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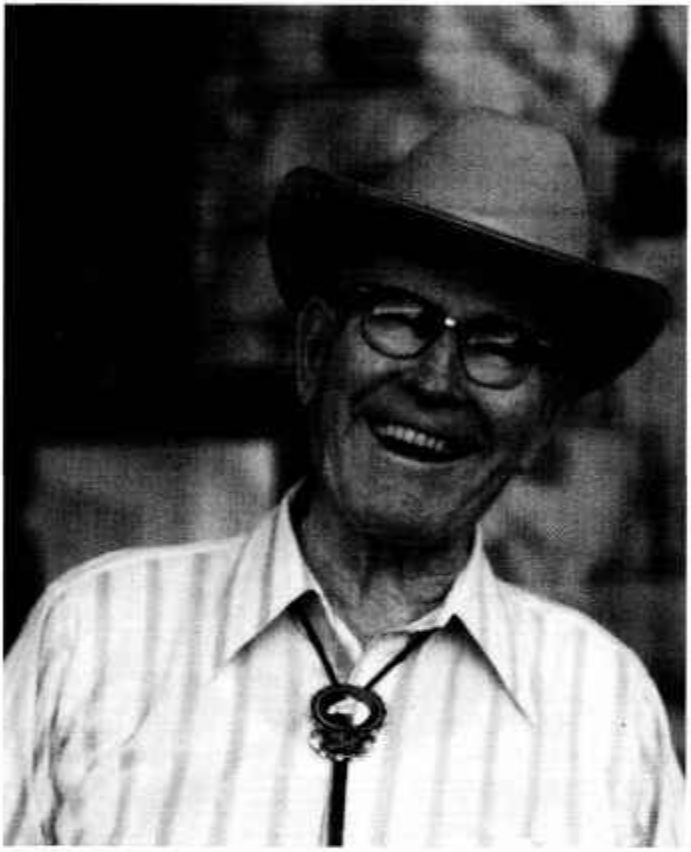

Rowland Rider at Lee's Ferry, Utah, June 1970. All photographs in this article courtesy of the author.

"How, Kemosabe"

Rowland Rider's Symbol for All Seasons

Deirdre M. Paulsen

"How, Kemosabe," Rowland Rider would say, raising his right arm. Unlike a schoolboy raising his hand to ask a question, Rowland would lift his arm up from the elbow. This gesture was Rowland's trademark of sorts, a declaration to the world of his knowledge of Indian ways. (Rowland said "Indian." The politically correct term *Native American* had not yet been advanced.) After all, Rowland, my grandfather, was the only white man in Kanab, Utah, who could skin a deer the way the Navajos liked it done. I can't remember if it was with or without the ears. But it mattered to them and to him.

When Rowland was a young man in Kanab, Navajo braves would wait for him in his barn, a safe haven for them. My grandmother, Romania, would hide with her three young children under the bed in their nearby two-story frame house. When Grandpa returned, he would chide his wife, saying his friends only wanted food. He would let his children sit on Navajo laps; when my mother sat on their laps, the braves would stroke her thick auburn hair. In the security of her father's presence, my mother enjoyed the braves' attention. Grandpa displayed his Indian knowledge as proudly as the earth-toned blankets the Navajos gave him in trade. He had a right. After all, his father, John Rider, called by Mormon pioneer leader Brigham Young to establish Fort Kanab as protection against the Indians, instead had made friends with the Navajos and Paiutes. The Paiutes called John *Pagamatoots*, "Long Beard." John's youngest son, Rowland, was *Pagamatoots Unis*, "Little Long Beard." And so Rowland's standard greeting to one and all became "How, Kemosabe," always accompanied by a raised right hand.

Rowland Rider at Lee's Ferry, Utah, fall 1909. Rowland was working for the Bar Z cattle company.

The raised hand functioned as a symbol in other ways. It showed Rowland's affirmation of life; Rowland welcomed new acquaintances, liked to be their center. And as a storyteller,[1] Rowland instinctively knew body language, knew the raised hand would draw an audience, would hold an audience's attention while he spun his magic of the roll away saloon, a saloon on rollers that could be shuttled back and forth across the Utah-Arizona line to evade lawmen. Rowland's magnetism extended to Zane Grey; the two sat around campfires on Bar Z rangelands, and Rowland swept Zane away with Western imagery and tales—Rowland the Western Trickster beguiling the Easterner. How much of *Riders of the Purple Sage* was Zane, how much Rowland? The raised hand broke down barriers, brought people in, held them there.

The hand greeting also served as a constant in Rowland's life. It linked the past with the present. Even in Rowland's later life of engineering and plastics manufacturing, when life became complicated with legal documents and lawsuits, there was always the simple "How, Kemosabe," with its accompanying raised hand, to keep life in perspective.

Not many kids in Barrington, New Jersey, where I was raised, had a cowboy grandfather. Now granted, Jersey is the home of the Lene Lenape

The Roll Away Saloon

This is quite a notorious story on the Arizona Strip because it involves liquor. As far as I can remember, all the cowboys liked to drink alcohol. Oh, boy, they'd drink home brewed, they'd drink lemon extract and vanilla extract. The freighters couldn't get it in there fast enough. The stores would sell out right away. That's a fact.

So they built this little saloon and it was right on the Arizona-Utah line four miles south of Kanab and four miles north of Fredonia about seven or eight rods to the west of the present highway. It was just kind of a two-room affair, with a bar at one end and the barkeeper's bedroom at the other end. It wasn't very large, maybe twelve by eighteen feet, but it created quite a bit of disturbance among the Mormon housewives of Fredonia and Kanab because their men would come staggering up home on their horses, too late for dinner, unable to take their saddles off. So the men of these towns, fearing their women, built this saloon on rollers, log rollers that went clear under the joist.

Well, one day when the women in the Relief Society up to Kanab got together sewing and having a quilting bee, they decided among themselves that too many of their men were going down imbibing at this Roll Away Saloon. So they organized a posse to go and burn the thing down. And their plans were all kept a secret from their husbands, of course. So when the men all went out on the range or out in the fields or doing something, the women saddled up their horses, a lot of them rode, and some of them took their white-tops,* and they headed for this saloon.

Just fortunately for the saloon keeper there, there's a little raise of land to the north about a quarter mile from the saloon, and on the south side there's also a little incline up to a little ridge there, what we call Halfway Hill. And sure enough, this saloon keeper saw the dust coming from these women on horseback and these four or five white-tops as they came over the rise. And he got the crowbar and rolled the saloon back into Arizona. The women got down there and were all ready to light their torches, they had their bundles all ready, when the saloon keeper said, "You can't touch this business; it's in Arizona. We don't belong to Utah at all. There's the line."

*Four wheels with a framework like a small covered wagon. Wooden benches, enough to seat several people, were added.

It was well paved, the line was, and it always had been. So they had a little confab, then said to the saloon keeper, "Well, if you sell our men any more liquor, we'll get you next time." So they went back home all disgusted that they couldn't go over into Arizona and wreck that place, and went back to their quilting.

Well, anyway, in a few days or a few weeks maybe, why the women down in Fredonia would be doing the same thing, quilting and making things for the needy and so forth. They would find out that their husbands had been spending all the spare cash up there at the Roll Away Saloon, so they'd organize a posse and here they would come. They'd come over that little ridge down there a quarter mile from the saloon and the saloon keeper'd see them coming, and it'd just take a few little pushes on those crowbars under the logs under the saloon, and over she'd go, over into Utah. The women would come up and the same thing would happen. "You can't touch me, I'm over here in Utah. Look there, there's the line." So the women would give up, threatening, and go back to Fredonia. And this went on for years.

Well, now, that's the Roll Away Saloon story and I guess I'm the only one that ever told it. And I think if you want to take a picture, you might find a few of those old rollers still rotting over there.

Rowland W. Rider as told to Deirdre M. Paulsen, "The Roll Away Saloon," in *The Roll Away Saloon: Cowboy Tales of the Arizona Strip* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1985), 3–4.

Indians, but that's where the Western hallmark of cowboys and Indians ends. No cowboys in New Jersey, and I never knew anyone who had met a Lene Lenape. But I had a cowboy grandfather with an honorary Indian name. I was the envy of Culbertson Elementary School.

I was in graduate school at Brigham Young University before I realized that Grandpa's value stretched far beyond elevating me in the eyes of my classmates. Rowland was not only one of the few articulate cowboy storytellers who remembered the turn of the century, but he was also in a more exclusive subclass: Mormon cowboys. I started examining Rowland's stories, looking at them through the eyes of a folklorist. They were good. Really good. And his gestures were good. All except for the "How, Kemosabe" with the raised arm. I thought, how clichéd can you get? His

Rowland Rider roping a calf in a rodeo in Kanab, Utah, 1912.

greeting was Lone Ranger, Hollywood. I doubted then that he had learned it from the Indians. What I wanted was authenticity. So when I analyzed Rowland's storytelling techniques in my master's thesis, "Stories and Storytelling Techniques of Rowland W. Rider, Cowboy on the Arizona Strip in the Early 1900s," I wrote a lot about how Rowland stooped over and started pawing the ground like a buffalo when he told of a buffalo standoff and how he'd pretend to swing a lariat when he talked about knocking a horse's eye out to save his life—but I never mentioned the "How, Kemosabe" or the raised hand. It wasn't until years later that I realized there was a kind of authenticity in the greeting and the raised hand.

To gain information for my masters thesis, I interviewed Rowland in his home in Salt Lake City and "on location" in Southern Utah. We went to Lee's Ferry to see the range of the Bar Z cattle he herded. We visited the ponds at Two-Mile where the sheep and cattle watered, and he talked of the range wars between the sheep and cattlemen. One year the cattlemen "cut the dikes," drained the pools so the sheep couldn't water. We followed the trail of the thirst-parched sheep who stampeded at the smell of water and plunged down rugged cliffs to drown in the Colorado River.

Rowland loved being a cowboy when he was in his early twenties, so it was surprising that a forest ranger convinced Rowland when he was twenty-two to further his education. In 1911 he attended the Southern Branch of the State Normal School of the University of Utah in Cedar City (now known as Southern Utah University). Two years later, he transferred to the Agricultural College of Utah in Logan to pursue a degree in engineering. In 1918, his last semester at the Agricultural College, he married Romania Fawcett, a graceful pianist from St. George, and they settled in Kanab, Utah, with Rowland's family. Ten years later, in 1928, he and his

Rowland Rider, spring 1914, yearbook photo at the Agricultural School of Utah in Logan. Rowland was freshman class president.

young family left this land of Navajo sandstone and the Moenkapi Formation to locate in Salt Lake City. Rowland traded cowboy ways for the title of inventor, developing the rotary engine in 1928 and the disposable needle in the 1960s. He entered the new field of plastics manufacturing after World War II. Rider Plastics Manufacturing Company's plastic tile was the family's bread and butter.

Grandma Romania died when Rowland was eighty-nine, and the next few years were tough. Rowland lived with me for a while, and the neighborhood kids loved his cowboy hat, his bolo tie, his boots—and his "Indian" greeting. Everyone would laugh at his stories, Grandpa the loudest with a deep, infectious laugh that drew all ages to him. But then Rowland had to have major surgery, and the laughter and the stories stopped. What good was a cowboy with an ileostomy? Grandpa stopped eating.

On June 11, 1984, I received an urgent phone call from a Salt Lake City care facility: "Come. Your grandfather is dying." A few weeks before, an orderly had slipped me a note saying the nurses had been starving Rowland at the nursing care facility where Rowland had gone to recuperate after his surgery. I knew better. Grandpa would not eat even the Apple Cotlets, his favorite candy, that I kept bringing to bribe him out of his hunger strike. The cowboy had decided it was time to die in his boots. I wasn't surprised when I received the phone call. I told the administrator I would get there as soon as I could notify the family.

The staff was nervous when I arrived a half hour later. I had taken too long, should not have paused to call family, they said. Rowland was precariously near death, but I didn't understand how close. I discovered later that he had had a stroke and couldn't feel anything in his left hand, the hand nearest me as I sat next to his bed—the one I kept massaging throughout the next few hours. I knew strokes could cause death; I didn't know they could cause numbness. I knew little. I had never seen death, never looked it in the eyes.

Grandpa was unblinking and mute, and I would moisten his eyes and his lips with a salve the staff provided. My cousin Nancy came. We visited

in the small room while I stroked Rowland's paralyzed hand. He looked straight ahead, unmoving, and our talking didn't divert his attention.

Then Rowland slowly, deliberately, raised—or rather, cantilevered—his right hand. He was still looking straight ahead, wordless. Then he slowly lowered his arm. Then raised it. Then lowered it. I said in a hushed voice to Nancy, "What do you think is going on?" She replied, "I think it's getting really crowded in here." We sat silently, awestruck for what seemed like a very long time, watching Rowland's arm go up and down, up and down, up and down.

Rowland's simple gesture spoke "How, Kemosabe" when he couldn't. The act was an affirmation of an afterlife; it was obvious to us at the time that Rowland was greeting many spirit ancestors in his own way, with the symbol that had been a constant in his life. The raised-hand gesture that broke down barriers, that welcomed people into his center, that breathed of Rowland's honesty and simplicity—and storyteller's showmanship—this symbol now served Rowland well as a transition. Rowland's last "goodbye" was a "hello" to a whole new audience.

Deirdre M. Paulsen earned a B.A. in English and an M.A. in American literature and humanities at Brigham Young University. She married David Finn Paulsen and is the mother of five children. She currently teaches composition, publishing, and folklore courses and codirects the Publications Lab at Brigham Young University. This essay won third place in the 2002 BYU Studies essay contest.

1. Rowland was first noted as a storyteller by John Willey in a magazine article published in 1919:

> *As it was getting dark, we all put up at the Grand Hotel, and after supper, sitting on the hotel porch,* conversation drifted to desert life, "the riders of the purple sage." Then it was we learned that the driver of the Oldsmobile truck [Rowland Rider] had been a "rider." He was the "son of the desert" and was acquainted with Zane Grey, the author, in fact had suggested to Mr. Grey ideas for some of his wonderful desert stories. He told of the buffalo ranch near Kanab; of the deer, wild horse, cougar, and other wild animal life of the Kaibab Forest; of his being the last man to bid God speed to two intrepid explorers of the Grand Canyon as they started downstream for the Granite Gorge from Lee's Ferry; and he informed of the buffalo-riding contest that was to take place the next day . . . his language simple and direct, without waste of words, and breathed of sincerity. He was a most interesting man. (John Willey, ed., "A Journey to North Rim of Grand Canyon; The Editor Rides for a Thousand Miles in George Relf's Car thru Desert, Oases and Forest and Sees Many Strange Sights; Travel Adventures Away from Railroad, Telegraph and Modern conveniences. A Wayfaring That Brings Few Dissappointments [*sic*] and Many Delightful Surprises," *Hotel Monthly* 37, no. 319 [October 1919]: 45–64; italics in original)