

A Legend In His Own Time

by Lynn Weatherman



This is a colorized version of the most often published image of CH Wing Commander. Taken at Castleton Farm by John Horst in 1949, it was discovered in the files of ASHA. It does a good job of capturing CH Wing Commander's color.

IT has been 50 years since CH Wing Commander was foaled at Meadow Brook Farm, Rochester, Michigan. He was the second foal resulting from the mating of the King's Genius mare Flirtation Walk with Anacacho Shamrock and he arrived on April 23, 1943. Flirtation Walk's first foal was a filly named Lover's Lane.

His owner was away when he was foaled. Mr. and Mrs. (Frances Dodge) James B. Johnson, manager-trainer Wallace Bailey and the Dodge Stables show string, had gone south to Aiken, South Carolina, where the Johnsons had a winter home. Some of the horses that left Meadow Brook, the estate of Frances's mother Mrs. Alfred G. Wilson, were Love Affair, Sweet Rhythm, Smile Again, Sister Mary, and Murietta King.

Aiken is still a training ground for Thoroughbreds. This is why Frances Dodge never owned one. The race horse people teased her unmercifully about her high tailed Saddlebreds and she resented this the rest of her life. After the purchase of Castleton Farm in Kentucky, powerful Thoroughbred people such as Leslie Combs tried to get her into the business, but she refused. Instead, she became involved with Standardbreds.

The War

The world was at war and for the free world it was a war for survival. The issue was still very much in doubt in the spring of 1943, but the tide was beginning to turn in favor of the Allies. The U.S. Army and Marines had taken the island of Guadalcanal after months of bloody fighting with the Japanese in the far off South Pacific, and General Patton's troops were rolling over the Germans and Italians in North Africa.

The musical "Oklahoma!" opened at the St. James Theater on Broadway in March and was an immediate hit.

The war changed daily life and it was difficult for the show horse world to maintain business as usual, but somehow it managed. In 1942, the U.S. Office of Defense Transportation urged cancellation of most fairs and expositions because of the criti-

cal shortage of rubber for tires. Most of the fairs complied with the request. The Kentucky State Fair and the New York National shut down for the duration. Things looked promising the following year because ODT withdrew the directive hoping that gas rationing would limit travel.

It didn't. Horse magazines were full of horse show advertising early in 1943. It was announced that 50 shows, for the benefit of the Red Cross and USO would be held throughout Iowa alone.

Both major manufacturers of show vehicles, Houghton and Jerald, advertised that their factories had been converted to support the war effort. They advised exhibitors to take special care of fine harness buggies because they could not be repaired or replaced until the war ended.

Californian Lee Duncan, famous as the trainer of the canine movie star Rin-Tin-Tin, had a Saddlebred breeding operation until the war and had stood Anacacho Shamrock at stud for B. B. Tucker. His horse activities were shut down as he was working night and day training dogs for the K-9 Corps.

Ray Harney was a radio operator in the Marine Air Corps. Gene Oder was with the U.S. Army Remount at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Lloyd Teater moved his stable to the Evanston Saddle Club, Morton Grove, Illinois, Marty Mueller was trainer at Dry Run Stables, Cincinnati, Ohio. Jean McLean's horses were still in the pasture in the early spring of 1943, while she was in school.

Jimmy Newton was training at David Williams' Stable, Janesville, Wisconsin, and Max Parkinson was working for Axel Madsen, Kewanee, Illinois. Welch Greenwell was training an outstanding three-year-old mare by Bourbon Genius named Moonlight Hour.

Frances Dodge

Frances Dodge, the oldest daughter of John and Matilda Dodge, was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1917. John Dodge and his brother Horace provided important technology for Henry Ford, then left Ford, established their own automobile company, and became wealthy. John Dodge died in 1920, leaving his huge fortune to Matilda, who remarried Alfred G. Wilson in 1925.

The Wilsons built Meadow Brook Hall on a farm near Rochester which

John Dodge had bought in 1908. The mansion cost \$4 million and was completed in 1929.

Frances began riding at an early age, and her mother and stepfather encouraged this activity. Alfred Wilson was overall farm manager and her guiding light in the early years. Mrs. Wilson enjoyed Hackney ponies and Frances loved the Saddlebreds, which she could ride and show.

She became the nation's foremost equestrienne, piling up victories in hard fought classes in the show ring and acquiring a deep appreciation and

ferred for sale. Wing Commander, not registered until September, was simply described as "Chestnut Colt, white markings, by Anacacho Shamrock and out of Flirtation Walk."

Names - Reflections Of The Times

Names of the horses in the 1944 Registry Volume reflect the times. There were various admirals and generals and colonels and sergeants; assorted commanders; six horses with D-Day in their names; Ike's Invasion~ G. I. Joe, Commando Kelly, Bombs

The name Wing Commander was apropos for both the time and the horse. It conjured up visions of a dapper British Royal Air Force officer ready to climb into the cockpit of his Spitfire and lead his squadron against the Hun in the skies over England.

passion for the American Saddlebred. In 1940 she had an amazing achievement when she rode the great Standardbred trotter Greyhound on the Red Mile to set the world record for a trotter under saddle at 2:01 3/4, a record which still stands.

Wallace Bailey, who had been assistant to Robert S. McCray at Minton Hickory Farm, was hired as manager-trainer for Dodge Stables in 1934. Frances had already started a breeding program, registering her first homebred horse, a roan filly named Blue Rose (King's Genius X Jewell Squirrel by Diamond McDonald), in 1933. The breeding operation was then expanded with emphasis on high class broodmares.

Others in the Dodge broodmare band were former World's Champions Night Flower, Etta Kett and Society Barrymore, plus Janet Sue, Glorious Star, Sunday Swing, and Front Page Lady.

From the first crop of foals sired by Anacacho Shamrock came WC Lover's Lane, Sunday Bonnet, and Erin Isle.

Had anyone acted on a Dodge Stables advertisement in *Saddle & Bridle*, March 1944 the course of Saddlebred history could have been drastically altered. The yearlings and two-year-olds sired by Anacacho Shamrock were of-

Away, War Chest, and War Drive; airplanes — The Corsair, Liberator, Lockheed Lightning; famous people — Claire Chenault (of the Flying Tigers), Sadie Thompson (madam in the South Pacific), Bob Hope, Miss Ginger Rogers,, Madam Chiang, Claire Booth Luce; songs; Londonderry Air and Remember Pearl Harbor.

The name Wing Commander was apropos for both the time and the horse. It conjured up visions of a dapper British Royal Air Force officer ready to climb into the cockpit of his Spitfire and lead his squadron against the Hun in the skies over England.

Some of the other 1943 horses which became famous were Stonewall's Peep of Dawn, Leatherwood King, Indiana Ace, and My Puddin' which was bred by Frank Peters, registered by Magnolia Farms, purchased by Dodge Stables and shown as Show Boat.

Dodge Stables Transition

The staff at Dodge Stables included Bill Rowan, who started Lover's Lane. Rowan recommended the hiring of Gregory Penna, "Pinion," who had worked at Anacacho Ranch and had helped with Anacacho Sham-

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rock. In addition to Rowan, Wallace Bailey had another assistant trainer Marvin Lane.

Wallace Bailey became ill and was hospitalized after the Chicago Horse Show in 1944, (held at the Chicago Coliseum – the International had been cancelled because of the war). He died on Christmas eve.

Bill Rowan was named interim trainer and broke CH Wing Commander to drive. Rowan was then side-lined by a mild attack of polio.

Earl Teater

Earl Teater was one of the most successful trainers in the nation. He had ridden to the winners circle in the five gaited stake at Louisville on four occasions; aboard Belle Le Rose in 1934, A Sensation in 1940 and 1941, and with Oak Hill Chief in 1943.

In 1945, he was working at J. Truman Ward's Maryland Farm, Brentwood, Tennessee. He was asked to catch ride some of the Dodge Stables' horses that season. Then in September, he was hired as manager of the saddle horse division of Dodge Stables. The purchase of Castleton Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, and the appointment of Earl Teater were announced simultaneously.

Although the Dodge Stables breeding operation moved to Kentucky in 1947 the famous old farm was in disrepair. Meadow Brook Farm remained the base of operation for the show stable until 1949.

In addition to American Saddle-bred horses, some of the world's finest Hackney ponies were bred at Meadow Brook Farm. Reed Bridgeford was manager of the Hackney department, and King of the Plain, imported from England and considered the greatest Hackney pony stallion of all-time, headed the stud. Highland Cora, King's Commando, and King's Banner were among the Hackneys.

Earl Teater and his family moved to Michigan. They did not live on the farm because Earl Teater had always maintained a policy not to live and work at the same place. This was a problem because of the tight security at Meadow Brook and "half the time we couldn't get in," Lou Teater recalled.

Teaching the Rack

Upon his arrival, Teater immediately spotted CH Wing Commander among the prospects. After the Chicago show both he and Marvin Lane began trying to rack the colt with the unbelievable trot.

There were three barns connected to a huge indoor arena containing a full sized ring at Meadow Brook. According to Lou Teater, it was not a good place to start racking a young horse. CH Wing Commander was once ridden back and forth across one end. After many weeks of shaking his head, Teater turned him to the rail one morning and he hit a true rack which he held all the way around the ring. From that time on the rack was no problem.

The young stallion was amazingly athletic. Throughout his show career he was shod by Earl Smith of Rochester, Michigan, and longtime farrier for Dodge Stables. His front shoes weighed about 12 ounces, (less than most factory made shoes), his toe length was never more than 3 3/4 inches, and he wore one leather pad. (A pair of his front shoes are now in the American Saddle Horse Museum). The only time he ever lost a shoe in the ring was at Lexington in 1949, when the mud was about eight inches deep.

Earl Teater also felt that CH Wing Commander's perfect tail contributed to his greatness. It was never tied and he never wore a switch, so it never bothered him in the show ring.

CH Wing Commander was shown for the first time at the Lexington Junior League Horse Show in 1946, winning the three-year-old five gaited class and he was the talk of the show. Remaining in central Kentucky he won at the Mercer County and Shelby County Fairs, and then went to Memphis, Tennessee, where he won his class at the old Le Bonheur show.

Maxine Carter, who covered Le Bonheur for *Saddle & Bridle* wrote about the three-year-old class, "Earl and Wing Commander had the trophy neatly tucked away about the first round of the ring and that's not an overstatement. He is THE horse."

He won his age group at the Indiana State Fair and the St. Louis National. Then, at the first Chicago International to be held after the war, CH Wing Commander ended his first show season by winning the stallion

stake. There was no three-year-old class and Dodge Stables had a nice four-year-old mare, Highland Ace, for the junior stake, so CH Wing Commander successfully jumped out of his age division. The Chicago International claimed to be the world championship, and therefore, with some justification, CH Wing Commander was called the World Champion Five Gaited Stallion of 1946.

CH Wing Commander's Greatness

What made CH Wing Commander great? His action was amazing, nearly beyond description. He went as high as possible off both ends, he had tremendous length of stride, and yet, he seemed to move with ease. He had great speed. Lou Teater estimated he could have trotted a mile in 2:10. Now and then a challenger could trot as fast for a time or another could rack as fast for awhile, but no contender could rack and trot with his speed and have any semblance of form. CH Wing Commander could go around the turns almost as fast as he could go down a straightaway and maintain good form.

He also had incredible power and endurance. Marion Brown, who frequently showed King of the Plain, a very legitimate challenger against him said, "The worst thing you could do in the show ring was to get behind CH Wing Commander. He'd grab the ground and throw dirt behind him like no other horse." According to most authorities, no five gaited horse before or since had his speed, power, and action, and no picture ever did him justice.

When asked to compare CH Wing Commander and his grandson CH Sky Watch, Lou Teater said, "You know we were the biggest fans of CH Sky Watch. He was a great show horse. We owned Flight Time his sire and we raised CH Sky Watch, it's almost impossible to compare horses of different eras. I think that if they had been in the ring together, CH Wing Commander would have been around the ring twice at the rack and trot to once for CH Sky Watch."

Controversial Classes

King of the Plain was involved in two of the most controversial classes in which CH Wing Commander was also involved.

The first was in the five gaited stake at the Kentucky State Fair in 1947. The four-year-old CH Wing Commander won the stallion stake, beating Beau Gallant, Genius of Stonyridge, and Genius Firefly among others. King of the Plain topped the gelding stake and Frank Bradshaw rode Daneshall's Easter Parade to win the mare stake.

In the finale, CH Wing Commander, Easter Parade, King of the Plain, Beau Gallant, and Spring Cheer were sent on a workout. King of the Plain was making a great show for Marion Brown, but twice threw a shoe and was excused. It boiled down to Easter Parade, whose performance was at first erratic, but ended by making a sensational show, and CH Wing Commander, whose performance was powerful and flawless. It was decided in favor of the wild going mare, the first of two defeats suffered by CH Wing Commander throughout his career.

His second defeat came in the championship at Madison Square Garden with the aged mare once again tied over the junior stallion. CH Wing Commander then beat Easter Parade a number of times until she was retired and ultimately produced CH My My, who would tie CH Wing Commander's record of six wins at Louisville.

The Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield was the scene of the second controversial class. In August of 1949 the coliseum was like a steam room, an estimated 120 degrees at ring level. The two judges were the great horseman Joe Jones and the noted Professor D. J. Kays.

In the stallion-gelding class, Welch Greenwell was showing the little gelding King James, who could rack and trot with extreme speed. When the class was lined up, the two judges conferred, and Professor Kays wanted to tie King James. Joe Jones disagreed and a second workout was called.

With this workout completed, the judges still argued. Howard Dickey was called in as a referee to decide the issue, but Professor Kays insisted on a third workout. CH Wing Commander, King James, and King of the Plain were sent back to the rail. Joe Jones marked his card and in disgust threw it in the judges stand.

Marion Brown said that King of the Plain was 13-years-old and he almost refused to go out, but eventually did. He said all three horses kept on

working. None of them quit, but finally Earl Teater led the way to call it off and all three lined up.

Howard Dickey voted for CH Wing Commander. The class had lasted an estimated hour and 45 minutes, and the horses had to be walked all night. Earl Teater was furious when he later found out that CH Wing Commander had been marked seventh by Professor Kays.

Of the three horses, only CH Wing Commander came back in the stake to win it. Lou Teater said that the class hurt CH Wing Commander's wind. "Dad said he could tell a difference after that. It didn't affect him much, but there was a difference." It was said that King James suffered brain damage and from that time on he would go crazy in the show ring.

CH Wing Commander won his first World's Grand Championship at the Kentucky State Fair in 1948. Earl Teater rode the winners of the major five gaited classes. Show Boat won the junior stake, CH Lover's Lane topped the mare stake, Blue Hawaii was the champion gelding, and CH Wing Commander won the stallion stake and grand championship.

Dodge Stables had moved to its permanent home at Castleton Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, in 1949. Frances married Frederick Van Lennep after she and Jimmy Johnson were divorced. It was not as easy for CH Wing Commander at Louisville that year. After the punishing show at the Illinois State Fair, CH Wing Commander vanquished Ridgefield's Genius, shown by Garland Bradshaw, in the stallion stake at Louisville. Lee Roby teamed The Replica to a popular victory in the gelding stake, and some railbirds predicted Oak Hill Chief's namesake would be the new champion.

In the championship, the horses were asked to park trot, and there



His faithful groom Pinion, who cared for CH Wing Commander throughout his life, washes the stallion's feet in preparation for showing on the Red Mile.

were three workouts. Ultimately, CH Wing Commander prevailed after an hour and fifteen minutes in the ring.

CH Wing Commander was the best friend a horse show could have. It was a given that he would be shown at Lexington, Louisville, and Chicago. People came from hundreds of miles to see him. Anywhere he was entered, it was made public as soon as possible; his appearance guaranteed a packed house and audiences would begin cheering as soon as he came through the gate.

The Wreck

Tragedy struck Dodge Stables in 1952. About 6 a.m. on August 6, two vans on their way to the Illinois State Fair came into Austin, Indiana, about 40 miles north of Louisville. A low boy carrying a bulldozer was parked on the side of the main street. The driver of the Dodge Stables van in the lead apparently fell asleep and hit the low boy. The following truck swerved

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THE SHOW RECORD OF CH WING COMMANDER

CH Wing Commander made his first appearance at the 1946 Iowa Centennial Show at the fairgrounds in Des Moines, where he was brought along with the Dodge Stables show string. He was not shown in competition, but many horsemen saw him work. His last public appearance in the show ring was a special exhibition to close the old coliseum at the 1955 Kentucky State Fair.

Campaigned for nine years, CH Wing Commander competed in ten states in 122 classes winning 120 firsts and two seconds. His total winnings are estimated at \$44,150.

He was a seven time World's Champion Five Gaited Stallion at the Kentucky State Fair from 1947 through 1953 and the six time Five Gaited World's Grand Champion from 1948 through 1953. He was nine time winner of the The Chicago International that also claimed the world championship. CH Wing Commander won the stallion stake there on nine occasions from 1946 through 1954. He won the grand championship at Chicago eight times, from 1947 through 1954.

1946 - Seven shows, 7 classes, 7 wins
Total earnings - \$1,365

Three-year-old Five Gaited

Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Harrodsburg, KY (Mercer Co.)
Shelbyville, KY (Shelby Co.)
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
Indiana State Fair
St. Louis National

Stallion Stake

Chicago International

Second Place Horse

Mist O'Dawn
Reverie's Sea Bee
Lady Jane's Sweetheart
Mist O'Dawn
Carolina Caroline
Carolina Caroline

Second Place Horse

Stonewall's Dare

Ohio State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National

Gallant Marine
Ace O'Goshen
Ace O'Goshen

Grand Championships

Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
Tennessee State, Nashville, TN
Kentucky State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

Daneshall's Easter Parade
Meadow Pam
Courageous Burton
Golden Butterfly
McGuire's Belle
Ace O'Goshen
King of the Plains

1947 - Eight shows, 16 classes, 14 wins, 2 seconds
Total earnings - \$6,620

Junior Five Gaited

Chicago, IL (Armory Show)
Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
DuQuoin State Fair, DuQuoin, IL
New York National

Stallion Stakes

Harrodsburg, KY
Kentucky State Fair
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
Chicago International

Grand Championships

Chicago Armory
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
Chicago International

Reserve Championships

Kentucky State Fair
New York National

Second Place Horse

Gallant Marine
Golden Maria
Everybody's Sweetheart
Evening Cloud
The Replica
Manor's Dare

Second Place Horse

McIntire's Chief
Beau Gallant
Beau Gallant
Gallant Marine

Second Place Horse

London's Folly
Daneshall's Easter Parade
Dixiana's Spring Cheer
London's Folly

1949 - Eight shows, 16 classes, 16 wins
Total earnings - \$5,195

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
Tennessee State, Nashville, TN
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Grand Championships

Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
Tennessee State, Nashville, TN
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

Grassview Sensation
Genius Firefly
King James
Ridgefields' Genius
Ridgefields' Genius
Genius Firefly
Spirit of Freedom
Gallant Marine

Second Place Horse

Daneshall's Easter Parade
In Society
Bloomtide
The Replica
Ridgefield's Genius
Master Genius
Reverie's Highland Kitty
Sam McGee

1948 - Eight shows, 15 classes, 15 wins
Total earnings - \$5,225

Stallion or Stallion/Gelding Stakes

Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Le Bonheur, Memphis, TN
Tennessee State, Nashville, TN
Kentucky State Fair

Second Place Horse

Ridgefields' Genius
Ridgefields' Genius
Courageous Burton
Ridgefields' Genius

1950 - Eight shows, 15 classes, 15 wins
Total earnings - \$5,730

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Harrodsburg, Kentucky
Illinois State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

King of Revelry
Ridgefields' Genius
The Replica
Admiration of the Nation
Ridgefields' Genius
King of Revelry
King of Revelry
Robin King

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to avoid telescoping but hit the corner of the first vehicle. James Allen, who showed futurity colts, was killed. Pinion and his son Rudolph were both injured.

The old show mare Glorious Star was hurt and had to be destroyed. The van was demolished, and the other horses were skinned up. The animals suffered no more major injuries. CH Lovers Lane was knocked down, and CH Wing Commander thrown into her stall. He stood quietly until Rudolph Penna, who had been riding in the back of the van,

opened the door. The stallion simply jumped out. He ran loose for a while but was soon caught.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Morgan, Scottco Farms in nearby Scottsburg, came to the rescue, housing the horses until arrangements could be made to get them back to Lexington. Fortunately, neither vehicle was going very fast and CH Meadow Princess, CH Socko, and Private Contract had remained at home. As bad as it was, the wreck could have been worse.

The Greatest Horseman

Much coverage was given to Earl Teater and CH Wing Commander in 1952, who won their fifth Five Gaited

World's Grand Championship at the Kentucky State Fair. Thoroughbred trainer Ben Jones of Calumet Farm was among the spectators. Hill Gail won the Kentucky Derby for Calumet that year, and the comment was made that Ben Jones was the greatest of all horsemen for having saddled six Derby winners.

Jones responded, "They say I train great horses, but mine go at top speed for only two minutes or so. That horse, (CH Wing Commander), has been working hard for almost an hour. Earl Teater is the greatest horseman."

Earl Teater was a perfectionist

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Grand Championships

Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

The Replica
The Replica
Admiration of the Nation
Ridgefields' Genius
My Golden Highland
King of Revelry
Emerald Sweet Sue

1951 - Nine shows, 19 classes, 19 wins
Total earnings - \$6,460

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

Devon, PA
Lanark, Phillipsburg, NJ
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

King of Revelry
Tempo Genius
Admiration of the Nation
Woody's Chunk O'Gold
Admiration of the Nation
Genius Firefly
Topsy Turvy
Peter Squirrel

Grand Championships

Devon, PA
Lanark, Phillipsburg, NJ
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
Pennsylvania National
New York National
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

My Golden Highland
Welcome Harmony
In Society
Bloomtide
Admiration of the Nation
My Golden Highland
My Golden Highland
As Beauty Does
The Replica

1952 - Seven Shows, (year of truck wreck)
11 classes, 11 wins
Total earnings - \$5,005

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

Pin Oak, Houston, TX
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Indiana State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
American Royal, Kansas City, MO
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

Reverie's Bourbon Gale
Bourbon Masterpiece
Bourbon Masterpiece
Admiration of the Nation
Stonewall's Peep of Dawn
Stonewall's Peep of Dawn

Grand Championships

Pin Oak, Houston, TX
Kentucky State Fair
American Royal, Kansas City, MO
Chicago International

1953 - Eight shows, 16 classes, 16 wins
Estimated earnings - \$5,300

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

South Shore, Chicago, IL
Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
American Royal, Kansas City, MO
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

Indian Chief
Stonewall's Duke of Dixie
Stonewall's Duke of Dixie
Beau Gypsy

Grand Championships

South Shore, Chicago, IL
Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Kentucky State Fair
American Royal, Kansas City, MO
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

The Replica
My Golden Highland
King of Revelry
The Irish Star
Red Cedar
Stonewall's Duke of Dixie
King of Revelry
Beau Gypsy

1954 - Five shows, 9 classes, 9 wins
Estimated earnings \$3,250

Stallion/Gelding or Stallion Stakes

Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Illinois State Fair
Ohio State Fair
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

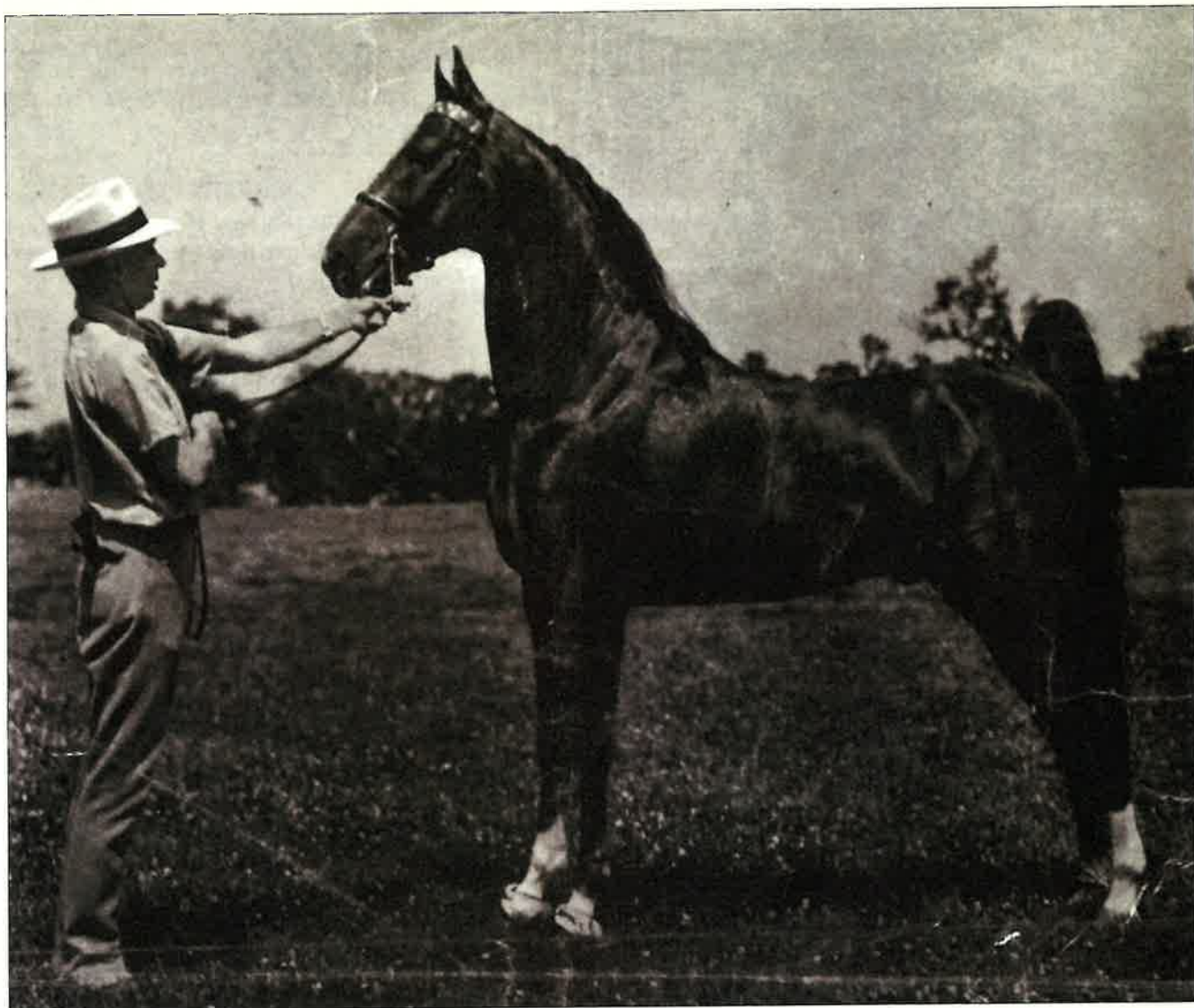
Genius Firefly
King of Revelry
Beau Gypsy
Beau Gypsy
King of Revelry

Grand Championships

Devon, PA
Jr. League, Lexington, KY
Ohio State Fair
Chicago International

Second Place Horse

My Golden Highland
Stonewall's Duke of Dixie
Stonewall Gorgeous
Bo Prophet



Stories grow as years go by, and today many people think CH Wing Commander was an ugly horse. While he was not exquisitely beautiful, he was quite handsome and his conformation was correct, as shown by this unretouched photo published in the Louisville Courier-Journal.

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when it came to showing a horse. He always rode the same old straight head saddle and not being a big strong man, the curb chain was tight. His philosophy was, "I don't want a horse pulling. I'm going to ride him and he's not going to ride me." The reins on CH Wing Commander were often loose.

Perhaps Wing's worst gait was the canter. He did it with disdain and once in a while it would get him into trouble. Following one stallion stake when his canter was less than satisfactory, Earl Teater took him back to the ring in the wee hours of the

morning and drilled the stallion at this basic gait. The next afternoon he was lame and held a front foot, pointing, as if the lameness was serious. Teater was convinced he had broken a bone in his foot. Pinion wept. Then the next day, CH Wing Commander was a sound as ever. Whatever caused the scare was never determined.

Using him just enough to win, Earl Teater would frequently save CH Wing Commander in stallion stakes, and then make a terrific showing in the championship. It nearly cost them once.

Frank Bradshaw said the only time he saw CH Wing Commander when he thought he was beaten, except when he accomplished the feat

with Daneshall's Easter Parade, was in the stallion stake at the Chicago International in 1953. Bradshaw was one of the judges and he said that Earl Teater was obviously saving his mount while Art Simmons aboard King of Revelry, gave his talented stallion the ride of his life.

It would have been a stunning upset, but Bradshaw said the judges would not beat CH Wing Commander without giving him another chance, so the two stallions were sent back to the rail. The performances reversed in the second workout. Earl Teater, realizing he was in trouble, called on Wing, while Simmons did not push his mount. The judges unanimously awarded CH Wing Commander the blue.

Bradshaw said he later asked Simmons why he let up, and Art responded, "I'm saving him for the stake." Bradshaw said that the championship was not even close.

CH Wing Commander was truly a legend in his own time. He was fairly challenged by many top horses and fought them off one by one. The public adored him despite his faults. In 1954, *Life* magazine came to Lexington and did a feature story on him. Photos were taken at Castleton and also at the Round Barn at the Red Mile, where the Dodge Stables horses were traditionally billeted during the show. CH Wing Commander's show schedule had been cut back as young horses were coming on and he had nothing left to prove.

Then at Louisville he became ill with a fever and was not shown in the stallion stake. Although the audience chanted for him, the critics were unmerciful because Garland Bradshaw's "little brown mare," CH Lady Carrigan was sensational and it was thought CH Wing Commander's illness was an excuse to duck her. In reality he was sick.

And so his last show was scheduled at Chicago. There was SRO in the old International Amphitheatre on stake night. Earl Teater pulled out all the stops, and it is said CH Wing Commander made the greatest show of his life. It was a fine way to end his competitive show career. At the request of Miss Nola Minton, he made one more public appearance under saddle. It was at the Kentucky State Fair, a farewell to both CH Wing Commander and the old fairgrounds.

Retirement was good to CH Wing Commander. He continued to occupy his stall in the show barn. In fact, because it was exposed to the sun, Mrs. Teater once suggested he be put in a cooler stall. The switch was made, but the horse objected and tore up his new



In some quarters, CH Wing Commander was thought to be mean and hot and his descendants hard to train. In truth, he was a kind, gentle stallion and perhaps trainability is sometimes mistaken for gameness. In 1950, this young man, Gene Healy, traveled to the Chicago International from Ft. Worth, Texas, just to see CH Wing Commander show. Earl Teater put him on CH Wing Commander. The only other people known to have been on his back were Marvin Lane and Ed Teater.

stall; he went back to the old stall and was content to remain there. Thousands of people went to Dodge Stables just to see CH Wing Commander and he was happy to see them. He was kind, gentle, and enjoyed attention.

CH Wing Commander stayed in good physical condition throughout his life. He received regular exercise, and was not allowed to get overly fat. Despite good care, for no apparent reason, he foundered in 1962.

Specialists from Penn State University were called in and the 19-year-old stallion responded well to the treatment which consisted primarily of shoeing. For the rest of his seven years, CH Wing Commander was reset every 30 to 45 days and his feet were x-rayed prior to each shoeing.

CH Wing Commander died on January 19, 1969, an apparent victim of colic at age 26. He was buried in the horse cemetery at Castleton Farm.

Pedigree Analysis

Close scrutiny of CH Wing Com-

mander's breeding reveals marked similarity on the top and bottom of his pedigree. One could say he was moderately linebred. His sire Anacacho Shamrock and dam Flirtation Walk were predominately Denmark.

Both, however, trace to Harrison Chief F.S. on the sire line. Anacacho Shamrock has an additional cross to Harrison Chief F.S. in the sixth generation on his tail-female line, and Flirtation Walk has a dash of Chief through King Vine, the sire of her dam Spelling Bee.

The sire line was solid throughout with World's Champions. Anacacho Shamrock had been Reserve World's Champion Five Gaited Stallion. His sire, Edna May's King, was twice World's Grand Champion; and his sire, Bourbon King, was considered to have been the world champion in his day.

In addition to the Denmark and Chief, CH Wing Commander also traces five times to Peavine 85.

Continued on next page

WING COMMANDER

Continued from previous page

CH Wing Commander crossed well with mares of almost every kind of breeding. He was the number one sire on *Saddle & Bridle's* Sire Rating for six consecutive years from 1963 through 1968. He then headed the deceased sire list from 1969 through 1973.

CH Valerie Emerald was the first Five Gaited World's Grand Champion sired by CH Wing Commander. She won in 1969, the year he died. There have been 11 Five Gaited World's Grand Champions since then (including his son CH Yorktown) and all but three (CH Sure Fire, CH Belle Elegant, and CH Mountain Highland Encore) are descendents of CH Wing Commander. Both CH Sure Fire and CH Mountain Highland Encore trace to Private Contract, full brother to CH Wing Commander.

The descendents of CH Wing Commander have been champions in all divisions of the show ring, but they have dominated in the five gaited division. The Edna May's King sire line has remained strong over the years primarily through CH Wing Commander. Although there are many direct lines to CH Wing Commander, the line has been perpetuated in the main by his sons CH Yorktown, Flight Time, Wing's Fleet Admiral, and grandsons CH Will Shriver and Attache.

In 1891, a group of prominent Kentucky horsemen were discussing the four-year-old mare Lou Chief, who had just made a sensational show at Lexington. One proclaimed that only Harrison Chief F.S. could have



CH Wing Commander at the Pennsylvania National in 1950. Few untouched ring shots of CH Wing Commander in action were ever published. Although this Freudy photo is perhaps the best, it still does not convey the speed and action possessed by CH Wing Commander.

sired such an animal, but there was a quick reply, "He could only have done so with a daughter of Peavine."

At the Kentucky State Fair one hundred years later, a similar group of horsemen talked about the remarkable performance made by CH Imper-

ator in the ASHA Centennial Celebration. One suggested that only Supreme Sultan could have sired CH Imperator. The immediate response, "He could only have done so with a daughter of CH Wing Commander."

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WING COMMANDER 22591

Anacacho Shamrock
12594

Edna May's King 8672

Sally Cameron 14376

King's Genius 9500

Flirtation Walk
23178

Spelling Bee 18420

Bourbon King 1788

Edna May 5703

Highland Squirrel King 1881

Altadena 3691

Bourbon King 1788

Princess Eugenia 6558

King Vine 6824

Not Registered

Bourbon Chief 976

Annie C. 3025

Rex Peavine 1796

Lee Wood 2330

Forest King 1462

Nellie P 2096

Prince Arthur 2387

Mania 2171

Bourbon Chief 976

Annie C 3025

Chester Pevine 3184

Queen of Lincoln 6557

Rex Peavine 1796

Bourbon Belle 6820

Red Light 2nd 2272

Not Reg. by Happy Bell