

Rose Parade Ride Holds Special Significance for One Cowgirl

By Cecily Markland
The Beehive

Recognized as ambassadors of the Western way of life, the Cowgirls Historical Foundation is known for its focus on preserving Western heritage and history.

Now, the Cowgirls are making a bit

of history of their own as they were recently invited to participate in the prestigious Tournament of Roses parade for the third year in a row.

Among the group's members, 10 of whom will ride in the Parade, are several who are Latter-day Saints.

One, Nicole (Carson) Bonilla, has a family history of several generations of Church activity as well as deep roots in Western showmanship, as her grandfather was a trick roper and performer who rode with the likes of Roy Rogers.

Nicole says, "I am honored to have

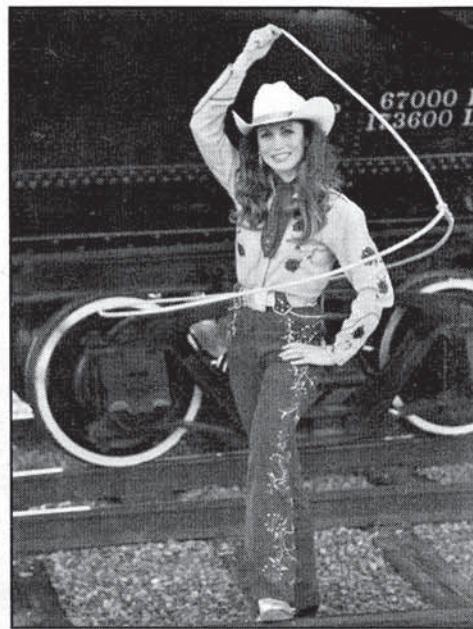


Photo by Charles Brooks

One of the 10 members of the Cowgirls Historical Foundation who will ride in the Tournament of Roses Parade this year is Nicole Bonilla, of the Chandler East Stake, shown wearing the shirt she had altered from the one her grandfather, Buss Carson, wore in the first of 35 consecutive Rose Parade rides.

Continued on pg. 19



Photo by Patricia Gomez

The Cowgirls Historical Foundation feels "extremely honored" to have been invited for the third year in a row to ride in the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's Day, according to Julee Brady, of the Citrus Heights Stake, who handles the group's public relations and is one of several Latter-day Saints in the group.

the opportunity to ride in the Rose Parade. My grandpa, Buss Carson, rode in the parade for 35 consecutive years. I will be wearing a shirt he had made for his first appearance in the Parade. I had the shirt altered and I made a pair of pants to go with it. I will also be riding in his Bohlin silver saddle."

Her grandfather, wanting to provide an opportunity for his family to work together, started the Carson Family Stunt Capade in the late 1930s. The *trick-riding* and roping show toured the United States, Mexico and Canada, performing at large fairs and rodeos.

"My dad (Merrill Carson), the youngest of his five children, had the same goal in mind for our family," Nicole explains. "I am one of six children and we all grew up performing in the family show."

She did trick-roping, clogging, singing and a dog act. At 15, she performed the main horse act with her palomino stallion, Majestic (a great-grandson of Roy Rogers' horse Trigger).

Nicole's father passed away three years ago, and she says, "My grandma, grandpa and dad all are buried in Forest Lawn Mortuary that overlooks the Los Angeles Equestrian Center where we will be performing as part of the Rose Parade. This will be a very special and personally significant experience for me."

Nicole, who graduated from BYU in graphic design/advertising, is married to Gabe Bonilla. Together they run Bonilla Design & Advertising out of their home. They have five children. Nicole is Lindsay 1st Ward's Laurel advisor and Gabe is a high councilor in Chandler East Stake.

"I feel blessed to be part of the Cowgirls Historical Foundation—a group that celebrates the same values, traditions, and heritage that are so dear to my heart and part of my own family's legacy and that I hope to pass on to my children," she says.

Watch the Cowgirls in the Parade

New Year's Day, and for information about their educational and community service programs, visit www.cowgirl-historicalfoundation.com.