



HANGING ON for eight seconds, Scott Harman had a wild ride at a rodeo in Weatherford, Okla., earlier this year. Mr. Harman has ridden in over 21 rodeos since the beginning of 2009.

— Photo by Hirschman Photo

Grad in professional rodeo circuit

By CAROLYN PLOTTS
quality-pro@webtv.net

Decatur Community High grad Scott Harman realized a life-long dream last month when he qualified to become a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

To win his card, Mr. Harman, 24, had to ride in at least 15 association-sanctioned rodeos in Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma. He actually has made 21 since January, he said, adding that he was in competition with 36 other cowboys to make it to the professional circuit, and only the top 12 made the cut.

The bareback bronc rider said his goal was to hit all the rodeos on the regional circuit and make it to the finals every time.

In Kansas City from October 22 to 24, Mr. Harman got seventh in the average of all days. He received 72 points for fifth on Thursday, 66 points on Friday and 75 on Saturday for fourth.

All that is left is to buy his rookie card, which costs \$500, and pursue his next goal of winning the "Rookie of the Year" title from the association next year.

Scoring is based on dollar winnings, he said, and rodeo is an expensive sport. Entry fees range from \$80 to \$300 for each event and Mr. Harman says he is doing it all on his own. He would like to have sponsors but, it hasn't happened yet.

Still, there are some things more valuable than money — and experience is one of them. He spent \$300 to enter the National Western Stock



ONE OF THE DOZENS of belt buckles won by Scott Harman during his amateur rodeo career. He won this one at the Wilsonville Rodeo this year.

Show Rodeo in Denver and didn't place, but, he said, he gained some great experience.

"Cowboys support each other," Mr. Harman said. "Even though we're competing against each other, we'll share tips and advice. We're all there to help each other."

The idea is to stay on a wild, high-kicking horse for eight seconds with nothing but a handle attached to a strap, called "rigging," to grip. Besides the rigging, he wears a special padded vest, leather chaps and a special glove.

Scott, the son of Ron and Renee Harman of Norcatour, has had ro-

deoing in his blood since he was a little boy, said his mother. He grew up riding horses and started rodeoing when he was a senior at Decatur Community High School. He graduated in 2003 and then, on rodeo scholarships, attended junior colleges in Colby and Coffeyville, then Northwest Oklahoma State University at Alva. He was an agribusiness major with a minor in agriscience.

In 2003, he said, he attended a rodeo school in Burwell, Neb., conducted by former professional cowboys Corey Hughes, John Clark and Casey McGoodin. He also took

some training at Bruce Ford's rodeo school in Kersey, Colo.

No matter where he competes, from the Dakotas to Oklahoma, he has a built-in cheering section. Someone from his family — either his grandparents, Bob and Anita Montgomery, or his parents and aunts and uncles — is almost always there to watch him ride.

His mother said she gets nervous in the stands.

"I get real tense," she said, "especially if his hand gets caught in the riggin' and he's under the horse. I am so proud of him."

Mr. Harman said he appreciates the support.

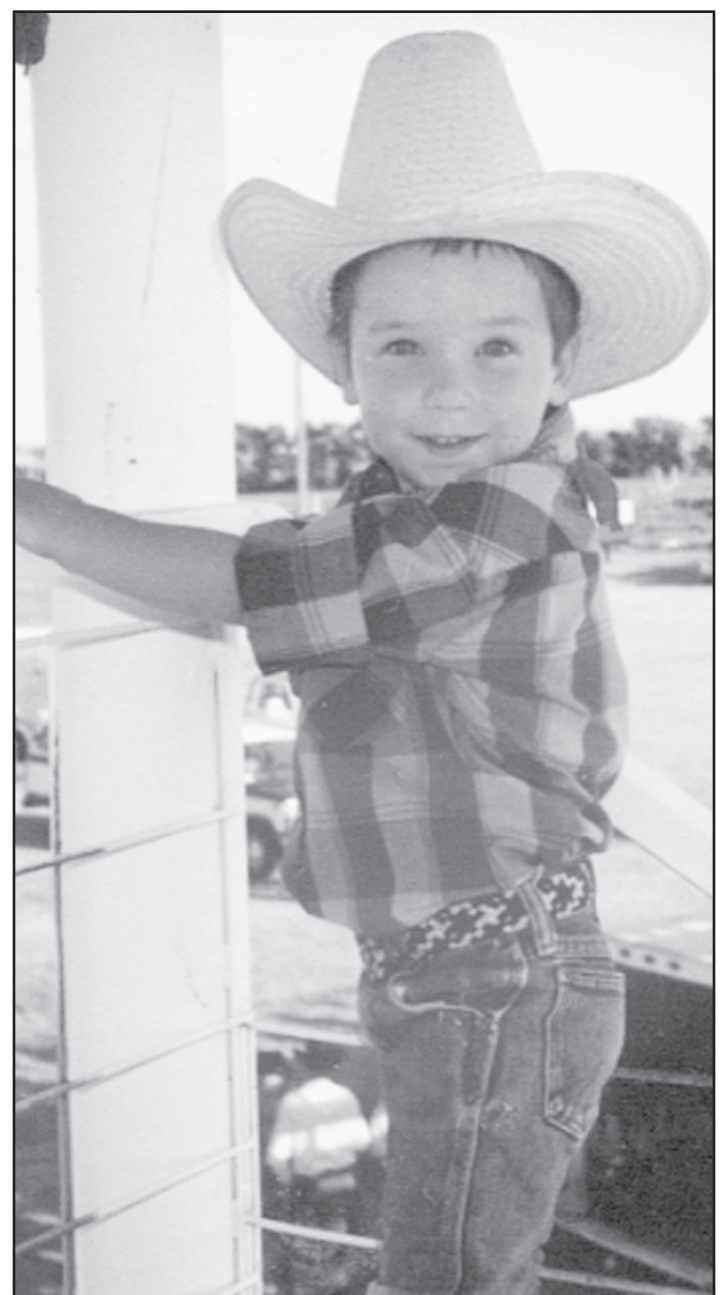
"I have been blessed," he said. "I thank everybody, my friends and my family, for all their help."

He has some young fans, too. His mother said that kids hang around behind the chutes to get her son's autograph. Sometimes he'll sign the entry number he wears on his back and give it to one.

"Maybe someday I'll be famous," he said with a grin, "and that will be worth something."

Until he wins some big rodeos or gets some sponsors, Mr. Harman said he is paying his own way. He works on a 129,000-acre ranch near Valentine, Neb. His boss, a former rodeo cowboy, supports his efforts. So to pay the bills, he does what cowboys do — breaking horses and putting up hay. Until it's time for the next rodeo, he said.

Then it's "Cowboy Up."



FOUR-YEAR OLD Scotty Harman stood overlooking the chutes at the Phillipsburg Rodeo, possibly, dreaming of the day he would become a professional rodeo rider.