

Jo Ellard

by Jill Dunkel

In 2011, Jo Ellard added another award to a résumé that is already full of amazing cutting accomplishments. The last weekend in August, Ellard topped the \$500,000 earnings mark which reserved her place in the NCHA Non-Pro Hall of Fame. Ellard was inducted into the Members Hall of Fame in 2002 for her efforts in developing the NYCHA.

Ellard first discovered cutting in the late 1980s when she was researching what type of horse farm to build in Texas. "I had never heard of cutting and a high school friend, Kenny Ware, took me to Arthur Jackson's place in Mississippi," she explained. After watching horses work and trying the sport for herself, she knew there was no other option but to get involved with cutting horses.

She was named Rookie of the Year in 1991 and increased her involvement with the NCHA as much on the administrative side as in the show pen. Ellard is considered the founding force behind the development of the National Youth Cutting Horse Association, and has served on many NCHA committees working for the betterment of the association in many areas.

Over the years, Ellard showed on the weekends and was also very active in the aged events. With a 20-year show career, the earnings started to mount, and she realized she was within reach of the Non-Pro Hall of Fame. "At the beginning of the year, I knew I had a shot at it. I think I needed about \$35,000."

Out of "show shape" and lacking a little confidence in the saddle, Ellard began showing and it all started coming back to her. Trainer Guy Woods kept tabs on her earnings and knew she was getting close to that magic number.

Just before the NCHA Summer Spectacular, she was about \$10,000 shy, but a semi-finals appearance on Saguaro Ichi added \$4,000 to her total. A few more shows and the Hall of Fame was within her reach. "Guy kept calling the office every other week so he knew exactly what it would take," she explained.

It was at a weekend show in Sulphur Springs, Texas, where everything came together. Riding Rubi Ichi in the four-year-old Non-Pro, Ellard drew a check over \$1,000 that ultimately put her in the Non-Pro Hall of Fame. Guy Woods cued the show announcer to Ellard's accomplishment, and it was announced that with that ride, Ellard joined the hall of fame.

"It was great. Everyone was coming up and congratulating me. I could share it with a lot of people," she said.

Looking back over her 20-year history of showing with NCHA, Ellard is most proud that she earned the Hall of Fame on horses that she raised. "I think 90 per-



cent of my horses were horses we raised, and the other 10 percent were yearling purchases that came through our program," she said. "The greatest accomplishment is the success that we've had with our home-raised colts, and that goes for Guy as well."

Ellard's most memorable horse, one she won the most money over the years, was Meradas Dee Jay, sired by Freckles Merada and out of Ellard's mare, Laney Doc. The pair was reserve at the Gold Cost Non-Pro Classic and fourth in Augusta in 1996. In 1998, Ellard and Meradas Dee Jay went to 92 weekend shows and finished the year eighth in the Non-Pro.

Her most special horse during her 20-year run at the Non-Pro Hall of Fame was the 1985 gelding Pretty Little Lena. "He was so much fun. You could leave him turned out year-round, then get him up, saddle him and go work a cow."

Now the horse that brings her great pride is her stallion, Cat Ichi. "He's young in his career, but his colts are just great. The oldest ones are five-year-olds and they are so consistent."

Ellard attributes her success to her resident trainer of 20-plus years and good friend, Guy Woods. "He's my No. 1 fan and cheerleader." She said her late husband, Bill, was also a tremendous support in her horse endeavors, as well as many friends and helpers in the cutting pen. ★