

## Introduction

Virginia's first memory of attending a rodeo is of the fancy costumes the women performers wore. Blouses of satin and lace, wool pants, and felt cowboy hats appeared to the four year old girl to be the uniform of the rich and famous. The Great Depression overshadowed many aspects of life, yet these women seemed to be immune to the poverty gripping the country. Living in rural Oklahoma on a large ranch, the Regers were never hungry. But Virginia wanted one of those satin blouses. And if it took becoming a rodeo performer to have one, that's what she would do. And that is exactly what Virginia Reger did.

When she was just a toddler, grandfather Crouch sat the girl unsteadily on the back of one of his tamest plow horses. She promptly fell off and onto the dusty ground. An immediate and loud cry brought Opal Reger running toward her sobbing baby daughter. But Grandpa Crouch picked little Virginia up, dusted her off, and stopped his daughter from interfering by saying, "Oh, she just wants to get back on. Then she'll quit cryin'." He sat the ten-month-old back on the horse and, sure enough, her tears dried and she loved it. That moment defined the direction her life would take for many years to come.

Monte Reger, her father, picked a steer with magnificent horns from a herd he and father-in-law George Crouch had purchased. Recognizing a potential performance act in the animal, he first tried the steer out as bucking stock. The name Bobcat Twister was given to the wild steer, but those massive horns were knocking riders out cold. So Monte took him home and within a couple of years, Monte trained that steer to be a performer.



He decided to go on the road with Bobby and Opal, but would leave the children, now three, at home with the grandparents. Virginia was devastated. She remembers crying and crying while sitting on someone's lap, refusing to believe her parents went on a rodeo adventure without her. But, as children do, she adjusted and even found ways to have fun. Often children from big towns would visit the Crouch ranch and the Reger kids helped with the field trips. Occasionally they would play pranks on the unsuspecting city kids and get a big laugh. But such antics had to be done out of Grandpa Crouch's sight, or they would surely get in big trouble.

While on the road, Opal and Monte found they, too, were unhappy and vowed to travel with the whole family. He built living quarters on the back of a truck and fashioned his own style of motor home. Such vehicles existed, but Monte engineered the Reger camping truck to their own needs. There were bunk beds, a stove, and a trailer hitch. Bobby was loaded in a trailer hooked behind the truck and off they went.





Virginia as a baby. She still has this blanket !



Even at four years old Virginia was strong willed. Insisting to wear her new hat and coat for the photograph, she refused to take it off despite all efforts by Opal and the photographer.



The Reger kids were raised on a ranch with a rope in their hands. But Virginia was a girl and would only be in “play clothes” if no cameras were around. Dresses were reserved for Sunday School. After being on the road with her parents, a quiet time at home was welcomed. School work was most often done through the Calvert correspondence school, but Virginia attended first grade in California while Monte was working with the film industry and doing promotions with Bobby.