



Arizona  
Quarterhorse  
Racing  
"HALL of FAME"  
NORA KESVIN PICKRELL  
Inducted  
December 7,  
2008

CAMDEN -- If you were to talk with Nora Keehn, it would be hard not to notice her outgoing personality and friendly smile. But what might not be so apparent from a casual conversation with her is her pioneering spirit and competitive fire that led to her induction into the Arizona Quarter Horse Racing Hall of Fame on Dec. 7, 2002. It's hard to believe from her level of energy and enthusiasm that the former Quarter Horse jockey is 84 years old. Keehn and her daughter, Gregg Pickrell, own and operate the 122-acre Far and Away Farm in Camden and brought 30 horses, 20 cats, eight dogs, six cows, one bull, one rabbit and six chickens east when relocating from Arizona. "I attended the University of Arizona, and, in those days, they did not have the racetrack program that they have now. It was developed by one of the men they refer to as one of the Four Horsemen, who brought Thoroughbred studs of Quarter Horse type and bred them to Quarter Horse mares, which improved the breed. His name was Rukin Jelks, and he was the greatest horseman who ever lived," Keehn said. Keehn went to work for Jelks, and, although she was an experienced horsemen with a hunter/jumper background, she told Jelks that she didn't know anything about race horses. "I had been in the hunter/jumper world for many years," said Keehn. "He said, 'I'll teach you.' And he gave me the opportunity. I mucked stalls, I fed horses, I groomed horses. He gave me the opportunity to get a license to be a jockey. I've been told that I was the second licensed female jockey in the United States." She developed a passion for riding Quarter Horses, making a seamless transition from the hunter/jumper world. Keehn wasn't aware of her pioneering status at the time. "I loved riding Quarter Horses," said Keehn, who said she and her daughter now only race Thoroughbreds. It was out of necessity that Keehn made the switch from the hunter/jumper circuit to Quarter Horse racing because of the challenges of making money. Keehn was also a judge on the hunter/jumper circuit. Pickrell, a Thoroughbred trainer, galloped for Aiken-based Thoroughbred Trainer and resident W.C. "Mike" Freeman in New York, she said. It was Pickrell

who saddled Burst of Light, the horse jockey Pat Valenzuela won his 4,000th career race on at Louisiana Downs on Oct. 9, 2008.