



*The Flying Cossacks (c.1974). L-R: Troy Ellerman, Casey Weston, Karen (Gay) Moore, Debbie Moore, Mette Ellerman, Tami Ellerman, and Fawn Ellerman. (Jozell Ellerman joined the act the following year, at age 4)*

## **The Flying Cossacks Will Appear at the Stonyford Rodeo**

**T**he trick-riding Flying Cossacks last appeared in a Stonyford rodeo thirty-one years ago, in 1987. The group was comprised of the five Ellerman siblings (Mette, Tami, Troy, Fawn, and Jozell), their cousins, Debbie and Karen (Gay) Moore, and their friend Casey Weston. All, except Casey, have Stonyford roots. Their grandfather was Lawrence (Sharky) Moore, a local legend who with brother Earl and sister Beulah, help get this whole shebang started in the 1930s and '40s—the parade in 1939 and the rodeo in 1943.

Sharky's daughter, Carmel (Sister) Moore Ellerman, was the group's mother, aunt, and teacher. Carmel became interested in trick riding as a little girl, when her dad took her to the Willits rodeo and she saw Monte Montana perform. Carmel's Uncle Louie and Aunt Bernadette Cabral were also rodeo performers, famous for Pyramids and Roman riding. They then lived in Salinas and asked her to come and learn Roman Riding with them. She was a natural and was soon performing at the Stonyford Rodeo—first with her friend, Jerry Spence, in 1948, then as a single, in 1957. For Carmel, the trick riding was a hobby. As she grew older, she went off to college and became a teacher like her Aunt Beulah, and with her taught school in Elk Creek and Stonyford. She married rancher Denny Ellerman, and they had five children.

One year, during a family-ranch branding in Green's Valley when the four older children and their Moore cousins were young, they asked Carmel to show them some trick riding. She did, and they all wanted to

learn how to do it themselves. They learned on ranch stock. They had no “special” trick riding saddles, just their own ranch saddles. Nor did they have specially trained horses; they used the ranch horses. They also used those same horses to compete in rodeo events--often competing and then performing at the same rodeo.

Thus started the “Flying Cossacks.” □ Their first show was in 1974 at the Maxwell High School Rodeo and then the Red Bluff Junior Rodeo, where some members of the Red Bluff Roundup committee saw them perform and wanted them back for the BIG Red Bluff Round up! It exploded from there when Cotton Rosser either saw them at Red Bluff, or heard about them, and signed them to perform at the “California Run” for his rodeo stock contracting business. The California Run included the California State Fair, The Cow Palace Grand National Rodeo, Oakdale, and others.

While performing in Paskenta, the Weston family saw them and asked if their young daughter, Casey, could learn trick riding and then join them; which she did.

Stonyford’s own Flying Cossacks have performed all over the United States, including Nephi, Utah; Twin Falls, Idaho; Fort Worth, Texas; Denver, Greeley and Grand Junction, Colorado; Helena, Montana; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Colby, Kansas. They have also performed in Stonyford eleven times. They have thrilled audiences everywhere with their daredevil show, being the first to do tricks while galloping full speed in a circle around the rodeo arena!

All five Ellerman children performed at the National Finals Rodeo (NFR) 2 or 3 times; Troy, Tami, Fawn and Jozelle performed at the Belmont Stakes in New York. Additionally, Tami and Fawn went to Kuwait and performed with Monte Montana Junior’s Wild West Show, and Troy went on to perform stunts in many movies and TV shows.

To learn more about the Flying Cossacks and the Stonyford rodeos and parades pick up a copy of the new book, *75 Years and Counting*, which will be available in Stonyford at the rodeo and parade.

Carmel and five of the eight Flying Cossacks will be in the Stonyford Parade on Saturday, May 5, 2018. They will also be at the rodeo for both days, of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event on May 5 and 6, 2018. The ones in attendance will be four Ellermans, Mette, Tami, Fawn, and Jozell, and their cousin Karen (Gay) Moore; Troy Ellerman, Debbie Moore, and Casey Weston will not be present.

Come out and see them.