



Boom Boom looking sweet and innocent.

others laugh, which is why I fell in love with the occupation," Thompson said.

When people learn that Thompson is a rodeo clown, the questions fly. "The number one question that people have asked is if I have been injured by a bull. I have been fortunate that nothing worth writing about has happened to me. In my 32 years, I have spent one night in the hospital due to an injury, chipped a tooth, and tore my Achilles tendon. My most

embarrassing injury didn't even involve a bull. I tripped over a sheep during mutton bustin'," Thompson explained. "Another question that comes up is how do I balance my family life between my rodeo life. I have three children, and when I am with them, they're spending time with dad, not Boom-Boom, and I make every minute count."

When Thompson isn't dodging bulls and cracking jokes, he's cheering for the Dallas Cowboys, casting a fishing line in the lake,

or out hunting with his bird dog, Rudy. Up until three years ago, Thompson was juggling a full-time teaching career, coaching football, and working as a Rodeo Clown. Since going full-time in the rodeo arena, Thompson has put on a lot of miles across the Great Plains, from the North Star State to the Lone Star State.

"If you're going to be a Rodeo Clown full-time, you've got to be able to afford good tires, like licorice to stay awake, and be

Johnny on the spot," Thompson said.

From early spring to late fall, Thompson is living out of his suitcase, or perhaps I should say barrel. Thompson has had three barrels throughout his career. Like many first-time barrel owners, Thompson started with what you might call a fixer-upper or a "get-byer" before investing in a 320 lb. steel barrel. While that barrel did a better job protecting him from a charging bull, it was hard to lug around and was starting to do a number on his back. Thompson down-graded to a 180 lb. aircraft aluminum barrel with all the comforts of home, including high

density foam padding, a steel removable bottom plate, and cables to better get around.

"Being in a barrel is similar to being in a car crash without a seatbelt. The trick is to push against the walls with your hands and knees and not bite your tongue when you get hit. When you're in the barrel, and you see a two-ton bull pawing at the ground and snoring, you know that thump is coming. It is quite the adrenaline rush; it's hard to explain. You have to trust that the bullfighters won't leave you open. Barnes hires some of the best—always a fun and trustworthy crew

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