

The Hostess With the Mostest

Hosting a barrel clinic was a rewarding experience that took the help of family and friends.

FRANCESCA CARRICK, OF FOUNTAIN, Colorado, bought her first American Quarter Horse just before her 50th birthday. Today, at 59, Fran has been to four barrel racing clinics, and the last one, she hosted herself.

Fran grew up riding until she was about 10, but none of the horses ever belonged to her, and time spent riding was hit or miss, until 40 years later when she moved next door to 1964 world champion barrel racer Ardith Bruce.

"I could see how full Ardie's life was with horses and her friends, and with my children being grown up and out of the house, I thought it might be something I would enjoy," Fran says.

After spending about three years reacquainting her muscles to the finer aspects of staying in a saddle, Fran attended a barrel racing clinic given by Sharon Camarillo, a four-time National Finals Rodeo qualifier.

"I was so novice, I really didn't get much out of it," Fran says. She advises that picking the right clinician for your riding goals and abilities is almost as important as picking the right horse.

Her next two barrel racing clinics were with world champion barrel racer Connie Combs. Connie qualified for the NFR seven times, is the only barrel racer to win a world title riding a stallion and has qualified three different horses for the AQHA World Show.

"I liked her style and her teaching ability," Fran says. "She was clear, and her methods were easy to follow, and above all, they worked."

Fran knew that her finances wouldn't hold out long enough to attend all the clinics she would like to, so she began planning to host her own clinic. Because Connie had the talent to get her ideas across to riders of all ages and abilities, and based on her reasonable clinician fee, it was easy to choose her.

"My primary focus was to break even," Fran says. "My second concern was to take in the clinic and absorb, as I had in previous clinics. I also knew that I wanted my clinic to be a certain way."

That "certain way" meant enlisting



Fran Carrick with her two American Quarter Horses, Saint Patties Skip, left, a Fol's Native-bred mare, and Bit Ofa Goodbar, a double-bred Doc Bar gelding.

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the help of her daughter, Kim; her son-in-law, Anthony; her husband, Floyd; and her best friend, Diane. They were all non-riders, which allowed them to lay out the continental breakfast, with flowers and coffee, and make the sloppy joes and cut fruit for lunch with ice-cold bottles of water.

As the attendees arrived for the meet-and-greet Friday night, Fran presented each attendee with a small gift bag, and there were plenty of chairs for people to sit down and visit with each other. Expenses were pared down when each attendee donated something to the clinic to be used. For example, Andy Dickens, also of Fountain, brought his electric eye to be used.

"Because so much was being done by others, I was able to attend the clinic and really learn," Fran says. "Without their help, I wouldn't have been able to be a participant."

Francesca Carrick, 59
Barrel clinic host
Fountain, Colorado

"This was a very special clinic to me because every attendee I considered a friend," she says. "It just couldn't have been done without my friends and family. I don't want to gush, but it was just such a positive experience."

Since Fran knew every attendee personally, she let the registration deadlines pass with just a verbal commitment. Four people let her down, making her break-even goal just a bit harder to meet. But she considers that just a lesson learned.

She is already planning to host another clinic with Connie in May and says, "Next time I will charge something for food, and I will make sure that attendees adhere to the registration process."

— BY MARYANNA CLEMONS