

Kirsten Vold

When James Brown belted out his soulful rendition of *It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World*, he'd obviously never had the pleasure of meeting Kirsten Vold. A modern cowgirl with easy manners and a winning smile, Kirsten grew up on the road and knows the rodeo business as well as any of her male contemporaries – if not better! The youngest of six children, Kirsten took over the Harry Vold Rodeo Company when she was just 25 years-old and, since that time, has managed to build on the legacy that her Canadian-born father began nearly six decades ago. It may seem like a natural progression, but Kirsten didn't always see herself living on the rodeo trail.

"I was going to be a lawyer and drive a sports car and live in L.A.," she said in a 2009 interview. "Everybody assumes that I was groomed for this from the time I was a child, as if this is the only thing I've ever wanted to do, and quite honestly, that's really not the case."

Home-schooled until her freshmen year in high school, Vold grew up on the road, ensconced in the life of the cowboy and the excitement of the rodeo. After graduating from University of Southern Colorado in 1996 with a BA in Communications, Kirsten decided to put her degree to work with a job in sports marketing and promotion. Even though her job involved promoting and marketing the sport she so loved, Kirsten felt that her professional destiny was as yet unfulfilled and decided to move back to her father's ranch.

Eager to get her "hands dirty" and become more involved with the day to day operations, Kirsten started to take an active role in the family business. It was not an easy being the only woman – and a very young woman, at that – in a man's world, but with her staunch determination and unparalleled work ethic, Kirsten eventually won over even her toughest critics and took her father's place at the helm.

"She's a pioneer; not an easy thing," her mother Karen Vold told a reporter for *American Profile*. "And when she first decided to do it, it was very tough. You have to prove yourself to a crew that's been there longer than you or is older than you, and to the cowboys. But she did prove herself. She never asked anybody to do anything that she won't do right alongside them. So she's earned their respect."

Kirsten now spends more than 200 days each year on the rodeo trail and oversees what is undeniably the leading rodeo stock company in the industry today. A genuine love of animals is the driving force behind the young woman that now manages 30,000 acres of short-grass prairie, raising some 650 bucking horses. According to Kirsten, her greatest personal achievement is Painted Valley, an 8 year-old stud who has been selected to five Wrangler National Finals Rodeos, was voted best Saddle Bronc Horse of the WNFR in 2009 and in 2010 Painted Valley was named PRCA Saddle Horse of the Year.

"If you ask me, the number one reason why I do what I do, it's because of the animals," she beams. "I love working with animals."

Vold, is now considered a trusted veteran in the industry and her family's company sets the standard by which all others are measured. Whether at the rodeo or the ranch, Kirsten's horses are her life and she is committed to breeding and raising champions. When she's not working, which is rarely, you can find Kirsten enjoying a ride in her convertible BMW, skiing the mountains of Colorado or just hanging out with her husband, Scott, at their home in Texas.

By Courtney Elam