



Photo by Joyce Ashley

Like to bike? If so, the Vernon Burnin' Bike Ride is just your speed.

For more than 20 years, bike riders have found the Vernon Burnin' a fun and challenging event. Co-sponsored by the Vernon Jaycees and the Vernon Optimist Club, the ride is held each August and

draws bike ride enthusiasts from a number of states.

Four routes are offered to participants, including a 12-mile ride for beginners or those who just want to take it easy; 22-miles for the harder rider; 38-miles for the more advanced bike rider, and a challenging 62 miles (100K) for the

serious rider.

Detailed course maps and controlled intersections are provided along with frequent rest stops stocked with water, ice, sports drinks, fruits and cookies.

Road assistance is provided by sag wagons. Finish line festivities include first place awards and door

prizes provided by local and area merchants.

The Vernon Burnin' starts and ends at the Vernon College south-west parking lot.

At the same time the ride is taking place, there is also a kids' event for the younger group with all participating youngsters receiving prizes.

Vernon's Ambassadors on Horseback



The Santa Rosa Palomino Club has thrilled audiences for over 66 years now with fast-paced performances, color, spirit and a dedication to maintaining a tradition of being perhaps the finest non-professional riding club in the nation.

Each performance of the Santa Rosa Roundup features the famed club, which traditionally sets the pivots for the massive grand entry and then offers its own breath-taking performance for rodeo-goers.

It was in 1949 that the late John Killough, manager of the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, and the late Walter Heard discussed having a riding club in Vernon that would promote the community and the Santa Rosa Roundup. From this conversation, a meeting of 16 men was held, and the idea received an unanimous endorsement. Committees were appointed to select shirts, hats and chaps, and it was decided that each member would ride a palomino.

John Biggs was elected president of the club. Other charter members were Drew Cartwright, Elzy Youngblood, Judge A.D. Green, Earl Walker, Bill Bond, Kenneth Wolfe, I.W. Traxler, Wylie Sweatman, Mark Neal, Jess Hancock, Ervin LeBus, Walter Heard, Fred Hanna, John Killough, and L.H. (Shorty) Wall.

The group made its first ride in 1950 in Childress with 29 riders. For the next two years, the club won first place trophies wherever it appeared.

However, members wanted to create a uniqueness for the club unequaled by any other, so in 1953, club president M.K. Berry, who had

a background of calvary training and mounted drill from his years as a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, instituted a series of maneuvers which evolved into the precision drill for which the club became famous. The drills, which have changed little over the years, have become a trademark of the club's performances.

Since its inception, some 200 men have been members. They are completely self-supporting with each man supplying his own horse and equipment and bearing his own expenses.

The club, with its distinctive uniform, matching palomino horses and spectacular drill, has become well known and sought after. They have represented Vernon and the Santa Rosa Roundup from Tucson to Birmingham and from Houston to Cody, Wyo. The horsemen have earned over 400 first place parade trophies and in the two times they have entered the competition, they have both times won the title of National Drill Team Champions.

In 1989, the House of Representatives of the Texas Legislature proclaimed the Santa Rosa Palomino Club as the official "Ambassadors on Horseback" for the state of Texas.

The Palomino Club has since ridden in two inaugural parades for the governor in Austin, ridden in two Cotton Bowl parades, an International Lions Club parade and appeared on the Today Show as well as on ESPN and TNN. When performing for the Houston Stock Show and Rodeo in the Astrodome, the group received a standing ovation from 37,000 cheering fans.

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