

SUPREME AMONG THE SULTANS

by Bob Funkhouser

The show horse industry suffered an emotional loss with the Jan. 23 passing of 24-year-old Supreme Heir. However, it will suffer most five, six and seven years down the road when there won't be any sons and daughters making their show ring debuts. Yes, some other stallions will emerge and gain in popularity, but those that produce countless world and national champions in all divisions, are few and far between. Supreme Heir's half brother, Sultan's Santana, might have been the last one to match the success of the five-time leading sire of World's Champions.

It wasn't a surprising climb to fame for Supreme Heir. Air Of Class (his original name) was born of royal blood and his show ring career began with one of the best. Foaled at Crabtree Farm in Simpsonville, Ky., he was bred by Mrs. F.D. Sinclair, the owner of his dam, many times world's champion CH Supreme Airs. Charlie Crabtree has never won the Breeder's Award, yet he has produced a great list of breeding stallions from Crabtree Farm including Yorktown, New Yorker, Harlem Globetrotter, Yorktown Magic and Supreme Heir. Redd Crabtree was the man who developed Supreme Heir into a two-time world's champion performance horse. It was also Crabtree who made the decision to make and keep him a breeding stallion.

"Mrs. Sinclair told me to cut him, but I told her I didn't think that was wise," said Crabtree. "She said, 'Why not?' and I told her he was a beautiful horse and bred so well that even if we weren't successful in the show ring he should make a breeding horse.

"I tried to rack him but he couldn't quite get that down, that's why we showed him as a walk-trot horse. After showing him for about a year though he started getting awful ornery. I knew something was wrong with him, but I couldn't figure out what. So later I sent him to the vet for something else and asked them to check him out. The vet called back and said, 'Redd, there's nothing wrong with this horse.' I said doc I know I'm not that bad a horse trainer, something is making him unhappy. He then confessed, 'Yes we found something. His testicles are in backwards and causing great discomfort when he works. You can either geld him or breed him.' So that made that decision for us to quit showing him."

Supreme Heir was the 1982 Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Champion and the 1983 Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Champion before his show ring career came to a medical close. And like so many of the great ones his breeding career began early so there was enough time to produce a number of offspring and really find out what he could do.

"As a show horse Supreme Heir had the best attitude and he was an extremely beautiful horse," added Crabtree. "He was like a lot of those Sultan horses in that he didn't



Developed and shown by Redd Crabtree, Supreme Heir was a world's champion walk-trot horse as a two and three-year-old.

have a ton of athletic talent in the beginning, but would let you help him. It was his attitude though that made him such a special horse."

It might have been his attitude that made him a special show horse but it was the bloodlines behind that attitude that have been responsible for making him the producer that he was. First of all he was sired by Supreme Sultan, a horse whose statue stands in front of the American Saddlebred Museum because of the remarkable stamp he put on today's show horse. Sultan's incredible quality, which came from his sire Valley View Supreme and his grandsire Genius Bourbon King, played a major role in taking the American Saddlebred that we know today to another level.

The female side of Supreme Heir's family has also left its mark on the breed starting with his dam, Fine Harness World's Grand Champion Supreme Airs. Shown to nine world's championships by Charlie Crabtree and Mrs. Sinclair, the beautiful, black Stonewall Supreme daughter Supreme Airs was just as successful as a producer. Not only was this Stonewall King granddaughter the dam of Supreme Heir, but also of Fine Harness World's Grand Champion and noted sire CH Foxfire's Prophet. Putting On Airs, a Mr. Magic Man daughter of Supreme Airs, produced Harlem Globetrotter and Yorktown Magic as well as a mare named Yorkshire Pudding who has produced the noted stallions Castle Bravo, Northern Blues and Reedann's Top Gun.

Everywhere you look on the dam's side there are historic producers. Supreme Heir's second dam was the Beau Fortune daughter, Crebilly's Plumb Beautiful. According to Redd Crabtree, his fourth dam, a Wild Rex daughter named Wild Wind, was described by both Frank and Garland Bradshaw as one of the best broodmares ever from the early days. She had a remarkable 25 foals.

Supreme Heir got his chance to prove what impeccable bloodlines he had two years after he won his second world's championship. New York resident Mary Hall was in the market for a breeding stallion, it was a dream her father had initiated just a few years earlier.

"We had always had horses but then gotten away from them for a while," said the now Mary Hall-Fisk. "Then in June of '82 my father said, 'Let's get a horse.' In 1983 we bought this farm in Clay, N.Y., and named it Hallston Manor. When we drove in here to look at it my father said, 'Couldn't you just see foals running through the fields?' He passed away a month later."

The Hall sisters continued their interest in horses. Mary's sister bought her first Saddlebred in 1984, Hallston Manor was a hunter/jumper barn at the time.

"I fell in love with the American Saddlebred and jumped ship," said Hall-Fisk. "It was suggested that we might want to look at getting a stallion and start breeding Saddlebreds. I remembered what my father had said and he was the driving force behind this. My mother, sister and I set out to find a stallion. We looked at 12 different horses and Supreme Heir was the last one we saw.

"I'll never forget that day. We went up on the hill at Crabtrees and here comes Casey [Crabtree] leading this magnificent animal up the hill towards us. He was like a bright, new shiny penny. We knew right then he was the one."

It took a few months to get the deal put together but Supreme Heir was purchased and went to New York for a short time before returning to Kentucky. The Hall family enjoyed success early on with horses like U.S. Heir, She's Heirresistable, Moving Time, Miss Syracuse and The Edge being born there in New York.

In February of 1988 Supreme Heir was placed with Joan Lurie at Willowbank Farm and together they formed an amazing partnership. According to Mary he settled right in at Lurie's.

"I was first struck by absolutely how gorgeous he was," recalled Lurie. "His eyes, his ears, his neck, every part was so beautiful. No matter what kind of horse you liked you had to be taken with this majestic animal. He also responded to a lot of love and care. He liked spending time outside, but not by himself. If you turned him out he would eat for just a few minutes and then want to come in so we hand walked him and let him graze that way. He also liked cool baths on hot days."

In trying to get his breeding career launched, Lurie kept the handsome stallion in front of the public. He had not been promoted like the many other Sultan sons that were out there at the time. She had to scrape and beg to get a few mares to him in the beginning. The Hall/Lurie team did put more into advertising the promising stallion, but even more importantly Lurie took the opportunity to bring him back out in exhibitions at symphony of champions events at both the American Royal and the UPHASpring Premiere in W.



At the age of 22 Supreme Heir was still as regal as ever.

Springfield, Mass. He had a regal look that just drew people to him.

"He has always been a 'stallion,' as cocky as he can be," said Hall-Fisk. "He had that look in his eye. You could always see lots of white. He became a people's horse, made by the people, not us."

Indeed he was the people's horse, voted seven times as Horse World Magazine's People's Choice Sire of the Year as well as the People's Choice Sire of the Decade for the 1990s. Supreme Heir is best noted for having sired three open world's grand champions, something no other stallion has done since his sire Supreme Sultan did it with Emperor, Starina and Sultan's Santana.

The list of world title holders sired by Supreme Heir is endless beginning with those three open world's grand champions: One For The Road (Three-Gaited), Callaway's Copyright (Fine Harness) and An Heir About Her (Three-Gaited). Those three represent a remarkable seven open world's grand championships.

A partial list of other world's champions would include The Super Nova, Swish, The Bess Yet, Callaway's Sunday Edit, Metro Heirea, Riva Diva, The Shadow Knows, Sweet Virginia, Nurse Goodbody, Heir Style, Sultry Heiress, Utopian Melody, Hank Heiron, French Silk Stockings, Lightnin' Lil, Lady Lenaire, Stonecroft Ring Leader, Callaway's Buttons and Bows, Go Baby Go, Up In The Heir, Heir Popper, The Flying Tomato, Amandari, Callaway's County Fair, Careless Heiress, Moving Time, The Edge, Lover's Heir,

Heir Kitty Kitty, Heir Brushed, What A Keepsake, and Mountainview's Heir To Fortune.

"Supreme Heir's percentages were incredible," added Lurie. "He crossed with all different bloodlines and all types of mares. I think the thing we will remember about him the most is his consistency. His colts were consistently square trotting, consistently hinged, consistently wanting to do. You know you always have those who 'could have if they would have,' and most of his do want to. I've seen a lot of stallions that were considered good breeding horses that you had to go through a lot of colts to get those few stars. It wasn't that way with Supreme Heir. It was a real privilege to be around a horse like him. I still have a hard time walking by his empty stall."

"When I think of Supreme Heir babies I think of a true square trot and a good thinker with a good heart," added Hall-Fisk. "He was an intelligent horse, a horse that connected with you. Even though I only got to see him once or twice a year he knew who I was. He loved his carrots. He wasn't fond of apples or peppermints, but absolutely loved his carrots."

As this chapter is closed both the Fisk family and Lurie are left wondering what will be next. You don't ever replace a horse like Supreme Heir, you just hope to find another one that will produce a good percentage of show horses. It's rare to find a horse like Supreme Heir twice in one lifetime.

Hallston Manor currently has (3) two-year-old stallions that show lots of promise as show horses and/or a future breeding stallions. One is out of a Will Shriver daughter, another out of a Callaway's Blue Norther daughter and the third out of an Attache mare. The farm also has 12 mares in foal to Supreme Heir which will deliver this spring. Hopefully from this group one will emerge and continue the family's propensity of producing show and breeding stock.

"We also have another two-year-old out of Whirlwind's Golden Charm who is a half sister to Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion Our Golden Duchess," said Greg Fisk, who married into the family and was soon taken by the grand stallion as well. "It is a thrill on my part to see the colts born each year. You can tell the Heir colts from the others as soon as they are born. They are so different from the rest. Their eyes, their head, their willingness to learn. His colts are not afraid, but very curious. They want to learn and they are very forgiving. I know I'm prejudice, but they really stand out."

The cycle must continue. A legend among sires is gone and the door is open for another. It will be a while before Joan Lurie will be able to walk past his empty stall or his grave outside by the ring at Willowbank Farm without hurting. It will also be a while before the Hall/Fisk families won't hurt as badly when thinking about the horse that had done so much for them as a family, especially knowing that he was a vision that began with Mary Hall-Fisk's late father.

Thankfully, it will also be a little while before we stop seeing new crops of youngsters with long necks, beautiful heads, square four-cornered motion and "look at me" attitudes that are distinctly.....SUPREME HEIR! ▲



During his breeding career Supreme Heir brought down the house with exhibitions at the Symphony Of Champions held at the UPH Chapter 14 Spring Premiere (pictured) and the Concert of Champions held at the American Royal.



Supreme Heir will go down in history as having sired three open world's grand champions: (L to R) One For The Road, Callaway's Copyright and An Heir About Her.