

GENTLEMAN ON PARADE

AUTHENTIC COWBOY ATTIRE. BY LEE PITTS

I love a parade. Just the other day I was asked what I wanted to do when I grew up. I replied that someday I would like to be in a parade. The Great Grand Marshall in the Sky must have heard me because I was invited to be in a parade recently. Well, it wasn't really me they wanted...it was my world famous trick horse, Gentleman. (It would be a real trick if I could get him loaded in the trailer to take him to the parade.)

Because he won't load in a trailer we had to wait for a parade close to home. Just prior to the parade there was a preliminary judging in which Gentleman got off on the wrong foot. When one of the judges, who also happened to be the grand marshal, came by for a visual inspection Gentleman kicked him in the... Since this is a family publication let me just put it this way: if the judge's head was New York City and his feet were San Francisco, the grand marshal got it right about Omaha.

When I received the entry form in the mail, it had advised all entrants "to dress in authentic cowboy clothing." So I showed up wearing a baseball cap, a pair of faded Levis and my five-buckle boots. The rest of the parade participants promenaded in diamond jewelry, Navajo robes, and \$450 boots. And that was just the horses. You should have seen the people. I swear, I never saw so much horse jewelry in my life. One lady was adorned in silver-covered chaps and sat astride a saddle that was worth more than my house. My parade saddle, on the other hand, was somewhat less "tacky."

One of the problems with the parade route was that it was three miles long and Gentleman had never covered that many miles in one trip in his entire life. But what we lacked in horsepower, we more than made up for in exhaust. They had to assign one clown with a pooper-scooper just for our entry and his large wheelbarrow was full before we made the first turn. Another prob-

lem was that we were supposed to ride down the middle of Main Street following the white line. But because the parade officials, in their infinite wisdom, made us one of the last entries, there wasn't any white line visible...if you know what I mean.

As heretofore mentioned, Gentleman has a couple problems that are not conducive to being the optimum parade horse. First of all, he is a stud. During the course of the parade he tried to breed every mare in the mounted sheriff's posse, which, you can imagine, made for some very nervous posse members. Because the riders kept looking backwards to see if Gentleman was approaching, they kept running into the back of the high school's band whenever the Rotarians' float broke down, which it did quite often.

Another of Gentleman's tricks is that he grunts when he goes to the bathroom. I was showing off my best Monty Montana rope tricks for a group of pompom girls when Gentleman decided to do this particular trick right in front of the reviewing stand. His trick aroused a tremendous burst of silence from the adoring crowd, many of whom were pinching their noses and gasping for breath. I think it must have been all the flowers he'd been eating off the floats.

About the time Gentleman was performing this trick, the drum, gun and bugle corps gave a 21-gun salute for the judges. It came as quite a shock to Gentleman and he decided to head for the house. We raced past a procession of politicians, bands, and drill teams and I barely had a chance to wave to the grand marshal as we passed his convertible. I don't know if the judges had the opportunity to appraise my authentic western attire or not.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Gentleman and I are anxiously waiting to hear if we won the Grand Marshall's Trophy. ■

Lee Pitts lives in Los Osos, Calif. Check out his books on page 5 or at www.leepitts.com.

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