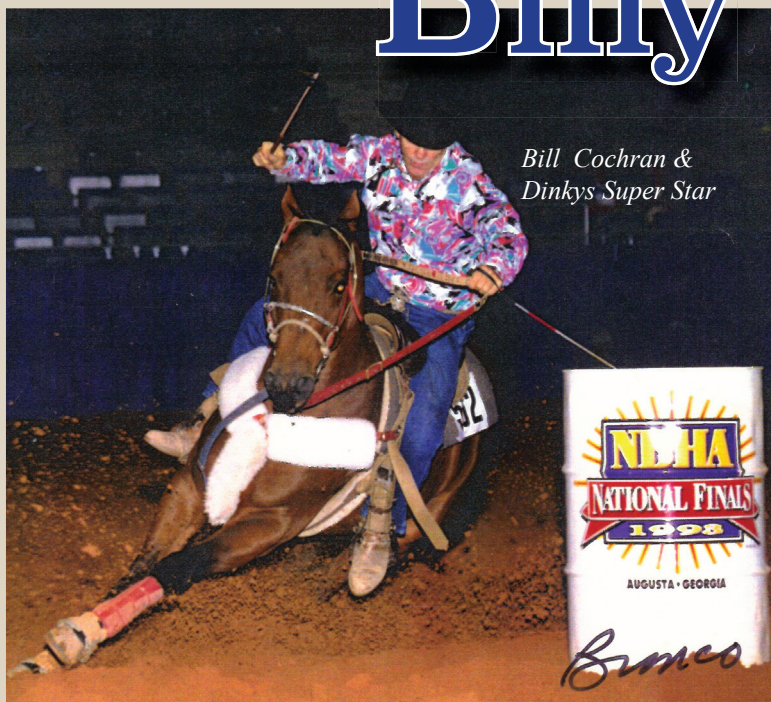


To Remember...

Billy Cochran



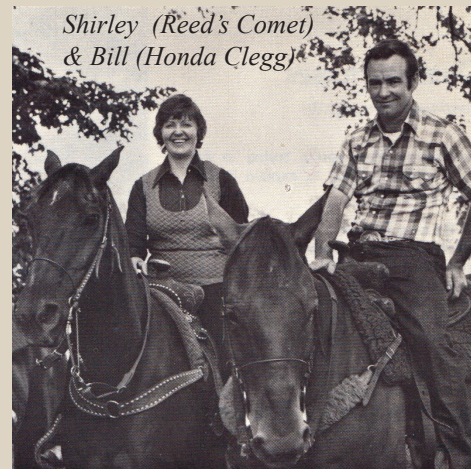
Bill Cochran &
Dinkys Super Star

Champion
in the saddle.....
Champion
in life.

If you've been involved in barrel racing or pole bending for any length of time, then you already know the name.

A Match Made In Heaven

Billy went to school with a girl named Shirley Stewart who had moved from Chicago to Billy's hometown of Sullivan, Illinois. She was in the 6th grade and Billy was in the 7th. They became childhood sweethearts and



Shirley (Reed's Comet)
& Bill (Honda Clegg)

soon Billy had his dad find Shirley a horse. It wasn't long before Shirley was tough to compete against at the horse shows. Billy mentioned that he couldn't outrun her, so he decided to marry her! Needless to say, Shirley Stewart became Shirley Cochran in 1954 when the couple eloped and were married in Harrisburg, Illinois. Shirley and Billy continued to compete against each other, but their winnings were now coming to the same truck at the end of the show. Other competitors knew they had their work cut out if they wanted to outrun the Cochrans.

As time went on their family increased and they added two beautiful daughters to their home. First Chris and then Cheri. Both the girls

I talked with Billy and Shirley Cochran of Gays, IL and they had so much great information to share with us. We have managed to include a small portion of their story on paper to share with our readers, but I can guarantee that this is only the tip of the iceberg.

We hope you enjoy learning more about this living legend, his accomplishments, his wonderful family and his faith.

In the Beginning

Billy Cochran was seven years old when his father bought him his first horse, a bay mare that no one else could ride. He learned a lot from that first horse. Billy recalled having to climb up the saddle on a rope tied to the saddle horn in order to get on her.

Billy's first contesting horse came along later when his dad purchased a two-year old paint named Danny. Billy and his dad broke him out and began teaching him the contesting events. In 1952 Billy went to his first horse show with his dad. His dad asked him if he thought he could do what they were doing on horseback. (I'm sure you must all know that he thought he could or he certainly would not have accomplished all that he has today.) And so, horse shows soon became a regular activity for him.

Recollection break....

Billy remembered belonging to the Illinois Stock Horse Association. He also mentioned that one of their rules was that a rider could only have one hand on the rein and the other hand had to be free. That meant you could not grab the rein with the other hand or the saddle horn either. Billy told me in order to not get disqualified by accidentally grabbing the rein or anything else with his free hand, he used to carry a 50 cent piece in the palm of his hand and hold tight to it. Can you imagine? I'm sure that would be very hard. I know it would have been for me, cause I like to grab hold of my saddle horn!

**Did you know???**

Shirley Cochran won many Championships and was very involved in promoting barrel racing events herself. She also helped organize some of the first women's organizations in Illinois. She was Champion of the Illinois Girls' Barrel Racing Association in 1963, 1964 and again in 1971 and 1975 (aboard Reed's Comet) when she was awarded trophy saddles. In 1980, aboard Honda Clegg, she was the Illinois Girls' Barrel Racing Champion again. She also won the championship in the Ladies Barrel Racing Division of the National Contest Riders' Association and the Amateur Barrels in the Illinois Quarter Horse Association. Shirley's success as a horsewomen has continued through her partnership with Billy. After all, they have been a team for 55 years.

Shirley & Reed's Comet posing with the saddle, headstall and breastcollar they won in 1975.



began competing when they were old enough and became champions in their own right. Chris won her first Championship saddle in 1977 on a horse named Tojo and Cheri won her first saddle in 1980. Billy told us that his fondest memories are of their family travelling to horse shows together.

"The fact that my family all rode horses is truly a blessing."



Chris and Cheri Cochran standing with Tojo.

Winning the Prize

Billy won his first World Championship in 1959 and since then has had 15 additional World Championship titles as well as 13 Reserve titles. He has been a Champion at the All American Quarter Horse Congress, the AQHA World Show, the Quarterama in Canada, many futurities across the United States, the National Barrel Horse Association, the American Quarter Horse Association, the Illinois Barrel Racing Association, the International Barrel Racing Association and many more.

He was the first person to be inducted into the Horseman's Hall of Fame in Mt. Vernon, Illinois in 1975 at a surprise banquet. He was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award by the IBRA in 2004. And in 2005 he was honored and inducted into the Pro-Tour Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He has so many awards from over 50 years of competing that they literally will not all fit in his home. He has even had a saddle made in his honor.

The Horses...

Billy had fond recollections of many horses they have owned over the years. He rolled off a few of their names for us. There was Riddles Whiteman, Palleos Smokey, Lucid Leo and an AQHA Champion, Reeds Comet. (I got the impression that Reeds Comet held a special place in each of their hearts because he ran at least 5 classes at every horse show and every one in the family rode him and won on him.)

There was Money Charge and Honda Clegg who both won many championships. Honda Clegg was very gentle and stayed with the family until at the age of 16 he was laid to rest after an injury.

Another horse that held a special place in the hearts of Billy and Shirley was Dinkys Super Star. He carried Billy to four World Championships, including a win at the 1999 All American Quarter Horse Congress in the Senior Pole Bending with a scorching time by anyone's standards of 19.3!

Billy recently sold his most recent champion, Windjammer. Together, they claimed many awards in the Illinois Barrel Racing Association and the IBRA.

Words of Wisdom...

Billy said he realized that he had an advantage by being smaller than most of his competitors but he was always looking for ways to be smoother and faster.

"I read every book on training I could get my hands on. I used to wake up in the middle of the night and want to go to the barn to try something just to see if it worked."

Billy has given many clinics and been a mentor to many young horsemen and women over the years. He has never been "stingy" with his knowledge.

When asked about anything memorable he had given young people for advice, he remembered a 4-H Clinic in which a young boy had come up and asked him "Mr. Cochran, how do you feel about winning." Billy said he tried to set a good example and answered "Just try to make sure your horse works well and if the horse works well, you should be very happy with that." The boy then asked "Would you be happy with that?" And Billy had to reply honestly by saying, "Only if I won."

Fast Forward...

Billy and Shirley celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on December 26, 2004. There were well over 150 people who attended and most were "horse-people" who have become good friends with the couple over the years.

They enjoyed a wedding ceremony that they didn't have the first time around. Their daughters, son-in-laws, grandchildren and 1st great-grandchild (now there are three) were part of the ceremony.

Champion for Christ...

Billy was very quick to let me know that he is a strong Christian and loves the Lord. He gives God all of the glory for his ability, talents and accomplishments with the horses. He also feels he has been so blessed by God with his wonderful family and many loving and caring friends. Billy and Shirley told me that in 1988 they both came to know the Lord as their Savior.

I don't think you could speak to either one and not be able to tell that they are Champions for Christ. Even if they didn't mention it, there is something about both of them that brings a smile to your face while you are talking with them. I know they would say it is Jesus. They really are such a wonderful couple and I enjoyed tremendously the conversations I had with them.



Final Note...

Billy has always been healthy, but at age 67 he had some bumps removed that they later found out were misdiagnosed. They found out that the bumps were cancerous and that it was a rare form. This put them in a situation which immediately required surgeries. Since February, 2008, Billy has had eight (8) operations of which four (4) were major. (Remarkably, he attended the IBRA banquet only 10 days after one of his surgeries. He received a standing ovation.)

Since his diagnosis, the horse community has come together to raise funds to help the Cochrans with the medical expenses (Billy's insurance dropped his medical coverage) through benefit shows, a saddle raffle and donations. Not to mention prayers, calls, cards and more. Billy and Shirley wanted to make sure we gave their heartfelt thanks to everyone. *"We love you and God Bless you."*

A Note from The Horse Resource.....

By the time you read this reprint of our March 2009 "Recollections from Yesteryear," most of you will have heard of the recent passing of Bill Cochran. We decided to reprint portions of the article to pay tribute to a legendary cowboy and a legendary man.

He fought a hard fight and continued to stand firmly on his faith. In his time here, he left behind quite a testimony for those who knew him. He will definitely be missed, but there is comfort in knowing where he will spend eternity.



Condolences can be sent to:
Shirley Cochran
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