



Lucks Easy Fanta Boy
AQHA Supreme Champion



Carol Harris and Rugged Lark

Horse business is booming all over the world. Big moneys are being added to futurities and winnings are exceeding anything anyone ever dreamed to see in our lifetime. The internet is expanding daily with horse-related business. Horse breeders are using the internet to show and sell everything from colts to finished horses to breeding stock. The National Finals Rodeo 1998 paid out over 3 million dollars in prize money and for the first time, the female athletes ran at equal prize money. It is the age of expansion world-wide in the horse industry. Just in the barrel horse industry alone there are new associations being formed daily. New magazines are being published and new products being introduced in mass.

However, the big money winners that you read about are mostly in the futurity categories. In 1997 we had our first Supreme Champion in 18 years.

This brings up questions in the minds of owners and breeders...

“Where is the horse industry going?”

“Are we heading for a time when we no longer have the versatile horses?”

“Is there any value in a horse that is an attractive, sound individual that can do many different activities?”

To answer those questions, I will share from my own experience and that of some leaders in the horse industry.

I began my journey toward specializing in the barrel horse industry in approximately 1976. It was around that time that my friend, Kathie O'Brien, convinced me to enter a barrel racing futurity in Texas. I entered up my 4 year old and she and I traveled to the Texas Barrel Racing Association futurity. It was the first one I had ever seen. It was obvious that this was a new frontier.

Some of the reasons for this were that the money added was bigger than most rodeos, the ground was kept in excellent condition and everyone was riding green 4 year olds. By 1978, Old Fort Days in Ft. Smith, Arkansas had began their futurity. No one had ever heard of a barrel race that paid out \$11,227.00 to the winner (Dale Youree) and a total of \$30,929 in prize money paid to the winners. The progression has been amazing. In 1998 that same futurity paid out a total of \$468,282.00 to their winners and the champion, Cody Bauserman took home \$93,700.00. Their entries have jumped from 176 nominees in 1978 to 883 nominees in 1998.

At approximately the same time that these began, the 4-H shows and gymkahna market began to slow down. As the economy in the United States went through a slump, we lost

the market of the all-around horse from the \$3500-\$5000 range. And we weren't getting as many calls to train horses for the versatility classes and all-around honors.

A trainer who is making their entire living in the horse business tries to read the market and keep up with where it is going. This is the only way that you can survive. If you spend your time developing a product that is not saleable, you can go broke fast. As the futurities began to grow, the calls for futurity age horses began to increase. I began to buy young horses aimed toward the futurities. I started hauling more to the big futurities than any other events and by 1986 moved to Oklahoma to be closer to the large futurities.

Although I now purchase young horses with the futurities in mind, there are some things that have not changed in my program. I still want the same type of horse that I used to buy. I want an athlete, a sound individual, an attractive, well-built horse with a good mind. I want him to be balanced in build, legs and feet. I want him to be out of proven bloodlines that are mixed with racing and working horses.

The barrel horse industry has added what are called 4-D barrel races. This means that races are paid in divisions that are split either by seconds or half-second splits. This gives a horse and rider a chance to be as much as two seconds off of the first place time and still get some prize money. This has given another market to the horse that may not excel in the top brackets. This allows a novice to race and have a chance to win money while they are learning. There are also brackets for children and seniors.

As I said, this has added another market for the barrel horse that did not excel, but what about the horse that just doesn't like the barrels? Every now and then, I get one who doesn't have the desire to be a barrel horse. Perhaps he is bred to run barrels, built to run barrels, trained to run barrels, but just doesn't have the mind for it. This is where it pays to have that versatile individual. I did not purchase him with the goal of his becoming a versatility horse, but if I have him broke and he is the kind of individual I'd be proud to ride, there will always be a market for him. He is not worthless. I have just sold one like this to a man who is now roping calves on him and loving him.

I've had horses like this that went to trail-riders, team-penners, and even pleasure riders because they were broke, attractive and fit their program. A horse bred to run crossed with working blood (cow sense) in their pedigree is a great prospect in my industry. This horse will work in different disciplines as well. I try to buy what anyone would be proud to own and ride and then get them real broke. This kind of horse will always have value.

The opinions that I just gave you are from a person who has been in the horse business for over 35 years in the disciplines of rodeo, horse showing, and futurities. These opinions were shaped early in life because my background is that of a rancher in the mountains of New Mexico. Our horses were used for every job. They had to be versatile enough to catch a cow in the flat land or in the mountains. We carried everything on them from sick calves to a lion, bear or deer we had shot. (In season) I have seen my father and brothers grab their rifles and shoot from the backs of their horses many times. Our horses were a

big part of our livelihood, not raised to compete on or show. If I were roping a calf to doctor it on the ranch or running barrels or showing a pleasure horse, it is basically the same type of horse that I would want to ride.

Over the years, I have had horses brought to me that didn't make a great reiner or were too fast for a pleasure horse or too excitable for trail - any number of scenarios. I saw a lot of these horses progress in barrels, roping, or other events simply because they were this type of horse. There is a saddle for every butt and a horse for every saddle.

Money does not govern everything. You cannot put a price on the pleasure that many people get out of their horses. There are multitudes of people who will never go to a show or win a dime. You can drive around my state and see horses everywhere. A man who works at my feed store breeds his mares just to sell the babies. He never rides them, but gets great enjoyment out of feeding and breeding them. This list could go on and on, but the point is to merchandise each individual and get him to the place where his potential can be reached and he can bring pleasure to his owner. This is what I enjoy the most in the horse business. My neighbor has a mustang. She wanted me to teach it to "steer" better for her grandkids. She doesn't even own a trailer and he will probably never make it to a show, but her grandkids are storing precious memories each time they come to grannies and ride. We must never forget that this is the foundation that this business is built upon - people who love horses and people who needed them as a part of their livelihood.

Since my opinions are based on my disciplines and my background, I thought it would be interesting to give you some view points from some others in different areas of the horse business from myself. I asked the American Quarter Horse Association for their statistics on exactly how many AQHA champions are being produced for the past 10 years so you can see the facts. I also asked for the AQHA Supreme Champions and AQHA Versatility Awards. Here are those results: (Please see page 8)

I wrote to Ed and Cindy Henderson, the owners of the 46th and most recent Supreme Champion - Lucks Easyfanta Boy. They were kind enough to respond immediately and answer my questions. Here is what I ask them and their answers:

1. Did you set out to try to earn the Supreme Championship from the start?

In a way, I would have to say yes.

2. Why?

Fantaboy had already finished his racing career when we were contacted that he was for sale. We purchased the horse based on his performance, bloodlines, conformation and more importantly his great disposition. But after arriving home and really studying this horse, we knew that he could be much more than a former race horse who became a contest horse and then a breeding stallion. I was looking up the requirements to making an AQHA Champion when I noticed a long forgotten award, the highest award, AQHA

Supreme Champion. Ed and I knew Fantaboy could be much more, he had the talent to become a supreme champion and that is just what we kept our eye on the whole time.

3. Do you have any idea how much you invested in acquiring this championship?

There is no doubt that the cost of training and showing in multiple events can be quite extensive. To have an exact ideal of the monetary cost, I could not say. Since the cost of racing belonged to his previous owner, and Ed had the capabilities as a trainer to train and show Fantaboy in halter, team penning and the initial maneuvers of team roping, I could not give you a true idea of what the normal person would be faced with if they had to pay from start to finish. The events of Fantaboy's that required an outside trainer were relatively cost feasible since Fantaboy was a quick and proficient learner. The most important thing that will be asked of you to invest in is yourself, you must want it whole heartedly.

4. Did you plan to make up this investment in breeding fees or your own personal breeding program?

Fantaboy was a working man. You might say he put himself through school! We were very practical and knew that we would utilize his breeding season profits to cover showing, training, promoting and advertising the stallion in the off season. This was a catch 22 as well. While this method kept one from dipping into their own finances, it also slowed down the process of obtaining the award. From January through July, Fantaboy was on the breeding farm. August was a let down adjustment month. September through December was left for training, showing and promoting the horse. After time is taken out for Fantaboy to train for his next event and stand for two weeks on Stallion Avenue at the QH Congress, only two months were left to show in before returning home for the next breeding season.

5. Do you feel that the versatile horse that can do several events is becoming a thing of the past?

I feel that it has been heading that way, but in a way we've all been guilty of letting it. Awareness is the key. QH members need to be reminded that saying "America's most versatile athlete" and proving the versatility of this animal is two different things. Horses are like people in that each one has different abilities and things it likes to perform at and it may not be what we bred for. If we continue to specialize breed, we will run the risk of breeding the versatile quality out of the quarter horse. members need to be reminded that the highest award established by AQHA is one that demonstrates race, halter and performance. The AQHA Supreme Champion title is obtainable, all they need is the heart of a champion horse and their own desire to go for it!

(These answers were copied exactly as they were sent to me and I thank the Hendersons for taking part in this part of the presentation)

I also contacted two great friends, Carol Harris and Doug Milholland. Carol is the owner-breeder of the legend, Rugged Lark. (I think he was the last horse I rode who was being prepared for the versatility class at the Quarter Horse Congress. Carol sent him to us to take around the barrels and tune in the reining class. Lynn Palm then flew in and rode with us before the Congress that year. That was in 1987.)

Doug is a 7 times World Champion reiner who has won the prestigious NRHA futurity, the Congress, and is known for his fantastic freestyle reining presentations. He represented the NRHA at the Olympics in Atlanta in 1996. He is also a past barrel racer, calf-roper and is an all-around great horseman. (And he and his wife Valerie are some of my most favorite friends in the whole world.)

Here are the questions that I asked them and their answers:

1. Specialization has created many super athletes for a particular event. if a horse cannot excel in that activity, do you feel that his value is limited?

Doug: I believe that a horse's value is most likely going to be limited according to what degree that he is not a superstar unless he is a great all around horse. That is, one that has a very trainable mind - a mind capable of a lot of events. If a horse is a great all-around horse, I think there is still a good market for them.

Carol: If a horse cannot excel in a specialized event, I do feel that his value is limited, but I do not feel that he is worthless. Today we are living in the era of specialization and in most cases a specialized talent will out perform an all rounder. Unfortunately this pertains to doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, athletes, horsemen and also horses. I sincerely feel a horses' value is determined by his ability to excel in different events. There is no limit to a horses' value who can legitimately excel in many events.

2. What do you do with the horse who cannot excel? Do you feel there is a market for him?

Doug: First you have to analyze if there may be another field this horse could excel at. If not, then you have to decide which avenue to go to get the most. Example: a reiner might be used for team penning if he was used up or not good enough to be competitive in reining. There is always a buyer if you are patient.

Carol: Most horses fit this category. Enjoy him and love him. I feel that there is still a market for a horse that cannot excel, perhaps with the rider who cannot excel. There are so many horse lovers in this world who just want to enjoy their horses; 4-H, trail riding, club activities, etc. These kind of horses will always be in demand simply because they will fit the pocket book of the average horse owner.

3. Do you feel we are heading for a time when we no longer have the versatile horse that is used in more than one event?

Doug: I believe there will always be horses that can be great versatile horses, but very few of them can be as good in an event as the horse that is specialized. This also depends on the owners and riders as to their goals. There is so much more money available to the specialized horse, but I believe that some of the same qualities that make great specialty horses can also make great all-around horses.

Carol: Unfortunately, I do because we no longer seem to have the versatile horse trainer that we had in the past. Most horse trainers today only know one or two events and seem to be unable to find the time or interest to further educate themselves. In the past, trainers were developed in a family environment where an all around horse was essential to their success. These trainer's children learned by watching and assimilating their parent's talents. Now kids have TV, video games and computers to consume their time. I don't believe it will ever be the same.

4. In 1997 the AQHA had it's first Supreme Champion in 18 years. Why do you think this is no longer sought after?

Doug: Because of our specialization, very few horses can race and get competitive enough today in the other events.

Carol: Personally I never sought to make a Supreme Champion because a successful performance horse would probably not be competitive in today's halter horse division. I personally never tried to get halter points with Rugged Lark even though his conformation is quite superior, he's just not exaggerated enough in muscle to excel in this division and I certainly did not want any favors from the judges.

5. Do you think there is a market for a reasonable, attractive, sound horse that can do many different activities?

Doug: I think there will always be a market for such a horse, because there are still a lot of people that like to ride and show that haven't specialized yet. Also, one thing I think we tend to forget is that we could probably increase the longevity of our horses if we would try to do more events making them more versatile and eliminate some of the monotony of one event. Of course, this takes extra time, money and skill, which is an important consideration.

Carol: Very definitely I feel there is an excellent market for a reasonable, attractive, sound, versatile horse. The most valuable thing a versatile rider can own is one horse that can do many events. This rider only has to buy one horse, feed one horse, transport one horse and use one stall. To me, this has got to be a greater priority than the need of a different horse for each different event. I also feel that this rider should learn where he and his horse compete comfortably.

(These answers were copied exactly as sent to me. I want to thank Carol and Doug for their response to these questions.)

Footnote: I have just attended the 1998 AQHA World Show. I have looked over the horses that became World Champions in the classes. Some are judged and some were timed of course. Here is something for you to ponder. We talk about how the big money in the futurities have caused specialization. Specialization is also determined by what wins. Within each breed, the champions that are selected in the various classes have an effect on what breeders and owners strive to produce. I don't believe that it is just the money that determines specialization, but also what is winning. There is specialization within each breed and this specialization itself determines how big or small the gap is to whether or not it is feasible to use one horse in many events.

You have been presented the opinions of a cross section of the horse industry. It seems to me that it all boils down to the fact that the industry is ever changing and always growing, but the basic love for the horse is always going to be a factor in the continuing growth of the industry. As long as we have horse lovers, money will be added and products will be manufactured. Horses will continue to be trained and the heritage that we have been given in this country will be preserved and spread throughout the world.

It is an honor for me to be here and I thank you for the opportunity. I still find it amazing that the dreams that I dreamed as a little girl in the mountains of New Mexico have all come true and I am so grateful to God and to the horse industry for providing me the avenues that gave reality to those dreams. The horse industry has been my life and I count it a big blessing to have the opportunity to give something back to that industry.

Bye for now and Dream Big!!

**AQHA VERSATILITY AWARDS
YEAR TO DATE**

YEAR	OPEN	AMATEUR	YOUTH
1998	1	4	3
1997	2	5	11
1996	1	4	8
1995	3	6	9
1994	3	11	12
1993	4	6	10
1992	3	9	5
1991	3	9	10
1990	1	5	5
1989	5	6	9
1988	4	3	7
1987			8
1986			9
1985			5
1984			15
1983			7
1982			9

These are all there are in the history of Versatility Awards.

**AQHA CHAMPIONS
YEAR TO DATE**

YEAR	OPEN	AMATEUR	YOUTH
1998	17	14	35
1997	23	17	51
1996	26	18	54
1995	25	13	53
1994	19	9	50
1993	21	14	43
1992	28	12	26
1991	37	13	42
1990	31	18	22
1989	34	15	27
1988	33	8	11

**SUPREME CHAMPIONS
YEAR TO DATE**

YEAR	OPEN	AMATEUR	YOUTH
1998	0	2	4
1997	1	3	6
1996	0	2	3
1995	0	2	7
1994	0	0	2
1993	0	0	1
1992	0	0	1
1991	0	0	2
1990	0	0	1
1989	0	0	2
1988	0	0	0