

Exceptional Rodeo Is Highlight Of NAILE

LOUISVILLE, Kent. — The North American's first Exceptional Rodeo clearly showed that cowboys have more than grit. They have hearts.

The Exceptional Rodeo featured nearly 40 youngsters as they lassoed fake steers; climbed atop fur covered replicas of bulls; and rode real horses. Every child was a victim of fate. Fate had dealt the young people a hand filled with Cerebral Palsy.

A 5-year-old boy sat astride a roan Quarter Horse and yelled "yippee" as he threw a frail hand into the air. He was guarded by 5 cowboys. Their chaps were covered with dust from the ring and the young man had dust on his cheeks and hat, a result of cowboy hugs and protective hands. The boy's dad said it was the first time his son had ever touched a horse.

Fred Wiche, WHAS Television & Radio farm director, stood in the center of Freedom Hall and said, "It's super, it's super — it's like a Crusade for Children." Later Wiche, who represented the Exceptional Rodeo's sponsor, observed that the rodeo broadens the vision of handicapped children.

Apparently little Kris' father agreed. Tears eroded a muddy track on his cheek as his daughter took a rope from a cowboy. "She's never done anything like this," he said, "it's great . . . I hope we can do it again next year."

Angela said her favorite event was riding the horse. A big, rawboned cowboy looked away to hide his emotion and grumbled, "God I'm lucky!" Angela turned her crystal blue eyes on her cowboy partner and hugged his back.

Nearby, six steer wrestlers stood around a blanket covered bull while a 7-year-old bounced about on the fake critter. Twelve hands steadied the young man as he took the ride of his life.

Hadley Barret, announcer for the Nationally televised PRCA Rodeo in Oklahoma City walked among the children and the rodeo professionals during the 1986 North American International Exceptional Rodeo. Pausing to tell a favorite story, the nationally known rodeo spokesman also betrayed the reason why rodeo athletes support Exceptional Rodeo activities.

"During 1983 we had an Exceptional Rodeo just before the national finals in Oklahoma City," explained Hadley. As the young people finished their activities that evening, most excited beyond words, one small child was brought to the microphone to accept a tiny trophy. The child spoke a few, halting words of appreciation to the cowboy announcer, not an unusual event at the exciting rodeo for the handicapped. "But," says Barret, "we found out later that those words were the first the boy had ever spoken, and he's been talking ever since."

Rodeo events routinely test the endurance of cowboys and cowgirls who pit themselves against the brute strength of bulls and the determination of broncs. The Exceptional Rodeo is designed to crack the shell of young people whose bodies are racked by forces beyond their control. The Exceptional Rodeo is a new dimension in the small universe of handicapped youngsters.

"This is the best part of the rodeo," said John Andrews, a steer wrestler from Clayton, Indiana.

Shorthorn Honors For Allen



Johnny Allen of Saxonburg (at halter) had a banner year with his Shorthorn heifer, Sutherland Polly Maid. The heifer was grand champion in both open and junior competition at the State Shorthorn Show this summer. She also took reserve honors in the Keystone International's Junior Shorthorn Show. Johnny and his brother Andrew (with banners) are members of the Butler County Livestock Club.

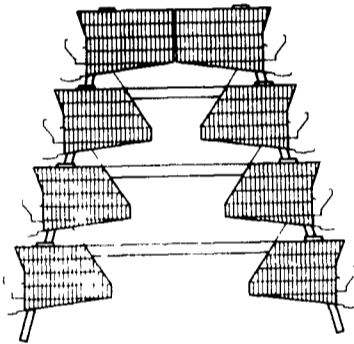
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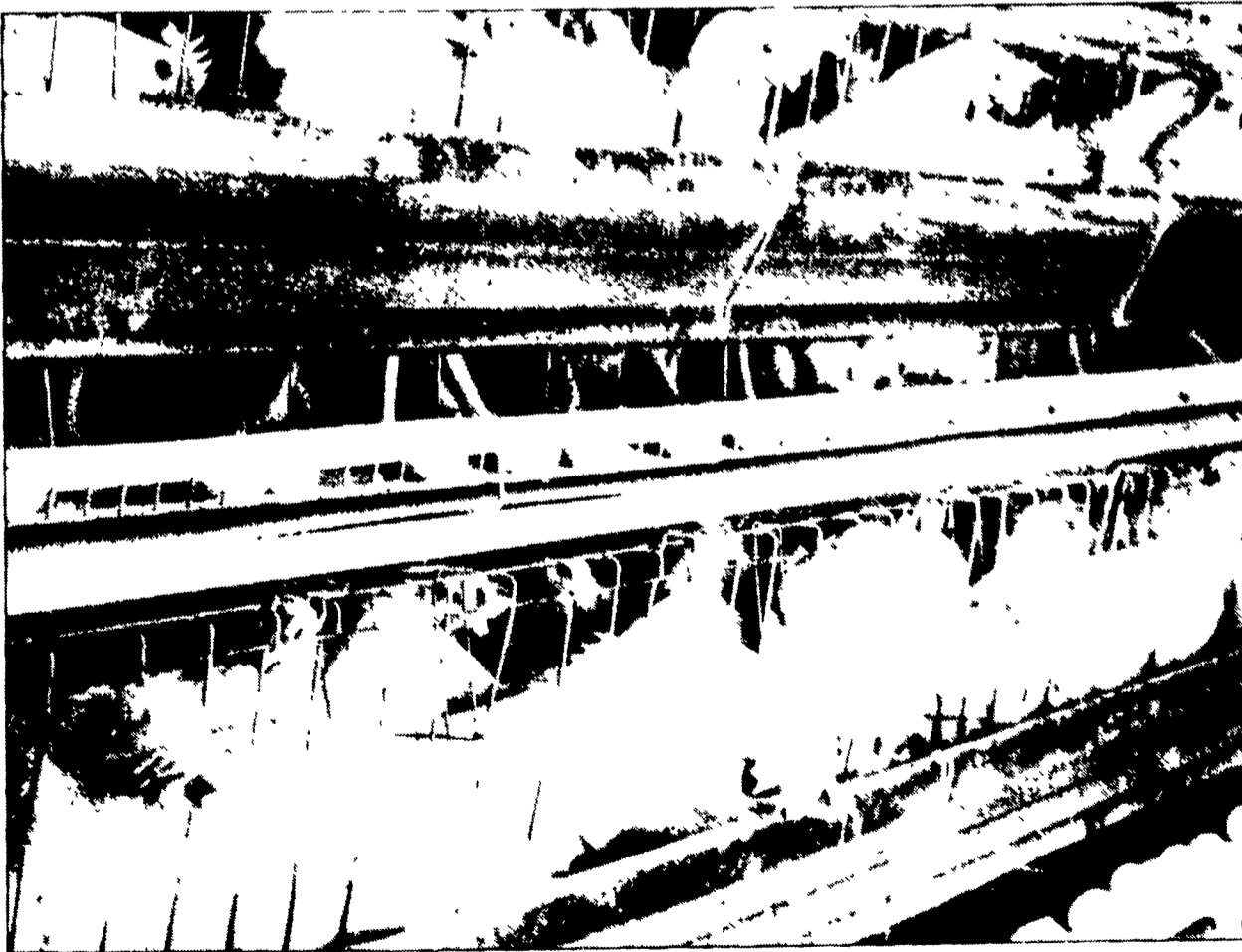
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