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**From:** "Rhonda Smith" <crashrhonda@yahoo.com>  
 "agpress2@Agpress.com" <agpress2@agpress.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 23, 2007 10:35 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Grass & Grain Article

Thanks so much. Rhonda Smith 744 Silver Leaf apt D Leavenworth ks  
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"agpress2@Agpress.com" <agpress2@agpress.com> wrote:

Here is the article you have requested. I have also attached the photos that he used in the paper. Frank would like to also have your address.

Thanks  
 Renee at Grass & Grain

### **Lifelong Horseman-Educator, Eureka Downs Manager Spends Lifetime With Horses And Children**

"Horses are just like kids. They are all different. The main thing with all of them is to have patience."

A lifelong horseman and educator, Lee Smith is qualified to make those statements. He recently talked about his experiences as both, in his home a few yards southwest of Eureka Downs, where he serves as manager.

"I tried the old timer's way, the bronc style, but I've learned over the years, it's better to just take time with horses," Smith, 74, evaluated. "Whether its race horses or performance horses, there's really not much difference in training as long as the horse progresses."

Smith retired from serving as principal of Tonganoxie High School in 1995 after 40 years as an educator. His work with horses, starting as a toddler and going in a big circle including being one of the leading race horse trainers in the country, continues today.

"I've loved horses from the get-go. I grew up with reins in my hands and have been working with horses ever since. I'll always be involved with horses," insisted the Eureka track manager, who also has a Thoroughbred mare now in race training.

Raised near Hartford, Smith was a son of Verl Smith, who worked horses and mules in the family farming operation. "We were farmers, not ranchers, but my grandpa Frank Smith had quite a few stock horse mares," Smith clarified. "I always loved to ride, and a highlight each spring was when we drove the cows about six miles to my Grandpa Carson's pasture."

While Smith likes to reminisce about the good times, one tragedy with horses continually sticks out in his mind. "Sleeping sickness hit my grandpa's horse herd, and he lost a lot of broodmares. It was a terrible deal. I'll never forget that," Smith contended.

Folks generally ask about Smith's first horse. "I always had a horse to ride, but the first one that was really considered my very own was a runaway named Bill," Smith reminisced. "He could be ridden, but if Bill wanted to run, there was no way I could hold him back. I usually rode bareback, and sometimes my brother, Robert, and I rode double.

"After Bill ran off and jumped into the hog pen with me on him, my grandpa insisted that he be sold. I cried myself to sleep worrying about Bill, but they sold him and got me a part-Arabian, part-buggy horse named Sam," Smith continued. "He was well broke, and I learned to do tricks on Sam. My brother and I rode him to Gumbo Grade School."

Jack and Kit were the mules used in the farming operation, but they weren't used for riding. "I decided if they could be driven, surely they could be ridden, so I started getting on them in the tie stalls and when my dad was gone one day, I started riding them," Smith recalled.

Days of farming with horses are fond memories for Smith. "That's really how I got hooked on horses," he qualified. "I loved every minute of it."

While cattle were driven with horses, they weren't usually roped from horseback; that is until the rope on the fork that lifted into the hay mow broke. "That was my first lariat, and I learned to rope calves with it in the corral," Smith admitted.

Illness and accidents concerning his dad and grandfather forced Smith into early manhood, putting the responsibility of farm duties in the hands of him, his brother and mother. "I always loved basketball, but I only played a couple of years in high school because I had so many chores before and after school," Smith remembered.

After graduating from Hartford High School at age 17, Smith went to Emporia State and then moved to Wichita. He worked as a machinist, while also receiving training in that field.

"By that time, we had a couple of tractors, and I also rented an 80-acre farm back home," Smith reviewed. "Grandpa's two riding horses then were Jim and Baldy, so I'd ride them too."

Married to Betty in 1952, Smith received a call from Uncle Sam, enlisted and served in the Army during the Korean War. "When I got back in '54, I enrolled at Emporia State, but then I started teaching in '55," he explained. "I had to go to summer school for several years, before I finally graduated with an elementary education degree in 1960."

Smith taught at Haven, Hartford, Osborne, and then returned home to teach at Waverly. A small acreage with a horse barn was acquired, as Smith continued his involvement with horses. "I had seven horses at that time, became active in the saddle club, started roping more and the girls were participating in horse shodeos," he noted.

Recalling his youth in the hay field, Smith organized a summer haying crew. "We'd put up as many as 80,000 square bales a year," he





# EUREKA DOWN



