



kicked in about two or three generations before he was born. Both his grandfather and father were in the horse and mule business in Oklahoma before it ever became a State. It was the last land run when the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands were divided up in the late 1890s and 1900. “It was then that Grandfather came up to Oklahoma from Arkansas,” Justin said, “and brought all his horses, 3 mares and jacks and his farming equipment. When he first arrived, he made his living building roads and bridges in Rogers Mills County, and my father was born there in 1912.”

By the 1920s there was little demand for mules for farming and road building, since tractors had come on the scene. True enough, mules weren’t needed, but a new business was booming, and that was horse racing. It was then that Justin’s grandfather and father sold all their jacks and bought a fine Quarter

Horse stallion, a grandson of Peter McCue – the legendary Quarter Horse sire. In those days the folks in Roger Mills County were struggling cotton farmers. They eked out a living on 160 acres, living in clapboard houses, having little pocket money and finding their entertainment wherever they could. But, they did have one valuable asset, and that was some of the greatest and fastest horses in the world – the Quarter Horse. All it took was a challenge from another horse breeder and they were willing to bet their meager holdings on the outcome of a one-quarter mile horse race right down the main street of their small town.

“Of course anytime you run horses, money is going to change hands,” Wells said. “When a challenge was issued by one town, you can bet that everyone participated. There was countywide interest in these ‘Match Races’. History is full of legendary stories about one small town chal-

lenging another town to race their fastest horse. The townspeople, more than once, completely cleaned out all the banks by taking out all their cash, emptying their socks, and taking the stashed money from under the mattress. It wasn’t uncommon for one town or the other to end up dead broke. One well remembered race was held on Sunday afternoon in the 1930s. The local bank opened that morning and the townspeople withdrew every single penny from the bank to bet on their horse. Fortunately their horse won and the bank reopened for the people to redeposit their winnings. As might be expected, the other town went broke and ended up borrowing money for “gas to get home.”

Ask Justin when he first painted and he’ll tell you that all kids paint and that it was probably hen scratches even before kindergarten. He always drew horses and cowboys like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, The Lone