

# Terrell horseman still has equine expertise

By TODD JORGENSEN

George Chappell knows just about everything about horses, from the ears to the hooves. After all, he's been around them his whole life. Chappell's proof is in the form of numerous trophies he has won both as a competitive roper and horse owner, along with the high-level receipts he's garnered from almost a half-century as a buyer and seller.

"I've always liked nice horses," Chappell said. "I never had to ride a sorry horse. I didn't know what a sorry horse was."

It's part of a family legacy that Chappell picked up from his father, who was a longtime ranch manager in Kaufman County for former Texas Gov. Bill Clements. And it has since been passed along to his son, Alan, who also is a competitive roper

and horse trader, having won an American Quarter Horse Association heading world title in 2001.

Currently, Chappell, 63, owns just one horse himself, but remains active in the business as a horse buyer for Terrell entrepreneur Doug Pritchett.

"I've never worked for anybody my whole life up until a year ago," said Chappell, who has lived in Kaufman County his entire life.

Chappell's success with horses started early, when he won a trophy at the first state 4H show in 1963 while a student at Kaufman High School.

One of his most successful stints came in the late 1970s, thanks in part to a horse named Wonder Trouble.

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George Chappell has spent his entire life in the horse industry and has won numerous titles from the American Quarter Horse Association. The Terrell Tribune/MICHAEL GRESHAM

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In 1977, Chappell set a national record for most points by a calf-roping horse in a single year. That same season, he also won the prestigious All-American Quarter Horse Congress trophy at the largest horse show in the United States. The following year, Chappell sold Wonder Trouble for \$15,000, which was a record at the time. The horse went on to further success on the roping circuit.

“At that time, that horse was talked about more than any horse in the United States,” Chappell said. “He was just a great horse. He always gave you 100 percent.”

Chappell has won three AQHA world championships, in 1978, 1983 and 1993. Those came during the years when his ranch was abuzz with activity, sometimes with more than 50 horses at a time. Chappell — who has sold more than 35 world champions including cutting horses, pleasure horses and halter horses — said at one point he was selling a horse a day.

“That’s always been my bread and butter,” Chappell said.

He also competed regularly in roping events for more than three decades, but found it financially limiting in his early years. Yet he credits roping with facilitating his entry into higher-level horse shows. “I always really wanted to rodeo, and I roped pretty good, but I just always felt like I didn’t have the money, said Chappell, who also has been a judge at AQHA shows for 32 years and is considered an appraisal expert in the industry. For Chappell, the key to finding a good horse usually is in the pedigree. He said details such as geography and environment surrounding a foal also can be important.

“I can kind of tell by the bloodlines what horses are going to be like,” Chappell said. “Where alfalfa is raised, you can usually find good horses.”

Chappell’s expertise comes from years of study that included plenty of errors along the way. He said he used to work from dawn until dusk every day. “My education comes from the school of hard knocks,” he said. “You’re going to make mistakes. The whole thing is figuring out how you’re going to change things up.”

Chappell and his wife of 25 years, Paulette, sold their ranch a few years ago and currently live in a house in Terrell. He still spends lots of time at horse shows and horse sales looking for equine perfection, although he doesn’t put 100,000 miles per year on his truck like in the past. But don’t confuse Chappell’s slower pace these days with retirement. He said his continued love of horses will prevent that from happening anytime soon.

“If I die tomorrow and they open up my heart, a horse will walk out,” Chappell said. “I’ve done as I’ve pleased my entire life. I’ve seen the whole world. I can’t complain.”