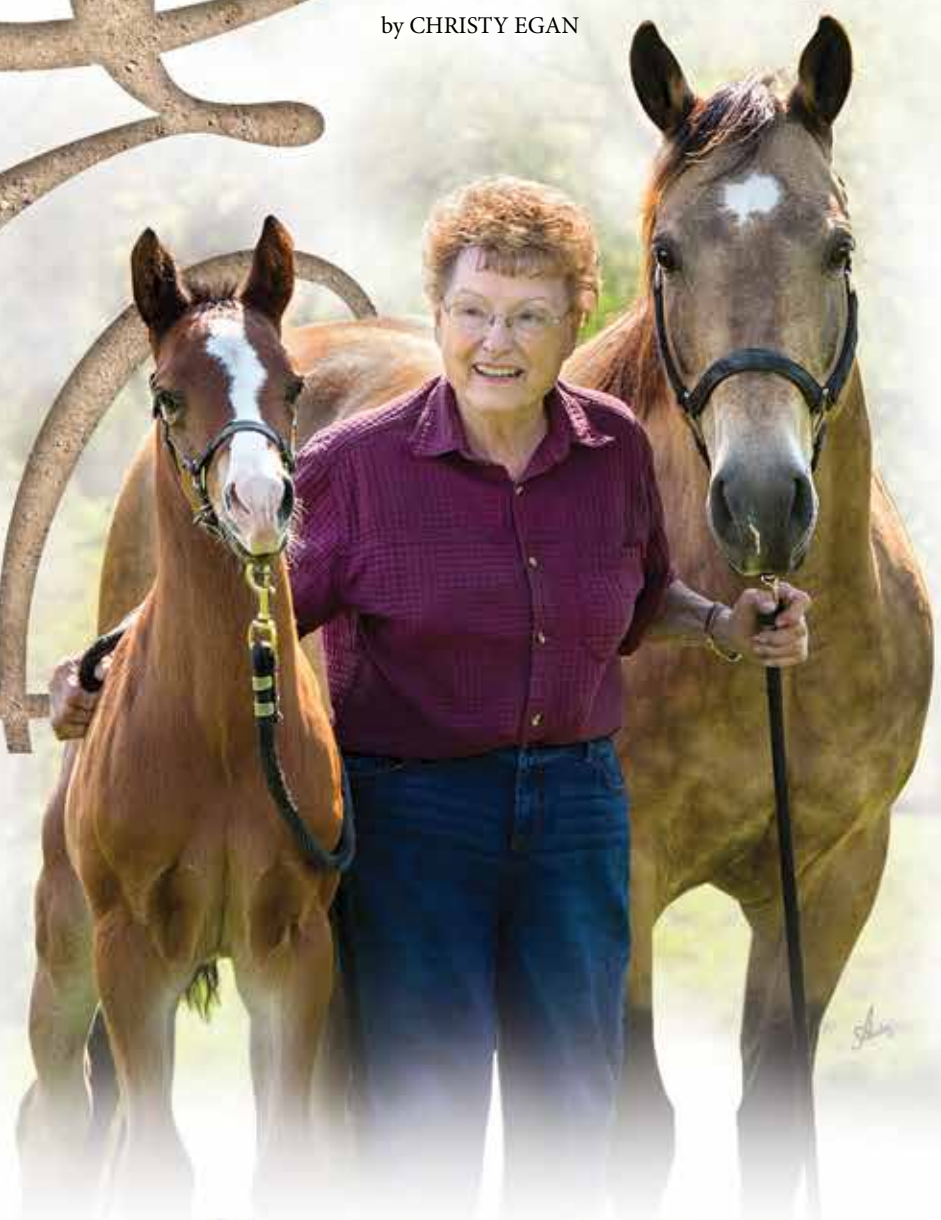


# ELEANOR HAMILTON

by CHRISTY EGAN



PIONEER, HORSEMAN, COWBOY  
& ARABIAN HORSE BREEDER



*Pictured: Eleanor with long time friends and horsemen Dick Ames, Joe Betton and Tom Redmond.*

*Eleanor's aunt and famous novelist Mari Sandoz.*

*Eleanor's father with his team of borrowed horses, 1927.*

*Eleanor's family home in the Nebraska Sand Hills, Double R Ranch.*



*I've personally known a great many people who have been involved with Arabian horses since the 1970's, but among them, I know of almost no one else like Eleanor Hamilton. Pioneer, horseman, cowboy and horse breeder, Eleanor is honestly one-of-a-kind in each of these defining categories.*

The key to Eleanor's unique life and perspective undoubtedly lies in the first of her descriptions ... pioneer. As rare as each of these designations are, pioneers, even second generation pioneers, are literally an almost vanished breed. Most Arabian owners and breeders know that Eleanor Hamilton was raised in the Nebraska Sand Hills, but few people understand what that means and the sort of grit, fortitude and bottom that define her as a pioneer. In America, many of our pioneer forebears were legendary. They lived through a time of deprivation and hardship that we cannot honestly comprehend now, in this time and place.

Eleanor speaks proudly of both her mother and father. Her parents built the Nebraska Double R Ranch her family occupied and created from scratch: cabin, fences, corrals, barns, everything. Her mother was the youngest sister of the famous novelist Mari Sandoz, of whom John Hutchins said, "No one in our time wrote better than the late Mari Sandoz did, or with more authority and grace, about as many aspects of the Old West." Among Sandoz's numerous credits are *Crazy Horse*, *The Strange Man of the Oglalas*, *Old Jules* and *Cheyenne Autumn*, which was made into a John Ford movie in 1964 starring James Stewart.

Eleanor's father carefully obtained his ranch horses specifically to work cattle, plow fields and pull farm equipment and wagons. He taught his daughter how to discern soundness, intelligence, stamina and cow sense. Eleanor rode and worked her father's horses throughout her childhood and never forgot his lessons about what a good, sound horse should look like and how it should behave.



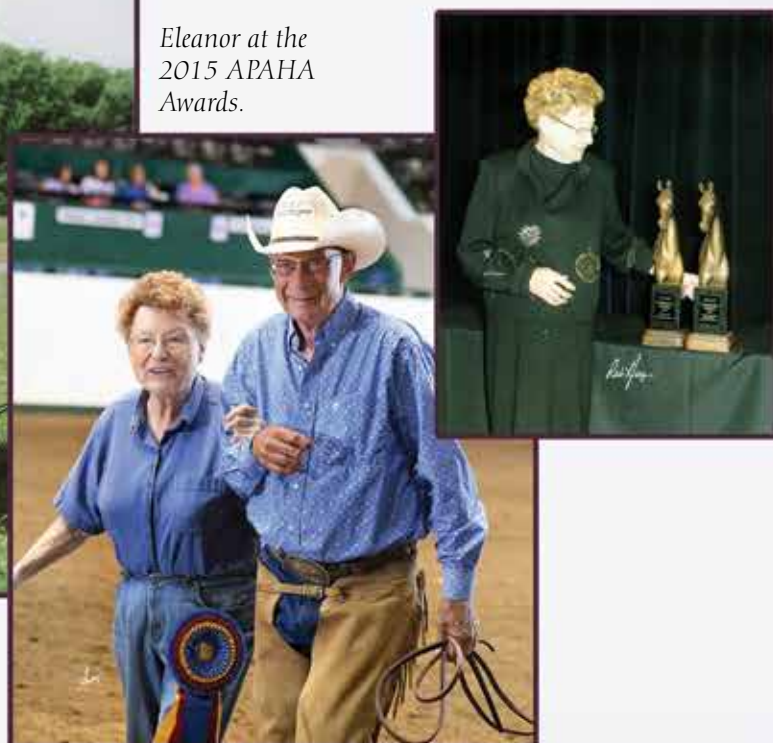




Pictured: Hesa Zee+/  
(Xenophonn x Somthing Special).

Eleanor with Rod Matthiesen, her long-time  
in-house trainer and coach.

Eleanor at the  
2015 APAHA  
Awards.



Below: Crown Musc+ (\*Muscat x Crown  
Juel, by Silver Baron) pictured with  
four of his daughters.



“Those horses of my childhood formed my lifetime opinions as a horseman and created a clear picture of what the ideal horse should be in my mind,” Eleanor says. “We didn’t have tractors and cars in the beginning. We rode horses to work cattle, tend the fields and to get us to town and to school in all kinds of weather. I love a beautiful Arabian horse, but the important characteristics of a horse to me begin with honesty, trainability and the soundness, talent and gumption to get the job done. We worked those horses of my youth through long, trying days, in every weather, and they did not let us down. The basics of the sound, dependable horse is, and always will be, the very essence of my Arabian and Half-Arabian breeding programs.”

Eleanor’s Arabian Farm is 38 years old this year. Eleanor, personally, is 85 (born: February 28, 1936). When she first started looking for a horse as an adult, she was not in search of a stallion or a broodmare, she was looking for a good horse to ride. She and her husband, Harold, lived and worked in Minnesota. At the time, Shinder’s News Stand in Minneapolis was a great place to find all sorts of books, magazines and newspapers. Eleanor stopped there frequently and looked for horse magazines. In one of them the mention of an Arabian horse sale in Minnesota got her attention and she went. By the 1960s she owned her first registered Arabian horse.

It was Eleanor’s Arabians’ trainer, Rod Matthiesen, who introduced Eleanor to reining with Arabians. A trainer for over 50 years, Rod has been with Eleanor’s Arabians since the 1980s and helped Eleanor select and purchase her first breeding stallion and first national quality Arabian show horse, Crown Musc+ (\*Muscat x Crown Juel, by Silver Baron). The original representative for Eleanor’s Arabians, Crown Musc+ was shown by Eleanor and Rod for over 10 years, first in halter and then in reining and western pleasure, open and amateur. As the farm’s foundation breeding stallion, Crown Musc+ sired over 100 offspring, purebred and Half-Arabian, among them 14 national winners, including national and reserve national champions Fire Musc+, Grand Casino+, CMS Super Chick, and Summer Dai+. The crown jewel of Crown Musc+’s first foal crop, Fire Musc+, was a U.S. Reserve National Champion in the Reining Futurity/Maturity and became a great broodmare. Her national champion offspring include Zee Fire Ball+/, Heza Fire Walker, Zee Fire Storm and the Reserve National Champion, Sheza Fire-Cracker.

“Crown Musc+ came to our barn when it was brand new and he was a young and talented horse,” says Eleanor. “He was the yardstick by which I measured my breeding horses for 20 years regarding talent, quality, temperament and trainability. He set the standard.”

Although Eleanor started early with horses on her family’s ranch in the Sand Hills, she came back to them somewhat later in life. It never dawned on her to let it slow her down. She took up reining in her fifties and was President of the Arabian Reining Horse Association for many years, as well as secretary for the Minnesota Arabian Horse Breeders. Eventually she became well recognized for her accomplishments and was named APAHA Amateur Working Western Rider of the Year in 2007 and 2012, and APAHA Breeder of the Year in 2015.

As a breeding farm, Eleanor’s Arabians hit the big time with the 1995 arrival of the Arabian stallion Hesa Zee+/. Already a 1993 Scottsdale Reining Champion, 1994 U.S. Reining Top Ten and Canadian Reserve National Reining Champion in 1995, Hesa Zee+ had a career total of six national top ten awards, three in open and three in amateur. His first foals began to arrive in 1994. He brought a new level of national notoriety to Eleanor’s. When Eleanor added Hesa Zee+ to her program in 1995, it brought with it all of the success and talent of the original “Zee” as well, Hesa Zee’s sire, Xenophonn (Bolero++ x Farviews Kamal, by Guardsman). The foundation stallion for Miller’s Arabians, Red Bluff, California, Xenophonn was U.S. National Champion Cutting Horse (both Novice and Open) in 1979 and again in the Open in 1982. The leading working western sire for many years, Xenophonn has numerous national champions and reserves in all working western disciplines, but especially in cutting. Hesa Zee+ has been following in his father’s hoofprints as a sire of working western national winning horses since his first foal crop. Two of those 1994 foals became Hesa Zee+’s first two national winners.

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~ Eleanor Hamilton





2018 U.S National Champion Zee Fire Ball+/  
(Hesa Zee+/ x Fire Musc+ by Crown Musc+)



Eleanor's Arabians  
Breeding Manager, Mark Coombs.

Eleanor, Pam and Justin Rose with Heza Fire Walker  
(Hesa Zee+/ x Fire Musc+ by Crown Musc+).

Colby Powell and Art By Hesa  
(Hesa Zee+/ x Artymusme).



Multi-National Champion Dunit My Way RA  
(Hollywood Dun It x Minding Ps and Qs,  
by Hesa Zee+/) with Crystal McNutt  
and Kathie Hart.

One was literally Hesa Zee+'s first offspring, aptly named Hezas First. A bay mare, she was 1999 U.S. National Top Ten in the Reining Horse Futurity 5 & Under. The second was Hezas Kool, 1999 U.S. Reserve National Champion Working Cow Horse, Amateur. Both of those national winners were out of Xenophonn daughters. At that point, Eleanor had already purchased several Xenophonn mares but the national success of those initial champions undoubtedly inspired her to buy more. Over the ensuing years she has owned eight. Eventually, however, the Hesa Zee+/ cross with \*Muscat daughters and daughters of the \*Muscat son, Crown Musc+ have dominated his national's list. Of Hesa Zee+'s national winners, 30% of them are out of \*Muscat or Crown Musc+ daughters, and the \*Muscat daughter Artymusme accounts for five of those. A mare of fine pure Polish and Russian breeding, Artymusme's national winners with Hesa Zee+/ include reining national champions: Art By Hesa, EAF Hesa Artist+/, and Hesa Artfull Zee.

It comes as a surprise to no one who knows him that Rod Matthiesen, Eleanor's Arabians' long-time in-house trainer and coach, has some very common-sense thoughts about Hesa Zee+'s success story. "There are two basic things that make Hesa Zee+/ bloodlines stand out in performance," Rod notes. "First, Hesa Zee+'s get are built to do the job. They enjoy what they do because they can do the work, soundly and efficiently. Secondly, they are quiet-minded and very trainable. Hesa Zee+/ had these characteristics as an individual in large quantities, and he was great at passing them on. Years ago, Arabian horse breeders bred their pretty halter horses to performance horses, thinking they would get a pretty performance horse. It just doesn't work out that way very often. The mind set you need for a great halter horse includes a high 'flight response' for that great, ready-to-spook, wide-eyed, ears-up look. That is not what you want in a working western athlete. For the breeder's part you need to put in time, thought and money. Eleanor has done all of that for many years and she has stuck to her guns about having a top working horse that is a real ranch horse, and not just a pretty face. I once read an article about the King Ranch in Texas, where they talked about how everybody who rode their horses had a say in their breeding program. They listened to the cowboys, the people who rode those horses, day in, day out, cutting cattle, fixing fence. Eleanor listens to her people that way too."

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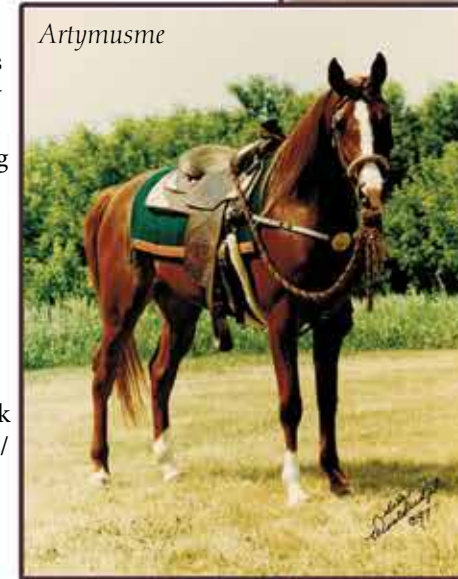
~Rod Matthiesen

Noted breeder and horseman Dick Ames of Cedar Ridge Arabians, was good friends with Eleanor for many years. The two of them collaborated on reining competitions, sponsoring prize money and trophies. They bid against each other at Minnesota Breeders and Scottsdale stallion service auctions, thoroughly enjoying the competition they afforded each other, in and out of the show pen. The Hesa Zee+/ cross with Dick Ames' mare Sarabask (Serinask x Charrisma) helped the Hesa Zee+/ legend blossom with three full sisters sired by him, producing ten national or reserve national champions to date. The middle sister, Minding Ps and Qs, U.S. Reserve National Champion Reining and Canadian National Champion Reining AOTR 40+, is the dam of seven of those national and/or reserve national champions.

To date, Hesa Zee+/ has sired 30 offspring that have won National Championships and/or Reserves and a total of 47 national winners, both purebred and Half-Arabian at the Youth, U.S., Canadian and Sport Horse National Championships. Hesa Zee+/ has added 40 registered offspring since his death, 50% purebreds, 50% Half-Arabians. Five of these youngsters are already national winners. Annually, Hesa Zee+/ continues to be named among the leading working western sires, frequently right at the top, and his daughters are proving to be extraordinary producers of national winners as well.

Breeding high quality purebred Arabians is hard work and ongoing success is not guaranteed, but breeding consistent, high quality Half-Arabians might be even more difficult. Success with the frequent breed crosses of American Saddlebred or Quarter Horse with Arabian can take even more time and imagination than purebred Arabian horse breeding. Horses that produce well within their own breeds often do not cross well with other breeds. And sometimes they do far better with other breeds. Eleanor's enviable success record is balanced equally between purebreds and Arabian-Quarter Horse crosses. "It's been an interesting journey," Eleanor laughs. "I started a bit of a trend when my Triple Colonel son, CG Colonel Jac sired the Canadian National Champion

Hesa Artfull Zee (Hesa Zee+/ x Artymusme)  
and Gary Ferguson, Scottsdale 2020.



Artymusme

Osteen  
Schatzberg  
2020

8



'IF IT AIN'T BROKE, WHY FIX IT?' ~ Eleanor Hamilton

Half-Arabian, EAF Colonels Lil Lady, as well as a U.S. National Top Ten named EAF Colonels Princess. Then my Peppy San Badger son, Little Sorrel Peppy, sired the 2016 Working Western Horse of the Year, 6-time National Champion and Reserve Working Cow Horse, Built By Peppy, and the 3-time National Champion and Reserve Cutting and Cow Horse, Zee China Doll."

Mark Coombs, Eleanor's Arabians Breeding Manager, has been with the farm for 22 years and is adamant about the extreme importance of Hesa Zee+/ within Eleanor's breeding program. "Just look at the success stories," says Mark. "We've been breeding to some of the top Quarter Horse NRHA sires of the day over the past few years. And yet, the great working western show horses from Eleanor's have come from Hesa Zee+, Hesa Zee+ crossed with \*Muscat and Crown Musc+, and Hesa Zee+ and the Xenophonn daughters crossed with CG Colonel Jac and Little Sorrel Peppy. That is sound, solid breeding on both sides of the pedigree. Eleanor has always liked the older, more classic-bred horses, both Arabian and Quarter Horse. Like Eleanor is so fond of saying ... 'If it ain't broke, why fix it?'"

Now retired, Eleanor became an Arabian horse breeder in the middle of her life and accomplished phenomenal things in the past 30 years. But in large part, what she did in midlife and beyond is rooted, right down to bedrock in her birthright as a pioneer and her formative childhood as a cowboy and horseman. She was born and bred to do what she has done, much like the great Arabian and Half-Arabian athletes she has bred, fostered and supported in this world. She will tell you that her horses were born to be working horses, strong, perseverant, tough and ready to do a good job and finish it. She will say that temperament is the most important quality in her horses, and they prove their good minds and versatility, horse after horse, by winning with open riders, amateurs, children and toddlers.

You could say almost precisely the same thing about this grand, 85-year-old lady who still rides every Saturday at her barn and insists on working reining patterns, not just jogging around. Ask her about the big horse shows though and she'll tell you, "Oh, there's going to be another one just like it next year." Priorities. Eleanor and her horses have always gotten them straight. □



2016 Working Western Horse of the Year Built By Peppy (Little Sorrel Peppy x Fae Zee Princess) with Eleanor and Lance Scheffel.

Eleanor and Hesa Zee+/ (Xenophonn x Somthing Special).

