

An Oddly Assorted Trio

Alexander the Great's Bucephalus, Stonewall King and a lovely fine harness mare called Heavenly Jane: what did they have in common? They all were featured in a late summer 1947 issue of *The Mid-Western Horseman*, an Iowa publication.

Perhaps some readers will remember the fetching legend about Bucephalus ("big headed" or maybe "hard headed"). We're told that he was brought to Alexander's father, Philip of Macedonia, as a prospective ceremonial/ war mount and that his appearance was perfect for the role. Because nobody in Philip's stable could ride the extremely restive animal, the king was regretfully rejecting him. However, Philip's young son, Alexander, had noted something about the horse's fault and thought he saw a simple solution. Alexander felt that the highly desirable creature was alarmed by the movements of his own shadow. Faced into the sun where he had no shadow, he could be ridden. Nobody has ever explained how, in use, Bucephalus could always be faced into the sun; Maybe just discovering his problem enabled training him out of it. Anyhow, he's said to have been Alexander's favorite all-purpose mount for 20 years, and to have been handsomely immortalized at his death by Alexander's building a city that he named Bucephala. The writer said the grave has been located and verified by archeologists in the Punjab region in a town now called Jhelum and that it can be visited. Many books and periodicals have repeated this story to remind everyone that what seems a hopeless problem with a horse sometimes has a simple cause and a simple remedy.

And what is there to say about Stonewall King that hasn't been said over and over? Some details about the All-Stonewall show held in Boone County, Missouri in 1947. Though the half-page story makes clear that it was not the whole show that would feature Stonewall Kings, just several classes, the magazine's treatment of this coming event was clear confirmation of SK's importance in the show world and invites lovely visions for the reader. It does establish as fact that the stallion was to be honored by special ceremonies on the second day of the Boone County Fair and Horse Show in Columbia on September 3, the main spectacle being his leading a parade of his offspring.



Pictured at Heavenly Jane's retirement are owner Mrs. Knox Browning, seated in buggy, and from (left to right) Joe Burnett, her trainer, Miss Bonnie Osmundson, her former owner, Knox Browning, Christian Barham, judge, and Maxine Carter.

Quite a lot of Stonewall history was incorporated in the story. He was 27 years old that year and his get were stated, without qualification, to have sold for more than a million dollars ('47 million, remember!). Seventy-five hundred dollars had been set aside to pay for the premiums, trophies and ribbons planned for his descendants who won the classes planned just for them.

Crowning feature of the show would be the famous stallion leading the parade of his sons and daughters, and a great many of them were expected; some owners from far away had indicated plans to participate in this family reunion. In actual fact, a later story says, only 26 of the great one's offspring followed him around the ring. However, one version says they all were wearing their most important ribbons and sashes, which must have made an unforgettable sight. Surely some clipping somewhere lists their names. Probably all were embedded in a four-inch portion of the Iowa publication, which qualified itself as not having the names of each and every Stonewall living at the time of publication.

The impressive list begins with Patty Lou Dare, who was designated the first Stonewall King offspring to attract attention as a show horse. This was a five-gaited mare owned and shown by Mary Fiers of Oklahoma, an exhibitor of note at the time, both for her distinguished horses and for her own abilities and charismatic attractiveness. Among the best remembered Stonewall Kings of 1947 were Oak Hill Chief, Invasion, Madam Chiang, Loretta, and The Dictator. No doubt many of the other names deserve special mention for their achievement, were that documentation at hand, but that is hardly necessary; SK's lasting popularity as a sire is proof enough that his get achieved greatly and were highly valued. We can indulge ourselves in noting some of the

most interesting names. There was a Shannon Stonewall and a Stonewall Shannon, a Stonewall Sensation and a Stonewall Masterpiece. There was a Prairie Fire and a Flashing Parade and a Night Wind; there was a Stonewall Peavine and a Stonewall Carolina (this last, perhaps indicating a link to Col. Castleton's famous mare).

The Mid-Western Horseman story noted that the reunion ceremony would be broadcast on radio (as had been the funerals of Man O'War and some other noted horses and the retirement ceremonies of others). News reels and national publications had been invited to make their own records of the event. Wouldn't it be fun to hear announcers' descriptions?

As to Heavenly Jane; her final moment of fame may seem something of a comedown after the Stonewall event, but she had won 32 blue ribbons and obviously enjoyed great status in her own sphere. The Iowa magazine calls her retirement ceremony "an impressive interim" on the last night of the Dallas Charity Horse Show. She was driven around the ring by her owner, Mrs. Knox Browning, then called to the center and draped with a horseshoe of red roses. The ceremony was conducted by Maxine Carter, *Saddle & Bridle's* iconic reporter. Handsome and revered Judge Christian Barham paid tribute to the career of a great campaigner. Jane's former owner, Bonnie Osmundson of Perry, Iowa, flew to Dallas to attend the retirement and a large picture assembled these people, plus Jane's trainer, Joe Burnett, and co-owner, Knox Browning.

So here we have a few minutes more life for a good and pretty mare, whose grayness set off many a red rose, and a famous stallion who has been gone now for 60 years and for a legend whose life supposedly ended in the 370s BC.