

*Retiree Joe Smith*

**“My goal is to be a young old man”**

By Dianne Cope 1981

“You better plan on eating chili when you go to Joe Smith’s home,” says an employe of the San Antonio, Texas, district claim office. Smith retired from there as senior property adjuster in 1973.

Since then, he has developed many interests, especially cooking chili. His favorite way to spend weekends is to compete in chili cookoffs throughout Texas. Wearing a cowboy hat, boots and a vest he embroidered with his nickname, “Rancho Chili.” Smith prepares a tangy, beanless chili.

“Last year I was one of 50 finalists to compete in the World Chili Cookoff in Arriba Terlingua, Texas,” says Smith proudly. He didn’t win, but his wife, Muriel, asserts, “He makes the best chili anywhere.” Since 1977, they’ve been members of the Texas Chili Pod Club that sponsors cookoffs to raise money for charities.

Before becoming a chili chef, Smith spent much of his free time hunting deer, bobcat, quail, wild hog, elk, mountain lion and turkey. “We used to keep a wild turkey, Old Tom, at our hunting ranch so it would gobble and bring in other turkeys for us to shoot. One year I brought him home.”

Recalls Mrs. Smith, “He kept Old Tom in the backyard and when I’d shake my dust mop, it thought I was ready to fight and tried to chase me. When I told Joe he said, ‘I’ll show you how to handle that turkey.’ So he came home with a great big newspaper and went out to show me what to do. And the turkey took that newspaper away from him. I



