

Thirty-seven and Counting

by Donna K. Fernandez
The SoCalGal

Horses, like people, age differently. As for people, you can usually look at somebody and guess their age within at least a decade. On the other hand, it is uncommon to even see a horse whose life has spanned more than three decades (30 years). I had the privilege of meeting one such horse this summer and, by the looks of him, he will live well into his 40s. His name is Take Care O Neall.

You would never know to look at Take Care O Neall that he is 37-years-old, but you can take my word for it. I saw his registration papers. He was born April 17, 1976.

Take Care O Neall's dam and sire were owned by Mary O'Neall of Take Care Farms in Turney, Missouri, north of Kansas City. Mrs. O'Neall gave the colt to the teenage son of her good friends,

Bill and Pat Buzzard.

Take Care O Neall has belonged to Ted Buzzard his whole life. As Ted says, "ever since he hit the ground." The stallion bears his "TB" brand on his left shoulder.

According to Buzzard, Mrs. O' Neall actually considered putting the colt down when he was born. "When he was born he had what almost looked like glass eyes," he said. "She wanted to put him to sleep because she was afraid he couldn't see." Over time they turned a light brown and, so far as Buzzard can tell, he sees fine.

It is no surprise that Ted Buzzard and "Neall," as he calls him, enjoyed a long and successful rodeo career. Neall is the grandson of champion cutting horse, Doc Bar, who sired his mare, Tracita. Neall's sire was Peppy Thirsty, son of foundation quarter horse, Thirsty.

Buzzard says he broke Neall "as a long 3," and he was soon heading and heeling with the best of them at rodeos



"from about as far north as you can go in the U.S., to the south coast, to the east coast, plus to Colorado and Texas to the west."

"Everywhere I went, he was what I rode," Buzzard said. "He was a rodeo horse most of the time. I competed on him for 13 years. We headed and heeled. I hazed in the bull dogging for people. Whatever I wanted to do, he was it."

He and Neall placed in the top five roping teams in the Kansas State Rodeo Association for several years. In 1986, they won the average for team roping at the KSRA finals. They also qualified for the United Rodeo Association finals, the Cowboys Regional Rodeo Association and Central Plains Rodeo Association finals, and the National and State High School Rodeo

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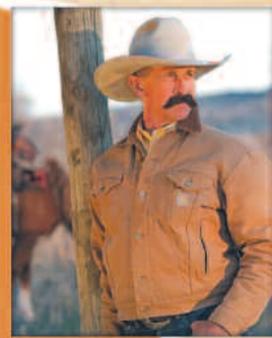
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37-Year-Old Horse has Aged Well

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finals over the years. One year they were also on a team that qualified for the National Ranch Rodeo Finals in Glen Rose, Texas.

"He was never blessed with a lot of speed" says Buzzard, "but his deal was he was so quick. You'd leave that box and he'd just drop. I have never ridden a horse that was so smooth coming out of the head box as he was. He was just so smooth and level; his head never came up and his front end never came up and that's important. He never was a speed burner," he said, "but (he had) that quickness."

Buzzard said Neall was even a parade horse, carrying the American flag. I said I was surprised since I haven't often seen stallions in parades, he simply said, "I treated him like he was a gelding. Friends that I rodeo'd with for years never knew he was a stud."

Although his registration papers describe him as a dun, Buzzard explained to me that the American Quarter Horse Association would now classify Neall as champagne; he is dun color but without the dun's classic dorsal stripe.

Buzzard says Neall has never been sick or had any serious injuries other than some bumps and bruises. However, he said Neall was sore for a couple of days following an accident they were in when Neall was about five or six. He told me an amazing story that could easily have been Neall's last.

Buzzard was driving home from a rodeo in Mound City one night, hauling Neall along behind him in a one-horse trailer. All at once the rear end of his pickup locked up. It jack-knifed causing the trailer to come unhooked and go off into the road ditch.

The tongue of the trailer stuck in the ground catapulting the trailer straight up on its nose, throwing Neall out of the top.

Buzzard says he saw it all. "He did a somersault in the air and lit like he was sitting down on his haunches. His front feet came down on the ground (in front of him) like this, his head came down and he started eating grass. The lead rope was still laying across his back just like when I put him in the trailer."

"I called a friend of mine to come get him. I figured there'd be no way I'd ever get him in that trailer but he never batted an eye. I walked him right in."

"After he was 16 or 17 years old, I got another horse and I just kind of retired him," Buzzard said.

When I asked how many foals Neall had sired, Buzzard guessed at between 75 and 100. "There should have been more," he said, "but I was hauling him all the time."

"I wish I'd been smart enough to try to collect him ... a few years back," he continued. "There are people who would still like to breed him, including me."

"We don't have very many of his offspring any more. I've got the youngest one, she's five. She'll be six in the spring." She's a pretty sorrel mare called Take Care Sis. He referred to her as a "cow horse in training."

"Neall has gotten grain just about every day of his life," according to Buzzard. Even though his top teeth are now worn practically even with his gums, he continues to thrive. He has been fed a steady ration of Purina's Equine Senior for "close to 20 years." Now that it is practically his exclusive feed, Buzzard gives him about 13 or 14 pounds per day.

When folks ask him how Neall looks at 37, he answers, "I'm not sure what a 37-yr-old horse is supposed to look like. He's not fat and sleek, like he once was. He's not muscled out because he doesn't do anything. But he's in good shape," as you can see by his photograph.

When he gets a chance to graze, Neall picks at grass. He chews on it a bit, then drops it out of his mouth. He also enjoys a little alfalfa now and then. Buzzard says he will take a handful and crush it up. It will take Neall a couple of days to finish it.

Buzzard said there wasn't anything particularly memorable about breaking Neall to ride. He considered him a quick learner given that he was successfully competing in rodeos at just three.

He mentioned that Neall never did care to be ridden bareback. He bet me Neall would still buck if I climbed on him bareback. Neall is so obviously still full of life, I decided I'd better not to take the chance. ■



HORSE BITS...

By Janice A. Pack

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Believe it not, another summer has begun to wind down. Fall waits just around the corner. I am looking forward to the fall colors, harvest and cooler temperatures. Summer horse activities have come to a close and the time has come for fall futurities and derbies in the various disciplines. State Fairs form a bridge between summer and fall. Also many horsemen and women look forward to pleasant fall trail rides and cooking around the campfire. Others have worked diligently all summer to qualify for the big world shows and now anxiously await their chance for glory and world championships! Ernie, Purina and all the other sponsors have brought many elite horsemen and clinics to our area and made this summer a great success for all horse lovers.

The American Royal, KC, MO, hosted the 2013 American Paint Horse Congress, July 31-August 4. 2,278 APHA entries showed before three sets of four judges in 105 classes. Senior geldings had the largest class with 32 entries. Exhibitors came from 22 states.

All three horses raised and owned by George and Leona (Phillips) Martz, Louisburg, KS, placed in the competition. Leona Martz rode "Sensational Gentleman" to a Congress Championship in Horsemanship and a Reserve Congress Championship in Western Pleasure and Masters Amateur Showmanship.

"Get Down and Fancy" with Regina Hedge placed 5th overall in Classic Amateur Hunter Under Saddle.

"I'm Real Wicked" with Taylor Jacobs aboard garnered a Reserve Congress Championship in Novice Youth Hunt Seat Equitation. She also earned 3rd overall in Novice Youth Hunter Under Saddle and 7th overall in Youth 14-18 Showmanship.

Tulsa, OK hosted the Pinto World Show on June 12-22, 2013. Elizabeth Jacobs rode "I'm Real Wicked" to a Reserve World Championship in Youth Walk-Trot Hunter Under Saddle.

The greatest news ever! Princeton, KS is back on the map. Sharon and Donn Higgins exhibited at the AQHA Select World Show in Amarillo, TX on August 27th for the first time. Sharon showed her Palomino gelding "Mangino" in Amateur Aged Geldings. On the long drive to Texas Sharon was torn between excitement and apprehension. After being in the show pen for over an hour with 26 other geldings, five judges gave her and "Mangino" 5th place. Anyone who shows knows the agony of hoping to make the Top 10. The Higgins thought they wouldn't place at all after places 15 down through 6 had been called. Exhilaration followed after winning 5th place. Making the top 5 was beyond belief! Sharon and Donn left home a few days early and had a sort of mini vacation. They were able to visit the AQHA Headquarters and Museum. They also took a drive south of Amarillo to the beautiful Palo Duro Canyon (second in size only to the Grand Canyon) and State Park. They were also impressed by the wonderful Texas hospitality. AQHA surprised Sharon Donn when "Mangino's" Superior Halter Award arrived in the mail the day before they left for Amarillo. What a wonderful ending to a year's hard work.

Good luck to my good friend Corey Rogers (former Colt Starting contestant), Sarasota FL, as he prepares to enter The Mustang Million competition in Ft. Worth, TX Sept 16-21.

Don't forget the Friesian Keuring, Baldwin City, KS, on October 2nd. Contact Pam Gish at 785-423-4024 or 785-594-3012 for time and details.