

C. M. Coffee a Cowboy's Cowboy



C.M. Coffee, 94, of Miles City, passed away on October 10th in the presence of his family at the Holy Rosary Health Center.

Clyde Merwyn Coffee, Jr. was born on the family ranch near Miami, Texas on May 22, 1921, to Clyde Merwyn and Abbey (Gripp) Coffee. He was called C.M. early on and after almost 95 years that is still how everyone knows him, even his closest friends and family.

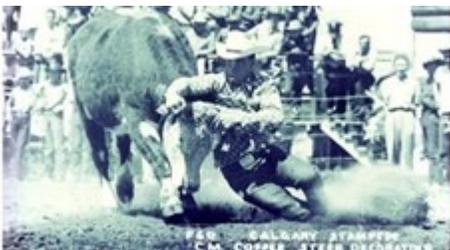
Like all of us, C.M. was formed by his youth. Times were tough in the late 1920's and early 30's across the entire country. The panhandle of Texas was especially hard hit in the heart of the dust bowl. At age nine, C.M. was riding horseback with his father on the family ranch. The elder Coffee was on a young horse that was very green. After riding a considerable ways from the house, his father was bucked off with his foot getting stuck in the stirrup. Young C.M. eventually gathered the horse; however, his father was gravely injured and died before reaching town. Apparently, C.M. understood at this early age the importance of strong horseman and cowboying skills, and continued to hone these skills over a lifetime.

C.M.'s mother was a true frontier woman and did her best to take care of C.M., his two younger brothers, Walter ("Squink") Coffee and Tom Coffee, all while running the family ranch. Many stories illustrate how strong and self-reliant "Mama Coffee" was from gardening, to rendering hogs, to handling firearms. She instilled lasting manners and the ways of a southern gentleman in her boys that have stood the test of time.

The following is a brief bio from C.M.'s induction into the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame in January 2012 –

"At an early age C.M. started working for neighboring ranches after school and on weekends, in addition to working on his family's place. During this time, C.M. also started competing in local rodeos. He competed in all events except for bull riding. He was a natural horseman, but it didn't take C.M. long to realize he "didn't know how to properly sit on a bull." As he grew, so did his rodeo circle. C.M. won many saddle bronc, roping, dogging and all-around titles throughout the entire panhandle area of Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Upon graduation from high school he was drafted into to the Army Air Corp. It was during his military service when he first came to Montana. He was sent to Missoula and received training in flight, parachuting and related areas. However, since the Japanese surrendered during this time, C.M. was sent to be a tail gunner on a B24 in the Army's mop up operations in the Pacific Theater. He was eventually stationed in the Philippines, but traveled throughout the U.S. and the Pacific.



Upon honorable discharge from the Army, C.M. returned to the panhandle of Texas and returned to rodeo. He was rehired to work on a ranch that he had worked on in high school. Not long after his return, the ranch owner asked C.M. if he would like to go to Montana and run a new ranch the owner had recently acquired. C.M. took the opportunity and headed north. The ranch was in the Pine Hills just southeast of Miles City.

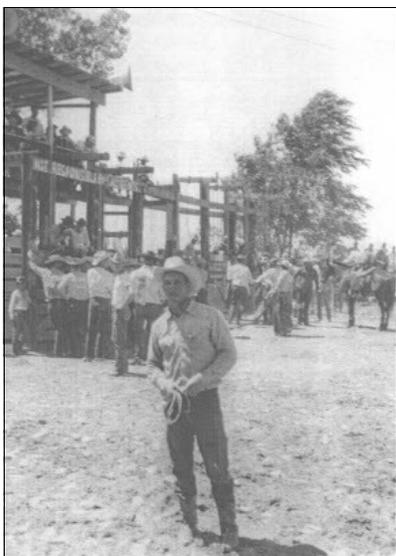
C.M. worked hard and saved his money. Over time, C.M. bought half of the ranch and became partners with the owner's son. Eventually, the son sold his interest in the ranch to C.M. Years later, C.M. would sell this ranch and buy a cattle & sheep operation at Sumatra. Through the decades C.M. has owned, operated and leased ranches across Custer, Rosebud and Prairie Counties. Also during this time, C.M. continued to rodeo throughout the region. He successfully competed in many of the areas top venues, including Calgary, the Wolf Point Stampede and Cheyenne Frontier Days.

In addition to ranching, C.M. was a director and an owner of the Miles City Bank which later grew into Stockman Bank of Montana. As the bank grew, C.M. always made sure the bank's focus remained on the customer. He provided insight into agriculture, the producers and the markets for over 50 years.

C.M. was a fourth generation and lifelong Shriner, over 60 year member of the Miles City Sage Riders Club and, in addition to being inducted in the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame, was inducted into the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame in 2008.

C.M. is survived by his wife, Virginia; his son Bill (Vicki) Coffee of Billings; his daughter Caren Coffee of Miles City; and two grandchildren, Colton Michael ("C.M.") Coffee of Bozeman and Abby Coffee of Bozeman. He is also survived by his brother Walter of Miami, Texas; nephew Charles (Rolanda) Coffee of Canadian, Texas; and his extended Coffee family throughout Texas.

Memorial suggestions to either the Miles City Range Riders Museum, Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame, or the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame.



Addition Note: We are sad to hear of CM's passing and we send our prayers and sympathy to his dear family and friends. CM was a one in a million and his life here on earth is a better place because of him and real Cowboys like him. I met CM in the early 70's on the Nefsy Ranch cooking for a crew setting up irrigation. In 1996 I remarried and moved to OK. We figured out then, we knew the same C M Coffee. My husband, Albert (Abbie) was nicknamed after Abbey Coffee, CM's mother. She was his grandmothers best friend in Texas. Small world when the dots all connect. Men like CM are Cowboys, you don't forget when you meet them.. God Bless and Happy Trails
C. M. - Joan and Abbie Thorne Adair, Oklahoma