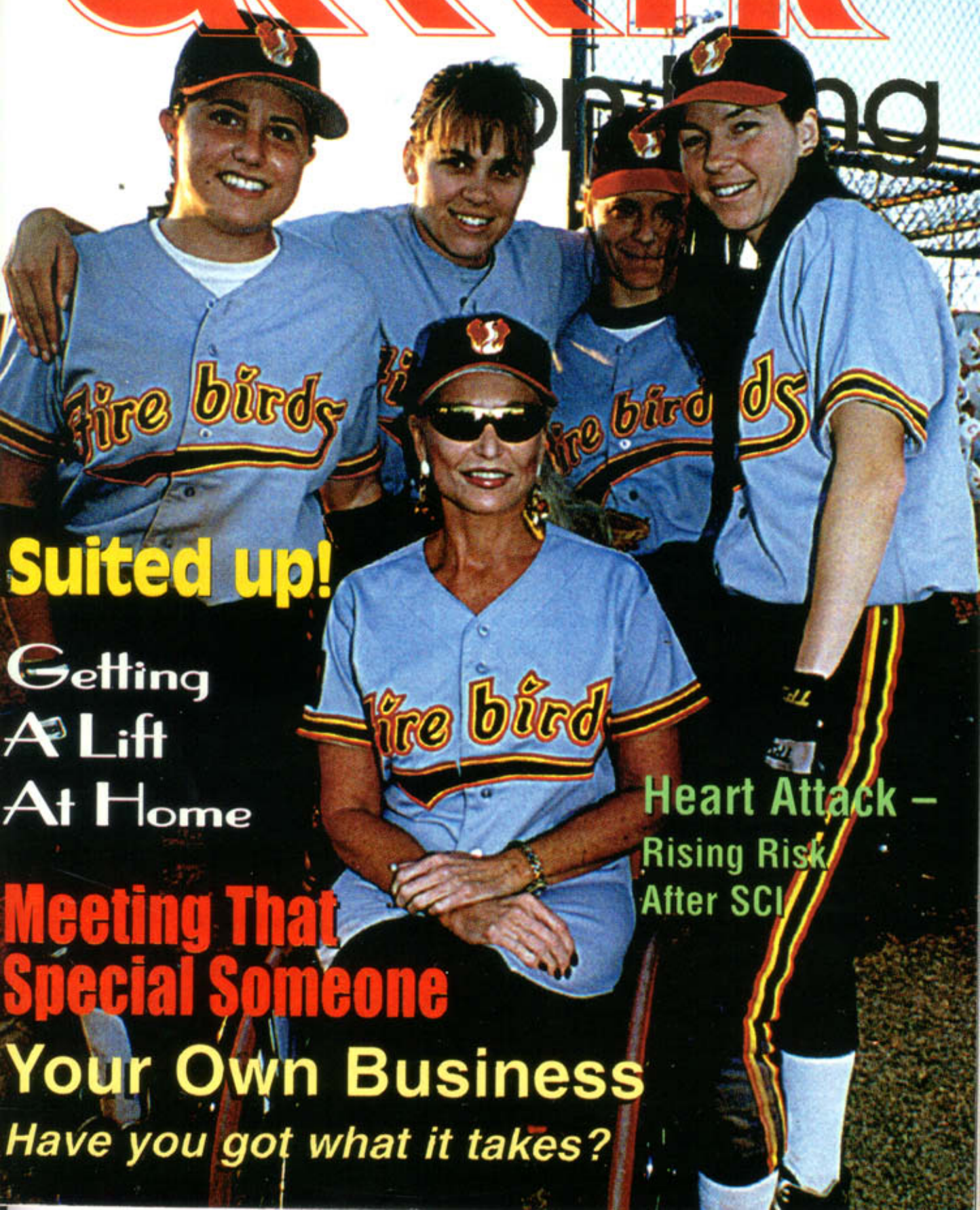


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# Common Threads: Baseball & Horses

You might spot her one row up from the Angels' dugout at Anaheim Stadium, or in a box seat next to the Padres' dugout at Jack Murphy Stadium. You might spot her chatting with scouts behind home plate at Arizona Fall League games.

You also might spot her at recreational baseball fields around Arizona, Nevada and California, suited up in a baseball cap and jersey, cheering on women playing amateur hardball.

A self-described "baseball addict," Christina Paine has recently taken her life-long avocation a

by Tammy Lechner



serious step forward as a co-founder and CEO of the National Women's Baseball Association (NWBA).

The NWBA is the first national baseball organization devoted entirely to women participants since the All-American Girl's Baseball League during the 1940's.

"Everyone from students to mothers and women who own their own companies are playing hardball," says Paine, who is also sponsor and general manager of the NWBA's Arizona Firebirds. "We're attracting women from softball because it's a faster game...more exciting."

Never a baseball player herself, Paine discov-



Top: Christina is hands-on with her team, The Arizona Firebirds.  
Above: Christina with friend Gene Autry.

ered a "fan's love" for the game as a child.

At the same time, she developed an athletic reputation for horseback riding that followed her to adulthood and places her today as a world-class "cutting" horse rider and breeder. (See "In The Arena.")

"The common threads throughout my life," says Paine, "have always been horses and baseball." Although a near-fatal horseback riding accident left her disabled about 20 years ago, Paine reveals an undaunted spirit that has always known when and where to find a window of opportunity. "You have two choices in life," she exclaims. "You rise to the occasion or you

don't, and if you don't you're out of life. And that goes for anyone, not just the disabled."

A dual-resident of Scottsdale, AZ, and Coronado, CA., Paine also began enjoying success in her teens as an actress and model in numerous Hollywood commercials and movies. Her credits in the entertainment industry include featured and guest-starring roles in shows including "The Wild, Wild West," "Big Valley," "Kojak," and "Barnaby Jones." Her role as a spokesperson/model for many top companies include commercials and advertisements for Coca-Cola, Hanes Hose, Breck, Revlon and Resistol/Stetson Hats. Currently, she is the spokesperson for Wheeling Free, a Costa Mesa-based company producing a three-wheeled, personal mobility machine; and is acting in commercials for Lincoln-Mercury.

A tour through her home in Scottsdale, which fronts a five-acre horse ranch she has owned and operated since 1986, displays a collection of artifacts revealing her life's greatest loves: Hollywood, the Old West and, of course, the Grand Old Game.

Several years ago, Paine wanted to get involved with ownership and management of a minor league baseball franchise. Buck Rodgers, the former California Angels player and manager, joined her efforts to scout for available franchises.

"She's a real avid baseball fan," says Rodgers, who met Paine through her close friendship with Angels' majority owners Gene and Jackie Autry.

But as the effort to acquire a minor league franchise became complicated and stalled, Paine acted on an opportunity in the fall of '94 to sponsor the "Arizona Firebirds," an entry in a

women's hardball league.

Paine also picked up the reins on a fledgling movement aimed at creating a new baseball organization exclusively for women and co-founded the NWBA along with Lexee Emineth, commissioner of the women's Arizona league and Jim Glennie, commissioner of the women's Michigan league. Both leagues were independent prior to coming on board the NWBA as the association's initial membership.

"Play hardball!" is now the call women are hearing from Paine, NWBA president Emineth and NWBA vice president Glennie.

When spring play kicks off across the nation in '97 there will be more than 2,000 women - about 100 teams - playing regulation hardball, largely through independent leagues.

"Our immediate goal," says Paine, "is to gain sponsorship support to provide decent venues for women's baseball nationwide. We know the players are out there, we know the desire is out there and we know the time is right."

To contact the National Women's Baseball Association (NWBA) for information about women's baseball leagues in your area call: 602-947-5095 or write: NWBA, 4730 E. Indian School Road, Suite 120, Phoenix, AZ, 85018.

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## In the Arena

In addition to her current involvement with women's baseball, and beyond a successful career in acting/modeling, Christina Paine reveals that the other "common thread" throughout her life is horses.

A noted supporter of "cutting" horse riding for the past ten years, Paine's involvement with horses began during childhood. She recalls her fascination with Western lore existing even at the age of three.

"I would not leave the house unless I was dressed in my cowgirl outfit," says Paine, who remarks that she saw herself as a little Dale Evans — one of her early heroes, alongside Roy Rogers and Gene Autry.

In fact, a modeling/acting career that

would span nearly three decades began at age five when a department store enlisted her as a "cowgirl" model. Paine went on through her teens and early-20s appearing in a host of national commercials and also guest-star on numerous television episodes, including many popular Westerns. At the height of this career, during her mid-20s, Paine was injured while riding. The accident damaged her spinal cord and left her without the use of her legs.

Reluctant to discuss the accident in great detail Paine says, "Let's just say that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and riding the wrong horse. Since then, I've felt it's very negative to dwell on the accident and I don't talk about it much."

Clearly, however, the accident com-

pelled her to refocus her life. Despite the injury, Paine's love of horses remained a constant in her life.

After a five-year hiatus from riding, she became hooked again when her good friend, actor Ben Johnson, prompted her to try "cutting" — a Western ranching technique in which a rider isolates (cuts) a single animal from a herd. Paine quickly conquered this maneuver, which requires a great deal of skill, speed and courage. With the aid of a modified saddle that has a seat belt to hold her in place, Paine relies on verbal commands and rein movements to direct her mount.

Throughout the 1980's and early 90's she became one of the top "cutters" in the world.

While not as involved today with riding, Paine continues to raise cutting stock on her ranch in Scottsdale, AZ.

"When you have been able-bodied but suddenly lose the use of your limbs," she explains, "you really don't know what you will be capable of until you try. All too often, those of us who are physically challenged become limited because of the limitations imposed on us by other people."

In addition to her role today as CEO of the National Women's Baseball Association, Paine is on the board of directors for WAIF, a charity benefiting homeless children, on the Celebrity Advisory Board of NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association), and on the board of the International Buckskin Horse Association Scholarship Foundation. As a founding member of the Autry Museum of Western Heritage, Paine participates in educational programs at the Autry Museum, including panel discussions on "Daring Women of the West," and "Women in Baseball. ▀