



Missi Elliott is 2010 Miss Wine Country Rodeo

Missi Elliott, a sports medicine major at Modesto Junior College and a certified equine sports massage therapist, has been selected as Miss Wine Country Rodeo 2010 by directors of the Sonoma County Fair, which this year will be held July 27 through August 8.

"I have a genuine love and passion for rodeo, and I look forward to representing the Sonoma County Fair and professional rodeo," said Elliott, 22. "This is a great fit with my long term career goals of working in equine sports massage therapy, sports medicine, and rodeo."

Elliott is no newcomer to rodeo — she was an active member of the Nor-Cal Junior Rodeo Association for seven years, during which time she won numerous "All Around Cowgirl" titles, 24 championship belt buckles in pole bending, barrel racing, goat tying and break-away roping events. She was awarded the "All Around Horsemanship Champion" title by California State 4-H and was a three-time state qualifier in pole bending and

goat tying in her California High School Rodeo Association district. Elliott has also served as the California State Horseman's Association Region 4 First Princess in 1996 and 1997, the Mother Lode Junior Rodeo Queen in 1998, Miss Rodeo Oakdale in 2006, Cow Palace First Runner-Up in 2009, and CCPRA First Runner Up this year.

She also contributes hundreds of hours coaching younger girls in rodeo events, from barrel racing to participating in rodeo queen contests. When she's not in the ring she enjoys all types of sports -- including wake boarding, snowboarding, swimming, training her dog, and hiking.

The Sonoma County Fair, now in its 74th year, opens on Tuesday, July 27. The PRCA Rodeo will be held Friday, July 30, and Saturday, July 31, at 8 PM. Farmers' Day, which includes all sorts of down-home, rough-and-tumble events, is also July 31 in Chris Beck Arena from 1 to 3 PM. Complete details on the 2010 Sonoma County Fair are available at SonomaCountyFair.com or by calling 707.545.4200.

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They've touched tens of thousands of lives over the years, giving youngsters an appreciation for healthy activity and engendering a love of animals, teaching adults riding and horse husbandry, breeding top-notch quarter horses for cutting and cow horses, competing throughout the country -- and garnering more awards than anyone could have room for. Since 1963, Ron and Ginger DeGrange have made a major contribution to the quality of life in Sonoma County through their ownership of Cloverleaf Ranch and so have been selected by the Sonoma County Fair to receive the Award of Excellence in the Horse Industry.

It would be hard to find someone in a room of Sonoma County locals who has never ridden a horse or enjoyed the summer camp at Cloverleaf Ranch. Ron and Ginger estimate that 34,000 youngsters have attended their renowned summer camp over the years. Thousands more have taken riding lessons or enjoyed the Saturday trail rides of past decades. Yet another 10,000 Santa Rosa Junior College students have benefitted from the equine program that Ginger developed and taught for SRJC.

"It's amazing the lives we've touched over the years — and it's so neat to think of all the friendships that go back to when we started in the '60s," Ginger recalls.

"Many of their students have gone on to influence the horse industry in horse racing and as horse show trainers of cutting, working cow horses, pleasure, reining and trail," adds their daughter Shawna DeGrange, who now is the third generation camp owner and manager.



Both Ron and Ginger were essentially raised in the saddle, and it would be easier to list the competitions in which they have not competed than to list all the events in which they have. Ginger won the Grand National Rodeo Queen title out of a field of 65 contestants in 1963, was Sonoma County Rodeo Queen in 1964, and California State Rodeo Princess in 1966. She qualified several horses to the AQHA World Show and finished in the top ten at the North American Limited Open Reining Champions. Ron also is the consummate horseman and instructor and holds community college credentials in both physical education and horsemanship. They both have competed locally and nationally in Snaffle Bit Futurity, cutting, working cow horse, and reining shows. Ginger is also an educator, holding teaching credentials to instruct both English and French. Her service on the agricultural advisory boards for SRJC and Santa Rosa High School has impacted thousands of students.

"I taught at Santa Rosa Junior High for six years and just loved it," she says, evidencing her passion for teaching. "Those eighth and ninth graders are so full of life."

Cloverleaf Ranch summer camp is legendary, offering an

authentic old-fashioned summer camp experience. Campers lodge in the rustic bunkhouses, learn sports ranging from archery and riflery to team sports, enjoy swimming and other water sports in an extensive aquatic program, and of course learn to ride and care for horses in the extremely popular equine program.

But Cloverleaf is also a working ranch. For many years the DeGranges ran a highly successful quarter horse breeding program with the great stallion Peppy San Bar. Ron has started colts for some of the best horsemen in the business, including "the Master" Greg Ward. And like Ginger, Ron has competed in NCHA, NRCHA, HRHA and AQHA events.

Having inspired literally thousands to work with, care for, and appreciate horses, it is hardly a surprise that Ron and Ginger are the recipients of the 2010 Award of Excellence in the Horse Industry at the Fair.

This year's Sonoma County Fair is themed "The Grape Escape", and will include a dazzling array of special events and contests related to grapes and family games. Additional information on the Sonoma County Fair, is available at SonomaCountyFair.com or by calling 707.545.4200.