

Osceola sports

Preachin' cowboy delivers message

□ Evangelist Randy Johnson has put his bad-boy days behind him and now preaches the word at rodeos.

By Frank Carroll

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Bronc and bull rider Randy Johnson's rowdy lifestyle fit him like a good pair of boots.

He drank. He chased women. And he raised hell.

Now he preaches against his old ways.

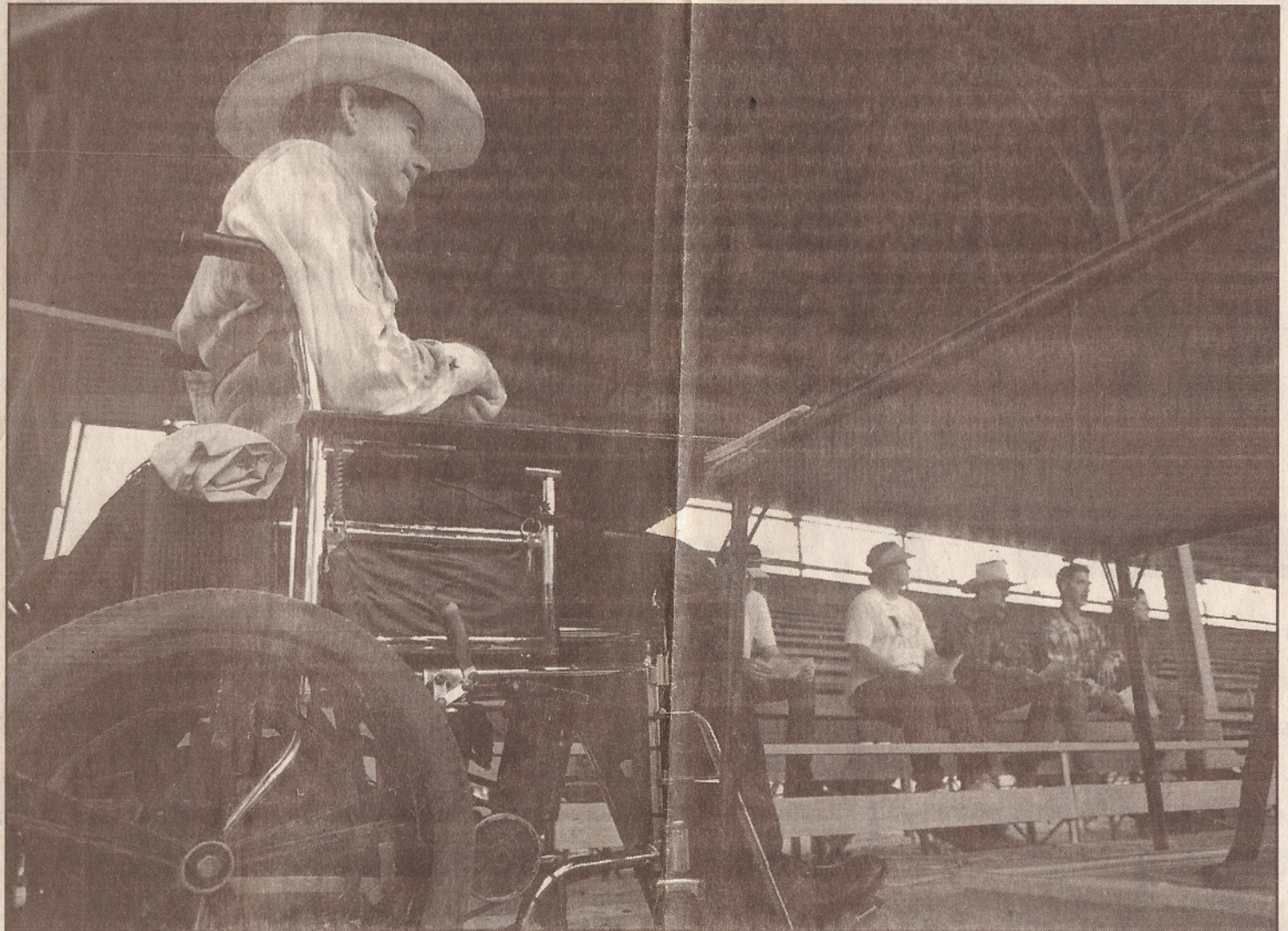
"I was pretty wild. Even though I was brought up in a Christian home, I strayed from what I knew to be right," said Johnson, a cowboy-turned-evangelist.

Wearing a white straw hat, Johnson preaches to congregations dressed in jeans, boots and colorful cowboy shirts. On the Fourth of July, his followers sat reverently on hard wooden bleachers watching livestock prowl a muddy Silver Spurs Rodeo arena while Johnson, 40, sermonized on independence.

The cowboy hat and motorized wheelchair set Johnson apart from other preachers. A quadriplegic since a near-fatal accident 19 years ago, he now follows rodeo circuits to minister spiritual needs.

Risk is part of a cowboy's career. Broken bones come with the territory. Death is a possibility. But Johnson's permanent disability was not caused by a wild horse or a rampaging bull.

Although he avoided serious injury as an amateur rodeo cowboy, Johnson was crippled in a swimming mishap.



P
T
Y
I
N
C
B
T
E
S

H
W
O

R
C
F

C
F
H
C
H

S
T
A
C
F
E
S

S
T
A
C
F
E
S

