



Don Dodge & Poco Lena

Poco Lena

Voted

**“Best Horse
Ever To Perform
In the Cutting Pen”**

The 2004 Futurity issue of the NCHA Chatter published the results of a survey asking which horse people thought was the ‘best horse ever to perform in the cutting pen’. Following are the results and story of the winner.

by Sally Harrison

chose lighter and leaner horses, over stockier ones, believing them to be superior in athletic ability for working cattle.

Compact and muscular Poco Bueno was all Quarter Horse in type. While Johnson admired the colt’s looks, he was skeptical about his ability to perform with speed and agility. Johnson’s stocky student was not long in proving his athletic ability, however, and in a way Johnson will never

“We (the NCHA Chatter) asked cutting horse enthusiasts to vote for the best horse ever to perform in the cutting pen. Based on hundreds of responses from around the world, Smart Little Lena ranked second, Chiquita Pistol was third, Peppy San Badger was fourth and Meradas Little Sue was fifth. Now we turn to Poco Lena, the readers’ choice as the greatest horse of them all.” NCHA Chatter

Poco Lena began her life on the 3 D Ranch in Arlington, Texas, now the site of Six Flags Over Texas Amusement Park. The ranch was part of the huge W.T. Waggoner Estate which at one time encompassed over 500,000 acres with headquarters in Vernon, Texas.

E. Paul Waggoner, son of W.T. Waggoner, purchased Poco Bueno as a yearling in 1945 from breeder Jess Hankins to promote him as a sire. Bob Burton, who worked for the 3 D Ranch, started the bay son of King P-234 when he was a two-year-old.

By 1947, Pine Johnson had come to work for the 3 D Ranch and the Arlington division served as sales headquarters for the Waggoner battery of show stallions and their foals. Johnson’s main duty was to work with Poco Bueno.

Johnson developed an expertise with horses and cattle on the famous Pitchfork Ranch and preferred the quick and nimble Thoroughbred/“native horse” cross which Pitchfork hands favored for ranch work. He

forget.

“He taught me to hold onto the saddle horn,” said Johnson. “Back then it was an insult to ride with your hand on the saddle. You’ll notice in photos that we rode with our arms up. “But that changed for me after one contest when Poco Bueno turned out from under me so quick that I landed on my feet, standing up. A lot of people thought I had stepped off of him. But I didn’t. He just dropped down and turned and I never even tripped.”

Because of his aggressive, hard-working style, Poco Bueno was a crowd pleaser. Capitalizing on that appeal, Waggoner entered him in shows around the country. However, during breeding season he came home to the ranch and was turned out to pasture with his band of mares. When Poco Bueno foals began arriving out of Waggoner-bred ranch mares, Johnson had no trouble selling them as weanlings for \$1,000 per head.

In the fall of 1950, besides the stallions Poco Bueno, Pretty Boy and Jessie James, only one horse remained at the Arlington ranch. She was a lanky weanling by Poco Bueno out of Sheilwin by Pretty Boy. Her name was Poco Lena.

“Poco Lena was a quick, growthy kind of colt that looked sort of strung-out,” recalled Johnson. “Everybody then was looking for a Quarter Horse. They wanted compact muscling and pretty heads. She didn’t have any of those things. She was sort of a string bean.”

While Poco Bueno was a standard for Quarter Horse type at the time,