



*Congratulations to*  
**Tom Sparks**  
*for being Inducted into the*  
***2025 USTPA Hall of Fame!***



# Hall of Fame

## ***Congratulations to this Year's Inductee!***

What is a pioneer? It means venturing into uncharted territory, unafraid to challenge the status quo and blaze new trails for others to follow. It's about being a visionary—someone who not only sees what could be but also takes action to make it a reality. Pioneers possess a unique combination of courage, creativity, and determination, navigating through uncertainty and breaking new ground in their field. Pioneers leave a lasting legacy by reshaping the world around them, often laying the foundation for future generations to build upon – Tom Sparks is a pioneer.



Tom Sparks is a man of many accomplishments, yet he would tell you that his greatest achievement lies in his family. Born in Ryan, Oklahoma, and a proud graduate of the University of Oklahoma School of Pharmacy in 1967, Tom has worn many hats throughout his life. From serving as president of multiple banks and owning multiple car dealerships to being a master diver with countless deep dives around the world, he has excelled in every endeavor he's taken on. But despite his impressive career and adventures, Tom's heart is most full when he's with his family, — whether playing cards, being at the lake, spending time at the barn, or traveling. As a devoted husband since 1967, a father of 3, and grandfather of 4, his true pride and joy comes from the love and relationships he's built over the years. And through it all, his unwavering support for all things Oklahoma athletics as a season ticket holder for 55+ years, remains a constant, just as his love for life and family does.

Toms' dedication to his craft and his unwavering love for horses have defined his remarkable career. From the moment he first saddled up, it was clear that his connection to these majestic animals went beyond mere skill; it was a bond built on trust, respect, and passion. His tireless work ethic and commitment to excellence have earned him a

reputation as one of the hardest-working individuals in the sport. Whether in the arena or behind the scenes, Tom's life has been a testament to the deep respect he holds for horses and the profound impact they've had on his journey. His love for horses has been a constant throughout his life. He often says he's had horses for as long as he can remember, and it was this deep-rooted connection that sparked his journey into the world of competitive horseback riding. This lifelong bond would eventually lead him to the sport of cutting, where the synergy between horse and rider is everything.

Tom Sparks first discovered his passion for competitive horseback riding through the sport of cutting in the late 1970's. Raised on a farm where horses were a part of everyday life, Tom had always admired their strength and agility, but it wasn't until he attended a local cutting event that he felt the spark to pursue the sport seriously.

Fascinated by the precision and strategy involved in working with cattle, Tom was drawn to the challenge of cutting, where horse and rider must work in perfect harmony to separate cattle from the herd. With a natural feel for the horse's movements and a sharp instinct for the sport, Tom quickly realized that this was his true calling. Determined to master the craft, he began training rigorously, learning from seasoned professionals, and refining his skills until he made his mark in competitive cutting winning numerous medals, trophies, and ribbons.





As Tom's children grew, they too shared his deep love for horses, with his oldest daughter, Allison, particularly drawn to competitive cutting. Together, they made a name for themselves in the industry, gaining recognition for their hard work and passion. Tom's influence expanded beyond the arena when he began breeding horses on his farm in Marlow, Oklahoma. He was a true pioneer in the field, advancing the techniques of artificial insemination and becoming one of the first to achieve successful embryo transfers at a private residential facility. His innovative approach didn't stop there—Tom also broke new ground with his research into how light affects hair growth in horses. After studying the phenomenon at Colorado State University, he became one of the first to introduce this groundbreaking concept to the state of Oklahoma, further cementing his status as a forward-thinking leader in the equine world.

Tom and his family were introduced to the world of team penning in the 1980s, as the sport was quickly gaining traction. Tom participated in one of the very first team penning's, an event that was, in his words, chaotic—held in an open arena with a stock trailer and the back door tied back to serve as the pen. It wasn't long before the event format evolved, becoming what we now recognize as organized chaos. Tom became deeply involved with the United States Team Penning Association (USTPA), dedicating much of his time to the executive team, organizing large events, and ensuring everything ran smoothly. One of Tom's key innovations, shared with USTPA Hall of Famer Mike Vanzant, was the creation of the ranch sorting clock that is now a staple in the sport. Before this innovation, ties were common, and there wasn't a reliable way to break them. Tom and Mike came up with the idea of using a lap timer, similar to those used in track running, and were able to prototype and refine a clock system that greatly enhanced the efficiency and excitement of ranch sorting competitions that is still used today.

Tom has earned many achievements, awards, and trophies over the years. One of the highlights was winning the 2011 USTPA 9 Penning Championship at the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo alongside his daughter and granddaughter—a special moment featuring three generations on one team capturing a championship. He went on to achieve tremendous success in the sport, qualifying for and winning the Paint Horse World Show, capturing multiple AQHA World Championships, and earning countless accomplishments within the USTPA. He also enjoyed showing horses at the state fairs, in Christmas parades and even dappled in a team of horses pulling a wagon around his farm.

Tom thoroughly enjoys spending time with his children and grandchildren of whom are thriving in their lives, which brings him immense joy. He also finds great fulfillment working at a hospice pharmacy, where he takes calls and ensures medication is delivered to those in need—a cause that has always been close to his heart. Even after all these years, Tom continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others every single day. If you know Tom, you know his spirit. He's full of life, always ready for fun, and never one to shy away from a challenge—whether it was a friendly competition, a wild dare, or simply being there when someone needed advice, a laugh, or a friend. His energy and humor have been constants throughout his life, and many can attest to the positive impact he's had.

These days, Tom still enjoys riding horses. While it may look a bit different and less competitive than it once was, he continues to share his unmatched knowledge and passion for horses—and he still makes time to ride every day.







## USTPA Hall of Fame Mission Statement

1. Honor the Heroes of Team Penning and Ranch Sorting. We shall recognize and honor those individuals who have made an impact on our sport and our members.
2. Celebrate Excellence. We shall enshrine those who excelled and made our sport better.
3. Preserve our History. We shall honor those who sacrificed and worked whenever they were asked without personal reward.
4. Promote USTPA Values. Family, teamwork, leadership, excellence, horsemanship, community and sportsmanship.

