

Nancy Alto Renfro

This determined horsewoman made her mark early as an amateur.

By Laura Stevens



Nancy rode Elis A Sleepin (Too Sleep To Zip-Vested Investment by Investment Asset) in senior western riding at the 2014 AQHA World Championship Show.

LARRY JO STARKEY

FOR NANCY ALTO-RENFRO, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE horses. An accomplished youth rider, Nancy took on the professionals at the AQHA World Championship Show at age 16 and continued her winning ways later as an amateur, where she was twice the top all-around amateur at the AQHA World Show.

Since turning professional in 2004, Nancy has left her mark as an AQHA Professional Horseman and judge. In 2013 alone, Nancy coached three of her students to world show wins: Mary Brown and Zippos Petite Prince won western riding at the Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show; Christine Hocutt-Senteney and Believe Hes Blazing won horsemanship at the Adequan Select World Championship Show; and Shannon Brown led Huntin A Gal to the championship title in showmanship at the AQHA World Show.

With a resume of championship titles and devoted clients, it's no wonder that when the *Journal* caught up with Nancy, talk quickly turned to good horses and good people.

The word that best describes me is: Determined.

What is your idea of perfect happiness? Sitting on a beach with my husband watching our little girls play.

I can't live without my ... cup of coffee in the morning!

How do you start your day? I get up at 6 a.m. and make coffee. Next, I get my girls ready for school and drop them off, then I'm out to the barn.

What is your most treasured memory? Being able to have the memory of my time with my mom while she was alive.

Tell us about your family. I am married to my husband, Thomas, and we have two daughters: Madison, 7, and Meghan, 5.

How would your friends describe you? Dedicated, passionate, focused and a competitor.

If you weren't a horsewoman, what career might you pursue? Accounting.

My worst habit is: Picking at my fingernails.

What is the best decision you've ever made? Giving up my amateur card and becoming a judge.

How do you balance family life, clients, riding, showing and judging? (Super powers, right?) By staying honest with myself and with my clients.

Tell us about the funniest experience you've had while judging. Probably the funniest is when Chris Jeter's chair broke in the middle of judging a pattern class.

What would your clients say is your most frequently used instruction? Elbows! And to use their feet.

What has been the most meaningful part of your involvement with horses? Watching my clients excel and meet their goals – whether big or small.



Nancy and Conclucives Bar Cody (Conclucives Dare-Ole Cody Bar Doll by Ole Bartender) were the all-around amateurs at the 1996 World Show.

What makes you proud to be involved with AQHA? I think AQHA is a great organization for our kids. It teaches life lessons that they will take into adulthood.

In what ways have you seen the horse industry evolve? Our industry evolves daily, constantly striving to be better.

What inspired you to make the transition from amateur to professional? I had a very successful amateur career. I have the personality of always asking "What can I do next?" So turning professional had been at the back of my mind for some time. I was lucky in that I had two very close friends, Christine Hocutt and Jan Brown, who kept encouraging me to turn professional. It was when Chris' horse, Believe Hes Blazing, was sent home after the World Show that I started riding him at Chris' encouragement. The rest is history!

You've owned and shown some extraordinary performers, like two-time AQHA World Show all-around amateur horse Conclucives Bar Cody and Reserve Superhorse and leading stallion Artful Investment. Is there a standout in your eyes? I have been blessed to ride some great horses. Everyone always asks who's the standout, and Conclucives Bar Cody would have to be it. But my first horse, O'to Windy, will always be my favorite. She was my first AQHA world champion when we won the senior trail together when I was 16. My mom broke her to ride and I started showing her when she was 4 and I was 7.

What horsemen do you admire most? I admire a lot of horsemen in this industry, but Jack Kyle and Nancy Easton would have to be whom I admire most. Some of Jack's words of wisdom I still carry with me today. Nancy was like a second mom to me for many years.

What has been your most exhilarating moment in the show pen? I have had many, but my first world championship at age 16 in the senior trail, and winning the world championship in hunt seat equitation for the first time both stand out. 🍷

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