

Ann Landers

Thanks for
 the letters



Dear Ann Landers: I want to thank you for publishing the address last February for 'Any Service Member' serving in Bosnia in support of Operation Joint Endeavor. The response has been overwhelming.

I am a Marine Corps helicopter pilot, 38 and single, serving on the USS Guam in the Adriatic Sea off the coast of Bosnia. This is my fourth overseas deployment. We have really enjoyed reading the letters we have received from your readers. None of us had ever seen anything like it. Our ship received so much mail that hundreds of letters were passed out throughout the ship. Eighty per cent of the letters are from people who said they wrote because they read your column. I have received letters from a college student in Sacramento, a professional woman in Lansing, Mich., whose letters are really funny, and an avid skier from Vail, Colo., and I have been "adopted" by a second-grade class in Bala-Cynwyd, Pa.

There are so many letters that responding to all of them is going to be impossible, but I intend to write to those with whom I feel a common tie. Despite having lots of family and friends to write and send treats, it has been fun reading through all these letters and becoming acquainted with new people. It's wonderful that so many folks have such kind hearts in the right place and are so supportive of us.

I wanted to thank you for printing the address in your column and let you know it has brought lots of smiles to our faces. When you are at sea for weeks (or months), a little mail can make a big difference. — Major Greg Mislick, USMC

Dear Major Mislick: Thank you for a very generous letter. Several readers have asked me to repeat the address, so here it is:

For Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps land forces, write to: Any Service Member Operation Joint Endeavor APO AE 09397

For Navy and Marine Corps personnel aboard ship, write to:

Any Service Member Operation Joint Endeavour APO AE 09398

'We are family' — rodeo royalty

DINA O'MEARA
 Medicine Hat News

PEOPLE

Change comes slowly to rodeo queen pageants. The competitions have remained mostly the same over 40 years — horsemanship, personality, speeches. The flow of fresh faces doesn't change; neither does the excitement and the tension, say former Hat rodeo queens.

"It's like a little family. We all share the same experience," says 1982 Stampede Queen Susan Hanlon, nee Hargrave, at Friday's Stampede queen and princess reunion. "It's like you never left, all the people are so friendly."

The biggest change in the competition is in the number of presents, says 1957 Rodeo Queen Patsie Suitor nee Brodie.

"I think the only real difference today is the number of gifts the girls get," says a tanned and fit Suitor. "They get saddles now, but then we got boots, gloves, and these outfits, of course," she says, showing two heavily embroidered jackets and pants.

After her reign, Suitor married husband Shorty and has ranched near Duchess by the Red Deer River since then. She has a son, Murray, who took over the family ranch after her husband died in 1984, and a daughter, Connie Edelman. She has maintained ties with the rodeo, judging local and national rodeo queen contests over the years.

Lori Ross, nee Leonard, enjoys looking through the photograph albums documenting the history of Stampede queen contests over the years. "It seems like when we were younger, we all came to these things," says the 1980 queen. "But now these things get in the way," Ross says, smiling down at her three-month-old daughter.

Ross got a home economics degree after reigning in Medicine Hat and went to New Zealand for almost a year in 1983 on an agricultural exchange program. She later received an education degree and taught in Jenner, where she met her husband. They now ranch in Buffalo and have a three-

year-old son as well as little Taylor.

When Peggy Robinson nee Dubeau, was crowned rodeo queen in 1960, there was only one store in town that carried western wear and all of it was for men. She had to go to go across the border to Havre, Mont. to buy a fancy lady's outfit.

"I was raised on a ranch west of Redcliff, so it wasn't just pleasure riding that we did, it was work," Robinson says.

Robinson got her teaching certificate after reigning a year, married John Vant and moved to Millet, about 60 km south of Edmonton. She has remained active in the rodeo circuit, as have her three children and second husband Bob Robinson, 1962 NFR bull riding champion.

Robinson was the last queen for 11 years, while Stampede organizers took a hiatus from setting up a pageant. In 1971 Laurie Sharland stepped in, took the reins and has been driving the contest since.

"I was really impressed with the operation here in Medicine Hat," says Hanlon.

After being crowned in 1982, Hanlon went all the way, becoming Miss Rodeo



A once and future queen spend time at the Hat Stampede Queen reunion Friday afternoon. 1980 Rodeo queen Lori Ross, nee Leonard, shares the limelight with three-month-old daughter Taylor. Susan Hanlon, nee Hargrave, (inset) took the 1982 Medicine Hat Stampede Queen crown and wowed cowboys across the country to capture the Miss Rodeo Canada title in 1984. Riding horses and ranching has always been a part of life for 1957 Stampede Queen Patsie Suitor, nee Brodie, although she spends more time judging contests now, rather than competing.

— News photos Frank Webber

Canada in 1984. It was a win that changed her life.

"Oh, yes, it changed things, in terms of broadening my horizons, making a better addition to my life," says Hanlon. "I felt like I had met half the world."

As Miss Rodeo Canada she travelled across North America and to Australia. Hanlon experienced the Aussie lifestyle first hand, living with ranch families and travelling to dusty rodeos for a month.

Returning to Canada meant finishing an education degree, teaching in Alberta for several years before moving to Spearwood, B.C. with her husband. Hanlon has two sons and is still teaching.

Reigning monarch Krista Lait and princess Louise Niwa also attended the reunion.

The 1996 royal pair will be attending local and regional rodeos and functions for United Way agencies throughout the coming year.

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