

Creative writing professor is also tall in the saddle

Anyone who hung around until the end of Friday night's Ranch Rodeo at the fairgrounds in Leoti would have seen the exhibition ride.

Following a hailstorm that briefly held up the event, spooking the wild horses even more, Rob Rebein flew out of the shoot and stayed on the bucking horse for 6 seconds.

Though he didn't make it to the whistle, it was a pretty good show for a first experience.

What made the ride unique is that the 46-year-old Rebein isn't a cowboy by day, but an associate professor of English and creative writing at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis.

Even though this was the first time competing in the saddle of a bucking bronc, the tall, lean man in the creased Wranglers is no city

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Kathy Hanks

slicker.

Currently living in Indianapolis, the Kansas native has spent enough time in the saddles of broken horses to know his way around a pasture on one. His father, Bill Rebein, operates a cow-calf operation, called the Lazy R Ranch, about 14 miles north-east of Dodge City.

Visits to the ranch are important for Rob Rebein, his wife, Alyssa Chase, and their two children, Ria, 11, and Jake, 8.

But this trip he made without the family so he could work on his latest book, "Dragging Wyatt Earp: Es-

says on Place and Identity."

Rebein describes it as "a collection of essays that attempt to explore the concepts of place and identity through a juxtaposition of memoir with revisionist history."

Rather literary for a dude who was seen hanging out behind the chutes at the Dodge City Roundup the past few nights.

While some of his work is highly researched and scholarly, including a literary criticism - "Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists: American Fiction after Postmodernism" - other works are memoir-based.

That's when his writing becomes lively.

"I feel when I write what I love, the voice is there," he said. "It's me finding a theme in a way the reader can connect. To make it that way for the reader is where the work comes in."

His current project includes sharing personal experiences growing up in Dodge City.

According to Rebein, the title piece examines the multiple meaning of the name Wyatt Earp, which in the context of his hometown exists as both a historical figure and as the main drag in a small town on the High Plains.

Love his topic isn't good enough, however Rebein practices what he tells his students.

"They have to find the universal theme that everyone can connect to," Rebein said. "Even in a piece on the rodeo, growing up in a small town, or herding cattle, you have to find something the reader can connect with even if they could care less about it."

During the Dodge City Roundup, rodeo organizers gave Rebein free rein to ex-

plore behind the chutes as the professional rodeo performers readied themselves, like pro-football players before the game.

It's an athletic event, Wild West spectacle and big social event all rolled into one, Rebein noted.

Monday morning he was getting in one last ride at his family's ranch. Then he'd pack away the cowboy duds before heading east.

Classes begin Aug. 24. Life will focus more on helping others hone their skills.

"When I come here, I live it to the fullest," he said. "When I head back, it's about my writing."

To watch Rebein's expedition at Leoti, check out <http://www.youtube.com/user/rrebein>.

Everyone has a story to tell. Please call me with your story at (620) 694-5700, ext. 348, or e-mail me at khanks@hutchnews.com.