and a rodeo rider in a hotly contested battle; the bucking horse was a very recognizable Appaloosa. "Here we were, I thought, trying to promote the Appaloosa as a versatile, gentle saddle horse, the kind that you can ride from the cradle to the grave. And here this painting was showing a rank bucking horse. I sat down and wrote the artist a letter and told him exactly what I thought about it."

Within a week or so, a letter from Phippen arrived in which he ex-



My Old Still by Apache F730 and out of Blossom once set a new world record at 870 yards at Centennial Race Track in Colorado. The two-year-old colt was owned and trained by Johnson.



Johnson, on left facing camera and Charles Austin, right, judged the first regional Calizona Appaloosa Show on October 10, 1954.



Patchy Jr.'s Shaun Tonga, 1964 National Grand Champion Stallion. Although born black with a white blanket, he changed to a blue roan with black spots, the color he kept until his death in 1977. After 40 years of breeding Appaloosas, Johnson said just about anything is possible when it comes to color except predictability. Photo taken at 1968 Colorado State Fair.