

Casino – off to Conquer a New Continent

by Mimi Busk-Downey



Crescent Moon Ranch's stallion RTP Casino has been sold to Gunspring Peruvians, and he now resides with Len and Suzanne Giddins near Melbourne, Australia. He joins their herd of Peruvians at a time when there is a renewed interest in the Peruvian breed in the Pacific Rim.

I met Len and Sue on a trip to Peru. The *Concurso Nacional* was cancelled and I was leading a tour on an in-depth discovery of the Peruvian horse --- visiting breeders in a personal way that we never could accomplish during show time. I was most impressed with Len's knowledge of bloodlines, his memorization of so many of the important stories behind Peruvian horse development. Sue charmed every breeder we met, asking how they had begun their programs, and what was important to them. I saw the Giddins had true, deep *aficion* that

was not a product of their own egos, but rather something that made them thirst for contact and learning in the world of Peruvian horses. Suzanne Brown was on that trip, as were other experienced people. Many of us fostered the Giddins' deep attachment to the breed and it was apparent that as a group, we all enjoyed the culture. It was one most enjoyable groups I have ever led, and many of us have remained friends. Back at home, I missed Len and Sue's company and told Dale that I wished they could move in next door.

The affinity I felt with Len and Sue played a big part in our decision to let Casino go to Australia. They were looking for a stallion that could promote the breed effectively on their continent. Their priorities were a horse that was impressive – large --- had recognizable bloodlines and not family lines already present there --- a horse that would add the high head carriage, good temperament. Further, they needed a stallion that Len, retired, could handle without difficulty. A mature horse that was noble and experienced at demos, one with titles and whose siring capability was known --- whose entire family behind him had stayed sound to old age. And the horse had to be able to handle the grueling importation process with composure. Before the sale took place, we talked to them for six months, and only after knowing them to that degree did we consider offering them Casino.



Len and Suzanne in the Peruvian desert

Casino's story began about 18 months before his birth. We had made an agreement with Cheryl Aldrich of Raintree Peruvians to stand Casino's sire, our well-known stallion Soberano CM, at stud in Texas for a season. We were always looking for a way to obtain offspring of Soberano from mares of different bloodlines. Cheryl had several mares that we liked, so part of our agreement for stud fees included our choice of two foals from their mares. The one I was the most interested to see was from Hera, a daughter of Antares.



Hera's dam Conquista was a mare I had liked since 1977. When the foals were born Cheryl sent a tape, and we had to decide right away. The first two colts on the tape were nice, but the third foal was quite breathtaking. He strutted into the camera's view like he owned the world. His head was as high as he could possibly carry it, and he was masculine and bold. He turned out to be Hera's foal, so we decided within minutes that we would choose him. Because his dam was owned by Cheryl Aldrich, the colt bore her initials, RTP. Dale named him Casino because we were gambling that we could know his quality from the bloodlines and a video.

Off to Conquer a New Continent – continued.

Casino was delayed coming to Canada from Texas after weaning due to an outbreak of VS in the United States. He finally arrived when he was almost a year old. He continued to develop well and then at two, he narrowly escaped death. He was in a large pipe corral with a shelter, and during a severe thunderstorm the 2 year old gelding in with him was killed by lightening. Our trainer at the time continually got names mixed up, and he came running to the house yelling “*Casino is dead!*” We ran out and even from a distance, saw Casino’s beautiful black head sticking up over the corral. We were certainly sad that the young gelding had died, but the relief to see Casino alive and well was indescribable.



Australian horse van delivering Casino

Throughout Casino’s career in Canada we showed him when we could, and went through periods when he showed less due to breeding commitments. When his famous sire *Soberano* died in 2002, Casino filled breeding commitments for him. Later, many people bred back to him based on the consistency and quality of the foals he sired. Shipping semen from Casino was very successful and he has many foals across the United States and some in Canada. In 2004 we started to show him mainly in Performance, and he accumulated a number of titles in Regional shows in Canada, the Northwest and the Canadian Nationals. He won the *Zootecnico* award outright at many times, and judge Pepe Musante said “this stallion has the conformation we need in the breed – his bone, his balance, the way his neck is set upright on his shoulders – it is hard to find this combination even in Peru.” Casino won firsts in Gait, Breeding, Conformation, Pleasure and Performance, Sidesaddle and Trail Obstacles. He won titles in Breeding, Pleasure and Amateur Performance. He won two *Laureado* awards (three times Champion of Champions at the same show). In 2007, he achieved the milestone of *Premio de Plata*, 1000 lifetime points. He also has sired show horses that have won Champion of Champions, National High Point Awards and *Laureado* titles.

Experienced in promoting the breed, Casino was chosen as a lead horse by the Texas Ladies Aside drill team at Equidance 2000 in Calgary. He also did numerous demos including seven days running as “the Conquistador” at the Calgary Stampede. He has always done what was asked of him in an uncomplicated way, the hallmark of a great disposition. Now, he has just



Gunspring Peruvians in Australia

completed his journey to Australia, he traveled from Alberta to California and stayed three weeks at Monty Roberts’ farm for quarantine. Then came the flight to Sydney and another three weeks of quarantine there. He was then trucked to the Giddins’ farm, about a day’s drive south to the province of Victoria.



Casino in his new home

Casino is now experiencing his second winter in a row ---- albeit a mild one by Canadian standards. Come September he will start breeding mares. Then in November, he will be exhibited at Equitana Pacific Rim.

We will miss Casino greatly, but are so glad that he is taking the Soberano bloodline to a fourth continent. We wish to congratulate Len and Sue for choosing Casino and on committing to the future of the Peruvian breed in Australia. ❖

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For more information on Peruvian Horses, please visit our website at www.supergait.com or call us at (403) 546-4331