



# JOURNAL

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## 2014 AQHA President Johnny Trotter

Outgoing AQHA President Johnny Trotter pushes for AQHA to move forward on protecting and continuing to promote the American Quarter Horse.

*The American Quarter Horse Journal*

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2015 AQHA President Johnny Trotter *Journal* photo

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Singer/songwriter and AQHA member Red Steagall introduced his long-time friend, out-going AQHA President Johnny Trotter, for his farewell speech at the 2015 AQHA Convention. Part of Red's introduction of Johnny was a video that was made and shown when Johnny was inducted into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame earlier this year.*

Red, thank you, and thank you for helping with that video, the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame induction was a real honor and I'm

humbled as I am today to serve the AQHA as president.

Aren't you glad that we've all been blessed with the American Quarter Horse?

I am, and if it weren't for this incredible horse and this Association we all love, I wouldn't be standing here today. In fact, my life would look a lot different.

Like many of you, I started riding a good while before I started school, and when I was 8 years old, we moved from Abilene to Dumas. My mother and dad got me my first horse, and with it, I started my journey to fulfill my dream of trying to be a cowboy.

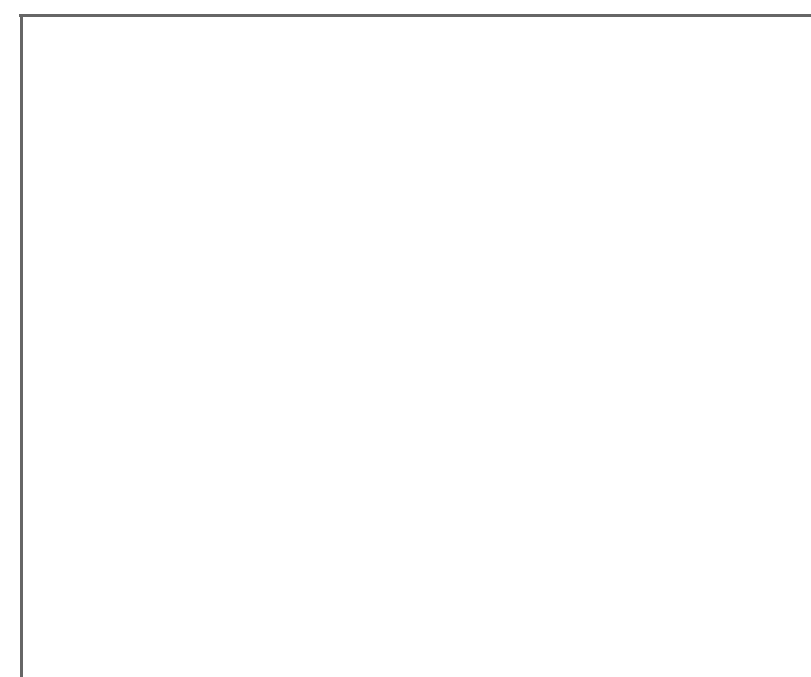
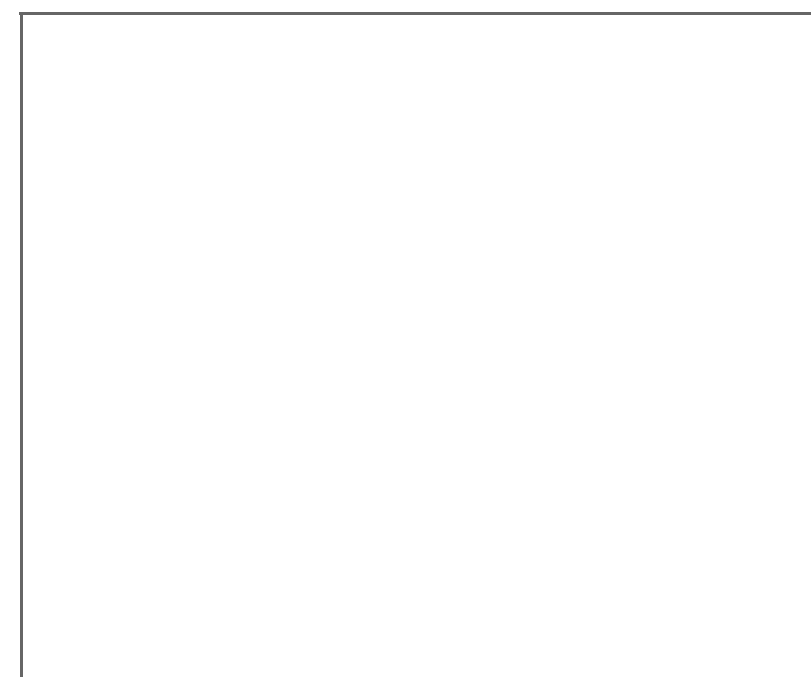
Family friend Edgar Kempson was a rancher and a member of the First Methodist Church, which my dad pastored. Edgar let me tag along to help feed, brand and do a lot of different things with cattle and horses. Since then, I've never been without a horse, and I'm grateful for everything they've done for me in my life.

I told this story at the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame – and think you'll appreciate it, too: A few years into my adventure as a teenage day worker, I was told that you really are never a cowboy until someone else calls you one. It wasn't until some 40 years later, when I found myself in a real conflict with the Hereford Economic Development Committee, at one of the meetings a member told the group, "Don't pay any attention to that Johnny Trotter, he's nothing but a cowboy!" A few weeks later, I thanked that guy. I told him I had been trying all my life to get someone to call me that, and he finally did!

He was speechless ... and I was proud to be called a cowboy!

Most of you think of me as a racehorse guy. But you show people need to hear this little short story: In the spring of 1972, a man from Seagraves, Texas, had passed away and his estate had

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loaded all his mares and colts up and sent them to Clovis, New Mexico, to the sale. In that bunch of good horses was an own daughter of Leo who had a Pep Straw colt by her side. The mare was old, but really good, and the colt was small and had been down in the truck, had manure all over him and had been hit on the side of his face and the right eye was swollen shut. I really wanted to buy them, but when they came into the ring, the mare brought way more than I could pay. Jimmie Randles bought her and he stood up and told them to split the colt off. I bought that colt for \$150, took him home, raised and broke him, and as a 2-year-old won the 2-year-old gelding halter class and placed in the junior reining at the Oldum Co. AQHA show at Vega, Texas. And, Jimmie had a bunch of his horses there!

I spent much of my early years trading horses around Clovis. About the same time, there were guys like Pete Garnett, Bobby Lewis, Bobby Edmond and Sonny Thomason, there who helped further my equine education, as I learned some very important and expensive lessons. I'm real thankful for those days and the hours I spent making a living straddling an American Quarter Horse.

Like that video said, I had always intended to sell One Famous Eagle – but I really liked him. As Dr. Blodgett and I talked about him, we decided to own and race him together, with the plan of him coming back to the Four Sixes to stand. Never in my wildest imagination could I have ever dreamed what was in the future, and the fact that One Famous Eagle would lead Jana and me into a relationship with [Anne](#) and John Marion and Karen and Glenn Blodgett, who would become some of the greatest business partners and friends that we could ever have. One of the greatest blessings in the racehorse world is to get to share a big win with a good friend and partner. It's because of horses that we've made many lifelong friends around the world. I can't begin to tell you in how many ways my life has been blessed because of this American Quarter Horse.

In 2001, at Bar G, one morning about 6 a.m., I was called to the phone. The guy on the other end says, "Here's the deal, at next year's convention, I want to introduce you at the Texas directors meeting. In a few years, there will be a seat open on the board and we will need you to represent Texas as an AQHA director!"

That was none other than our friend [Dr. Charles W. Graham](#). Thank you "Doc." Without that call, my life and my relationship with AQHA could have been much different.

A year ago, when I became president of AQHA, I sat down with Don Treadway. We mapped out some priorities that I thought were important. Like a lot of things at AQHA, these weren't easy. But thanks to Don, the staff and the other members of the Executive Committee, I am proud of the progress we've made.

I have always felt that each of us needs to do what is best for AQHA and the horse, and forego personal bias. Members of the Executive Committee, task forces and voting body members should serve with credibility.

Last July, we assembled a task force to examine AQHA's governance – both the perceptions and the realities of what was taking place on the board so that AQHA could operate more effectively. Governance will always be a topic of conversation, but I hope we have started the process to help AQHA be stronger and do what is best for the horse and our members. We can continue to improve our governance and what's best for our Association – not our personal interests. Who would ever think of trying to run a public multi-million-dollar business with a voting board of more than 275 members, or elect an executive committee member out of a meeting of that group that attends one meeting a year only for the purpose of answering roll call two times?

Many of you told me and the other members of the Executive Committee that AQHA needed to improve its customer service – to expedite registrations and transfers without jeopardizing breed integrity. My goal was to see a three-to-five-day turnaround. Now they're under 10 days when there are no issues with the work.

As all of you know, last year we started reorganization, and now more people are cross-trained on key areas, and when we start to see the benefits of a new computer system, I know AQHA will meet our goal of providing great customer service. Thanks to you, Trent Taylor, for your leadership in the process.

For our show members, you told us we needed a solid plan for shows. Last year, we brought Pete Kyle on board. Pete began working with a show strategic planning group and show council to address the many issues, and the 2014 World Show was the greatest experienced in

the last several years. Thank you, Pete!

It was gratifying to see the new show leveling program make a full debut in 2014. We heard from a lot of you – the improvements made to **AQHA's Level 1 (formerly Novice) program** were indeed well received. More people earned points. More people got qualified and more people received recognition for showing their American Quarter Horses. Thanks, Patti Carter!

At the end of 2014, we completed a recertification program for our judges. There was a lot of talk about it, but at the end of the day, our judges had positive feedback about that process. They make valuable contributions to our breed and to the showing community. Judges play a vital role in our industry and direct the breed. Their work is appreciated by me, the other members of the Executive Committee and the membership. It's important for us to always look for ways to improve the judging program. Only through education and evaluation can AQHA keep the best judges in the industry. We all say thank you, Pete and Alex, for the process and completion.

I want to thank the members of the Foundation Council and our friend Kate Johnson who worked hard last year to keep the American Quarter Horse Foundation on track and a true supporter of the Association's efforts. I am proud to support the Foundation and I think it's important that we all do. Now that we have a new executive vice president, we can begin the process to find a director for the Foundation.

There was probably no area throughout my term as president that we worked harder on than addressing the welfare of our horse and working to remove people from our industry who do harm to our horses by using and abusing drugs.

I told you in beginning of this speech – I love horses and we all are blessed to have them in our lives. One of the reasons I love horses so much is because I believe they want to please us. How many times have you seen a horse run his guts out to please us – only to be sabotaged by some horse that is under the influence of some drug or some sort of hop! I am, as many of you are, sick of it! If our industry is to survive and prosper, it cannot and will not be tolerated – whether that's on the racetrack, in the show pen or any other arena where our horses perform.

I'm proud of the message AQHA is sending to racing members through the **Multiple Medications Violation System** introduced at the beginning of 2014. I know we will have tweaks to make to it and it will be discussed a lot at this convention, but I think people now know that we are serious about cleaning up our sport – by ourselves – without Washington outsiders or animal rights activists telling us what to do. I want to personally say thanks to Don, Trey Buck, Matt Whitman and Micah McKenny for the hours of work they have contributed to this.

While the MMVS addresses the racing crowd, on the show end, we will continue an aggressive testing and punishment system, too. Those of us who are owners have to assume the responsibility for the welfare of our horses and have to be specific with instructions to those we hire to train and care for them. It's a pretty simple concept. We pay the bills we are responsible.

Right, wrong or indifferent, our Association is about the welfare of the horse. I want to take this opportunity to compliment Carol Harris and her persistent pushing of this Association and its leadership in the right direction. Ms. Harris, thank you!

We all are pleased with the decision of the Fifth Circuit to overturn the jury verdict in the **cloning lawsuit**. You – our members – asked us to not let up, and we never did. It's a pretty basic principle – when people with shared interests, goals and values come together to form a voluntary private association to serve a common purpose, the members should have the right to determine the rules for their association. Thank you to our own attorney, Chad Pierce, the Underwood firm, Wade Arnold and Mike Loftin, and the Kelly Hart firm, David Keltner, Maianne Auld and Mary Smith. We are proud of and thankful for the decision!

There are a lot of people I need to thank for helping me while I was on the Executive Committee and during my term as president.

To my fellow Executive Committee members – both past and present – only you know how hard this job is and how many people want to tell you what you *should* be doing. Johannes Orgeldinger, Peter Cofrancesco, Gene Graves, Johnne Dobbs – even though Gene is no longer with us – I thank you all for your service to AQHA and helping me as I moved into the president's chair.

Glenn Blodgett, you will make a great president with your calm demeanor and ability to see things objectively. Sandy Arledge and Ralph Seekins, thank you for your help and your service



to AQHA.

And of course, to George Phillips. George would have been the next person to occupy this chair. It's a real shame he didn't get to serve when he was originally elected to the EC and could have been president last year. He was a friend and a colleague, he and Nicole spent a day with us at Hereford, as well as at the All American weekend this year and that will remain a fond memory always. We all will miss George and there isn't any doubt he would have been "the people's leader" for this Association. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Nicole, and your family – and with all of the families of the people we have lost.

Don, I want thank you for your constant support, your work and dedication to AQHA. There were many times when we worked out our issues, and I always appreciated your counsel and your insight. No other EVP of our Association has had the issues of the magnitude to deal with that you have. From all of us on the Executive Committee, we wish both you and Robbyn a very happy retirement and some much deserved peace of mind. Thank you.

Jackie Payne, we can never thank you enough for all your help, you're many years of service and all you have done for AQHA, and all of us. I wish you and Bruce a very happy retirement.

Then of course, there's Jana. What can I say? The annual photo books, party favors, planning for all the EC and spur-of-the-moment trips to Amarillo, to greet whomever. You all know that she is, for sure, the best part of having me as AQHA president. Like my friend Ben Hudson says, "Fun follows Jana around like a little brown dog!" Like Jana says, "Come on Fun!"

This is a new beginning for AQHA. It's a celebration of 75 years. It's the start of 75 more years of this great Association and the world's best horse.

There will be new members of the Executive Committee elected who will make their mark on AQHA. After a lengthy search, we have a new executive vice president who will lead AQHA into the future. Craig Huffhines brings years of leadership experience in the agriculture industry and a track record of success to AQHA. He is enthusiastic and has a passion for the agriculture and livestock industries. His success at the American Hereford Association will benefit AQHA in many ways. I see Craig as the leader of the New AQHA Dream Team! Let's all get behind Craig and the Association, and enthusiastically work to launch a new AQHA!

As long as we live, there will be a group of people like us committed to preserving this Association we all love and the American Quarter Horse. For that I am grateful. Today I ask you ... Are you committed? Are you committed to your God, your church, your family, your country? I ask you to be committed to your American Quarter Horse Association, to keep it and the leadership in your prayers, to support the leadership, the Foundation, the staff and support the great animal God has entrusted us with ... the American Quarter Horse.


Thank you for allowing me to serve as your 2014 president. Hopefully, we have made a difference. It has been a real honor!

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