



Karen Herbst, here with Fletcher (aka "Cat Daddy"), loves supporting the sport of rodeo and its up-and-coming stars. She owns a number of top roping horses.

A Real-Life FAIRYTALE

Karen Herbst and her Cinderella Horses

make rodeo dreams come true.

By Mary McCashin

ONCE UPON A TIME, KAREN HERBST HAD AN IDEA OF HOW HER life would play out, how her story would be told and the legacy she would leave behind.

Raised on her family's cattle ranch in Shoshoni, Wyoming, Karen worked as her father's "right-hand man" throughout college, paying her way through school and earning a degree in general business.

As graduation rapidly approached, Karen was unsure where her business degree would take her, but she wanted an office job off the ranch. Karen's mother made a call to a family friend who worked in the oil and gas industry in Casper, Wyoming.

It paid off. On Good Friday 1981, Karen told her family she had earned a job as a land man in the oil and gas field, earning \$24,000 a year. It was a male-dominated industry; Karen was only one of three women to work for the company.

She eventually moved to Texas and began working in the country music industry, in addition to owning an oil and gas company.

"I was managing Sonny Burgess (a Texas Country Music Hall of Famer) at the time and was trying to get him on tour with George Strait. I knew George and Roy Cooper were good friends, so I approached Roy about it. Roy and I ended up doing a DVD that was set to Sonny's music called 'Roy Cooper: Roping My Dreams,' but Sonny never got on tour with George!" Karen says, chuckling as she tells the story.

And with that, Roy and Karen's friendship began. Karen frequently found herself being invited out to the Cooper Ranch.

The first time she rode one of Roy's horses, she realized what she had been missing.

"I didn't realize how much I'd missed the horses and the riding until that moment," she says. "I hadn't ridden in probably 25 years. It's just a soft spot in my heart what good horses do to relax you. They're companions and friends."

Bitten by the bug, Karen bought a ranch in Whitesboro, Texas, and began acquiring rope horses with impeccable bloodlines.

"I went a little crazy buying nice horses. I feel like I should have checked in to 'Horses Anonymous!'"

Magically, Cinderella Horses was born.

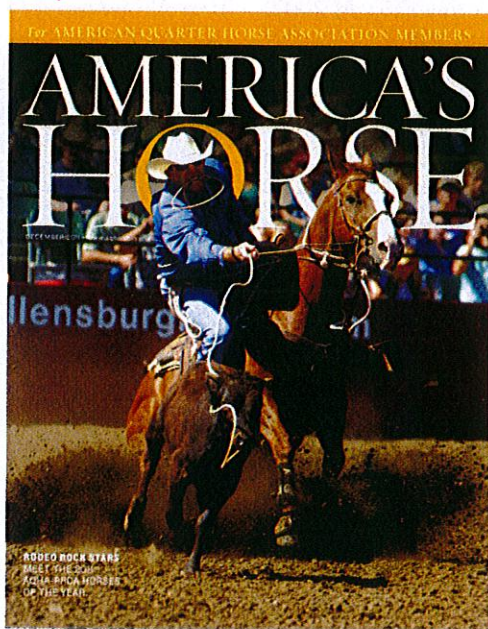
Recognized by the unique freeze-brand of a high-heel with a spur, Karen began to build an empire, with the horses being registered in the name of Spur 1 Resources Ltd., the oil and gas business she's been an owner in for more than 15 years now.

One of the initial team members was Eightys Sport, or "Sweetness," a horse who Roy Cooper's son Clint would compete on. "Sweetness" was named the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association-AQHA tie-down roping horse of the year in 2010, 2011 and 2012. He is also a two-time AQHA world champion.

Besides Clint, other top ropers who have ridden Sweetness include Trent Creager, Fred Whitfield, Houston Hutto and Timber Moore.

Clint says, "I never, ever have seen another horse that even compares to Sweetness. He's 21 years old now (and still competing), and Karen entrusts Dr. Josh Harvey at Outlaw Equine and myself to keep him in the best shape possible. He's just an incredible horse. She makes sure her horses live the ideal life."

Little Bobo Hickory (aka "Boo") was another notable Team Cinderella athlete.

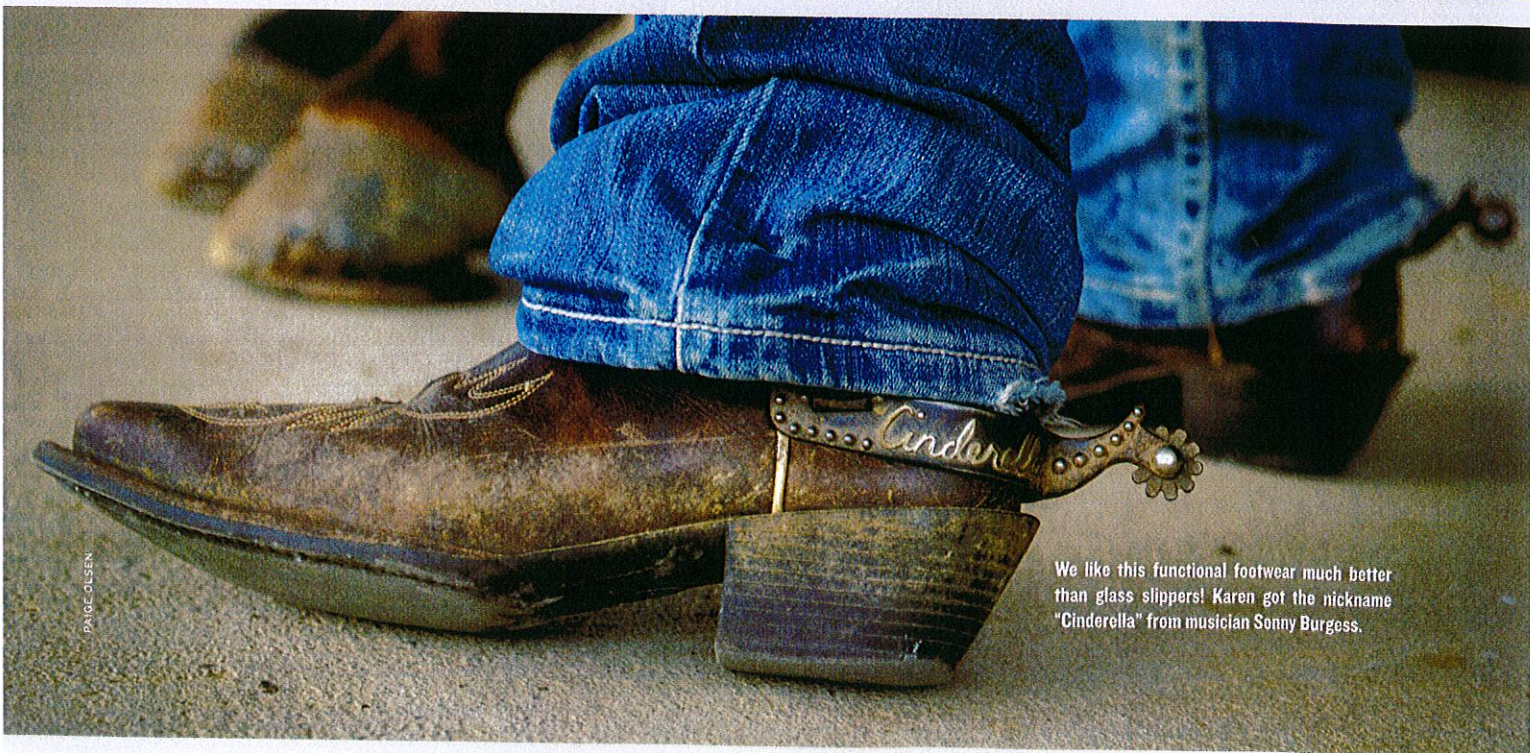


One of Karen's superstars, Eightys Sport, made the cover of the December 2011 *America's Horse* when he won his second of three tie-down roping horse of the year titles. Clint Cooper is aboard.



Karen and Stampedes Drifter, whom she uses as a personal heading horse

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We like this functional footwear much better than glass slippers! Karen got the nickname "Cinderella" from musician Sonny Burgess.

PAIGE OLSEN

"Trevor Brazile, Fred Whitfield, Cody Ohl and Tuf, Clint and Clif Cooper all won money on him," Karen says.

Tragically, Boo lost a fight with salmonella poisoning and laminitis in 2013.

"I spared no expense trying to make him comfortable and keep him going. He fought for two years; he had a heart like that," Karen says.

Today, Karen owns Haidas Hickory Pet (aka "Boo 2"). Like Boo, he is also by High Brow Hickory, and Karen has high hopes for the 2004 gelding who's currently on the road with Pye Murreh.

With her reputation for owning quality horses and being supportive of her team, Karen says people often approach her about leasing out mounts.

"Rarely do I have to find cowboys who want to ride my horses," she says.

As for being so involved in a male-dominated sport, Karen says, "I probably get along better in the rodeo world than I do in the oil and gas industry! After 34 years, the oil and gas industry is still fairly male-dominated. In the rodeo world, there are cowboys and cowgirls, so it's a bit more accepting."

In addition to leasing out top-quality rope horses to both tie-down ropers and team ropers, Karen is incredibly supportive of her team members and the sport of rodeo. She travels to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo every year, in addition to Cheyenne Frontier Days and other major rodeos.

"Karen just has the biggest heart; she loves animals more than anyone I know," Clint says. "I'll never be able to ride another horse that even compares to Sweetness. She has always been so supportive of us."

"I put that Cinderella slipper patch on my shirt in 2007, and ever since then, it has just been a great ride."

The Cinderella moniker came rather naturally to Karen.

"I wear high heels in the office all week and boots with spurs on the weekend, so (the design for her brand) just seemed like the perfect combination. 'Cinderella' came from Sonny Burgess. When I was managing him, he used to always tell the band to do whatever Cinderella told them to do."

"When I was out at the Coopers', all three of those boys are so well mannered and kept calling me 'ma'am.' I said they

could either call me Karen or call me Cinderella. I appreciated their respect, but 'ma'am' made me sound old!"

Karen has no plans to slow down anytime soon.

"It's all about getting the brand out there and having people recognize the Cinderella brand. We were just solely marketing to tie-down ropers, but we're really branching out into team roping, too. Nick Sartain and Rich Skelton both come ride with us regularly. I'm really happy with how things are. I've gotten the opportunity to learn how to team rope some, and that's addicting!"

Karen also reaches out to rodeo's youth, mounting Riley Webb, a 10-year-old up-and-coming tie-down roper, on her horse Six Foot Six, aka "Heisman."

"He had a horse that wasn't working for him, and he was taking lessons with Clint at the time. Clint called me, and we decided to put the two together."

"Clint's cousin Cooper Ratliff, son of famous female roper Betty Gayle Cooper, also needed more horse power for his college rodeo season this spring, so we sent an older bay, "Cowboy Cool" (Lightin Bar Bud), to his rescue. It's rewarding to me. They love to get the horses out and show them, they're so proud of them, and they're so appreciative of the extra help."

It seems like the fairytale has only just begun. With Karen's roping-horse program rapidly expanding, young horses coming up through the ranks and a roster that includes some of rodeo's finest, Team Cinderella may just be the fairest of them all. 🐾

Visit www.cinderella-horses.com to learn more about Karen's team. Mary McCashin is a freelance writer from Weatherford, Texas.



To see some of the Cinderella Horses in action, check out Karen's YouTube channel. A link is available in the digital edition of *America's Horse*. See Page 44 for instructions on how to access the digital.

The Cinderella theme is prominent at Karen's beautiful place in Whitesboro, Texas. She says she wears business attire with heels during the week and boots and spurs on the weekends, which "spurred" the idea for her logo.

