

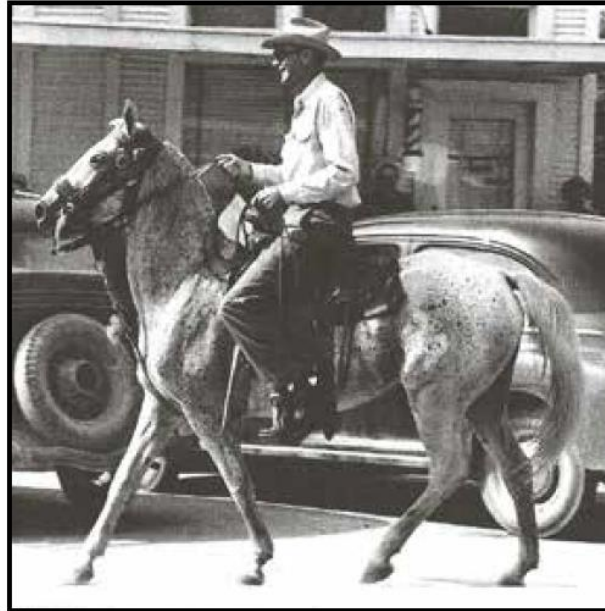
Jake Bussey – One of La Porte's Early Cowboys

WRITTEN BY Kelli Grabbe

With rodeo season upon us, it is only right that we visit the memory of a man that helped shape the lives of many youths in the La Porte area, Mr. Jake Bussey. Born in Oklahoma in 1908, he came to the Houston area looking for work during World War II, and found it in the La Porte shipyards as a welding instructor in 1942. Just a year later he was instrumental in organizing the first rodeo at Sylvan Beach, and in the process raised more than \$300 for La Porte's Chamber of Commerce.

Shortly after the war he was "drafted" into the position of sheriff's deputy. He wasn't really interested in the job, but told the guys that if they got enough signatures on a petition he would take it, and so they did - and he was perfect for the job. He began the job living with Fred Buff, La Porte's mayor at the time. He soon learned what many of us in La Porte know is still true today... "everyone was kin to everyone else so I never did say anything about anyone."

Realizing he had attracted countywide attention for his work in law enforcement, in 1950 he decided to run for Constable of Precinct 8 and won against



Jake Bussey was a sheriff's deputy and a county constable, but his true love was rodeos.

three other opponents. He began that position as a lone ranger all by himself – serving all the crimi-

BUSSEY Continued on page 9

WHERE TO FIND:



Antonio's Italian Grill
Al Anding - State Farm
Brady Insurance
City of La Porte
Clark Freight Lines Inc.
Hibachi Grill
La Porte Vision
Mainly Drinks
Main Properties Real Estate
Shell Federal Credit Union
Utility Trailers
Vapor Sense

BUSSEY
continued from page 1

nal and civil papers in the large precinct. Five years later he was given three deputies and a secretary as the area grew rapidly.

Mr. Bussey had a special ability to understand kids and the problems they faced in those days, and was always quick to help them out of a jam by just "talking it through." Jake was also known for always having a rickel for any kid he happened to come upon. Many folks in La Porte today have memories of their run-ins with Constable Bussey – those memories are often recounted with a grin and the remembering of a quick lecture, followed by him cutting them loose to get on with their business of being omery kids.

The more serious side of his job had him confiscating a gun stash headed for Cuba, an event which resulted in a U. S. Treasury Department commendation. He also escaped many close calls with criminals, including a fight with a man who jammed his shotgun into Mr. Bussey's stomach. When the man pulled the trigger, the gun misfired, an action Mr. Bussey contributed entirely to the grace of God. He himself had a gun "just in case," but rarely carried it. He said he wasn't a fan of guns, but knew that having one close by was just a smart practice in his profession.

He truly loved his job and was passionate about it. In an interview held in his early 70s, Mr. Bussey said that he had no regrets about his life-long career as a Texas law man. He loved his town of La Porte and all of its residents, who he referred to as "my people." He was elected constable of Precinct 8 every four years, unopposed until he retired in 1982, which allowed him to see the kids that he had counseled have grandchildren of their own.

A small sampling of Mr. Bussey's contributions to society include: a lifetime member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Association, the Pasadena

Rodeo Association, and the La Porte Livestock Show and Rodeo Association. His commitment to the La Porte rodeos also led him to become a charter member of the Constable's Cattlemen's Association. He was also an honorary member of the Deer Park Riding Club and Pasadena Mounted Police Association. Jake never missed coming into Houston as a loyal rider of the Salt Grass Trail Ride.

His accolades in law enforcement include a life time membership in the Justice of the Peace and Constable Association of Texas. He helped to form the Bayshore Peace Officers Association. He was also cited by the Civil Defense authorities of Harris County for his service and bravery during Hurricane Carla in 1961.

Some of you may not know that Mr. Bussey was a longtime member of various community organizations including being a 33rd degree Past Master Mason and Past Master of La Porte Lodge #857 AF & AM, Shriner, Elk, Odd Fellow, Glad Handlers Club, La Porte Rotary, a life member of Honorary Eagles, Arabian Knights of the Shrine, and a former president of the San Jacinto Scottish Rite Club, and the La Porte Bayshore Shrine Club.

His larger than life persona was no doubt increased by his 6-foot-5-inch stature, but many will agree that his quick wit, intelligence, tolerance, dignity, and his insistence that everyone be treated with the same amount of respect have earned him a bit of Texas lawman immortality.

The "Tall Texan" had four children; Colleen Ingram, Tommie Ramsey, Calvin Bussey, and Karen "Cookie" Walker. At his death in February 22, 1996, he also had 16 grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

When you are out on the trail this season, tip your hat and give a nod to Jake... he loved his rodeos much as anyone.