

RODEOS



By Elyssa J. Kirkham

and Righteous Living

Quinn Kesler of Holden, Utah, is rarely seen without a rope in hand—and not just any rope. It's a lariat, or lasso, that Quinn uses when participating in the roping events at rodeos and competitions. He first got roped into roping when he was around six and went to his first championship when he was nine.

Now 17, Quinn is off to a right smart start in rodeo. His favorite event to participate in is team roping, in which a team of two works together to rope a steer. One is the “header,” who ropes the calf’s head, usually around its horns; Quinn prefers to be the “heeler,” who ropes the steer’s hind feet.

No Horsing Around

While he needs to have a good header to count on when team roping, he has an even more important teammate: his horse, Hickory. Quinn spends hours practicing roping, chasing after steers on horseback. The ranch dog, Roxy, chases after him, looking distinctly out of place on her short Dachshund legs.

The blue sky and golden grasses of rural Utah feel straight out of a Western movie, and it's hardly a wonder that Quinn loves to be outside. He spends the better part of his day roping, training horses, or doing odds-and-ends chores around the ranch. Quinn started with a talent for handling horses, but he has worked hard and invested countless hours to achieve his high level of skill in roping.

But Quinn still makes time to fit in daily scripture study, prayer, and seminary class. “I love seminary a lot. It's a big help in understanding the scriptures.”

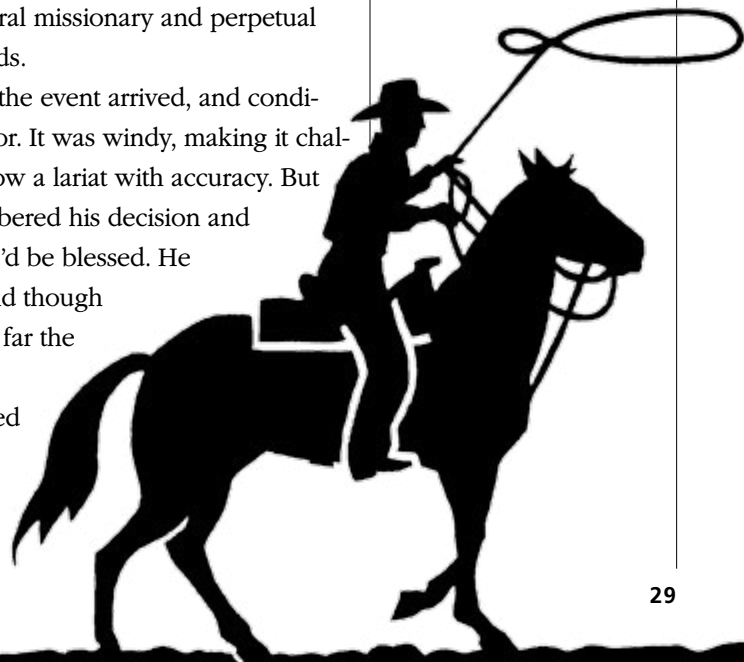
Quinn knows that the same principles of time and hard work that he has applied to roping have also helped him build up his faith. “If you study the gospel, put everything you have into it, and be all you can, you're going to get the best results,” says Quinn. “You're going to have success, as well as a strong testimony.”

Going National

Quinn has seen firsthand how trusting the Lord leads to success. His first big roping win came during the National Finals Rodeo in December 2005. Going into the competition, Quinn, then 12, decided that if he won, he would donate all of his winnings to the Church's general missionary and perpetual education funds.

The day of the event arrived, and conditions were poor. It was windy, making it challenging to throw a lariat with accuracy. But Quinn remembered his decision and trusted that he'd be blessed. He roped well, and though he was by the far the youngest one there, he placed first and third against tough competition.

No matter where his rodeo competitions may take him, roper Quinn Kesler stays on the strait and narrow path of righteous, clean living.





Even though there were a few things that Quinn might have wanted to buy, such as a new saddle, he put his money where his mouth was and donated the money.

“It opened my eyes—if you’re going to do something good for the Lord, He is sure to help you,” Quinn says.

A Simpler Choice

As his success has continued, Quinn has also continued to need that divine help. “The rodeo crowd can be kind of rough sometimes, with Word of Wisdom problems and swearing,” says Quinn. “It can be hard for some people to avoid getting caught in that sometimes.”



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For many, alcohol and tobacco are a part of the culture at rodeo events, and companies that sell these products are some of rodeo's biggest sponsors. But Quinn steers clear of those kinds of sponsors. "If I have committed to avoid it and it's against my beliefs, why would I endorse it?" Quinn says.

Quinn has been offered a drink a few times by his roping buddies during a rodeo event. They joked around about his standards and told him that just one wouldn't hurt. But Quinn refused.

When Quinn was younger, his father, Greg, told him that he would support Quinn in pursuing roping—if he did three things: kept his language clean, kept the Word of Wisdom, and stayed morally clean. Quinn also decided that he would keep the Sabbath day holy by not competing on Sundays. Knowing that he made those commitments early on helps Quinn stay on track. He knows where he stands, and for him doing what's right is a simpler choice.

Standing Tall

People have started noticing Quinn, and not just because he can rope a steer faster than you can say "Boy, howdy!"

"I want you to know that Quinn's on the cover not just because he's a great roper, but because he's a good kid," Greg remembers

an editor of a roping magazine telling him a few years ago. Outside of competition, it's Quinn's standards that people really notice. He is "an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12), of the Light of Christ, and of the joy His gospel brings.

"There aren't a lot of guys in rodeo that are LDS. People watch me, and I know that I have to be a good example and live well," Quinn says. "If you're living right, people are going to notice."

The End of His Rope

Quinn plans to leave the lariat behind for two years to serve a mission. He will be quitting less than a year after turning 18, the age of eligibility for participating in professional rodeo competitions.

"I'll probably compete some and then have to put it down to go on my mission. That will be a little tough," Quinn says.

Some people might think Quinn's crazy for leaving rodeo behind for two years almost as soon as he can go pro. Anyone can see that he has a promising future ahead of him, and to some, Quinn's decision to leave behind such an opportunity seems baffling. But he knows why he's going.

"I've had everyone tell me a mission's going to be great, and I want to serve the Lord. It will be a good experience." **NE**

Every day Quinn practices roping and horsemanship. This repetition, plus his natural ability, has led to Quinn making a splash in the rodeo world at an early age. Even with his success, Quinn is determined to live the kind of life that can be an example to others.

