

A Peculiar Horse Who Found Stardom Late In Life

CH COLONEL HOSS

by Bob Funkhouser

You just never know when, where and how you might find the next show ring star and thankfully for everyone who loves the American Saddlebred, they don't all come from the blue-blooded establishments of the Bluegrass State.

Colonel Hoss found his way to the bright lights of Kentucky via the Ohio State Fair. The then nine-year-old gelding was spotted by Tommy Clouse who called his son Clark to say he had just seen a horse they needed. He told his son the gelding was doing all five gaits at the same time but that he was exciting doing it.

"I was down in North Carolina looking at horses with Matt Shiflet and dad called to tell me about this horse," said Clark Clouse. "He said, 'there's a guy that looks like Willie Nelson showing this gaited horse. I don't know what gait he was doing, but was exciting.'

"I didn't pay much attention to him but when I got home he told me again that we needed this horse. So we went to the mountains of West Virginia and this guy met us at the highway and we followed him down this two-lane road, which turned to one lane. I didn't know where we were going. We get to this guy's place and he asked, 'how do you want to see him?' I told him I'd like to see him in the show bridle and he said he hadn't worked him since they had been home. He had been trail riding him.

"I tried him and he was a hard horse to balance, hard to catch his trot so I wasn't sure about him but dad said buy him. I called Joan Adler and she bought him."

Bred by Ronald Turner and shown for the first time by Brian Turner to win the Tri-State ASHB Weanling Futurity, the son of Catalyst and Paragon's Lasting Impression (by Sultan's Paragon) was purchased by Ed Harper (aka Willie Nelson) as a five-year-old. He kept him for four years before the white-legged gelding moved to Kentucky where Clouse showed him some for Joan Adler before selling him to the Beachum family for their son, Justin Cowley.

"Just a few weeks after we bought him I took him to Dayton to work," added Clouse. "Lonnie Lavery saw him and said, 'that's a good one. This horse will win at Louisville.'

"Everything had to be just right with him. Four ounces could throw him off and he wouldn't trot. Another thing we found out was if he was bad at home, he'd be good at the show. There were several times he never trotted a step during his last ride at home before a show. He was also very nervous at the show. He would work a bucket up the wall of the stall and put it on his head with his gums flapping. He did it all the time."

Justin Cowley and CH Colonel Hoss lit up the ring in just their second show together. After having a less than stellar beginning at ASHAV, Cowley and the Colonel rocked the American



Harold Denton and CH Colonel Hoss had many great wins in the amateur gaited division.



Justin Cowley and CH Colonel Hoss garnered a huge fan base, winning at Lexington, Louisville and Kansas City.

Royal, winning the Junior Exhibitor Five-Gaited National Championship defeating the likes of CH Callaway's Independence Day, CH Carolina Cat, CH Sunken Treasure, Catch The Moon, Caramac's Big Ticket, Cara Clara and CH Harlem's Hot Ticket.

"Beating all those world's champions at Kansas City, that was a lot of fun," exclaimed Clouse.

The next year Cowley and Colonel Hoss had a great year, including junior exhibitor world's champion and reserve world's champion of champions titles. That was followed up the next season, 2008, with the amateur gentlemen's qualifier and Amateur Five-Gaited Grand Championship at Lexington Junior League to go with the Amateur Gentlemen's Five-Gaited World's Championship.

In 2009, a new chapter would unfold for the Colonel. Harold Denton had always been a big fan and had been beaten several times by the big-hearted gelding. When Clouse told him the gelding was available, Denton jumped at the chance to own the world's champion and he too found great success. It all started with a sweep of the division at River Ridge and wins at Shelbyville and St. Louis. The new team seemed to really click and Denton had many great riders over their four seasons together.

"He liked Harold and the way he rode him," exclaimed Clouse. "He was a hard horse to ride, but Harold got along with him great."

"It's a great feeling to ride a horse like Colonel Hoss," added Denton. "He was a hard horse to ride as he was natural gaited. You had to sit the trot at first and then once you caught it, you could post but you had to feel your way through it. We liked to go in last so I could make sure I had my trot before we hit the gait. There was no stopping once you got it.

"Once at Lexington Junior League the horse going in the gate in front of me spun around and knocked the trainer to the ground and he was laying long ways in the gate. I had already caught my trot and wasn't about to stop. There was room for me to go by him so I just blasted through and never looked back.

"The thing about Colonel Hoss is you had to learn what to do and what not to do. Winning with him is what I'm going to miss the most. He was just such a fun horse to show. He won the High Point Report honors three years in a row, once with Jason [Cowley] and then two with me. How many horses his age have done that?"

Like many of the really good ones he had his share of quirks. Besides being a real hard horse to keep balanced and trotting, once it came time to retire he didn't want any part of it. His life was in the training barn and that's where he wanted to be.

"You couldn't turn him out for five minutes," said Clouse. "He hated it outside. We finally got him to stay out some with a really nice yearling that we had. They turned into buddies and he would stay out with that yearling. In fact, when we found him dead the yearling was standing beside him licking on him, wondering why he wasn't getting up.

"We're going to name that yearling Colonel's Legacy.

Colonel Hoss indeed left a legacy and a lot of great memories for those who worked and showed him. And like most great American Saddlebreds, it was his big heart and athletic ability that separated him from his peers.