

PARKER COUNTY

# MAVERICK<sup>TM</sup>

PREMIERE ISSUE

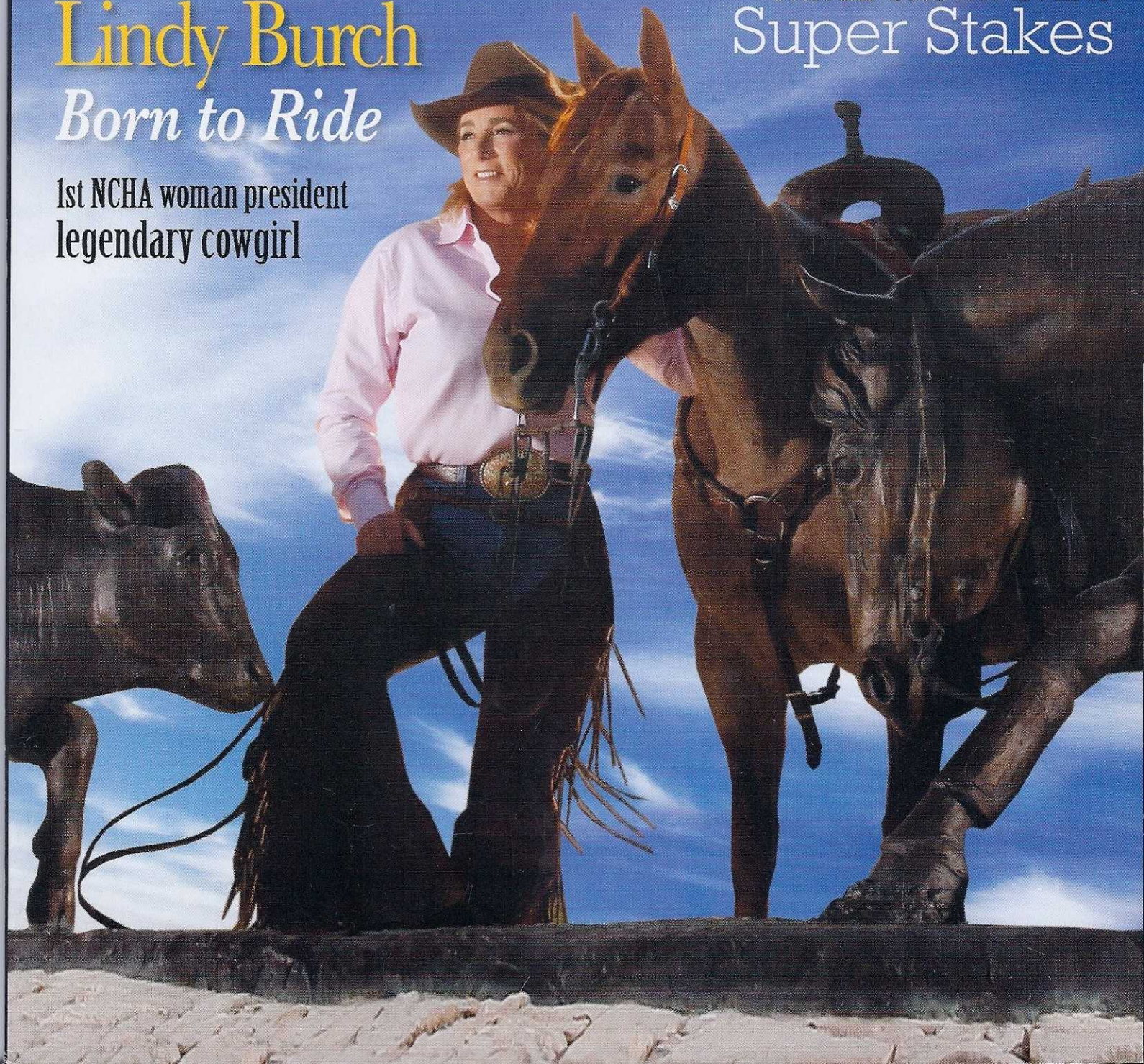
MAGAZINE

## Lindy Burch

*Born to Ride*

1st NCHA woman president  
legendary cowgirl

TRIPLE CROWN EVENT  
Super Stakes





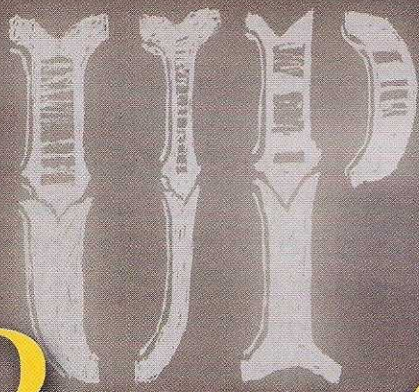
# GOVERNOR

# Lindy Burch was

By Dacia J. Coffey





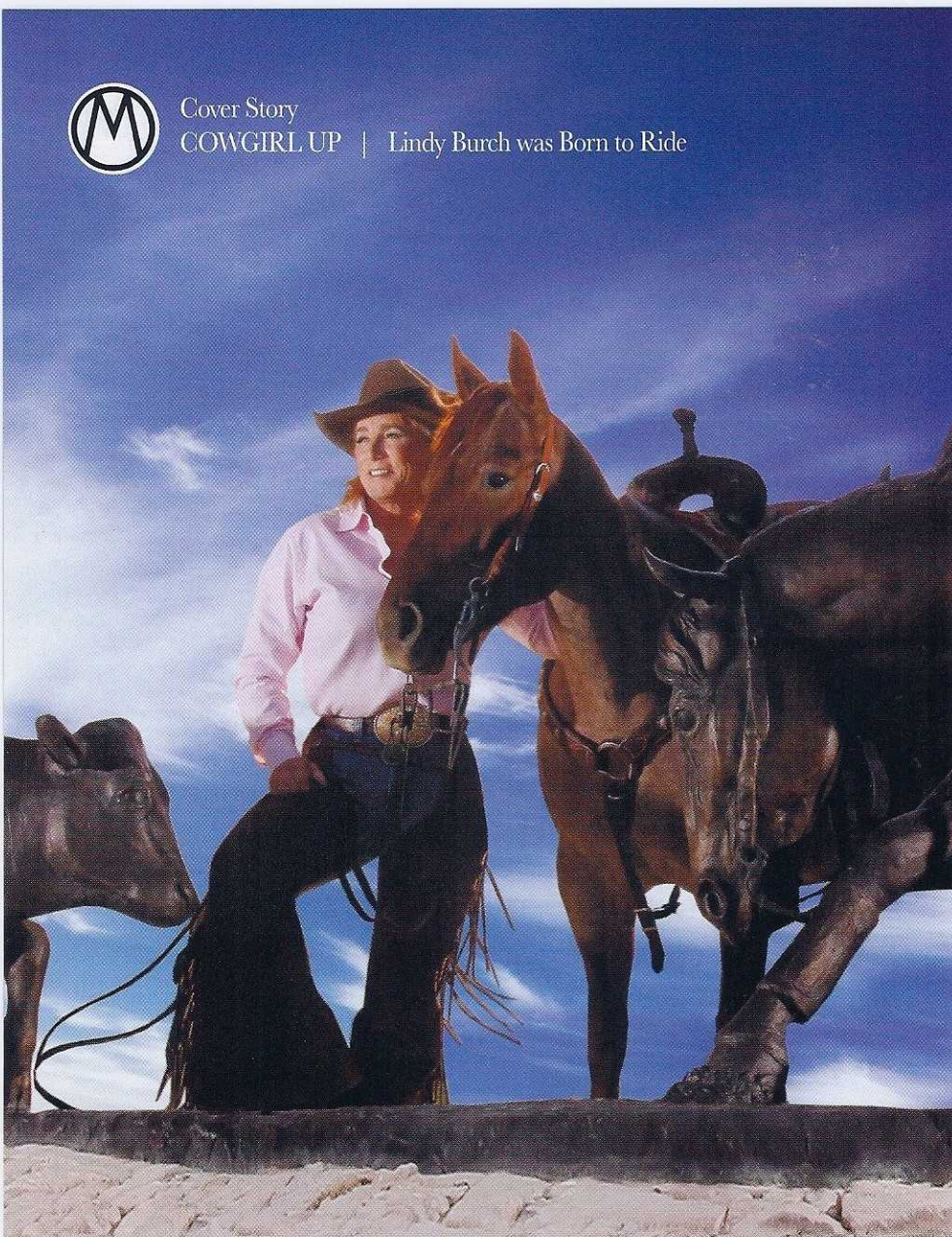


# Born to Ride

With the approach of the Triple Crown event, Super Stakes, many eyes turn once again to legendary cowgirl and first woman president of the National Cutting Horse Association, Lindy Burch. A maverick in her own right, Lindy has blazed trails and helped to advance the status and reach of this riveting sport. The first woman to ever win the NCHA Futurity, she is one of six equestrians to ever win back-to-back Futurity titles. She has already been inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, as well as the NCHA Rider Hall of Fame and NCHA Members Hall of Fame. But, behind all the glory sits a kind-hearted outdoorswoman, passionate about giving back to the sport that has given her so much.







Much has been made of Burch's accomplishments as a woman, but the truth is her success stands on its own. "The fact that I'm a woman is hard to ignore," explained Lindy. "Not a lot of women decide cutting is their focus." But as she ascended the ranks, hearing comments about how she was a good rider—for a woman—still got to her. "I wanted to be the best regardless of my gender," she said.

Because of the minimal involvement of women in the competitive cutting horse sport, her ire was justified—no special rules or points have ever been given for women versus men. In this even playing field, her ability and her remarkable record stands on its own.

Growing up in southern California, Lindy's father instilled a love of the outdoors and horses. Riding through Van Nuys and Sepulveda Dam was an integral part of their family character and daily life. Being the oldest in the family and a self-described tomboy, Lindy explained she was not raised to think women were limited in what they could accomplish. "I wasn't seen as a girl—I was just Lindy."

So at age 15 when she saw cutting for the first time, she didn't pause before announcing her interest. When a cutting horse trainer moved across the street from her family, Lindy struck a bargain with him. In exchange for saddling horses and cleaning stalls, the trainer would teach her the mechanics of cutting horses.

It wasn't long before people were taking notice of her abilities and asking her to work their horses as well. "At 18, it was great to get paid doing something I would have done for free, but it still didn't occur to me that I could create a life doing this," said Lindy.

With good grades on her side, she set her sights on becoming a veterinarian, first earning her Bachelors in Zoology and a Masters in Endocrinology. While working on her doctorate, she began showing at local events and found herself with a small stable of show horses. "It didn't seem like a leap of faith at the time, but I guess really it was," said Lindy of that fateful decision to pursue cutting full-time. "It just felt like the right thing to do."



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## OFF AND RUNNING

In 1979, Lindy became the only woman to claim the title of NCHA Open Futurity Reserve Champion. She followed this up by setting a record and winning the Open Futurity Championship in 1980—only one other woman has accomplished this to date. Lindy continued her work on the heels of her success and eventually entered into a partnership that helped establish the Oxbow Ranch as a leader among cutting horse owners and breeders. In the 90's, she switched her focus to developing a small, elite group of broodmares and designed her own facility in Weatherford, Texas. Her ranch is the 80 Ranch, named for a perfect score in cutting horse events.

Lindy has become one of the all-time leading money earners in the sport. Her career is marked by spectacular accomplishment. Lindy became the first rider in history to win all four go-a-rounds of the Open World Finals in 1995. She had another record-setting ride in 1998 at the NCHA Open World Finals, accruing 233 points, which still stands as the all-time highest score for an NCHA event. In 2000, she became the lone woman to win the NCHA Open World Championship. Only six other riders have won both the Open World Championship and the Futurity. She attributes her success to persistent hard work and laughed when explaining,

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“Luck is always a factor, but the harder you work, it seems the luckier you become.”

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Of her record, she expresses surprise that it still stands with the outstanding horses to show in the last few years. “Nowadays, most trainers are capable of winning the large events on any given day and the horse power is becoming more and more integral,” explained Lindy. “But that record will be broken eventually and I hope to do it.”

## LEADING THE CHARGE

Most mornings will find Lindy tending to NCHA business in her office before heading outside. Three helpers and an assistant rider allow her to work with as many as nine horses a day. With foaling season, her evenings are spent checking on the broodmares—weekends are dedicated to keeping the horses ready for the aged events and qualifying in the top 15 for finals. When she can, she fits in a nice glass of wine or a vacation for bird hunting.



A perfect depiction of the intensity and grace of a cutting horse in action, the life-like sculpture “The Finalist” resides in Fort Worth’s cultural district in front of the offices of the National Cutting Horse Association. An elegant nod to the joint history shared by NCHA and the city, it was sculpted by renowned artist, former cutting horse trainer and past NCHA president, Jim Reno. The sculpture is a gorgeous example of Reno’s intuitive understanding of equine musculature and his love for these majestic animals.

Commissioned by Ann Marion, famed owner of the 6666 Ranches and philanthropist, “The Finalist” was presented to the city in 2005 to much fanfare. The beauty and power of this grand work of art is a fitting monument to a sport that originated from the everyday necessity of good horses in cattle handling and ranch life. Reno has earned great acclaim both for his art and his work in the cutting horse industry.

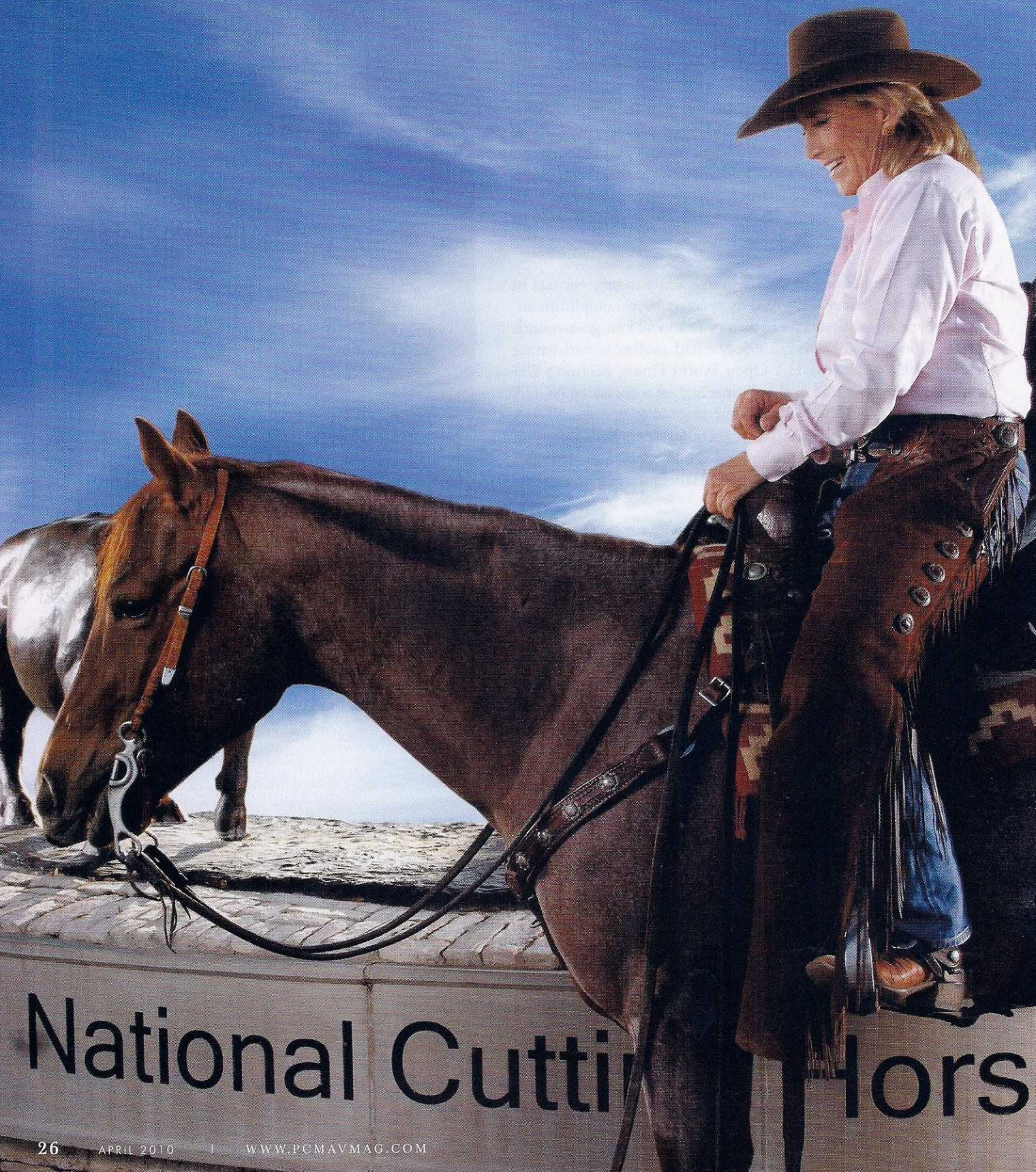
His sculptures are also found at the Kentucky Horse Park, The National Quarter Horse Association, Texas A&M and Sea World.





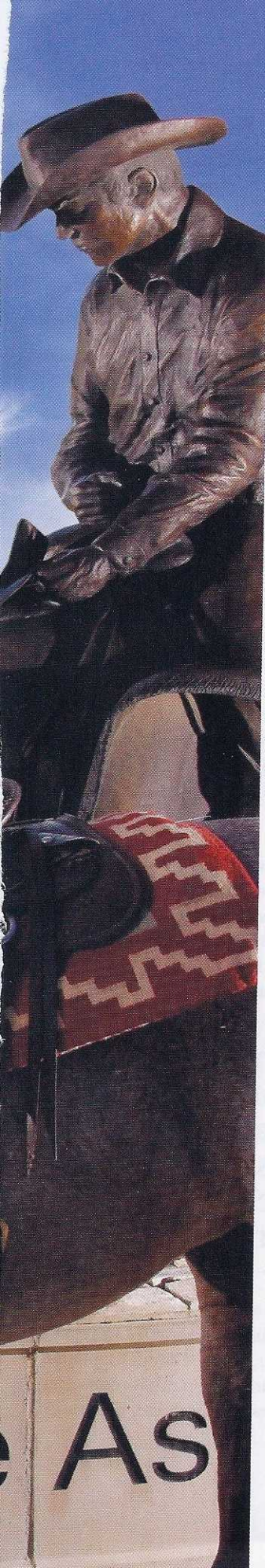
# Cover Story

COWGIRL UP | Lindy Burch was Born to Ride



# National Cutting Horse





Lindy became the president of the NCHA in 2001 and regards her position as a great honor. A thankless job in many ways, it represents an opportunity for her to give back. Under her leadership, the NCHA has reached record membership numbers. "I never want it said that I was a taker and not a giver," said Lindy. "I have had a great life doing what I love. It gives me great fulfillment to help advance the association and move the sport forward."

In addition to her dedication to the NCHA, she champions these four-legged athletes by serving on the American Quarter Horse Association Horse Research Committee and the Colorado State University Equine Orthopedic Research

Committee. Their vision is to maintain the horses' ability, longevity and quality of life by preventing injury and improving surgery, rehabilitation and medicines. While her presence on these boards is an intriguing return to her education and background, it is simply another indication that Lindy lives her life how she rides—with integrity, focus and heart.

It might be the alert, pricking of the ears or the way her eyes would follow the cow's every move. She may have caught the attention of the roundup boss with the instinctive way she would give the cow room while staying alert and focused. A cowboy could put his hands down and give this cutting horse the freedom to complete the task on her own.

## THE HISTORY OF CUTTING AND THE NCHA

In the 1800's, the cutting horse was a special member of the ranch stable who eased the task of separating cattle from the herd for sorting, vaccination and castration, but as the cattle ranches became more industrialized, using pickup trucks and sorting shoots, cutting horses began to fade into the history books.

In 1898, the first advertised cutting horse contest was held in Haskell, Texas. Eleven riders competed for the \$150 purse before a crowd of 15,000. Cutting horse competitions began popping up more regularly and in 1919 the event was added to the annual rodeo during the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth. Twenty-seven years later, 13 cutting horse owners met during this same show to discuss the forma-

tion of a local association to set common rules and procedures for the sport and the National Cutting Horse Association was born. By 1963, this group recorded over 700 events in a single year and prize money totaled over \$400,000.

Today, the organization's goals continue to be straightforward—promote cutting competition, set standardized rules and preserve the cutting





# SUPER STAKES

The Super Stakes, one of the six majors for aged events, will be held at the Will Rogers Coliseum, March 26 through April 16. A truly exciting experience for fans and riders alike, the Super Stakes holds the second largest purse of the year. XTO Energy is the presenting sponsor for this event.

"With the large purse and the prestige that comes with this event, you never know when you're going to see that truly extraordinary ride," adds Lindy.

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horse's heritage. Cutters from around the world now compete in over 2,200 NCHA events worldwide, including six major events, for purses totaling over \$40 million. The NCHA publishes a monthly magazine, manages partnerships with corporate sponsors, conducts educational clinics and has developed a well rounded youth program.

Six major events construct the competitive heart of the NCHA: the Futurity, Super Stakes, Summer Cutting Spectacular, World Finals and the Eastern and Western National Championships. Limited age events take center stage for competition and media attention, culminating in the Triple Crown of Cutting—Super Stakes, Summer Spectacular and the premiere event, the Futurity. The ultimate stage for young horses, breeders, trainers and riders live to qualify for the finals of the Futurity. The winnings total over \$10 million for these three events alone. (The prize money distributed from the Triple Crown of Thoroughbred racing totaled \$4 million, by comparison.)

The NCHA continues to build on the international attention and excitement they have garnered around these events and are now focusing on expanding the platform for the World Championship. Affectionately referred to as "The Weekend," over 1,500 events are held for a wide range of classes outside of the limited-age events and leading up to the World Series of Cutting. With rock-n-roll music, colorful commentators and total crowd involvement, it is cutting horse excitement at its finest.

The NCHA has upped the purse amounts; the top 15 compete in the World Championship during the Futurity. "Bringing more attention to the open events makes for a more balanced sport and it's the right thing to do," said Lindy Burch, president of the NCHA. "It is total entertainment for the fans, and it appeals to a new market which helps us grow this sport."

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It's no wonder that the NCHA has helped to make cutting one of the most popular equestrian sports of today. Spins, stops and lead changes keep crowds on the edge of their seats.

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The combination of power, instinct and speed mixed with tradition and history makes horse cutting a truly mesmerizing and exhilarating spectacle for everyone involved. As the "Cutting Capital of the World," Weatherford has unique access into this intriguing world where the sport not only captures our heritage, but our hearts as well.