

Ellease Tucker

Rodeo Queen

By: Lacy Bookstore and Kali Hoskinson

Lillian Ellease Tucker's parents, William Floures Hicks and Edna May (Johnson) Hicks, were born in Sparta, Tennessee. She was born in Sparta, Tennessee on April 1, 1918. Until she was six months old, she did not have a name. Her Granddad Hicks asked the question, "Are you going to wait until she is grown up and can name herself?" She was named then, Lillian Ellease Hicks. Her father would not call her by that name, so he nicknamed her, "Boots." He wanted her name to be Bertha May Hicks, and they later found out that the doctor had put her name on the birth certificate as Sally May Hicks. She questioned who she really was for a long period of time.

When she was two years old, her folks packed up and moved to Elkhart and homesteaded four miles west of Elkhart, Kansas. They purchased five quarters of land and shortly after moving there, her sister, Willena, was stillborn and was buried at the Elkhart Cemetery. Ellease grew up as an only child after that. Ellease went to school at Roundtop, west of Elkhart.

Ellease came to Elkhart in the seventh grade and eventually graduated from Elkhart High School. She had perfect attendance all twelve years of attending school. Ellease participated in all sports offered. She was the forward position on the high school and town basketball teams. She was the pitcher for the girls' baseball team, and she participated in high school track. She was also a very active horse rider who would go out every day and ride to enjoy life. Life was not always fun and games; she worked in the fields with her dad every day. The earlier years were mighty rough. She had a plan for taking a beauty course but just never seemed to find the time for such a class.

In her junior year of high school, Ellease met Pete Tucker. Pete Tucker was the son of Charley and Tracey Tucker of Wilburton. Then two short years later, in 1938, they were married. Right after they married, Pete's folks passed away. After the passing of his parents, they moved to a little town by the name of McCune, Kansas. They moved up there to take care of his siblings Jackie, Ruth, and Ruby. Then they moved on to a town called Mulberry, Kansas so Pete could haul coal for a living. Ellease was the operator of a small gas station on the Missouri-Kansas line. After a short four years of living there in Mulberry, they moved back to Elkhart. They moved back to help Ellease's parents farm the family land. Her father passed away in 1959, and Pete and Ellease Tucker continued to do the family farming. In 1947, the local Lions Club sponsored a rodeo. She borrowed Jack Hardwick's palomino horse, named Victoria Lake, and entered the Western Pleasure class, for which she became the champion. Ellease Tucker was a candidate for "Frontier Blonde Rodeo Queen." Marge Rankin Powell was crowned queen with Ellease coming in as the first runner-up. That weekend created the desire, and in 1949, the tuckers started showing horses and rodeoing as amateurs. The couple soon advanced to the professional status. Pete soon became a great calf-roper and became the World Champion. In 1961, "Boots" won the World Champion Barrel Racing title. This title was won on her favorite horse, Brownie.

Through the years, Ellease entered many contests such as: Goat Tying, Barrel Racing, and Bronc Riding. She was in the top 25 in women's rodeo events for over 25 years. One of the most surprising awards Ellease ever won was the contest sponsored by Lasso Western Wear and the GRA (Girls Rodeo Association). This was a yearlong do-it-yourself design contest, and she was the second place winner in the outfit described as feminine pink and lavishly trimmed with pink lace. All of her riding clothes were tailored by Maude McMorris of Doole, Texas. One of her favorite trophies is the belt buckle she won in 1962 at the National Finals Rodeo in Santa Maria, California. She still owns the farm west of Elkhart and is currently living in the Morton County Assisted Living at the age of 93.

Lillian Ellease Tucker is a member of the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. Every day she thanks God for giving her the good life she has had.