

Hey Neighbor

For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Cowgirl only second Kansan to reign as Miss Rodeo America

Rest assured Miss Rodeo America is qualified to wear her crown.

Not only is the 2008 queen a renowned cowgirl, but she can ride alligators, too. Besides that, she knows how to hunt wild hogs, whether that's a credential or not.

When we caught up with Miss Rodeo America 2008, Amy Wilson of Colby, she was in Kissimmee, Fla., serving as a judge for the Miss Silver Spurs Pageant and staying for media promotion of the Silver Spurs Rodeo. That's one of her

many jobs representing pro rodeo following coronation at the 2007 National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nev., where she competed as Miss Rodeo Kansas 2007.

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beauty with what photographers described as an all-American smile collected four special recognitions in ceremonies concluding a week of festivities. She was winner of the personality, appearance, photogenic and speech awards.

"We had to drive to Las Vegas in order to take all of my outfits," Wilson admitted. The family left Kansas November 30, and Amy returned December 17. Actually, out of 53 years, Wilson is just the second Kansan to ever be Miss Rodeo America. Diana Putnam Friend,

Miss Rodeo Kansas 1979, from Hoyt, wore the top crown in 1980.

Despite all that glamour, the 21-year-old daughter of ranch couple Lonnie and Lori Wilson still likes to ride horses best of all. "I literally grew up riding. My favorite place has always been on the back of a horse," insisted Wilson, one of six children.

Fond memories of her first horse, Flo-Yo, stick with Wilson as she talks about riding with her dad checking cattle and then competing in local horse shows. "He was sorrel and a really unique horse. A really great one," Wilson contended.

Other good horses followed, but what really enhanced Wilson's riding ability was showing sale horses for an auction conducted by an uncle. "I had to get on all kinds of horses, so riding different horses in the queen contests and at rodeos around the country

doesn't scare me a bit," she verified.

Soon competing in youth rodeos, Wilson rode in all events, but breakaway roping and barrel racing became her specialties. "I really do like to rope," she stressed.

A qualifier for the Kansas High School Rodeo Finals several years, Wilson attended Colby Community College for two years on a rodeo scholarship and as a rodeo team member. She graduated from Colby last spring with dual degrees in communications and ag business. The college named her recipient of the Dr. Mosier Award, equiva-

lent of the year's most outstanding student.

Involvement in rodeo queen pageantry started for Wilson a decade ago. "I entered the Thomas County Rodeo Princess Pageant when I was 11, and although I didn't win, I tried again the next year and finally on my third try, I won," she remembered. "Not winning those years was the best thing that could have happened to me. I continued to work, learn, try to do better and I finally succeeded."

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president of the Miss Rodeo America Pageant.

All of that travel required considerable assistance, and Wilson was largely responsible for finding sponsors and conducting fund raising activities. This was all credited by Wilson as being an asset for her in the national pageant.

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When she arrived in Las Vegas, Wilson was among friends. "Actually there were only two out of the 26 other contestants who I didn't already know: Miss Rodeo Michigan and Miss Rodeo Hawaii," Wilson commented. "We all got along so well together and had so much fun. We'll be lifelong friends. I've been talking to several of them since then."

There was little time for rest after Wilson got home from Las Vegas. "I kicked off my yearlong reign of service representing and promoting the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association world-

wide at the National Western Stock Show in Denver during January," she noted. "With 20 rodeo performances, that really kept me busy."

Wilson also appeared at the Denver Western Wear Market. Following that, she went to a rodeo in Rapid City, S.D., and will be in

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event at pro rodeos."

In the meantime, her three Quarter Horses are sitting idle at home as Miss Rodeo America rides professional rodeo stock contractor mounts throughout the country. "I am trying to sell one of my horses, but I'll keep two so I'll be ready to rodeo when I've completed my reign," she confirmed.

Along with the uniquely designed gold tiara signifying her royalty, Wilson collected many other awards including a wardrobe, hats, saddle and Miss Rodeo America buckle. Each is cherished, but the \$10,000 educational scholarship will be put to good use. "I intend to pursue a communications degree at Fort Hays State and then have a career as a television reporter and work in rodeo public relations," she confided.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many great people, and I'm looking forward

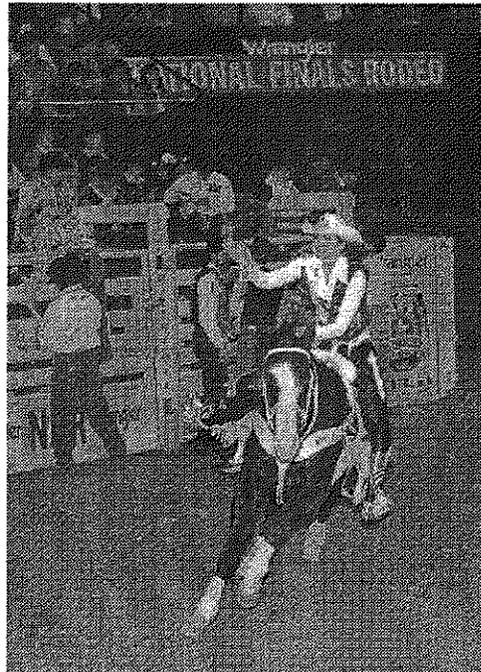
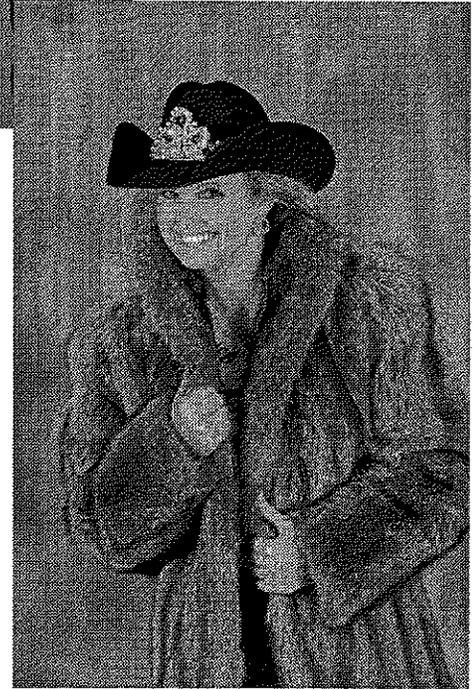
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