



# Carrying the Torch

*Separated by 70 years, two cowboys grow up together.*

*By Marjorie Haun*

Cowboys aren't taught to be cowboys; they are born to be cowboys. Sure, you can impart a proper set of skills to someone who thinks they want to be a cowboy, but unless they possess an innate cowboy spirit, their career on horseback will likely be fleeting.

Kedric "Ked" Somerville was born a cowboy and has spent most of his 87 years training equines and pushing cows amid the plateaus and canyons of southeastern Utah's high desert. And though some might say he is "living history," Ked has no intention of leaving his legacy in the pages of books or on the

shelves of a museum. His legacy is being cultivated in the lanky build and horseback exploits of his young protégé, Bode Carpenter. (See "The Horseman's Protégé," *RANGE*, Summer 2019, at [rangedex.com](http://rangedex.com).)

## It All Began with the Horses

It wasn't long after Ked lost Marleen, the love of his life and companion of 54 years, in 2011 that Boden "Bode" Carpenter entered Ked's realm. At the age of five, Bode moved with his adoptive parents and brothers from Salt Lake City back to their hometown of Monticello, Utah, where Ked maintains his 60-acre ranch south of town. "There's been a lot of little kids come to the ranch and they'd want to go down and pet the horses and look at them," Ked says. "One day, Bode's grandpa brought him down here and said, 'Bode told me he was bored so I thought I'd just drive him down to the corral.' At first, I thought he was just another little kid who wanted to touch a horse, but pretty soon he was down there all the time. He was trying to get on the horses, trying to get on the mules and he wouldn't leave." He jokes, "I tried to throw rocks and everything else at that kid and I just couldn't run him off."

Little did young Bode understand that at 70 years his senior Kedric Somerville was something of a living legend. In 1926 Ked's grandfather Andrew Somerville, along with brother, Bill, Franklin Adams and J.A. "Al" Scorup, incorporated what at that time was one of the largest cattle outfits in southern Utah, the SS (Scorup-Somerville) Cattle Company. From 1929 to 1956, Ked's father, Rulon, managed a large subdivision of the



ABOVE: Ked and Bode have spotted something captivating out on the range. AT TOP: Ked on his favorite cow mule, Honk, and Bode on his palomino, Buddy, practice roping skills in the Abajo Mountains south of Canyonlands National Park in Utah. OPPOSITE TOP: Ked accompanies Bode at his sixth grade graduation. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Ked and Bode horse around on the mule.



ranch, the Spring Creek unit, and after Ked was born in 1936, he spent a good part of his childhood moving through the high-desert cow camps with the cowboys and cattle.

Conversely, Ked, a cowboy's cowboy, had no idea that the curious little fellow buzzing around his equines had the makings of a fine man of the saddle—one worthy to carry his story into the future.

### Equine Sense

At six feet tall, 16-year-old Bode has surpassed Ked in height and, in many ways, horsemanship. Under Ked's hand, Bode has been both a learner and a teacher in the art of the equine. Ked says: "Bode started by roping all my horses and mules. I told him the way to catch them is with a nosebag and a halter, but he didn't listen to me. Every day he would go down there and start roping, and not just over the head, but on their front feet, their hind feet, around their butt. Well, pretty soon those mules would just stand there. He [inadvertently] broke those horses and mules to a rope and pretty soon they could do anything with a rope that you can imagine. It was a good way to train those horses and he didn't even know it."

There was no holding back Bode's zeal for equine company. He's climbed atop—or stood atop—almost every horse and mule that has crossed his path. When Bode turned seven, he got a little Welsh mare named Ruby who was herd bound and three degrees past ornery. Bode says: "We were on a ride and I was trying to get her to gallop across the field but she wouldn't do it, so Ked said, 'Just swat her.' I swatted her and she started to go. At first, I thought she just had a really rough gallop, but she was bucking! I held on for three or four jumps before I went off. One moment I was in the saddle; the next moment I was on the ground."

Ked and Bode were accompanied by Kelly Roberson, a local rider and part-time EMT. Ked says: "We found Bode in a pile with his chaps over his head. He wasn't bawling but there were tears cutting through the dust on his cheeks. He said, 'My leg hurts,' pointing to his thigh. Kelly said, 'We got to get his chaps off so I can see if his femur is broke, then we got to get those Wranglers off,' and that's when Bode took off crawling as fast as he could. We finally got his britches off and saw that he was okay. We got him back on Ruby and I looked up at Bode and said, 'You wanna go back, Bode?' And he says, 'I'm gonna finish the ride.' That's when I started shedding tears. We rode another 11 miles that day."

Ked could've started Bode on an older, broke ranch horse, but he saw a certain value in allowing Bode and Ruby to learn together. "It took a few years," Ked says, "but his legs got longer and he got strong enough to make her feel those spurs. The point is that he and Ruby learned together. He learned to read the horse's actions and moods. A lot of times he would just disappear over the ridge for a long time because he had her under control. The

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PHOTO COURTESY TRACY PEHRSON CARPENTER



value in letting Bode break that mare was great for both of them."

### Kid Cowboy

Set in a rough-hewn land with precipitous changes in elevation, scored by arroyos and gorges and places so remote that only cowboys and cows have seen them, ranching in southeastern Utah is impossible without good equines.

It wasn't long after Bode became a fixture on Ked's ranch that he started cowboying. Ked, then in his late 70s, worked for Johnny Johnson's J-Bar Ranch, which ran cows from slickrock tracts north of Bluff, Utah, to Glade Mountain east of Cahone, Colo. Only a lad,

Bode was traveling over 1,000 miles each summer on the backs of horses and mules—often on horses no one else could handle.

When Bode was eight he went along with Ked to brand calves in a portable corral near the rim of the Goosenecks of the San Juan River. Ked says: "We gathered and corralled the cows and calves. We got a gray dun named Whiskey out of the corral and tied him to one of the panels. All of a sudden those corral panels started banging and rattling. Well, Bode was on the top of one of the panels with his foot sticking out in the air over Whiskey. Whiskey didn't have too much experience with little kids it turns out."

But Bode never backed down, and though Whiskey proved difficult for other riders, he could be a good cow horse. "It wasn't that Whiskey didn't want to work," Bode says. "It was the fact that they were scared of him. He knew that he was in control so he just did whatever he wanted. I stayed calm with him and he worked for me. The only time he ever tried to buck me off was when I tried to stand up on him." Ked adds, with a giggle, "Which was every horse he ever got on."

When Bode was 10, he took a liking to a big bay gelding. Ked recalls: "While gathering cows we got to camp around noon and Bode was nowhere to be found. We looked down at the corral and there he was getting on every horse he was told not to get on. One guy had a big bay gelding that he would tight rein all the time and just could not ride. Well, Bode took a liking to that horse. The next day we were out herding cows and that big bay gelding flies past us with Bode on him, galloping along with his reins loose. You could tell the horse was loving it as much as Bode."

Bode says: "Johnny's three best horses were the horses he disliked the most. There was Whiskey, Thor and a horse they called Clutch. Thor was powerful and could pull anything. Whiskey had his moments where he would just explode, but he was athletic and could do anything you needed him to."

### Carrying the Torch

Unlike other young men his age, Bode would rather spend time cowboying with a man old enough to be his great-grandfather than playing sports or pursuing other diversions. He's completing his high school classes online so he can have the flexibility to work as a cowboy for local ranchers, often traveling 40 miles away from home to do so. And he works part time at the local grocery store. His cowboying philosophy is uncomplicated and has everything to do with the indispensable relation-

ship between a rider and his horse. "If the horse knows its job and you know your job," he says, "the day will go by way faster. But you have to trust your horse to do its job and the horse has to trust you to do yours."

Ked worries that not enough credit is given to young people who eschew the glory of sports for the toil, long days and dangers of cowboy life. "I've been disturbed about high school and college sports where the bleachers are full of people who all stand up and cheer. But I've often thought how they would enjoy watching Bode out there working cattle in the corral, out of the corral, or just trying to catch an ornery bull. If they can see what's going on when Bode is out cowboying, they would see some real athletics. Especially when you're roping from a horse. A lot of the time you're roping something that could kill you."

Ked is confident that as Bode continues on the cowboy path he will never want for employment. "People ask me, 'What's that kid gonna do?' Well, it goes from handling cattle, to breeding bulls, to calving, understanding fertility, to being a veterinarian, to irrigation water management, clear on up through the whole gamut of farming and ranching."

And for Bode, it's Ked's gentle but firm guidance that has shaped him as a horseman. "If I hadn't met Ked, I would be a different kid," Bode says. "I wouldn't have met the people I've met while I was cowboying. I like the fact that he never really got mad at me. He took everything I did with a grain of salt, and I did some things at the barn that weren't very smart. He always just talked to me about what might happen if I did something he advised against. Ked gave me a love of horses. I'm grateful for him."

Ked says: "Sometimes he'd do things that I didn't agree with, but I discovered over time that Bode's got the best judgment of any kid his age I've ever seen. He'll let me know if I'm doing something wrong, and pretty soon I see that he's right. He's smarter than me about these horses and has a natural instinct for what is right."

Though active and unwaveringly cheerful, Ked at 87 is not content with the thought of merely passing into history. He has found in Bode Carpenter a young man who can carry the life he loves as a horseman and cowboy into a future he will never see. ■

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