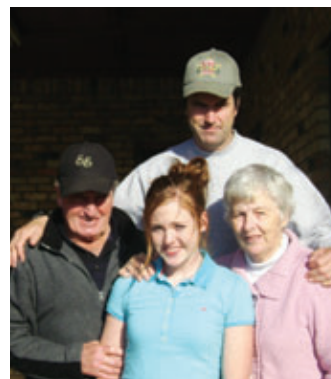


For the Long Haul

Cutting's long-term team: EE Ranches and Guy Woods

By Bridget Kirkwood Cook



(Left) EE Ranches owner Jo Ellard with Cat Ichi and Guy Woods, who won the 4-Year-Old NCHA Summer Spectacular in 2004

—Photo by NCHA Daily Chatter **(Center)**

Guy Woods' wife, Michelle, and daughters, Becky and Niki, preparing Thanksgiving lunch.

—Photo courtesy of Jo

Ellard **(Right)** Guy Woods with his daughter, Niki, father, Wally, and mom, Lex, at EE Ranches in 2007.

—Photo courtesy of Jo Ellard

In a sport where you're only as good as your last competition and where trainers are fired and horses moved for mistakes in the show pen, lasting relationships are hard to find. With a tenure of 23 years, Guy Woods and EE Ranches of Texas hold the record for the longest period of employment for a resident trainer.

Jo Ellard, owner of EE Ranches, said honesty and ethics are what have kept her and Woods together.

"Guy is very honest in his dealings with me as an owner, as a performer and with our customers – he tells the truth whether it's what you want to hear or not. We've never had to find out down the line that I've been led to believe a horse is great that really wasn't," Ellard said.

The identities of EE Ranches and Woods are closely intertwined, and finding exactly where one starts and the other ends is a difficult task – even for Woods.

"It's terribly hard," said Woods with a laugh, "I treat this ranch like it's my ranch, and I do things accordingly, but we can do that because over the years the Ellards and I have thought alike."

Taking care of the ranch as if it were his own and always striving to do better are another two qualities that Ellard said have kept them together.

"He's not money hungry. He's very frugal with the ranch's finances and is always trying to find better ways to do things and to improve the bottom line."

"It's about finding the right mix of personalities and understanding what's going on," Woods said. "I make most of the decisions about what we're doing with the horses,

but we think a lot alike, and I keep Mrs. Ellard informed of everything that's going on. Basically, we're thinking about promoting the horses all the time; it's not about who gets to show what, it's about promoting the horses."

For 15 of their 23 years, Ellard was Woods No. 1 loper, and together they experienced the reality of competitive cutting

"I've been able to stay so long because Mrs. Ellard is so hands on in the business that she understands its ups and downs and ins and outs. Horse training is so performance based – while you're winning, all the owners love you. If you're not winning, then the owners tend to jump ship and go somewhere else. Here at EE, we've had our winning years and losing years, and the fact that Mrs. Ellard has been so hands on in the business and shows in the Non-Pro herself, she understands how it goes. She loped all those really good horses, so we've been able to ride out the lows together and enjoy the highs."

The son of a horse trainer, Woods moved from Australia to America in 1979. He worked for Bob Loomis, Bill Riddle and Carol Rose before catch-riding an EE horse Play Satin Beauty to third place in the 1988 Super Stakes, which resulted in Woods being offered a job. He has since earned more than \$2.3 million.

EE Ranches-owned horses have earned \$2,855,033 in the show pen, and EE has owned horses in 81 finals at the National Cutting Horse Association Futurity, Super Stakes and Summer Spectacular. In addition to Play Satin Beauty, other top-dollar finishes in Fort Worth, Texas, include Cat Ichi and Woods winning the 4-year-old at the Summer Spectacular in 2004, tying for second the same

year at the Super Stakes and placing ninth the previous year at the NCHA Futurity. In 1997, Woods was second in the Classic at the Summer Spectacular on Laker Doc and third in the 1998 Summer Spectacular 4-Year-Old on Little Satin Teddie.

Woods is proud of EE's high-dollar earnings, but his real satisfaction comes from the breeding barn.

"What I'm proud of most about what I've done and what Jo's done is that all the winning has been on home-raised horses. They all came from a collaboration of me and Mrs. Ellard deciding to produce that horse – to breed this mare to that stud and go on and train and show it. Every horse we've had has been that way," Woods said.

An expatriate, Woods appreciates having a home base in the U.S. that has made it easy for the years to pass by.

"It's extremely comfortable around here. The longer it goes the more you think about how great it has been. Five years is a long time to stay at one place, but it just went on and on and on, and then all of a sudden, it's 20-something years. You didn't realize it was happening while it was going on, but when you look back, it's quite an accomplishment," Woods said.

Woods has become more to Ellard than just a manager – he's family.

"His family have been over numerous times, his mom and dad, sisters, cousins, nephews, and we're all great friends – I would go to Australia just because of that," Ellard said.

"We're all connected," Woods continued. "You don't live with people for that long without knowing them. My family's personal relationship with the Ellards has always been really strong. Jo is a fabulous person – we're tight." ★