



The Cowgirls Historical Foundation

RIDING AND STYLING IN THE NAME OF PRESERVATION.

You could call them Old West ambassadors. The Cowgirls Historical Foundation “saddles up for service” in vintage cowgirl fashion. Based in Tempe, Arizona, the nonprofit is dedicated to increasing public awareness, appreciation, and preservation of America’s Western heritage and equestrian lifestyle. Foundation cowgirls appear around the country decked out in collectible rhinestone-studded vintage outfits from Hollywood’s western golden age, riding on beautiful vintage silver parade saddles and supporting “events that showcase the magical connection between humans and horses.” We talked to some of the cowgirls about horses, riding, and looking good doing it.



Chantel Lynette Miles

HOMETOWN: Tempe, Arizona.

AGE: 19.

COWGIRL CRED: I started taking riding lessons at 11 for fun; a year later, I had my own horse. Since then, horses have become my full-time hobby and passion.

YEARS WITH CHF: Four.

MY HORSE: Thundercloud Jr., aka Boomer—a bay paint. He’s like a big dog that wants constant attention.

WHAT I’M DOING NOW: I’m a sophomore at the University of Arizona, finishing my pre-nursing prerequisites in order to apply to nursing school in the spring.

TOP COWGIRL HONOR: Winning the title of Prescott Frontier Days Rodeo Queen for 2010, which has always been one of my favorite rodeos in Arizona.

COWGIRL THAT I MOST LOOK UP TO: Another CHF cowgirl, Taryn Brady. She has a personality and smile that light up a room, and to top it off, she has unbeatable horsemanship skills.

WHEN I’M NOT WEARING A VINTAGE COWGIRL OUTFIT, I’M USUALLY IN: A pair of Lucchese boots I got at the National Finals Rodeo a few years back and a pair of Wrangler Q-Baby jeans.

MY FAVORITE TRICK: Standing up on my horse.

FAVORITE PLACES TO PERFORM IN THE WEST: Los Angeles Equestrian Center. We’ve ridden in the Rose Parade three times and performed at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center. The crowd is so enthusiastic, and it makes the performance really exciting and fun.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE A TRAIL RIDE: Out my back door at my family’s home in Prescott, Arizona. Just a few minutes’ ride and you’re among the gorgeous pines and national forest.

I DRIVE: A blue 2007 Acura TSX. My favorite thing about it is the license plate: RODEOQQT.

FAVORITE ROAD SNACKS: Anything salty—chips, Goldfish, etc.

ON MY IPOD: Taylor Swift, The Format, Mae, Josh Turner, and John Mayer.

I ALWAYS PACK: A pair of sweatpants to change into. I love to be comfortable.

MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM: My mom.

BEST RIDING ADVICE: Patience is the key.



C&I Online
See more of the Cowgirls
Historical Foundation at
www.cowboysindians.com.

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Taryn Brady

HOMETOWN: Mesa, Arizona.

AGE: 21.

COWGIRL CRED: My mom says that when I was a baby, if she wanted me to smile for a photo, she would put me up on a horse. Twenty years later, it still works.

YEARS WITH CHF: Five.

MY HORSE: Cleo, a beautiful 8-year-old quarter horse. Cleo’s a bit vain—she loves to stare at herself in window reflections—but I think it’s justified.

WHAT I’M DOING NOW: I’m working on a joint bachelor’s-master’s program in broadcast journalism with the Barrett Honors College and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication—with a minor in geography—at Arizona State University. I want to be a broadcast meteorologist.

TOP COWGIRL HONOR: My current title, as Miss Rodeo Arizona 2009.

COWGIRL THAT I MOST LOOK UP TO: My grandma, Odile Frost Brady, a beautiful, kind, and talented equestrienne. She was the 1950 Reno Rodeo queen.

A COWGIRL IS: Independent, resourceful, strong, and tough. Mud, horse manure, rain, cold—none of it should impede a cowgirl’s willingness to go on a ride or help out at a rodeo. It also means paying respect to the heritage that came before us.

WHEN I’M NOT WEARING A VINTAGE COWGIRL OUTFIT, I’M USUALLY IN: A rodeo jacket; long-sleeved T-shirt with a pair of Wrangler, Stitch, or Diesel jeans; and my tall butterfly vintage Tony Lamas.

MY FAVORITE TRICK: The “Rodeo Rock-and-Roll Drill.” I run into the arena on my horse with a pink guitar; then I lip-sync to the Big & Rich song while standing on my horse. Then I jump off my horse, do the splits in the air, land on the ground, and start playing the guitar in the arena dirt, while my horse stands patiently next to me.

FAVORITE PLACES TO PERFORM IN THE WEST: I love performing in the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in conjunction with the Rose Parade. I also love performing at the Prescott [Frontier Days] Rodeo in Prescott, Arizona, on the Fourth of July. There’s nothing more patriotic than the Independence Day performance at the world’s oldest rodeo [held annually since 1888].

HOW DO YOU TRAIN FOR A RIDE: Consistent riding is really the best training. Riding works some interesting muscles and utilizes a different center of balance. The best way to effectively hone the skills and build the muscles is to ride often and hard. It also helps to get into the correct riding position—with your weight on the inside of the balls of the feet in the stirrups, ankles bent in, shoulders even, back supple, sitting up straight—and then try to stand up while riding and staying in the same exact riding position. That forces you to find the center of balance and build the necessary muscles faster. It also makes the proper seat feel more natural.

HOW DO YOU TRAIN YOUR HORSE FOR A RIDE: We use our horses in unusual environments that have many “spooky” things. I just try to expose my horse to as much scary stuff as possible. She’s a rodeo and a parade horse. I try to help her know what to acclimate to and what she should and shouldn’t be afraid of. I take my horse everywhere in the city. I ride her on the busy roads. I take her to the Sonic drive-in. I will ride her to parks and hobble her there so I can sit and read. This teaches her to relax even when the traffic is right there, she is in the city, and she is far from her friends.

I DRIVE: A sporty 2007 silver Ford Mustang, and to haul, a handsome 2500HD 4-wheel-drive white Chevy diesel truck.

FAVORITE ROAD SNACKS: Homemade granola bars that I make myself, Cow Tales [caramels], and freshly squeezed orange juice.

ON MY IPOD: Chris LeDoux, Johnny Cash, Garth Brooks, George Strait, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Mozart, Bach, Andrew Bird, Band of Horses, Arcade Fire, Stars, and Built to Spill.

I ALWAYS PACK: ChapStick, double-stick tape, a lint roller, Scriptures, rope, and a roping dummy.

MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM: My Irish Claddagh ring.

BEST RIDING ADVICE: Be aware. Listen to your horse. Have confidence. Tell people where you are planning to ride.





Nicole Carson Bonilla

HOMETOWN: North Hollywood, California.

AGE: 33. I've been married for 12 years to Gabe Bonilla, and we have five children [ages 10 to 1].

COWGIRL CRED: I've been a cowgirl since the day I was born. I grew up performing in the Carson Family Western Show, which began in the early 1930s with my grandfather, Buss Carson. My grandpa lived in Hollywood at the same time as Roy Rogers and Montie Montana, who were friends. Instead of pursuing a career in the Hollywood movie industry, my grandpa chose to tour the rodeo circuit. So, he began the Carson Stuntcapade, which consisted of Roman riding, trick-riding and roping, liberty drill, and dog acts. [The show] toured the United States, Mexico, and Canada, performing at large fairs and rodeos. My father, Merrill Carson, continued the family tradition, and I started singing "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" in the show when I was 3, while my grandpa played the guitar. A few years later, I began performing with my four sisters and brother, doing trick-roping, cancan, clogging, singing, and a dog act with poodles and Dalmatians. My last performance in the family show was the night before I moved to Utah to attend Brigham Young University.

YEARS WITH CHF: Almost three.

WHAT I'M DOING NOW: Western-style graphic design. I've designed promotional materials for several rodeos, Western-wear stores, horse trainers, and competitions, along with the Cowgirl Historical Foundation.

TOP COWGIRL HONOR: Riding in the 2008 Tournament of Roses Parade with CHF.

BEING A COWGIRL MEANS: There's a time to get dirty and there's a time to get gussied up. A cowgirl is never afraid to work hard. I think the best phrase to sum it all up is "cowgirl up." I do it every day of my life as a wife, mother, businesswoman, and equestrienne.

WHEN I'M NOT WEARING A VINTAGE COWGIRL OUTFIT, I'M USUALLY IN: MEK jeans. I'm always wearing jeans. Unless I'm going to church or in a bathing suit, I'm in a pair of jeans. Even if it's 115 degrees outside, I'm in a pair of jeans. My favorite cut is a medium-rise with a slightly flared leg. It's even better if the jeans have pocket flaps or rhinestones on the back pockets.

MY FAVORITE TRICK: At 6, I was taught how to trick-rope by my dad; I started trick-roping in our shows by age 8. Trick-roping is kind of like riding a bike: Once you learn how, you never forget.

MY FAVORITE ROPE TRICK: When I stand in the saddle of my horse while my horse is standing, and I spin a 75-foot-long rope around me and my horse creating a giant "wedding ring."

BEST PLACE TO TAKE A TRAIL RIDE: My favorite trail ride so far was the one I took up into the hills overlooking the Los Angeles Equestrian Center with my CHF girlfriends right after the Rose Parade Equestfest last December. The trail we were on led up to the Forest Lawn Mortuary, where Grandpa and Grandma Carson, and my dad, Merrill Carson, are buried. It was a sweet and touching moment for me to be on horseback next to their resting place.

I DRIVE: A silver 2002 GMC Yukon XL. It's great because it's big enough to pull a horse trailer and can fit a family of seven.

FAVORITE ROAD SNACKS: Trying to keep a cowgirl figure after five kids isn't always easy, so I keep my snacks pretty healthy. Grapes and apples always work well on road trips because they're naturally juicy. String cheese and trail mix also hit the spot.

ON MY IPOD: Black Eyed Peas, Big & Rich, Martina McBride.

I ALWAYS PACK: Water and snacks in my purse. I've either been pregnant or nursing for the last nine years, so I never leave home without water or snacks.

MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM: My wedding ring. Because I have five young children, I rarely bring them along to a CHF event. My wonderfully supportive husband stays home with them and lets me go off to have my cowgirl adventures. My wedding ring reminds me of the people I love most in the world: my husband and my dear children.

BEST RIDING ADVICE: Stay safe.

Wylene Wilson

HOMETOWN: Mesa, Arizona.

AGE: 30.

COWGIRL CRED: I've been chasing the dirt dream since I was 4, climbing on every horse, pony, and four-legged animal within arm's reach.

YEARS WITH CHF: Five.

MY HORSE: Black Widow, a 5-year-old quarter-horse mare, is my partner in crime for extreme cowboy races.

DAY JOB: I consider what I do not so much a job but a love. I break and train horses professionally—every breed, shape, size, and age you can imagine.

TOP HONORS: Placing second overall at Craig Cameron's Extreme Cowboy Race.

ALL-WOMEN'S CHALLENGE: I rode a mustang named Filthy Rich that I'd trained for just 125 days.

COWGIRL THAT I LOOK UP TO: I've never seen a woman ride like my sister Wenda Johnson—bareback, in a saddle, double, or backwards. I'll put my money on her any day.

COWGIRL CREED: My mom always said, "Be a workhorse first and a show horse later." And that's a motto I'll always stick by.

WHEN I'M NOT IN A VINTAGE COWGIRL OUTFIT, I'M USUALLY IN: Extra-long, comfy starched blue jeans, a long-sleeved V-neck shirt, custom boots by Luskey's/Ryon's in Fort Worth [Texas], and a custom JW Brooks hat—I have eight. Some people collect shoes. I collect hats.

FAVORITE TRICK: Stepping off a horse while he's running is my trademark. Recently I taught my mustang, Filthy Rich, how to roll onto his back like a dog while I sit on his belly. I was shocked that he let me roll him over, since horses naturally do not stay in that position. I also love to stand up on horseback while cracking a bullwhip. I've been known to do a back flip off a horse's back as well.

FAVORITE PLACE TO PERFORM: Any rodeo or arena in Arizona. With such a beautiful backdrop and amazing sunsets, you can't beat it.

I DRIVE: A one-ton 2008 Dodge white Dually.

FAVORITE ROAD SNACK: Spitz sunflower seeds (dill-pickle flavor).

ON MY IPOD: Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Journey, REO Speedwagon, Etta James, George Strait, Josh Turner, Miranda Lambert, Lee Ann Womack.

I ALWAYS PACK: ChapStick and DKNY Be Delicious and Dolce & Gabbana Light Blue perfume. I also love to wear new socks—as strange as that sounds—so I pack new socks all the time.

MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM: I'm not that superstitious, but I'm lucky to have my life. To me, that is the greatest charm of all.

MY BEST RIDING ADVICE: You never know if you don't go.



riding

Amanda Gomez

HOMETOWN: Tempe, Arizona.

AGE: 21.

COWGIRL CRED: I rode my first pony at 3, competed in my first rodeo-queen competition when I was 8, and haven't looked back.

YEARS WITH CHF: Since it began in 2005.

MY HORSE: I've had a few horses but am currently horseless since I'm attending college out of state. My last horse was Mescal, a 15-year-old quarter horse who loved eating pancakes and licking the syrup off the plate.

WHAT I'M DOING NOW: I'm a senior broadcast-journalism major at the University of La Verne in La Verne, California.

TOP COWGIRL HONOR: During my reign as Arizona High School Rodeo Queen, while competing for the title of National High School Rodeo Queen, I won the coveted Horsemanship Award.

BEING A COWGIRL MEANS: I'm able to represent and help preserve our Western heritage and the wonderful sport of rodeo.

WHEN I'M NOT WEARING A VINTAGE COWGIRL OUTFIT, I'M USUALLY IN: My favorite pair of Wrangler 20X jeans or a cute dress and my BCBG[irls] copper Western dress boots.

MY FAVORITE TRICK: I don't really have a trick, but I love to go fast. There's no better feeling than the wind blowing through your hair as your horse races through the dirt.

FAVORITE PLACES TO PERFORM

IN THE WEST: The Payson, Gilbert, and Prescott rodeos [in Arizona]. The crowds are amazing, and I feel like we're always welcome when we enter the rodeo arena. Rodeo is a popular sport in Arizona, and rain or shine, we always seem to draw big audiences.

BEST PLACE TO TAKE A TRAIL RIDE: When I was younger, I loved to ride the open range in the high desert at our family farm in New Mexico. It was so much fun to be able to ride with nothing but endless miles of trail ahead of you, but I had to make sure my horse didn't step in a rabbit hole.


I DRIVE: A 2006 white Volkswagen Jetta.

FAVORITE ROAD SNACKS: I love Cheez-Its — they're my guilty pleasure, and unfortunately, once I eat one, I can't stop eating them.

ON MY IPOD: Taylor Swift, Gary Allan, Rascal Flatts, Britney Spears.

I ALWAYS PACK: My makeup and hair straightener.

MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM: A pair of horseshoe earrings.

BEST RIDING ADVICE: If you fall off, always get back on and cowgirl up. Perseverance and confidence are key cowgirl attributes. 



You can catch the cowgirls of the Cowgirls Historical Foundation in this year's Rose Bowl Parade. Learn more online at www.cowgirlshistoricalfoundation.com.

—Ellise Pierce



Looking Good

The riders of the Cowgirls Historical Foundation dress in some of the fanciest duds in the West. How's a girl to choose?

NICOLE BONILLA I love wearing my Grandpa Buss Carson's Rose Parade shirt. The shirt is a creamy yellow with red roses and green vines. It is one of two shirts my grandpa had made to ride in his first Rose Parade in 1955. The beautiful roses and stems were embroidered by the artists at Nudie Cohn's Rodeo Tailors. The golden color of the shirt was selected to coordinate with my family's beautiful golden palomino horses, which were descendants of Roy Rogers' horse, Trigger. I made a pair of red riding pants with coordinating embroidery and rhinestones to complete the outfit. Every time I wear this outfit I am reminded of my family's legacy, which



consisted of hard work, love for family, and desire to entertain a crowd. My other favorite is the gold Nudie pantsuit from the 1960s. I feel like the Rhinestone Cowgirl any time I get to wear it. The outfit is made of Kings gold gabardine, embellished with the artistry of vintage embroidered red poppies and winding green vines. Originally made for a talented Western performer, the outfit is covered from neck to toe in rhinestones.

TARYN BRADY My favorite vintage outfit belonged to my grandmother. It is a Nathan

Turk pantsuit that is deep-green and cream gabardine fabric with chain-stitch red-cherry embroidery. She wore it when she was the 1950 Reno Rodeo Queen. Her father, my great-grandfather, was the president of the Reno Rodeo in 1963 and was responsible for encouraging the committee to put on a rodeo after a fire had devastated the grounds the year before. Just this past summer, I got to wear my grandmother's same clothes to the Reno Rodeo as Miss Rodeo Arizona. They brought me in on a stagecoach and introduced me as the "great-granddaughter of Harry Frost, who has done so much for the Reno Rodeo." As I participate in the sport of rodeo and the Western way of life, I feel as if I am carrying on the legacy of those who came before me—I even get to wear a part of that legacy in my grandmother's clothes.

WYLENE WILSON There is a yellow outfit that was originally made for a man that is embellished with red and green flowers. It is flashy, yet unique. The material is heavy polyester, and the outfit is covered in rhinestones and full of vibrant color. I really do enjoy wearing it because it's just so different, and it really stands out!

CHANTEL MILES My favorite outfit is Nathan Turk's exquisite purple butterfly pantsuit. It's a fiesta of vibrant colors with chain-stitch embroidered flowers and butterflies. Designed over 50 years ago, its patterns are timeless. I've always enjoyed wearing it in Rose Parade events and calendar photos because purple is my favorite color.

AMANDA GOMEZ My favorite vintage outfit is my gray riding skirt outfit with [matching] jacket. It has light-pink roses and greenery embroidered down the front of the jacket as well as down the front of the riding skirt. It is covered in rhinestones and comes with gray boots to match. I feel so special wearing this outfit knowing that it belongs to me and was designed and made by the Jan'l, who has been so dedicated and helpful to the Cowgirls Historical Foundation and their mission. Jan'l's inspiration for the outfit came from a vintage pattern. It represents a timeless era when cowgirls adorned their riding skirts. I've been fortunate enough to wear it in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade two years in a row. —E.P.