

brains'

Hancock said he's never had stage fright and he's looking forward to clowning a Victoria rodeo in front of 7,000 people.

But, he explained, "when I'm out there, it's me, the bull and the guy riding."

Hancock said clowning requires a lot of teamwork.

"Two clowns working together during a bull riding is kinda like a football team; you encourage each other, you push each other — it's teamwork," he said. "You lean on each other, too."

Hancock said clowns perform both ad-lib and rehearsed acts during the rodeo.

"I set myself on fire one time," Hancock said, recalling an act which backfired.

In the act, another clown was to point at him with a sawed-off shotgun as he set off a bomb attached to his pants. But the bomb was packed too tightly.

"Stood me right up on my head — set my pants on fire," he said. "People were trying to beat me out with their hats."

"A lot of people don't realize how dangerous clowning is. People up in the stands, they see a clown get knocked around and they think, 'Hey, he got it, big deal. That's what he gets paid for.'"

Hancock said nobody holds as high a respect for clowns as bull riders do.

"We're almost their guardian angels," he said.

The first two hours of the rodeo, clowning is all fun and games, Hancock said, but it's different during the bull riding.

"I'm a ham all the time," he said. "The only thing that's different is I joke and play around a lot. Then, during the barrel races before bull riding starts, I go and don't want anyone around me and I sit down."

Hancock took off his black felt cowboy hat and pointed inside it.

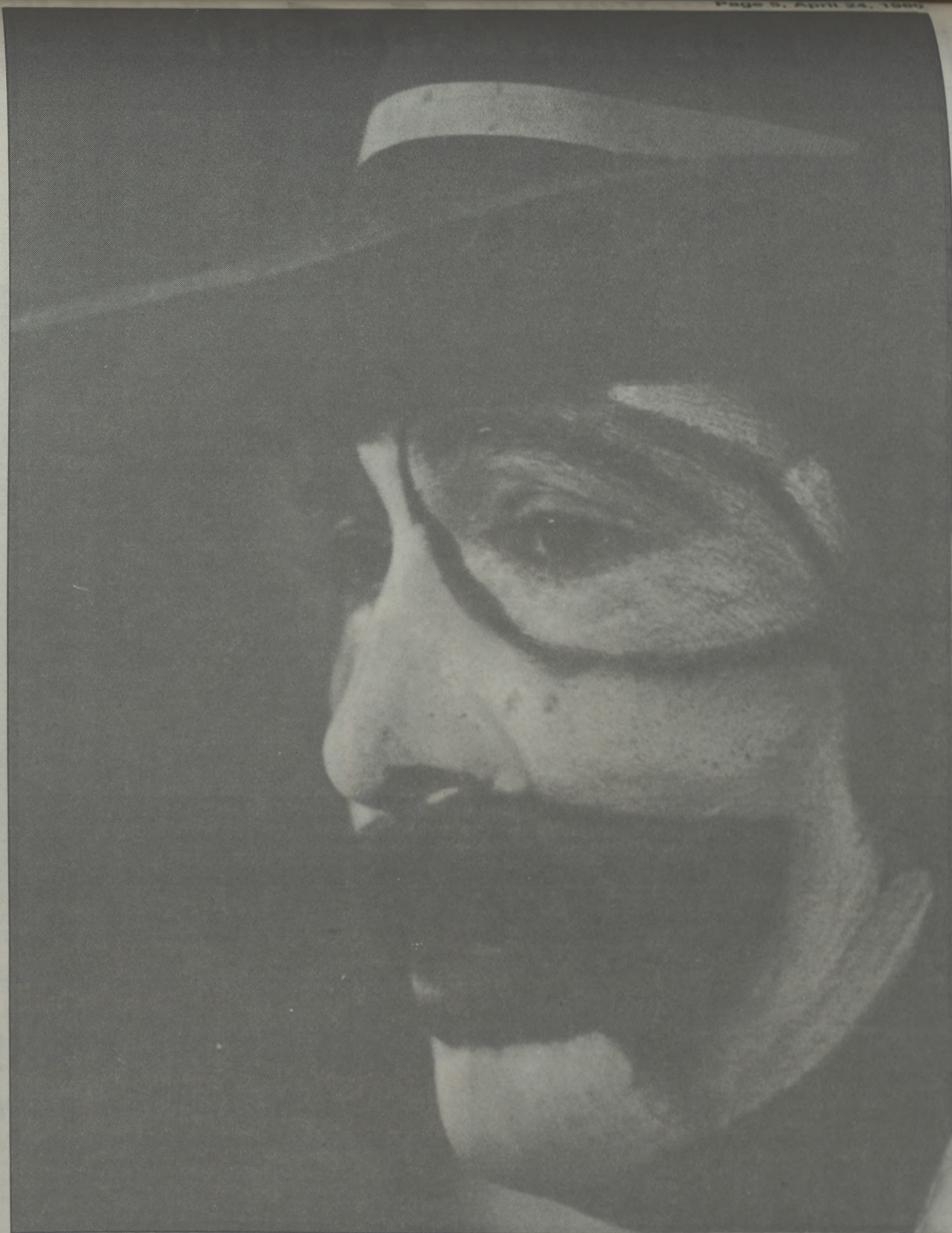
"See, right in there," he said. "I've talked to the good Lord many times, right in there. Just like this." He covered his face with the hat.

"I usually speak to the good Lord for a little while and just sit there and think about what I've got to do," he said. "It gets my blood going. I'm a lunatic after that. I'm so psyched up I'm just like a cat in a cage."

Hancock said he goes into the bull riding ready to do what he can to keep the rider from getting hurt.

"Every time you get somebody out of a bad jam, you can look at it as maybe saving their life and saving them from getting hurt," he said.

"When I go all the way through a rodeo without getting any bull riders hurt, whether I get hurt or not, it makes me feel good," Hancock said. "It makes you know you've done your job. And that's your victory."



Hancock's rodeo clown partner, "Hoot," hams it up with a horse between events at

a youth rodeo in Hearne last Saturday night.

y
Dave
Tollefson