

Cowboys



At Home With...

Lynn Anderson,

62, lives in Taos, N.M., where she rides as much as she can when she's not on the road performing hits like "Rose Garden." "Horses and music have been my life," says the Grammy-winner and Country Music and Cowgirl halls of fame nominee. Anderson just released a new CD, titled *Cowgirl II*.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN GRAND FORKS, N.D.?

I was very close to my paternal grandparents. They founded the saddle club in Grand Forks, and my grandmother taught me to ride bareback. She was my inspiration. "If you can ride bareback, you can ride anything," she would say. My parents say that I could sing before I could talk and ride horseback before I could walk.

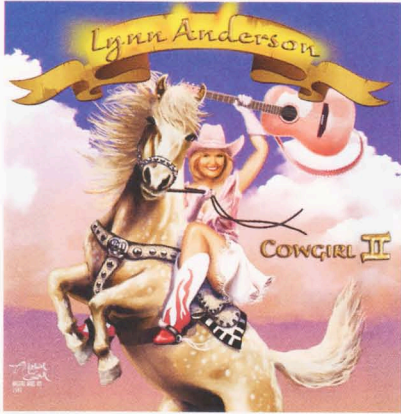
DO YOU STILL BREED HORSES?

Yes, although not as much. I've had 12 national champion horses and eight world champions that I've owned, bred, and ridden at the AQHA [American Quarter Horse Association] Congress. I've competed in everything from halter and trail, to reigning and driving, but cutting is my favorite. My show horses are in Gainesville, Texas, with trainer Teddy Johnson. I go back and forth as much as I can. My

stud Lark N Lena was 2009 North Texas cutting horse champion. He is by Rugged Lark, a former AQHA Horse of the Year. At the first AQHA Congress, my Lady Phase (bought from Matlock Rose) won yearling mare—the first world-championship trophy ever presented. Breyer Horses considered Lady Phase a "perfect quarter horse" and based a plastic toy horse on her form. My horse Skipster's Chief (by Skipster, by Hank Weiscamp's "Skipper W") was the poster horse for NARHA [North American Riding for the Handicapped Association]. My work with NARHA eventually led to the founding of Nashville's Saddle Up program 25 years ago with Tom Paul's wife, Dixie.

ANDERSON IN 1967 WITH LADY PHASE, WHO WON AN AQHA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY FOR YEARLING MARE.

A Cowboys



WHAT IS IT ABOUT CUTTING HORSES?

Once you've ridden a cutting horse, you've ridden the Cadillac of the quarter horse industry. Once you let the horse know that's his cow, you have to let go of the reins. That was amazing to me—that I was just a passenger on some amazing animal. I love horses. Whenever I travel abroad, I like to ride that country's native horse, like the Fjord horse in Norway, or the Paso Fino in Peru. I also wear a cowboy hat wherever I go. Lately, America has not been so popular internationally, but I'm always well received. Cowboys are the good guys, and no matter where I am in the world, people will approach and say "howdy."

YOU WERE A BEAUTY QUEEN, RIGHT?

Yes, I won the California Horse Show Queen at the State Fair in 1966. It entitled me to run for Ms. Rodeo California, which I did and lost. I ended up winning the horsemanship and writing events, but I came in fourth for personality and appearance. [Laughs] I guess I have no personality or appearance. My mother [Liz Anderson, 85] used to get so bored watching me compete from the stands, that she'd write songs. She ended up writing "Strangers," and "The Fugitive," which Merle Haggard made famous, and "Ride, Ride, Ride," which I performed.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO PERFORM WITH SUCH DIFFERENT ARTISTS AS JOHNNY CASH AND LAURENCE WELK?

Because I've been at it so long, I guess. [Laughs] I've been so blessed for getting

to work with the founders, if you will, of country music. So whenever Bob Hope or Dean Martin or Lucille Ball wanted a country girl, they called me. At the time, my country songs were the only country music on network television. I did a couple of years on the Laurence Welk Show, the Johnny Cash Show, the Smothers Brothers Show, and others. Believe it or not, I'm a founding member of the Academy of Country Music. I'm member #11, and Bob Kingsley of Country Top 40 is member #12. My husband, Mentor Williams, also wrote and produced "Drift Away," a Billboard chart mainstay.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIG PROJECTS THESE DAYS?

I released a new CD in November called *Cowgirl II*. It's a follow-up to *Cowgirl*, which won an award from the Cowboy Hall of Fame. I just returned from the Tropicana Casino in Nevada, and recently did concerts with the Oregon Symphony. These days I'm trying to present Western music in what you might call a sophisticated way—reminding people who might not be familiar with the Western genre of classic Western heroes and the Western way of life. I've been doing some television, too. I produced a show called "American Country Cowboys" (on CMT) about country stars [Mary Stewart, Tanya Tucker, William Golden, and others] that ride cutting horses. The proceeds went to Saddle Up.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR VOLUNTEER WORK.

My volunteer work with NARHA got started many years ago at my daughter's birthday party on my driveway in Nashville. There was a six-year-old child with *spina bifida* who we put on one of my horses and he just reacted so well. My grandmother used to tell me: "There's nothing better for the inside of a kid than the outside of a horse." I feel like it empowers a kid who might not otherwise be able to walk. I've seen kids in wheelchairs approach a horse, but you put them in the saddle and they're taller than everyone else in every sense. They go from feeling defeated to feeling empowered.

—By Philip Armour