

The year is 1978, and I'd like to introduce you to the cast of characters for this next story of mine. The first is Jimmy Bush, world champion cutter and one of the best showmen our industry has ever seen. Matlock Rose, the great champion and one of the corner stones of our industry - he was married to Jimmy's sister, Joy, at the time. Matlock had hired all three Bush brothers to help him train and show horses while working at B.F. Phillips ranch. Jimmy was the youngest and Matlock took him under his wing and helped him to develop into an outstanding showman. Then there was myself, three horses and Jimmy's poodle, Jose.

Our destination: Phoenix, AZ . Our purpose: to compete in four consecutive cutting events being held there that had NCHA and PCCHA sanctioning. One of the horses we had with us was Son of Sugar, and he was sitting 6th in the top 10 of the nation in NCHA, and 1st in the PCCHA, which encompassed the seven western states. Another one of the horses was Barred Mac Deck and he was currently 2nd in the PCCHA open and leading the Novice Horse of the Year division.

All of us hit the road together. We left the Eade ranch in San Ardo, CA early in the morning in Jimmy's old GMC pickup pulling a 30' stock trailer.

Jimmy told me he'd sold his place in Chandler, AZ and that he had a few things he wanted to toss in the trailer to take back to California with us. So, away we went, Jimmy and I, with Jose sitting between us in the pickup, standing guard and barking at everything that went by. Everything seemed smooth and perfect, a rarity considering the fact that it was Jimmy and I. Things seemed fine... that is, until Jimmy spoke those dreaded words, "Leon, you don't have an extra set of health papers on you do you?" I said, "No Jimmy I don't, and I can't believe you ran off without them." "I didn't run off without them", he said, "I never had any to start with." I told him, "Jimmy, there is no way we'll get into Arizona without those papers, and we need to get to those shows." He just looked at me grinned, and said "Take it easy cowboy, we'll be showing." Naturally, I was a little nervous wondering just how he planned to pull that off.

Well, it so happens that Jimmy had a friend in Blythe that was a vet, and his plan was to stop and get his health papers from his friend and then we'd be on our way. Sounded like a good plan to me, so I settled down - for a while.

When we got to Blythe, it was about 6 in the evening. We pulled into the vet clinic and I could see someone sweeping the floor inside. Jimmy said that it definitely wasn't his friend Dr. Jack Perkins. Well, never one to miss an opportunity, Jimmy decided to have a little fun with this fellow, thinking that after he was done harassing this guy, he would then call Jack to come back to the office to take care of the papers for him.

When we entered the office, the man looked up, but before he could say anything, Jimmy stepped forward, took his hand and said, "Dr. Perkins, I am Jimmy Bush from Louisville, TX and I need some health papers for two of these horses we're taking to a cutting in Arizona". The old man just looked at Jimmy for awhile before replying, "I'm not Dr. Perkins, he went to El Paso on business, I just help out here." My heart sank, the joke was on us, there weren't going to be any papers. Jimmy's expression never changed as he asked the old gentleman what his name was, where he was from, etc. and as it turned out, he was from Waco, TX. I noticed some photos on the wall of this man and Dr. Perkins on a fishing trip with their catch. "How's the fishing in the river here," I asked, he replied "Great!" That was all the opening that Jimmy needed, he took it from there. Well they started talking about fishing in Texas, with Jimmy bringing up those health papers every once in awhile. All of a sudden he looked at me and said what time is it? I told Jimmy it was seven o'clock, time for my medicine. "Leon, go out to the truck and get that pint of Black Velvet under the seat" he said. I brought the whiskey in, handed it to Jimmy who uncapped it, took a swig then offered it to the man. It was fairly obvious by the looks of him, that this fellow had drunk enough whiskey in his lifetime to float our pickup. Well, that man and Jimmy drank that warm Velvet and the Texas stories grew bigger and bigger as they became "best friends". Before long, this man decided that seeing as how Jimmy and Jack were such good friends, and seeing as how he and Jimmy were fellow countrymen and all, it'd be alright to give Jimmy those papers he so desperately needed. So, he filled them out, and signed Jack's name, put the state seal on them, and bingo! We were as legal as anyone could ask for.

Before the man could sober up and change his mind, I quickly loaded Jimmy, Jose and those papers back in the truck and off we went, headed for Arizona.

I told Jimmy he was, without a doubt, the luckiest guy I'd ever seen. I was also wondering if he had a backup plan in case that one hadn't worked, so I asked him about it. He said, "Sure I did. I'd have just saddled Son of Sugar, and led Que three or four miles around that station and met you and Mac Deck on the other side."

So there you have it, one way or another, Jimmy was not going to be deterred from his goal. The moral of this story is, where there's a will, there's a way. And just in case, it never hurts to have a backup plan.

Til next time... Cut clean, quit clean and have fun in the middle.