

The "Legendary Chicken Fairy"



Chuck Waters said: 'There is no way that I'm going to show a mare with a name like that!' Many, many shows and blue ribbons later, he admitted that she really had become a local legend.

by Mary Lou Wiskowski

I'll never forget the first time I saw the "Legendary Chicken Fairy!" Sam Calig had been telling me about this mare for several months. "Should stop over at the stable and see her. She's big and she's one of those horses that you like — an Appaloosa." O.K. I had wanted to stop and see Chuck Water's horses anyhow. He was training and showing harness and

jumpers and living at Sam's farm.

When Chuck pulled her out of the stall I just said "Whew! She sure is big. Sure is hairy!" (It was early March). Other than that, I didn't think too much about her. In fact my first thought was "I could never have such an ugly horse in my barn!"

I went on a trail ride over Easter vacation, the week after I met "Legen-

dary." As I was driving home on the turnpike, a blinding thought struck me — "Big ugly horse! Big ugly girl! I have to have her! We go together!" I drove straight to Chuck's stable. "Do you still have her?"

"Who?" he asked.
"That big hairy horse!"
He laughed and said "Yes."
There had not been many people look-



One of the "Legendary Chicken Fairy's" colts, *Legendary Ruler*, by *Bold Sirens* by *Bold Ruler*, as a 2 1/2 year old. He is already 10.3 hands.

ing at her. I asked him if I could put a down payment on her. When he agreed to a payment I pulled out \$10 which was all I had with me at the time. He laughed hysterically.

I flew to the bank to fill out a loan application (It's a lot easier now to take a loan out for a horse than it was then. I had to put her down as an "appliance" to get the loan.)

Chuck started to work with her and he showed her on the Pennsylvania Appaloosa Association show circuit. She was young but she was high point jumper at the end of the season. (Twelve years ago we had fairly large English classes and shows with open jumping classes on the P.A.A. circuit. Now these classes are about as scarce as hen's teeth.)

To make a long story a little shorter, she was high point open jumper for the three years we showed her with the Pennsylvania Appaloosa Association. The greatest thing was, she was taking her to the open hunter and jumper shows. She won against many of the former open jumper champions. People hated to see Chuck pull in at the shows, after a while, with "Legendary Chicken Fairy." In fact, one show even dropped open jumping, gambler's choice and jumper three bar classes because she always won. A gentleman from Lipsoner came to one show with his two extremely expensive open jumpers. "Legendary" left them in the dust. He was so upset that he loaded his horses up and took them home.

"Legendary" does have an unusual name. As I told you, when I got her she was big and hairy. About that time, Jack Blanchard and Misty Morgan came out with a song called "Legendary Chicken Fairy." It was a really clever song with a very catchy tune. Our local radio station played it quite often and when I heard

"Legendary Chicken Fairy, big as life and twice as hairy" in the song, I knew that had to be her name. Chuck said — and I quote — "There is no way that I'm going to show a mare with a name like that!" Many, many shows and blue ribbons later, he admits that she really has been a local legend.

I remember the time I entered Chuck in a men's pleasure class on "Legendary." Panic struck when I saw a whole ring full of western riders and Chuck the only one posting with English tack. He really stood out in the crowd. Not only because of his English attire but because most of the fellows mounted on their western type Appaloosas only came up to her withers.

KDKA radio station had a contest with another local station about who could grow the largest tomato. KDKA was losing. Their tomato plants weren't growing so "Legendary Chicken Fairy" sent them a shoebox full of "agricultural aggregate." The tomato plants grew and they won the contest and Legendary's name, needless to say, went out over the air waves.

Legendary was also a star at one horse show where she jumped to help earn money for Pittsburgh's Children's Hospital's fund raising campaign. The radio would play "her" song and tell people to come to the show and meet the real "Legendary Chicken Fairy." I am proud to say that Doreyville Junior High School, where I teach Arts and Crafts, raised over \$10,000 with all of our money raising projects. We also won the "Farkleberry" award trophy for being the junior high school with the most amount of money collected per student in the whole Western Pennsylvania area. It really makes you feel good to be able to participate when the end result helps hundreds of children become well again.

"Legendary" was a fun horse. When we went to the big shows like G.E.A.R. and the Nationals, I just loved to walk her up and down the aisles. Little cowboy critters would be walking and be deep in conversation about cutting, roping or Western pleasure. They would pass her and then suddenly stop! Turn around and say "I just saw an elephant."

"How do you get up on her?"
"Do you get nosebleeds up there?"
I guess I forgot to mention that "Legendary" is 17.1 and not just tall like a Thoroughbred but broad!!! The "Unknowledgables" always asked if she was part workhorse! I beg their pardon!!!!

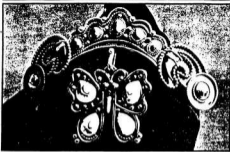
"Legendary Chicken Fairy" was high point jumper three years in a row and qualified each time for the World Play Offs. I teach and could never take the time off to go since school is always in full swing in November and the trip would, of course, be unadventurous!

As time went along, the "Fairy" developed a serious breathing problem. In Tennessee, a top trainer told me that she had heaven. I couldn't see any liver lints, but who was it? She would cough and roar going over a course. Something had to be done! We took her to Dr. MacKay-Smith at the Delaware Equestrian Center near Philadelphia. When he walked into the examining room and saw "Legendary" he just threw his arms around this huge beast and said "Babykins!" After he scoped her, he said, "If she's not a roarer then there's no God."

We left her and he performed "the operation." She came through with flying colors. Dr. MacKay-Smith is not only an excellent surgeon, his cosmetic surgery left no scars. "Legendary" was as good as new.

The following Spring she had her second foal. She was pregnant during the surgery but the baby was not at all affected. "Legendary Steeler" was by "Pretender Espanol" whose sire was "Pretender" who sired "Cassino II," the Derby winner. He was named after — who else — but the "Pittsburgh Steelers." I promised my husband, who is an avid Steeler fan, that if she had a colt and the Steelers won the Super Bowl game I would call him "Legendary Steeler." "Steeler" was bay with a large white blanket, four white stockings and a blaze. Art Rooney, Steeler owner, put his picture up in the Steeler's locker room. We sold him to a family who is showing him at hunter shows and he is doing quite well.

The decision to breed Legendary to another Thoroughbred came about when Jack and I went to a Thoroughbred sale at the Kentucky Training Center in Lexington, Kentucky. We had sold a "Mighty Marshall" colt out of one of our Thoroughbred mares and we planned to buy another Thoroughbred mare. At the end of the sale we were still sitting there waiting for the next horse. Jack saw a



In addition to raising legendary Appaloosas, the Wisniewski's also create exquisite jewelry and buckles. An especially nice piece is pictured above, the High Point Youth Award Trophy for "Opportunity" 1976.

beautiful black stallion, "Elen's Reason," and said "If you could breed 'Legendary' to him, I would agree to let you take her to Lexington."

"Well, that was all I needed! I tried everywhere to find out who had bought the magnificent animal. Finally, out of desperation, they told me to 'check with that man in the light blue suede jacket.'"

"I found him and told him that I had a big Appaloosa mare and that she was 17!" and that her name was "Legendary Chicken Fairy" and how much was the beautiful stallion's stud fee???? The gentleman told me that if we could get her to Lexington within the next three weeks he would breed her for free to "Elen's Reason." I asked where we should take her and he said "Here, the Kentucky Training Center." I finally got the courage to ask who he was and he told me, "Dr. Peson, I own the place." I still wonder at how this all happened and I will be forever grateful for the generosity which Dr. Peson showed us.

We went home on cloud nine and searched everywhere to find a tall two horse trailer. We found one and made plans to leave the following Saturday morning at 1:00 A.M. I had never pulled a trailer before as someone always hauled for us. The man I bought the trailer from said "Don't worry, it will follow you anywhere." With my luck I was pulling it through Pittsburgh during evening rush hour traffic. He was right — it did follow us home.

We got ready to load "Ledge" at 1:00 A.M. It took us two hours! We forgot to mention any of this to "Legendary." She was sooooo bored that we really had to push to finally get her in on the one side. It was like squeezing toothpaste out of a tube getting her out later that morning in

Lexington. In daylight we found a little corner pen at the top of the trailer divider and discovered that we could have taken the center rails out completely. Poor mare! Needless to say that from that time on she was hauled at an angle with the partition out.

The day we took "Legendary" to Lexington, I saw a big bay stallion at the Kentucky Training Center. He looked like a big Quarter Horse. Was I ever embarrassed when Billy, the farm manager, told me that he was "Bold Street," a son of "Bold Ruler." I mentioned to Jack at that time how nice I thought he was.

I got a call from Billy about two weeks later. The farm had sold "Elen's Reason." Billy said that Dr. Peson told him that they would go ahead and breed her to "Bold Street." I was elated! "Secretariat" was my love and now "Ledge" was going to be bred to a "Bold Ruler" son.

"Bold Street" is out of the great race producing mare, "Beaver Street." An article in "EQUUS" magazine said that a granddaughter of "Beaver Street" recently syndicated for a million dollars. My problem now was how was I going to break the news of the change of plans to Jack? We watched a lot of races on TV and Bold Ruler's get won a lot of races. I finally told Jack and he admitted that he was very happy with the change in plans. Just think, some of the same blood coursing through Secretariat, Seattle Slew, Spectacular Bid, Ruffian and many other famous horses would be in our foal.

"Legendary Ruler" was born the following February. He has a broken arrow on his forehead! How appropriate for an Appaloosa! He also has a lot of little subtle white spots all over his silky, jet black coat, four little white socks and tons of mottled skin. He was 42" tall when he was born.

"Legendary Ruler" now stands 16'3".

I had sent the mare out to a large show stable with foaling stalls since our barn, foaling stalls and indoor arena had not yet been built. They called to tell me that "Legendary" had had a chestnut colt. When I got out to the stable and looked in the stall I found this jet black baby. Wanting a colt more than a filly, I was afraid to look, thinking that they had probably made a mistake on that also. He was a colt, all right! The reason they thought he was a chestnut was because of the red heat lamps shining on a new, wet baby.

"Legendary Ruler" has sired some very large, well balanced athletic foals. They have ranged in color from buckskins with large spotted blankets to blacks with spots. Several are in dressage training. One went to Maine last Fall to be a field hunter with plans to show him as a hunter this season. A four year old filly is back from training and shows much promise as a hunter/dressage prospect.

It's really hard when you have to grow your own and wait for everyone to grow up, be trained and then start to achieve their potentials.

After "Legendary" had her second colt, "Legendary Steeler," she was shown working hunter for the year. Rodger Klamforth judged and pinned her at a show in Butler and said that for as huge as "Legendary" is she goes over a course like "poetry in motion."

Chuck took "Legendary" to an "A" show in Quentin, Pennsylvania after her operation. She took a sixth in a class of sixty horses. Chuck said that after complaining about her name at the beginning that she made him a kind of celebrity there because the announcers loved her and her name and kept announcing over the speaker how many more horses there would be until it was time for the "Legendary Chicken Fairy" again.

I had told Chuck that if the price was right I would sell my big mare if she went somewhere where she would be shown. The day after her classes at Quentin, interested parties from New York and Mexico came to look at her. When she came out of her stall, Chuck said that she was very lame. The ground had been like a rock that July with no rain. All of the big jumps she had been over and the pounding just did her in. "Legendary" came home and was x-rayed. Nothing conclusive was gained by the pictures but the vet said that she could possibly be going navicular. That did it! I made up my mind then and there that she would spend the rest of her life with us at Silver Falcon Farm raising babies and would be the biggest trail horse around.

"Legendary" is due to foal late this summer. Her due date is the Fourth of July. She is bred to a big racing Quarter Horse stallion by "Jet Deck." I swore that I would never breed her to anything but a

Thoroughbred stallion but "Easy Custis" was such a magnificent athlete that I had to say "Yes," when Laurie Rath, owner of Rath Farms, breeders of racing Quarter Horses, offered to breed Legendry to "Custis." He is a son of "Jet Deck" and has a lot of Thoroughbred blood.

As I mentioned earlier, "Legendry Chicken Fairy" was high point open jumper for three years, high point working hunter one season and a blue ribbon winner at many, many shows. She was also leased one summer to do dressage. With only one month of training she went to several dressage events and placed in her classes. For her size, she was very handy and she won numerous handy hunter classes. "Legendry" has jumped over seven feet many times while being schooled. Her disposition is very gentle. She would stand at the gate waiting to enter her classes with her front feet almost closed, skipping. Chuck always had to make sure that she was fully awake. Once in the ring she was all business.

We had several heartbreaks during our relationship with "Legendry." The girl who was supposed to be a professional trainer took "Legendry" into the qualifying jump off at the big show in Tennessee. "Legendry" jumped over the wing in the in and out and my "professional," instead of in-jumping the combination, disqualified her by trotting out of the ring. The crowd went wild when she jumped over the high wing but I went to the ladies room and cried for an hour.

Chuck flew down to the G.E.A.R. show in Richmond, Virginia to show her in the open jumping class. I was worried about the fence covered with foil looking like a lit upinsel Christmas tree in the night lights. "Legendry" never let it bother her while all the other horses were freakin' out at this particular fence. She had a clean round the first time but the second time around she just dropped a leg on a little 4 1/2 foot fence.

The last big Appaloosa show was at G.E.A.R. in Columbus, Ohio. Her first round was clean but my rider pulled a kamikaze act and completely missed two fences in the second round. What can one say?

Legendry's diet away from home was every chocolate doughnut that she could mooch, a few hot dogs (without mustard) and one very surprised fellow lost his scotch and water when she drank it.

I would like to breed "Legendry" to several of the top warm blooded sport horses in the United States before her "child bearing" years are over. The foals could not be registered with the National Appaloosa Horse Club but I really don't care. I am more interested in this talented mare producing offspring that can compete in open shows.

If "Legendry Chicken Fairy" does nothing other than give us a few more babies and just sits back to watch

"Legendry Ruler's" babies excel, I will be quite happy. It has been a pleasure being owned by this very distinguished, short tailed, one-of-a-kind mare.

Many thanks to my husband Jack for being so patient. It wasn't easy changing from city boy to country fellow in the last short twelve years since we have been married. Also apologies to all the English teachers for parables that may be dangling in this article. I excel in making custom crafted jewelry. This typewriter has given me a real fight.

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