

# TRUE WEST

PRESERVING THE AMERICAN WEST

SEPTEMBER 2009

## WHAT HISTORY HAS TAUGHT ME

**I will always be** a cowboy at heart. I worked hard to “earn my spurs”; I feel proud knowing that I rode with that special tribe, and they called me one of their own.

**The most beautiful spot on earth** is Clearview Ranch. If you died and went to heaven, it would be a horizontal move. The ranch is only a few miles from where I started this great adventure, and it's the perfect place for Lisa and me to raise our kids and horses. You can look one way and see back into yesterday; the other, away off into mañana and on to forever. It gives you perspective.

**I never imagined** I would come full circle and own my own piece of heaven in New Mexico. I've written numerous songs about this area, and I always dreamed of living here, but I figured I would have to do it working for someone else.



**Appearing as myself with Kenny Rogers in the movie *Wild Horses*** was a great thrill! This was my first movie, and it costarred Ben Johnson, Dick Farnsworth and Buck Taylor. I grew up on their movies. These guys are the “Real McCoy.” Even though I was as green an actor as could be, they treated me as one of their own. They were, and are, my heroes on and off the screen.

**Working on the Spade Ranch** was the first time I wasn't treated as a “kid,” so I learned that rough Canadian River country for my own. Knew every inch of it, and learned to live or die by my own decisions. I broke my first real broncs there, learned to swim the river horseback and learned that if I didn't get along with my horse, it can be a long, lonely walk back to camp.

**Twenty years and 11 albums later:** Wow!

**The greatest advice my parents gave** was never spoken but their actions led our family by example. They put God first in their lives, and they taught us that life is not fair. We saw them live out their faith during the darkest days and the greatest loss our family experienced. When I was 14, my family and I were involved in a deadly car accident. My nine-year-old sister was among those killed. Despite unbearable pain and suffering, my parents kept their eyes upon the cross and all that it means and promises. Through their example, we learned what it really means to walk by faith and not by sight, and not to question God's plan when it doesn't seem fair or make sense.

**A real cowboy is** someone who cowboys. That is, they make their living taking care of cattle and stewarding the land with their main tool being a horse. I have the greatest respect for this occupation. I was one at one time, and I know what it takes to be one. (Sorry, no “cowboys at heart” included here.) It is the most highly skilled and underpaid occupation in the world, in my opinion. Although we ranch and live the Western lifestyle, I don't even consider myself one of these any longer.

**The strangest road trip adventure I've ever had** was a gig I went to in Duncan, Oklahoma. I arrived when I was supposed to—on time and ready to go—but a week early!

**"We've Taken Bob Back to Tulsa"** tells the story of Bob Wills through the pen of one of his greatest admirers, the legendary Richard E. O'Brien. This was Rich's way of saying goodbye to one of the most important influences in our music. No one has said it better.

**What history has taught me** is that if you have to tell them who you are, then you ain't there yet. And I ain't!

**R.W. Hampton, Western Musician** - As a young man R.W. Hampton left his native Texas for New Mexico to take up the ways and music of the cowboy. He's recorded nearly a dozen albums of original and traditional Western music, with his latest, *Oklahoma...Where the West Remains!*, receiving the prestigious Western Heritage “Wrangler” Award. His song, “We've Taken Bob Back to Tulsa,” climbed to the top of the European Hotdisc Top 40 Country Chart this year. Although his music is now his career, Hampton and his wife raise their horses, cattle and kids on their own place outside of Cimarron, New Mexico.