

Karen Russell
KQHA Hall of Fame Inductee

Karen Russell feels she has been very fortunate to combine the two passions in her life: horses and teaching.

A Kansas native, Karen has been riding as long as she can remember. A photo of her at five years of age shows her astride her pony Sarah in Nickerson, Kansas. As an adult, Karen taught elementary school students for 23 years working with both regular and special education students. Although teachers have plenty to do during the regular school day, Karen continued working with students long after the final bell had rung. During most of her teaching career she coached all girls' sports offered.

As if teaching and coaching didn't make for a long enough day, Karen could be found in the saddle most nights from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. with the weekends spent hauling to shows. Eventually the time came when she had to give up teaching and concentrate on the horses, but even then, she spent much time teaching riding techniques to both youth and adults. These clinics were and are still extremely popular.

During her 30 years as a trainer and riding instructor, Karen has trained and shown horses in a variety of events and coached youth to numerous World Championships and year-end awards. In fact, most of the youth in the 1979 Kansas Youth World Championship team had been coached or taught by Karen at some time during their show careers.

While Karen specializes in English and Western rail classes as well as horsemanship and English equitation classes, she says she really enjoys the speed events as well. She still has several photos that show her participating in the racing events; one shows her aboard Dutch Cole as he won the barrel racing class in the GRA Rodeo in Strong City in 1972, and another shows her winning the Hidden Valley KQHA State finals on Roneys Penny in 1967.

Although Karen has not taught in the public school system for many years, she still uses the techniques she learned in the classroom to focus on individual learning styles. An article in Quarter Horse journal several years ago emphasized these techniques.

Karen has been a longtime member of both the Kansas Quarter Horse Association and the American Quarter Horse Association. She is also listed as an AQHA Professional Horseman. As a judge for both the AQHA and the NSBA, Karen has traveled across the country and judged at some of the nation's top shows.