

*Article from Quarter Horse Journal in 1977 written by Jim Jennings*

You don't just happen by Dan and Helen Opie's place in eastern Oregon. As a matter of fact to get there you almost have to be going there. The nearest airport is Boise, Idaho, about 180 miles to the east. It's a nice drive though, through the mountains and desert. But be aware that you leave the pavement 40 miles before you get to Dan's house. The last 40 is gravel road.

Dan lives at what used to be Verneter, Oregon, although it's not a town anymore. The nearest town is Crane, but he gets his mail at Lawen. And if none of these communities ring a bell, look southeast of Burns about 50 miles, on the south fork of the Malheur River and you'll find the Opie Ranch.

But even with the inconvenience, Dan and Helen never lack for company, for the only house at what used to be Vernator, is the home of those Quincy Dan horses. And that's the story I'm about to tell.

Dan Opie came to Oregon from Arizona in 1938. He pitched his bedroll in the bunkhouse at the Spurlock Ranch - just a few miles down the road from where he lives today - and began riding broncs. Five years later he was running the ranch, and did so for the next 16½ years.

But Dan had some long range plans, and all the time he was at Spurlock he was buying land of his own. As the years went by, he kept adding to it - bought a few horses along the way - until finally, he quit Spurlock and began running his own place.

Dan said, "I was just running cattle, and had what horses I needed on the ranch. They were mostly grade horses, but I did have a Quarter Horse stallion that I had bought down in California in 1946. His name was Chulo Jr by Chulo by My Texas Dandy. He was a bulldog type horse with a plain head - in fact, a very plain head. I used to rope a few calves on him and tried to bulldog on him, and we bred a few ranch mares. He sure wan't what they're looking for today, but at that time he was all I could afford."

"Then about 1948 or 49" he continued, "I went to Pendleton to a Quarter Horse show and sale and bought two registered mares, the first ones I ever had. One of the mares was from Texas - a beautiful headed mare. She was what made me get head conscious."

"We had those two mares about a year, bred them to Chulo Jr. and it did not take very long to find out we had to change stallions. We kept one filly out of the best mare. She was a nice filly, but she had a plain head because of the stud."

It was about then that Dan bought a yearling stallion called Diamond Salute, by Silver King out of Scare Face S by Baily, Dan said it was this horse that stared him in the right direction, but he also happened onto another deal and another stallion about the same time.

"I used to rodeo some, and I also traded around on some bucking horses," he said, "That's how I got acquainted with Leonard Milligan. He wanted some bucking horses to take back to Colorado, so I traded him some for mares and a stallion.

The horses I got were all registered," Dan continued, "The stallion was a horse called Easy Vandy by Bandy and the mares were pretty good. I didn't buy his best mares - I couldn't afford them - but I did get a daughter of San Siemon, a daughter of Royal Ford, a pretty Buck mare, some Hancock-bred mares and a Joe Reed II mare - we got some good mares from him".

By this time, Dan was firmly established in Quarter Horse business. He got a judge's card from the American Quarter Horse Association, began judging a few shows, and that's where the Quincy Dan chapter begins.



Picture of Quincy Dan at three years old. Although the stallion is dead now, he is primarily responsible for Dan Opie's place in the Quarter Horse World.



Dan and Sir Quincy Dan rule the Opie Ranch



Sir Quincy Dan is Opie's selection who carried on the Quincy Dan bloodlines.

Dan explained, "I judged a show in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1961, and after the show I went down to the Quincy Farms at Colorado Springs to look for a stallion. Quincy Dan was probably about six weeks old and in a pen with two others, Fairbars and a horse named Quincy Jag. I bought Quincy Dan then. He was the cheapest of the three and the only one I could afford, but I showed him against the other two horses later and beat both of them. Guess I was pretty lucky." he grinned.

Dan showed Quincy Dan in 1962 and 1963 as a yearling and a two year old, and in 1963 the horse was grand champion at both Denver and the Cow Palace. Dan believes he's the only horse that ever won the two shows.

"Diamond Salute was the first good stallion I ever owned," Dan noted. He was a good sire and his mares were good producers. But Quincy Dan was the first great horse I ever had, and probably the greatest horse I'll ever have. I personally feel he was the greatest halter horse I've ever seen. Now, I haven't seen 'em all, but I've seen quite a few of 'em. His record shows 26 consecutive class wins, and only one man ever judged them more than one time - that was Don Dodge.

"Of Course," Dan continued, "what made him a great horse was the way he produced. And now his daughters are reproducing." Quincy Dan died when he was nine years old, really before he came into his prime. He sired only 178 horses. Eleven of those are AQHA Champions, and 53 of them collectively earned 1,612 halter points. Quincy Dan was by Mighty Bars, a son of Three Bars (TB), and with this influence he also sired three AAA horses, although he was never bred with speed in mind. Twenty one Register of Merit horses with 905 performance points also carry Quincy Dan blood.

The loss of Quincy Dan was a great blow to Dan, but bad luck didn't have him completely down. The year before he had purchased a son of Quincy Dan, and now this horse Sir Quincy Dan, was to carry on the bloodline.

Dan explained, "I bred Sir Quincy's mother a Joe Reed II mare, for a lady in California. The next spring I was in California judging a show and I heard the colt was on the grounds, so I went by and looked at him. He was seven days old and I bought him." Again with the grin, Dan added, "I was lucky twice."

Lots of horsemen around the country don't believe luck had anything to do with either occasion, as Dan claimed. They believe it was Dan's ability as a horseman that enabled him to select both Quincy Dan and Sir Quincy Dan when they were still on their mommas. And now Sir Quincy's record seems to prove that. Following in the footsteps of his sire, his foals had earned 589 halter points and 371 performance points. But that's not where the real glory lies.

Back in 1974 the AQHA established a World Championship Quarter Horse Show. For the first time in history a world champion in each event was to be named. And when the dust settled at the end of the show, Opie's Pride by Quincy Dan, was the World Champion Aged Mare.

The following year, the best in the country again journeyed to Louisville, Kentucky, for the second championship show. A week later, Sheza Cover Girl by Sir Quincy Dan was the World Champion Yearling Filly, and Quincy Rose Ann by Quincy Dan was the World Champion Junior Cutting horse.

In 1976, at the third such championship show, Opie's Raquel by Sir Quincy Dan was the World Champion Two-Year-Old Filly, and at the end of the year, Sheza Cover Girl became the high-point junior halter horse of the nation with 173 points.

"The way last year ended, it kind of made a man wonder which one is the best," Dan said, "with one bring world champion and the other the high-point horse."



Bonnie Salute is by Diamond Salute, She is an AQHA Champion and an AQHA Superior Halter Mare.



Dan Opie has become an institution in the Quarter Horse world, being the breeder of several world champions.



Wife Helen assists both with the horses and cattle.

Dan currently has two other stallions he's standing also. One is a two-year-old by Sir Quincy Dan and out of Bonnie Salute, a daughter of Diamond Salute, an AQHA Champion and AQHA Superior halter mare. He plans to breed this horse a little this spring just to see how gets along.

The other is a horse called Flicker De Bar by Three Bars (TB) and out of a Bear Hug mare, and Dan got him almost by accident: "I had been shopping for a horse to breed to some Quincy Dan mares for a good while, and then one day I was down at Redding, California, judging a show. After a while I got to noticing that in every class there would be some horses by a horse called Flicker De Bar. And of course, before the day was over I began to wonder, "Who is Flicker De Bar?" Then, the next day, during the performance classes, they had a four or five year old stud in the working cow horses and he won it real easy, four or five points ahead of any other horse. When the man rode over, I asked him, 'Friend, why did you show this horse at halter yesterday?' He said, 'You're supposed to ride 'em, not walk and lead 'em.' Well, the horse was very attractive, and had he been in show shape, he would have probably been my champion stud. Of course, it turned out this was Flicker De Bar.

"So, I came on home, but I couldn't keep from thinking about this Flicker De Bar. I knew he must have been my type of horse, or I wouldn't have used his colts so well. I told my friend Bob Lyons from Salem about him, and it ended up that Bob and I bought him in partnership. We've stood him here ever since, and we have some of his daughters that we're going to cross on Sir Quincy. He's an old horse now, and he's lost some of his refinement. He's 18 years old this year, but he still has a lot of good points on him."

Dan will breed about 40 mares of his own this spring, some to each stallion. And normally, all the foals will be sold during their weanling year. "Yes, that's right," Dan said, "we sell them right on the mares and then deliver them as soon as we wean them. Of course, having those world champions the last few years kind of helps the sale of the babies."

Dan and Helen, in addition to the horses, run about 400 mother cows, they're mostly Polled Herefords, but he breeds his yearling heifers to young black bulls. He says he will have black heifer left over once in a while, but he primarily sticks to whiteface cattle. In speaking of the cattle, Dan says it's to his sorrow that he has them, referring to the steadily declining market. "I've been laughing about it, because it's easier to laugh than cry. Now I'm worried about how long the stud can support 36 bulls. He's done it for three years so far."