

Alberta Lewis - 2008

Alberta joined CowBelles, now CattleWomen, one year after the organization was formed in San Luis Obispo County. She is one of the original CowBelle trail riders and she worked very hard to get an annual ride started. She has been involved with all aspects of the organization from helping with beef promotion, working at the mid-state fair booth, and attending the State CattleWomen's Convention. She was honored as CowBelle Mom of the Year and held the office of President of the local CattleWomen's association. Today, she is an active member as she serves as a member of the board of directors and attended the 45th CowBelle's trail ride held earlier this year.

Alberta, a fourth generation Californian, was born in 1928 in Salinas, Ca. In late 1928, her parents, Al and Aleen Stone, and her sister Pat, moved to the Carrisa Plains. They drove all their cattle and horses to the Bitterwater Rd. ranch in Carrisa Plains from San Ardo and arrived to see the plains completely covered in snow. On their ranch, Alberta became a very skilled rider at an early age and would meet her dad Al and help him drive the newly purchased cattle from the train station in McKettrick over the Temblor Range to the Painted Rock.

The family eventually moved to Santa Maria, and she attended St. Mary's Grammar School – which was quite different than the one room schoolhouse on the Carrisa Plains. Alberta attended Santa Maria High School and continued to be very active playing on all the girls' sports teams. Her good grades permitted her to be let out of school to help in the fields during the war. She graduated from high school in 1947, and excitedly attended her sixty-year class reunion in July.

After high school, Alberta attended Santa Maria Junior College and became a member of the debate team. After Santa Maria J.C., Alberta went to Santa Barbara Business College, returning home on the weekends to help out on the ranch.

Alberta met Bob Lewis, from Carrisa Plains, while working at the Santa Maria high school track meets. In 1949, Bob and Alberta were married at St. Mary's Church in Santa Maria. When Alberta wasn't in her garden, she enjoyed riding, dancing with Bob, tractor driving, and ranching on the Carrisa Plains. They had their first child, a daughter, Georgia, while living in Pozo.

In 1950, the Lewis family was given the opportunity of a lifetime to purchase the Navajo Ranch, located on the edge of Carrisa Plains. It took Bob, Alberta, and Georgia just two pick-up loads to move to the Navajo Ranch where they were blessed with three more children: Susan, Albert, and Robert.

In 1963, they purchased the Templeton Sales Yard with Alfred Santos. The sales on Saturday were thriving and often weren't over until the early hours of Sunday morning. After moving to Atascadero in 1969, Alberta realized how much work it took to keep up two houses. They sold the sales yard in 1973 and moved back to the Navajo Ranch.

In 2005, Alberta was crowned the 2005 Pioneer Day Queen and Bob the Grand Marshall. This marked the 75th Anniversary of Pioneer Days and was the first time a husband and wife were crowned together.

Alberta and Bob were fortunate enough to enjoy their four children and ten grandchildren together for fifty-seven years. Alberta still resides at the Navajo Ranch and most of her children and some of her grandchildren still participate in the operation. She is also very proud to say that there are three generations of the Lewis family that are still active members in the San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen's Association.

Besides the CattleWomen's Association, Alberta is active in the Republican Women's organization and San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau. She has also been a member of the SLO Co. Grand Jury.

Alberta is honored to receive the CattleWoman of the Year for 2007 and to have the friendship of her fellow CattleWomen.