

# Scott Raftery Named 2017 Zane Schulte Award Recipient

*The Arizona horseman is a trusted instructor who still closes deals with a handshake.*

by Jennifer K. Hancock

National Cutting Horse Association director Scott Raftery of Green Valley, Arizona, is the 2017 Zane Schulte Award recipient. The longtime Arizona horseman, who is known for his teaching ability and his cattle skills, has served as a leader and ambassador of the industry for more than three decades.

Raftery grew up around horses under the guidance of his father, Bill Raftery. The elder Raftery, who was a decorated World War II veteran, served as a horsemanship instructor for the U.S. Cavalry before he moved to Arizona, became a farrier and started a family.

"We've been in the horse business a long time," Raftery said. "My dad played with cutting horses a little bit."

Raftery's path to becoming a cutting horse trainer took a 15-year detour through the rodeo arena.

"I rode bulls, which didn't show a whole lot of intelligence," Raftery said with a laugh. "Some of my friends that rodeoed, their fathers were in the cutting horse business so I always thought if there's a chance down the road I'd get into it. After I got married and left rodeo, I had a chance to start peddling with the cutting horses."

His early training career involved breaking racehorses for the track and riding reining and working cow horses.

"I always was looking over the fence at the cutting horse deal, and we got lucky enough to acquire a couple," Raftery said. "I got a few trained, and that's the way it went. It was easier to stay in it once I had enough clients."

And for the past 30 years, the cutting pen has been home, and his clients have become family. While he never apprenticed with a trainer, he considers Mike Mowery to be his mentor.

"We were on the same high school rodeo team," Raftery said of Mowery. "When I had a little time, I went out and spent time with him or even over the phone he would get me lined out."

Raftery has been married to Cheri Raftery for more than 36 years, and the couple has three children – son Will and daughters Heather and Sara. Will, who returned from Army tours in Afghanistan and Iraq to assist his dad with starting colts, is married to Josie Raftery, and they have two daughters, Zoey and Addie.

Raftery counts homebred Lil Commando as one of



Scott Raftery, who is known for his integrity, cool-headedness and unselfishness, is the 2017 Zane Schulte Award recipient.

his most memorable horses. The gelding is by the Rafterys' stallion, Mr Commandate, and out of their Peppy San Badger mare Lil Peps Shadow. Raftery earned a reserve championship in the \$3,000 Novice at the Western National Championships on Lil Commando, and Heather had success at the show, too.

"I rode him ahead of Heather because she was going to show him in the Youth, and she was co-reserve champion that same year," Raftery recalled. "That's probably our favorite horse, because we did raise him and train him and bring him on ourselves."

Raftery received the Don Dodge Award in 2003, the Wes Sutton Award in 2006 and was honored by the Southern Arizona Cutting Horse Association for his longtime service to the organization in 2015.

An NCHA Director for Arizona, Raftery has served multiple terms as president of the Arizona Cutting Horse Association and as a director for the state organization. For more than three decades, he's been a member of the NCHA, AzCHA, SACHA and Pacific Coast Cutting Horse Association. He continues to give back to the industry as a volunteer and in leadership roles.

"I feel it's my responsibility," Raftery said. "I've been in it a long time, and what little knowledge I have I think I have to give back. I feel like I can give back to the association."

"I've always felt like I needed to be an ambassador to the sport," he added. "I think integrity and honesty is probably the foundation of my business. I think that's why I stayed in the game as long as I have. Don Dodge told me a long time ago that it wasn't all what you do with horses, but it's how you treat people that will make you stay in the game. I took that to heart. I think that's why we're still in the game, and I think whether I'm training a horse for a client or helping in the pen or trying to find a horse, I think the honesty and integrity that I try to maintain is the foundation of my business, and that's why we've stayed in the game as long as we have."

Always willing to lend a helping hand, Raftery is sought after by cutting competitors and show management for his cattle knowledge. He has served as the

cattle liaison for the Arizona Cutting Horse Association for more than a quarter century.

"I've been the cowman for about 20 some odd years here," Raftery said. "That's why these shows have been a success out here is availability of really good cattle. I've never written a contract with these people, I've done it all with a handshake and our word, and we maintain a good working relationship with the cattle people here."

Joe Kalt, who has ridden with Raftery for more than 10 years, nominated the trainer for the Zane Schulte Award.

"Scott Raftery is a dedicated teacher of humans," Kalt wrote. "In fact, probably the most commonly heard remark among us who have ridden with Scott is that we don't know of a better teacher and coach. The teaching of his clients is not an afterthought to Scott and doesn't take a backseat to training the horses. Instead, the teaching is a calling and responsibility that Scott invests in and studies constantly."

He said the traits that make Raftery an ideal candidate for the award are integrity, cool-headedness and unselfishness.

Kalt went on to state, "His long and steady service as a director of the Arizona Cutting Horse Association, the Southern Arizona Cutting Horse Association and the NCHA is the product of people forever looking to Scott for his energy, his brains and his wisdom."

Raftery, who has earned \$227,668 in NCHA competitions, prides himself on the success of his amateur and

## Past Zane Schulte Award Recipients

- 2016 Chubby Turner
- 2015 Gaylon Wells
- 2014 Jimmy Orrell
- 2013 Joe Jones
- 2012 Sam Wilson
- 2011 Dave McGregor
- 2010 J.B. McLamb
- 2009 Sam Shepard
- 2008 Allen Crouch
- 2007 Chris Benedict
- 2006 Mike McCarty
- 2005 Jim Reno
- 2004 Buster Welch
- 2003 Al Dunning
- 2002 Bill Riddle
- 2001 Dale Wilkinson

non-pro riders. His website states, "I may have not won a million dollars, but my students have!"

The Zane Schulte Award annually recognizes a professional trainer who exemplifies the character by which Zane is remembered: integrity, service, values, respect of

their peers, contribution to the industry and excellence in the arena. Each year's winner is presented with a special bronze Zane Schulte Award trophy at the NCHA Futurity.

After learning he was the 2017 award recipient, Raftery felt an even stronger desire to help others.

"I think the thing that hit me the most was that it makes an even bigger obligation for me to be that type of person to honor Zane and his memory," Raftery said. "I have to try even a little bit harder than I have in order to maintain that." ★



An ambassador of the sport, Scott Raftery has had plenty of success including wins with Wise Little Pepto, but he'd rather brag on his clients and students instead of himself. PHOTO CREDIT: Ted Petit Photography