

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Tre' Lee - The People's Choice Trainer Of The Year

Top Of The Mark - The People's Choice Overall Five-Gaited Horse Of The Year

The People's Choice Five-Gaited Open Stallion Of The Year

By Erica Rae Faulkner

The seats of Freedom Hall were full of Saddlebred enthusiasts during the 2016 Five-Gaited World's Grand Championship class. After a two-horse workout between the stallion winner Top Of The Mark, and mare winner CH Fox Grape The Tiger Lily, all the entries in the class retired to the in-gate end of the ring to await the naming of the new Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion. Peter Fenton's familiar voice came over the loud-speaker. "Well, it was a great class and a very exciting two-horse work out. It's time to meet the World Grand Champion. It is with the unanimous support of our three-judge panel, WGC Top Of The Mark and Tre' Lee." Tre' Lee collected his reins and racked down the rail where he met his wife Emily and son Chase at the far end of the arena, to accept the Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion honors.

Bred by Mary McClean and the Golden Creek Farms, Top Of The Mark is by CH Top Spool and out of the Broodmare Hall Of Fame mare Carol Lynn. Both sire and dam are also owned by Mary McClean. CH Top Spool was famed for his game personality, grand stature, his ability to command a ring with his presence and his success as a breeding stallion. As a show horse, he was in the winner's circle many times, with his win in the Amateur Five-Gaited Championship at the World's Championship Horse Show in 1999 being his career highlight. He went on to sire many highly competitive show horses, such as, Top Beat, Spools Lady Boyle, CH Spools Top Star RHF, and Top This, among others. Dam of Top Of The Mark, Carol Lynn (BHF) also has placed her name at the top of the breeding world, as she continually has produced quality offspring. CH Lynn Williams, CH According To Lynn, CH The Tonight Show are all prime examples of the talent that Carol Lynn (BHF) has put on the ground.

CH Lynn Williams was the first successful baby to come from crossing CH Top Spool and Carol Lynn (BHF). And with all the success that CH Lynn Williams experienced in the show ring, it only made sense to once again breed these two great horses and see what else they could produce. And in doing so, the show horse world gained a new star, Top Of The Mark. This grand stallion was instrumental in Mary winning the USEF Ellen Scripps Davis Memorial Breeders' Award this year, as well as helped her get inducted into the ASHA Breeders' Hall Of Fame this past year. Top Of The Mark is



Top Of The Mark and Tre' Lee make their trip down victory lane as the Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion. Top Of The Mark was also named UPHA Overall Five-Gaited Horse Of The Year, UPHA Open Five-Gaited Horse Of The Year, USEF Horse Of Honor and ASHA Horse Of The Year.

Mary's first homebred Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion. Tre' Lee has had the privilege of training the stallion at his farm, Prospect Lane, with the help of his wife, Emily.

Tre' was born and raised in North Carolina. When he was in the 6th grade he relocated with his family to Virginia. Tre' spent his days attending every horse show he could with his father, Clem Lee. Clem Lee is also a horse trainer, and Tre' knew from a young age that he would one day follow in his father's footsteps. He recalls his trips to the World's Championship Horse Show with his father, and fondly remembers watching the classes on Saturday night, dreaming of what it would be like to win the Five-Gaited World Grand Champion title.

Eventually Tre' left home to work for Johnny Jones in Union, Kentucky. "Johnny was great at gaiting a horse," said Tre'. Johnny obviously passed this trait down to Tre', as he has successfully brought

along numerous young gaited horses, such as the recent Junior Five-Gaited World's Champion of Champions, Vegas Moon. He has also shown such noted five-gaited horses as, Undeniably Undulata ERB, You Can Kall Me Lucky, Ultimate Blue, and It's No Wonder, along with many others. However, his talent goes far beyond just working with a gaited horse, as he has found success with horses in every division from harness to three-gaited.

Eventually Tre' Lee and Johnny Jones went into business together, and moved their operation to Versailles, Kentucky. It was not long after that Tre' and Emily purchased Prospect Lane. Since opening their own operation, Tre' and Emily have worked together to amass a list of World Champion wins, more than most their age. However, this past year's win with Top Of The Mark was a special one. It was Tre' Lee's first Five-Gaited World's Grand Championship win. Along with success in the show ring, Tre' and Emily have also



Tre' Lee showed the junior five-gaited horse Vegas Moon to much success in 2016. Here they are pictured winning the Junior Five-Gaited World Championship class for owner Mary McClean.

enjoyed 14 years of marriage, and the experiences of parenting as they raise their nine-year-old son, Chase.

Top Of The Mark, or Grover, as he is known around the barn, is not your typical stallion, "He is such a kind horse," Tre' says of Grover. "We have had him since he was just a young colt, and our relationship has continued to grow over the years." However, Grover has presented Tre' with



Tre, Emily and Chase Lee enjoy a moment together at Top Of The Mark's Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion win.

challenges, as horses always do, and Tre' thanks his wife for her support and help through the growing pains with this special horse. "Sometimes if I would just be stuck in my training with him, Emily would get on and take over and get him through it and the break allowed me to come back with a new approach." In the early years, Grover learned his lessons well, however his body took a little bit of time to catch up. "He took some time to grow up physically," says Tre'. "Mentally it was all there all the time. You could see these moments of greatness when he came out to work. We knew all along he was going to be great. His body just needed some time to fill out and get strong."

Tre' is thankful for the opportunity to work with such a talented animal and gives thanks to Mary McClean. "She really is a great customer," says Tre'. "She does whatever is best for the horse. She never pressures us to rush with the training process. She has given us free rein to take care of Grover as if he is one of our own. She is just a wonderful person to work with." The list of people that have helped in the success of Grover's career is a lengthy one. And Tre' wishes to thank them all. He says, "There are so many people that I want to thank. I could not do this without my wife. Mary, for her patience and trust. My wonderful staff, Jose Guido, Carlos Garcia, Foster Roberts, Eddie Williams, who shoes for us, Dr. Behling and Dr. Wazir, Dr. Clare Seagren, Daryn Hall, my parents, Clem and Dora Lee and so many more. Most of all I would like

to thank God for bringing these wonderful people and great horses into our lives."

Recently, Prospect Lane has moved into a new facility. Still in Versailles, the new barn is just a few miles away from the original operation. "We just got in here right before Thanksgiving," comments Tre'. The new barn has a large arena, 32 stalls for horses in training, as well as a broodmare barn. "The main reason for the move is because Emily and I have a lot of broodmares that are our own. And we needed more space for them. This facility provided that," says Tre'. Prospect Lane is looking forward to a bright future, and Tre' is looking forward to seeing Grover pass on his talent and working with his get for years to come. "We have a couple young ones on the ground by him right now. None of them are working yet since they are yearlings. But we have six or seven that really are showing a lot of promise." Heading into 2017, Tre' leaves his fans and young admirers with this advice; "Anything is possible. I did not come from a wealthy family per se. I worked hard and learned from everyone I could. You never know where you are going to end up, so you just have to get up and give it your all every day." Great advice for the younger generation, and for all those who voted for Tre' Lee and Top Of The Mark in this year's People's Choice poll.



An emotional Emily Lee stands with her son Chase as they listen to Tre' during his interview with Peter Fenton after his unanimous win with Top Of The Mark in the Five-Gaited World Grand Championship last year. Tre' made sure to give thanks to Emily and all she does for Prospect Lane.