Dear Editor;

When the blown-up photo that accompanied my Valley Mid-Winter Fair article appeared, I suddenly had my doubts that I had captioned it properly. Was this really a woman riding a wild bronco in the photo that I had obtained somewhere in the distant past?

Like many other I turned to the internet to see if I could discover anything about Ruth Roach. Discover, I did indeed. This is what Wikipedia had to say about her:

Ruth Scantlin, later Ruth Scantlin Roach, later Ruth Scantlin Roach Salmon (1896 - June 26, 1986), was a professional bronc rider, and world champion rodeo performer. Her 24-year career began in 1914 and ended in 1938, when she retired from the rodeo and started a ranching business in Nocona, Texas, with her husband, Fred Salmon. She the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and The 101 Real Wild West Show. Bronc riding was her favorite event, although she performed and won championship titles in other areas (as Ruth Roach). During her career she won the titles of World's Champion All Around Cowgirl, World's Champion Trick Rider, and World's Champion Girl Bronc Rider.

She married fellow rider Brian Roach (winner of the 1919 Calgary Stampede bronc riding competition); after their divorce, she retained the name Roach for the rest of her career for professional reasons. She later married another rider, Ambrose Richardson, and Fred Alvord, a rodeo director and cowboy. Her final marriage was to Fred Salmon, a rancher.

A short High Noon Western Americana biographical note states: Ruth ran away from home to join the 101 Ranch Wild West Show as a trick rider. Her contest debut came at the 1917 Fort Worth Roundup, America's first indoor rodeo, as a bronco rider. Dubbed the "soft-spoken, rough-riding golden girl of the West," she wore trademark giant hair bows and boots hand-tooled with hearts. She is remembered for trick riding up the steps, across the lobby and through the dining room of Fort Worth's Texas Hotel.

Photos of her are available for purchase at several internet sites. One site even has a refrigerator magnet for sale with her photo on it. The University of North Texas has an archival collection of Texas photographs including 74 of Ruth. They may be viewed at The Portal to Texas History.

With such unusual performers as the athletic Ruth, it was no wonder that the Fair in Harlingen was such a stellar attraction.

Norman Rozeff