

The Zane Schulte Memorial Award

Sam Wilson says it's an honor to know his fellow cutters nominated him for the Zane Schulte award

By Jill J. Dunkel

Sam Wilson has been riding cutting horses since before cutting was a sport. Growing up in the ranching business, Wilson had a knack for training horses to work cattle. He put that talent to work starting colts for local ranches in South Texas and the Gulf Coast region.

As word began to spread about cutting shows, Wilson watched a few friendly competitions and thought he would try his hand at the sport.

"I can't remember what year I started showing, but it was quite a while back. Long before they ever kept records," he says. "We showed in South Texas in the Gulf Coast and Houston cutting horse associations. We started hearing about how tough North Texas was. If you weren't in North Texas, you weren't in anything. I went up there, and they didn't know any more than we knew. They worked cattle out on open places, and we worked cattle in the brush. You had to learn how to get in position, be quiet, hurry up and wait...things like that you'd put into your cutting horses."

Wilson continued participating in the North Texas area and eventually became interested in helping with the leadership of the association.

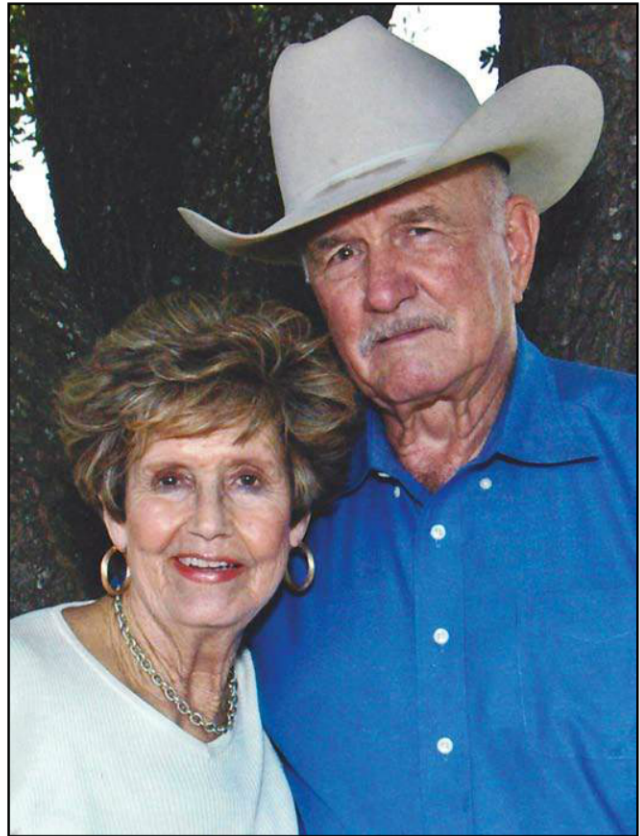
"The cutting horse association was having problems, and we didn't want to let it die. My good friend, Jim Reno and I, decided to submit our names to be on the executive board. We got support from a lot of people, and I went to Fort Worth quite often. I stayed on the board for years."

Wilson's tenure of leadership with NCHA was marked by several rule changes and new events that are still in play today. In the late 1970s, Wilson was among legendary leaders who reworked the rules in an effort to "try and fix things."

"We had a committee meeting at Buster (Welch's) in Sweetwater. We got cattle up and wanted to create a situation and discuss it right there. We gathered up a lot of good information there," he explains. "People knew the rules and learned what rule applied to each situation." This original rules committee was the first to begin experimenting with taped reviews of runs.

Wilson served on the NCHA Executive Committee from 1973 to 1990, was Vice President from 1976 to 1978 and President from 1979 to 1981. He holds the position of Honorary Director today.

Throughout his storied career as a trainer, Wilson was associated with many legendary horses. He raised, trained and bred Son Ofa Doc, who sired multiple world champions, including Show Biz Sandy, Bob Acre Doc and Short



Sam and Susie Wilson, December 2007 at home on the ranch in Pattison, Texas.

Doc. Son Ofa Doc is buried on Wilson's ranch next to his flagpole.

Wilson rode Bob Acre Doc to earn the World Championship in 1991. "He was an exceptional horse. When he cut, you could tell he was saying 'give me the ball. I'm ready to play.'"

In 1965, he placed ninth in the NCHA Top Ten standings with Glo Snap. Five years later, his wife Susie rode the same horse to win the Non Pro Reserve World Championship. In 1967, Wilson was reserve champion of the Futurity on Les Glo's Rita, and in 1974 he rode Two D's Dynamite to the NCHA Reserve World Championship.

His desire to teach others about his passion led to weekly cutting clinics at his house for amateurs or riders who earned less than \$500. "We had big fun and learned a lot. Riders served as turn back riders and herd holders so they got to see and learn a lot."

Despite slowing down during his wife's illness and subsequent passing, Wilson continues to help aspiring riders.

"Mr. Sam took my son Troy under his wing and got him going on the cutting circuit," says Beth Keaton. "He is now 81 years old and is still training up the next genera-

tion of cutters. He's one of a kind, that's for sure."

Wilson coached Troy Keaton to a Texas High School Rodeo cutting championship and three Top 5 finishes at the National High School Rodeo Finals. He is now coaching Troy's sister, KaryAnn.

"They live for the practices with him. He's one of those true cowboys. He doesn't say much, but whatever he says, you better be listening," Keaton says. "My kids would not be cutting if it weren't for Sam. They do it so they can be with him. I don't think there are many horsemen left like Sam. The importance of what you learn being around someone like Sam...it's priceless."

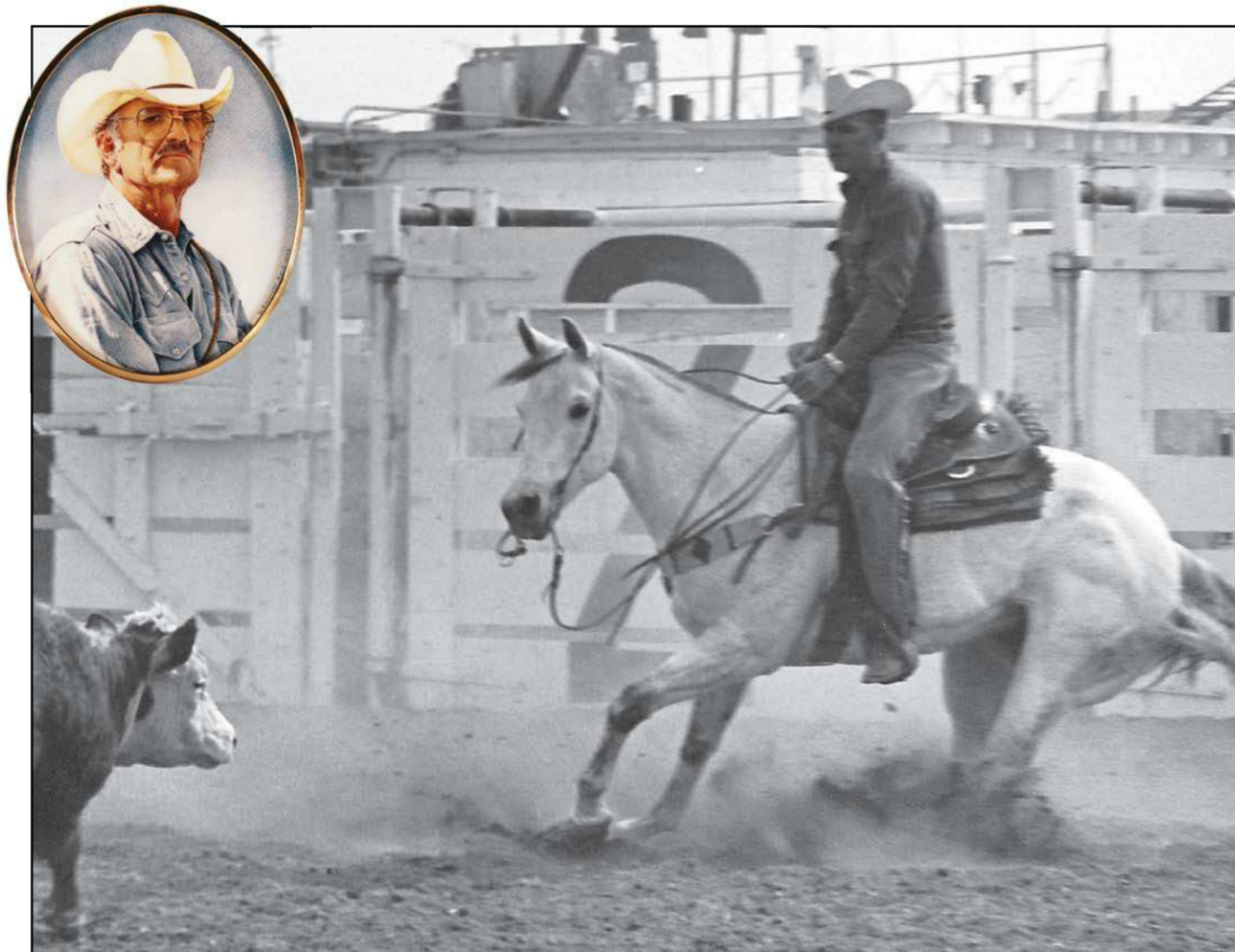
Although his children and grandchildren are not involved in cutting, he is extremely proud of the people they have become. Wilson has one daughter, Ginger, two sons Tim and Danny, seven grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Wilson says it's an honor to know his fellow cutters nominated him for the Zane Schulte award. Even though his days of competition are over, he keeps his box in Will Rogers that he's had "since the beginning of time" so he can watch great horses perform. He still enjoys riding horses nearly every day. ★

2012 Zane Schulte Award Nominees

Jack Adams
Luke Bakey
Tracy Barton
Jeremy Barwick
Greg Beutenmiller
Loren Christianson
Michael Cooper
Brett Davis
Troy Davis
Keith Deaville
Zeke Entz
Lee Francois
Paul Hansma
Ben Johnson
Nina Lundgren
Tommy Marvin

John McFarlin
Scott McKinsey
Jim Mitchell
John Mitchell
Nick O'Dell
Jimmy Orrell
Kenny Paul
Todd Randles
Billy Ray Rosewell
Noe Silva
Josh Sleeman
Tim Smith
Ted Sokol
Josh Townsend
Larry Vance
Sam Wilson



Sam Wilson riding My Blue Diamond in Tucson in March of 1967. (inset) Watercolor by Bill Mundy in Oxfordshire England. At the time this was done, it was his first watercolor of a cowboy and it hangs in a museum in England.