

Sandy Collier rides into Cowgirl Hall of Fame

October induction awaits NRCHA World Champion

FROM HORSETRADER STAFF REPORTS

FORT WORTH, Texas—Sandy Collier, who remembers vividly the first time she broke into the Open Finals at the National Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity, joined another elite club recently when she was voted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

The Buellton-based Collier, 58, is one of four 2011 inductees into the Hall, located in Fort Worth Texas. In a ceremony planned Oct. 26 at the Will Rogers Memorial Center, Collier will be inducted alongside Sarah “Sally” Buxkemper, Mary Lou LeComtpe and Anna Mebus Martin.

“Horses have always been so good to me—this is just another thing they have made possible,” said Collier, who will ride Stressolena Aug. 20 in the National Stock Horse Association “World’s Richest Stock Horse” competition. “It makes you feel good—to get that kind of confirmation that I did a good job. This is sort of a crown jewel.”

Along the way, Collier has accumulated many “hats-off” moments, including the 1993 NRCHA SBF World Championship on Miss Rey Dry. Also near the top of her memory list was the 2001 SBF when, clad in a sequined stars and stripes blouse, she was the Co-Reserve Champion on Diamond J Star with Bob Avila—although that Finals didn’t turn out as expected.

“That was the year I had Sheza Shinette and had won the pre-futurity on her, then won the prelims at the Snaffle Bit by 7½ points,” Collier recalls. “She was the crowd favorite then I lost a cow in the herd. It was like, ‘oh my!, my chance to do it again is gone!’”



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“But I had my Diamond J Star, who sort of paled in comparison to her because she was so special,” she adds. “I really didn’t realize how good he was. So, I kind of looked at him in sort of an Obi-Wan Kenobi moment, and said ‘you are my only hope.’ And, darn if he didn’t step up—Bob Avila and I split second. That was pretty cool!”

Collier will join more than 200 extraordinary women who have been inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame since 1975. Collier, whose career and love of horses began on the East Coast as an English rider, is the



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first and only woman to win the National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) World Champion Snaffle Bit Futurity. A strong athlete, she won the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Jr. Cow Horse World Championship, the NRCHA Hackamore Classic Champion, and received the Western Lifetime Achievement Award presented by Monty Roberts of the Join-Up organization. Collier is an international clinician, co-author of the book, *Reining Essentials*, and has published several articles and DVDs on horse training.

She enjoys riding, but as she approaches age 60, she realizes her career is finite.

“It’s very realistic to think that by the time you turn 60, it’s time to start thinking about slowing things down,” she said. “Although Doug Williamson keeps getting better with age, if you ask me. I can’t hope to have that kind of success, but I do enjoy giving clinics and judging. There’s a lot of things to do when I choose to slowdown—but that isn’t yet!”

She conducts from 10-12 clinics nationally each year and enjoys giving a boost to a local interest, the Santa Ynez Valley Therapeutic Riding Program where she helps train instructors, works with the kids and “the horses when they might get a little off track.”

She also is part of an August fund-raising extravaganza along with Ramon Becerra and Olympic Medalist dressage rider Charlotte Bredahl.

She and Bredahl perform to music and perform a “duel” back-and-forth between the dressage and the stock horse.

■ **More on Cowgirl Hall of Fame:** See website <http://www.cowgirl.net>