

The Rodeo Rider and the President

Rising rodeo star finds unusual ally in Western president

by Justin Carinci of the Polk County Itemizer Observer in Dallas, Ore. (reprinted with permission)

MONMOUTH – At age 8, Trinity Hall had her first taste of the fierce competition in rodeo. After one youth event, she was hooked.

“It was an eye-opener,” Hall said. “They were having fun but they took it kind of seriously.”

Fortunately, Hall thrives under that kind of pressure. Now a senior at Western Oregon University, she ranks in the top ten in the entire Northwest in two different rodeo events.

The Polk County native holds another honor at Western – she’s the university’s only rodeo participant.

Since Western has no team, Hall competes as an independent. As a Western student, however, she needed approval from a dean or the university president to compete.

When Hall couldn’t find her dean, she found herself in President Philip Conn’s office.

“I was delighted to know Western Oregon University has a rodeo team of one,” Conn said. Hall was equally surprised to find herself talking to a major rodeo fan.

Conn served as president of Dickinson State University in North Dakota and chancellor of University of Tennessee Martin, both rodeo champions in their respective regions. A bronc rider statue graces Conn’s desk.

Conn gladly signed Hall’s paperwork. Under National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association rules, Hall also needed an advisor.

Conn stepped in again, if only in name. “Technically that’s true,” he said of his advisor title. “We joke about that.”

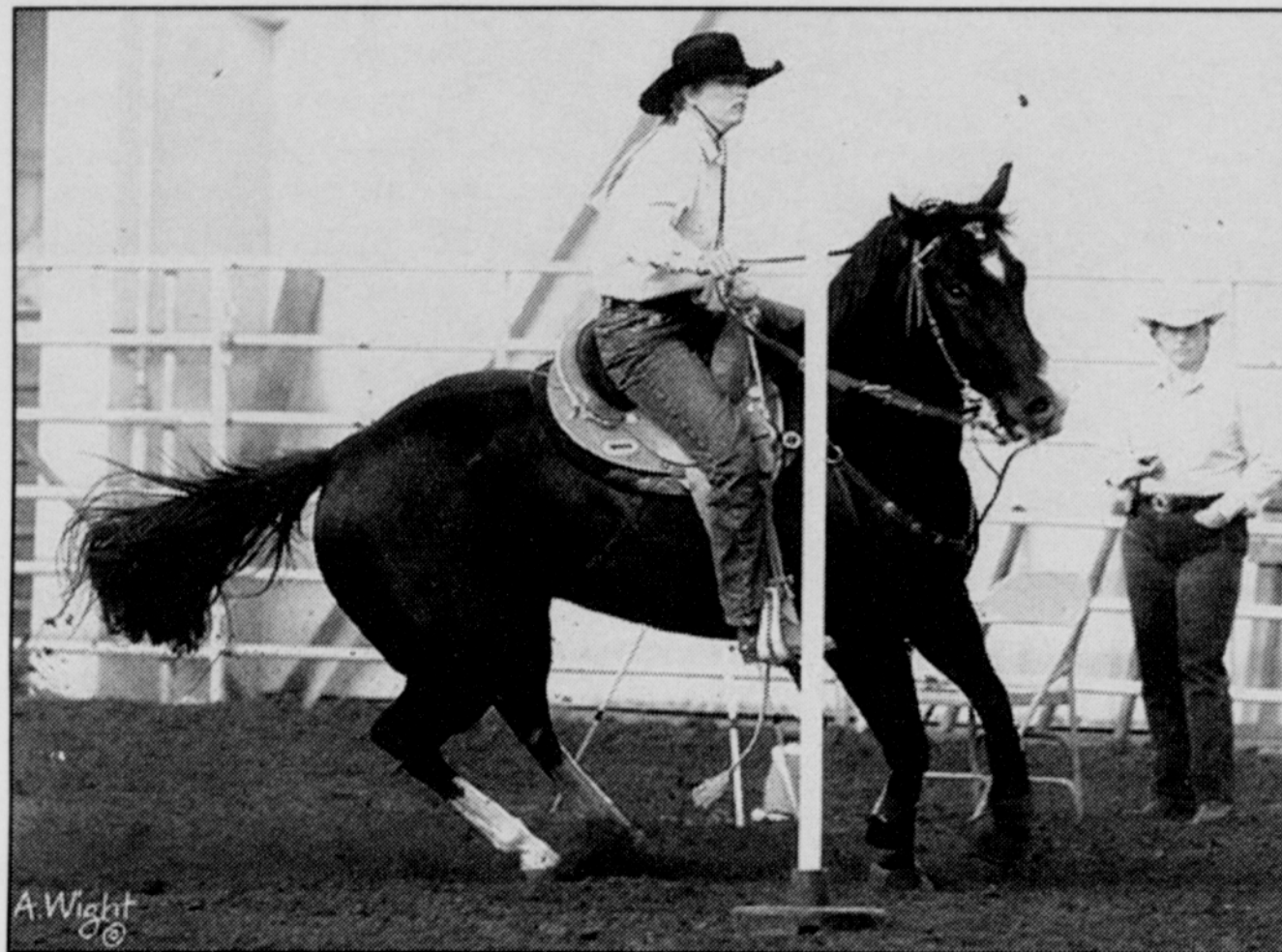
“My advice is ‘stay on the horse.’”

That advice serves Hall well for barrel racing. In that event, riders maneuver the horse around three barrels as quickly as possible.

Hall is ranked in the top five for the event in all of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Conn also encouraged her to get off the horse sometimes, like for the goat tying event. Hall holds nothing back in that event, jumping off her horse at a run to throw and tie the goat.

The speed and the unpredictability of animals make goat tying one of the



Trinity Hall

most dangerous events, Hall said. “I’ve been dragged and stepped on by the horse.”

Scrapes and bruises don’t deter Hall. She hopes to turn professional after college.

As a woman in rodeo, however, Hall has fewer options. On the college circuit, she competes in three events, including breakaway cattle roping.

In the National Professional Rodeo Association, rodeo’s pro circuit, Hall would be limited to barrel racing. Only men compete in the remaining events.

She’d like to have more doors open to women – she challenges sexist comments when she hears them. But she doesn’t expect to turn the chauvinist cowboy culture around by herself.

“It would be a tough battle,” Hall said.

Not that Hall has shied from tough battles before. She works with her coach in Hermiston every chance she gets.

That dedication shows in her academic goals as well. She studied at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho and Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, earning an associate’s degree in secondary education.

Hall, a Native American (Siletz), won a Diversity Scholarship from Western Oregon University’s Multicultural Student Services and Programs. She has a 3.8 grade-point average on her way to a public administration degree.

Hall gets real-world experience as an intern for the City of Dallas, working in community development and human resources. “It’s like a hands-on government class,” said Community Development Director Jerry Wyatt.

So far, she’s acing the class. “She works really hard,” Wyatt said. “Give her any assignment and she goes right after it.”

Despite her government experience, Hall’s career goal remains what it was at age 12 – she wants to teach. After considering high school, Hall now wants to teach elementary school.

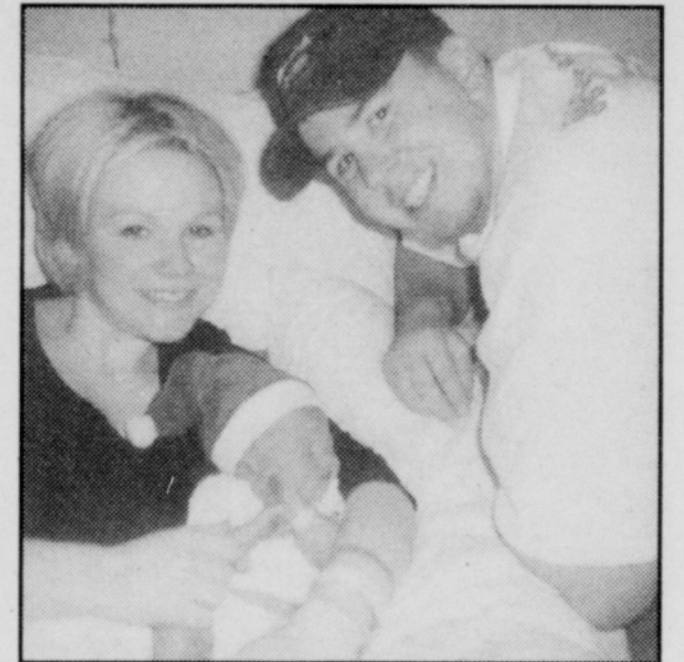
Hall doesn’t see her paths as cowgirl and teacher as incongruous. She finds parallels between training a horse for rodeo and molding young minds to learn.

“You can see the progress a horse makes just like a kid,” Hall said. As with rodeo, success requires the teacher keep learning. “You have to train for yourself; you have to train for the horse.”

Hall hopes the training pays off in a trip to the national college rodeo finals next summer in Casper, Wyo. If she does go, Conn said he’d love to attend.

Conn wants to see Western represented in the finals. He has fond memories of representing other schools at nationals.

“We have a cowboy presidents gathering,” he said. “We swagger about and act like we have something to do with it.”



Misti and Brian Bellinger with their new baby, Blake Conner

Blake Joins Bellinger Family

by proud grandpa Dub Bellinger

Congratulations to Brian and Misti Bellinger and their brand new baby, Blake Conner Bellinger.

Quality of Life

by Eva E. Clayton

At this time of year our people have gone through a holiday season, winter has brought her blanket of chill, and the short day hours never seem to be enough.

This, together with an important council election looming on the horizon, stretches the feeling of good tiding.

Manipulation, voices of discontent, group alignment, can put us all at odds.

I feel our people need to be careful and not revert to a grape-stomping mentality. It takes time to make a fine wine.

People bruise easily, feelings can and do run deep.

The twine of strength, respect, and camaraderie must interweave itself throughout our community, our programs/services, and within our business.

All must work together to improve the quality of our lives. A splintered arrow does not shoot straight.