



This slice of Kentucky has been home to the Sarvers and the birthplace of many top show horses. Photo by Fred Sarver



Sarver said he was inspired by nature and what an inspiration it is.

A CORNERSTONE

OF THE BREEDING WORLD

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER

Year in and year out we admire the presence and athletic ability of our American Saddlebred, Morgan and Hackney show stars but did you ever think about, how did they get here? Where did they get their start? Large scale breeding farms are nearly a thing of the past as these days many foals are the products of “small breeders,” those show horse exhibitors who also raise a foal or two. It’s a hobby for them with dreams getting a baby that will make to the show ring and hopefully accomplish great things.

For the handful of large breeding farms remaining it is most impressive what they do to provide the product in volume that we know as the show horse/pony. There are endless days and nights with so many moving parts and variables that you have to wonder, why they even attempt this?

Earlier this spring I had the pleasure of visiting a farm dedicated to the breeding of American Saddlebreds. It’s a business, it’s what they do on a daily basis and it’s not for the faint hearted or those who can’t go the extra mile.

Just outside of Bourbon County, Kentucky, which has a rich history when it comes to the breeding and

raising of American Saddlebreds, Fred and Karen Sarver’s Cornerstone Farm is doing its part to uphold that tradition, along with their dedicated customers who send some of the best mares in the nation there to breed and raise a foal. Like many in the business, Kentucky is not Sarver’s original home, but the road he took to get there is paved with some of the most influential bloodstock the modern-day breed has known.

On the day I was there it had been raining days on end, making all of the regular outdoor chores, truly chores. There were two vets there checking mares and giving fluids to newborn foals insuring their healthy development over the next few months. There was lab work to be done, the telephone didn’t stop and oh yes, the blacksmith was there at the same time. In addition to being a horseman, organizational skills are paramount. Besides all of the physical activities going on, there is record keeping, record keeping and more record keeping.

And just to keep it lively, a bad storm blew the roof off of the stallion annex that evening, giving the staff the chore of moving the breeding studs to a different location while the electricity was out everywhere. Just another day on a breeding farm.

The Sarvers originally purchased 45 acres for their Cornerstone Farm and then bought 50 more, and then added another 20 for their friend and client Martin Gueldner who built a barn/arena/summer home on the property for his breeding stock and show horses that he works himself. Most recently, another 143 acres was added to the Cornerstone network.

“We have around 50 foals a year,” said Fred Sarver. “Five or six are our personal foals.”

Sarver has a great staff to keep all of the pieces and parts moving in the right direction. Hugo Deloya has been with him since 1996 when he was in Virginia. Deloya takes care of starting all of the farm-owned colts and a few outside customers. George Borchers has been with the Sarvers for the past four years and brings a wealth of knowledge from South Africa.

“It takes a community to make it happen,” said Sarver. “I’m surrounded by a great staff and everyone knows their job. We don’t have to give a lot of instructions around here.”

Cornerstone Farm has the greatest collection of black stallions to be found anywhere. Farm veterans Mountainview’s Heir To Fortune and Brookhill’s Apollon



Callaway's Bluesman is the newest addition to the stallion roster at Cornerstone.



Part of a great staff at Cornerstone, Hugo Deloya has been with Sarver since 1996.



CH HS Baby Steps is among the former world's champion mares being bred at Cornerstone Farm.



Leading The Brightest Blue, George Borchers is Sarver's right hand man in the breeding operation.

have sired and continue to produce world-class show stars. The newest addition is the 2010 World's Champion Five-Gaited Stallion, Callaway's Bluesman. This horse is special to Sarver with his connection to both Callaway Hills and the late Redd Crabtree.

Also in the stallion line up is the South African-bred sire, (SA) Tango's Daylight as well as Phlags Phlying and the up and coming young sire, HS Daydream Masterpiece.

"We are purpose driven here," said Sarver, referencing their business model and goals. "We are putting healthy, live foals on the ground for our customers."

Some of those customers include Scott Hagan, Misdee Wrigley Miller, Ross Millin, Tim O'Brien, Kim Skipton, Carolyn Garrett, and the Beltz family, among others.

While the stallions are prized, Cornerstone, like most successful breeding operations, is home to some outstanding broodmares. Among the names you'll recognize are CH Along Came A Spider, I Am The Dream (BHF), CH HS Baby Steps, The Brightest Blue, Voulez Vous, Daphney Dearest (the dam of world's champion of champions CH Mr. Center Stage), CH Undulata's Susan McGee, HS Daydream's Dream Girl, HS Ima Cool Girl, Crazy Daisy, Rock This Town, Lily's In Town, Honor Thy Mother, and CH Lulu Guinness.