LAST PROSE OF SUMMERS

Rodeo Resembles Rice—A Little!

By ED SUMMERS

Last week on a Saturday night we took a friend and ourselves down to the Houston Fat Stock Show and Rodeo, and on the whole had a very enjoyable evening. However, since then we have been thinking, and the results of this unfamiliar process may possibly be of interest to some of you.

Courage, Skill, and Corn

When people think of a rodeo, they think of cowboys (cowboys are people in blue jeans and cowboy boots and Western shirts a couple of sizes too small with large hats and weatherbeaten faces and possibly a tattoo on their hand which shows when they light cigarettes) riding horses and wild Brahman bulls and wrestling steers, a clown or a Western hero that would rather kiss his horse than his girl. We expected to see this mixture of courage, skill, and corn, which we thought had become traditional—and we did see it, but we also saw something which we are convinced spells the end of the Houston rodeo as we know it. We saw sportsmanship.

Dogs At A Rodeo

It is what has been added, rather than what has been taken away. The police dogs which were on display are fine, and very interesting, but is their place at a Western rodeo? The trampoline artists were skillful, and also about as western as Thomas E. Dewey, and the Western hero, who is supposed to bring sentimental tears of yearning for the Old West of badmen and Indians and the U. S. Cavalry, shot his way out of a T.V. screen and staged a fake fight with an Indian, whom he then helped up and shook hands with. The singing group would have been equally at home in the ballet, which was going on next door.

Old West At Rice

Back when you could still see bears within a hundred miles of Houston, a wealthy dry-goods Houston industrialist established a project which became known as the Rice Institute. There are still a few among us who wish Mr. Rice had wished his Institute off on New Jersey, as Mr. Sims at the Forum indicated he once planned to do; that he did not has meant a great deal to a great many people. Rice Institute was isolated in a swamp out on the edge of a great big oil-cattle-lumber frontier town, and under President Lovett's individualistic philosophy some of the brawling atmosphere of that era was preserved on this campus until very recently.

Rice and the Rodeo

When the powers-that-be decided it was time for Rice to take the plunge and initiate a culture reminiscent of the 1950s, a great many people protested, and a great many more are still very unhappy. Perhaps there are some irregularities in a comparison of Rice Institute with the Houston Rodeo, but there is this resemblance: both are changing, in slow and grudging response to the presence of outside pressures.

In the case of Rice there is little we can do except either watch passively, or jump in and help the process along.

Next week we are going to take a look at the Rice Institute of twenty-five years from now, when your children will be here if you can't talk some sense into them.