

Horse Quest 2005

by Mimi Busk-Downey

PHAC member Suzanne Brown of Vista Ridge Ranch had been involved with breeding Peruvian horses for about ten years when last summer she decided to change direction. She had enjoyed her horses very much and her Vista Ridge Ranch had achieved a high level of show ring success, including a Canadian National Breeding Stallion – *Laureado* title. She had evaluated her herd and decided that a number of the animals resulting from the crosses she had made, though very good sound horses, had not achieved the level of show quality she was looking for. This led her to offer many horses for sale, and she decided that she would purchase a very high quality horse or two as a base with which to “start over”. In late January she phoned me and asked me when I could get away to go with her to Peru and choose a new beginning.

Suzanne riding a stallion at Eduardo Risso's.



We arrived in Peru on February 5th and embarked on an extensive trek in search of an outstanding individual – or maybe two --- that would embody Suzanne's vision of her future breeding program. I had arranged appointments in advance. It was pretty inconvenient that our plane was late leaving Dallas, as we arrived at our hotel in Lima at about 3:00 AM. We were on the road by 8:00 AM the next morning on our way to Ica in the south of Peru. My former trainer Juan Carlos Vasquez was our guide that day and without him our driver never would have located the turnoff – on a deserted road in the treeless desert – that led to the beautiful oasis hacienda of Eduardo Risso. Our driver was unaccustomed to driving in sand, and the next thing we knew our minivan was hopelessly stuck! Luckily, a 4-wheel drive truck could see us from the highway, and came to our rescue. The driver had to stay with the van in the hot sun until a tractor could be dispatched, but we were soon in the shade, drinking soda and looking horses. Eduardo explained to us something Suzanne and had never imagined --- that people who live in the desert have to plow their roads to remove the blown-over sand, just as we plow snow!

Eduardo and his lovely wife (daughter of Alfredo Elias) showed us some good prospects. We noticed the uniformity among their herd and could see that they have a vision and are realizing it in their animals. While making notes on horses and taking pictures, we discussed the importation process with Eduardo. He explained how if a person is taking one or two horses has to either wait until other horses are going, or pay for three spots on the plane anyway. By the end of the day, Suzanne was saying that she might want to buy three horses, due to the better shipping efficiency and costs of importation for a full crate. After an enjoyable lunch we hopped back in the van and I advised the chauffeur to drive more aggressively so that we would get out of the hacienda without getting stuck again. He took me at my word and roared out of there!

On Sunday, we visited ranches near Lima. We were able to go to a couple of places in Lurin in the morning, and then had an appointment in Cieneguilla. We ended up being a little pressed for time, so our travel agent Hector (who was driving us in his Passat) consulted with Juan Carlos regarding the back road from Lurin to Cieneguilla, and they discussed that it was a little rough but a lot shorter. We grabbed lunch snacks of almonds and dried fruit, and took the shortcut. It was more than rough --- it was mostly a donkey trail! It took us about an hour to traverse the rocky path, and we crossed water three times, once deep enough that Hector made us get out and walk across the foot bridge. His radiator was steaming when he came out of the creek that time! The moto-taxi drivers were staring at us, two “gringos” taking pictures of our crazy driver. Finally we came to the Lurin river proper, and I recognized where we were and told Hector that absolutely we were not crossing it in the car! After asking directions they found the car bridge and we finally arrived at the ranch of Cristobal Duarte. Cristobal has been breeding Caballos de Paso for 40 years. He has a small herd of very fine animals and some bloodlines that are difficult to come by these days. Cristobal also does the exportation work for most of the horses that leave Peru, and for good reason. He is very efficient and knows the paperwork inside and out. It was very pleasing to me to see the strength and gaits on his horses, as I have known him since he helped import my *Cayalti* and *de La Borda* horses back in 1977.

Crossing the water near Cieneguilla



Every day after returning to the hotel, Suzanne reviewed photos and video from her new camera. I was keeping extensive notes from every ranch highlighting the horses that we liked the best. She was keeping in mind her own vision that was forming, as well as the characteristics that would go well with her remaining horses.

On Tuesday we had only one appointment – one I had set up as soon as I knew we were going to Peru. We traveled to the ranch of Pepe Risso Matellini, and spent the whole day there with *don* Pepe and his daughter Carla and Carla's son Sebastian.



JRM Demanda ridden by Sebastian Risso that they only planned to sell three horses this year to bring their numbers down to their "quota" of 50. Suzanne recognized that she might have the opportunity to obtain bloodlines normally unavailable. As a favor, I asked that don Pepe and Carla consider selling the fillies, which were not for sale. We were especially interested in getting an offspring of *Intendente*. He is 13 years old and a very impressive sire as well as show horse, and he had been sold to Argentina, scheduled to leave Peru in May after the National Show. We kept that in mind in case we came across mares at another ranch that could benefit from being bred to him before export.

It was a very special day. We saw every one of their horses, presented first at halter then saddled. They have so many fabulous horses, including National *Laureada* mare *JMR Legendaria* and her sister *JMR Legionaria*, many times first place stallion *JMR Intendente*, it could be a little overwhelming for someone who is not familiar with the horses and bloodlines to keep them all straight. I had been there for three consecutive years, either with my husband Dale or with our small tour group, so had an idea of the horses that we might be most interested in. This is not to say that they would necessarily be for sale, as *don Pepe* only offers a few horses for sale at any given time. I had ridden a mare there the year before named *JRM Demanda*, and was very impressed by her first foal sired by *JRM Locutor*. She had been pregnant again to *Intendente*, and this time we saw the family group with the new filly. *Demanda* fit much of the criteria that Suzanne had set as essential. Don Pepe and



JRM Demanda, JRM Iracunda, & JRM Iliada

In addition to viewing all the horses, riding many of them, and being treated to a gracious lunch, we absorbed "pearls of wisdom" from *don Pepe* all day. He is so incredibly experienced, well-read and such a clear thinker.....the only way one could express it is that he is so *smart*.....that it is an honor to have him try to impart some of his knowledge. He explained how he decided on some of his crosses. We were able to take booklets of all his horses' bloodlines with us, which is incredibly helpful in doing our research. He also gave bottles of special red *pisco* to Suzanne and I, to Juan Carlos Vasquez and also to my trainer Jimmy Perales, who were both there with us assisting by riding horses that day. After a couple of follow-up calls, it became clear that this group of Risso horses was going to be available to us, and Suzanne was strongly considering them.

Our days progressed and our list of horses grew. However, as some were advanced to the status of "possibles", others dropped off the radar, so it wasn't too hard to keep focused on the goal. Every where we went, Suzanne's favorite horses seemed to come from three bloodlines – those of Pepe Risso, Anibal Vasquez and Lucho Vasquez. Several of our very favorites were combinations of the blood of Risso (JRM) and Anibal Vasquez (AV).



Mimi riding AV Diplomatica

On Wednesday afternoon, we took a flight to Trujillo, in northern Peru. This would be primarily to visit the two Vasquez ranches in Paijan. Suzanne's longtime trainer Eddi Gutierrez met us at the airport and took us to a new breeder nearby. Daniel Iturri. He had a nice group of horses that combine the blood of Alfredo Elias with that of the Vasquez families. Sr. Iturri had all his horses catalogued so that I could easily record the bloodlines of the ones we liked. He too has a vision and has already produced some fine animals.



Suzanne on AV Real de Paijan, sire of AV Diplomatica, and Anibal Vasquez the father (right). Anibal Vasquez the son, center, is a well-known bullfighter as well as horseman.

The next morning Eddi took us to Lucho Vasquez ranch. We saw many horses that we liked, and some of them were for sale. Lucho was very gracious but the colt that Suzanne liked best was not for sale. She tried a number of horses to go with the mare she liked very well, and we came away with several possibilities.

Immediately upon leaving Lucho's we arrived at the hacienda of Anibal and Lucila Vasquez. *Don Anibal* and *dona Lucilla* were very busy right then since *don Anibal* is the current president of the ANCP CPP. They are living in Lima to allow them to attend properly to their duties, and their daughter Anylu and son Anibal are managing the ranch. We had been told when I made the appointment that the Vasquez parents would not be able to come from Lima to meet us, but when we arrived, we found out they had come up the night before, and we were flattered that they would make the long trip just for our visit. We sat on the porch as horse after quality horse was presented, and we liked quite a few! Anylu and dona Luci had all the bloodlines and show wins memorized. While I wrote notes, we chatted and ate a scrumptious lunch. The Vasquez grandchildren were riding mares in the background, that were grand-dams of



AV Almendra

found her package, the one at Anibal Vasquez'. However, she could not get the Risso group out of her mind. I loved that group too, and felt it was a true breeder's group, the kind of purchase that would reap rewards far into the future. She was studying the bloodlines and reviewing pictures late into the night.

We spent the next day visiting Manuel Acuna's ranch, which is beautiful and had some excellent individuals. Some of the ones we liked were not for sale, and amazingly they were the cross of our two favorite bloodlines, Risso and Vasquez. The manager there, Dr. Remigio, was very hospitable – he is a veterinarian who oversees the ranch very well and interestingly he lived ten years in Russia and is fluent in that language as well as Spanish. Later we visited Peter Koechlin's place where he served us typical cebiche and we saw lots of young horses. While there we also met with several other breeders, and managed to slip out gracefully when they started talking politics (both the horse association and the country's political scene, since Peter is launching a campaign for president of Peru!).



Carla, Mimi, Pepe RissoSr., Suzanne, Pepe Jr.

Suzanne went to bed early that night, after and in the morning she woke me at 5:30 to tell me: she did not want to pass up this opportunity to have the bloodlines she wanted. The Vasquez group has everything she needed, but she wanted those Risso bloodlines and believed that this was a unique opportunity that would not be repeated. So, she had decided – she would buy all six horses. That meant 8 horses really, since both mares were pregnant! I thought it was a breathtaking decision, truly surprising since she had talked about having such a limited number of animals – but amazing, to acquire such a good group of horses in one fell swoop! There are any number of people who I have observed to have had the resources to make such a purchase, but very few ever do it.



JRM Intendente

Cristobal Duarte had everything ready for the horses to come to North America. We were back in Peru when the horses left, as the timing coincided with the approaching National Show. The horses went to Miami on a cargo plane full of asparagus, in the crates that hold three horses each. Cristobal accompanied the horses to Miami personally and made sure they arrived at quarantine in good shape. From there, Willy Griffith in Miami took care of the paperwork until they were released. They have to stay in the US for a few weeks before coming to Canada.

So, our adventures on the 2005 Horse Quest had led us to see 550 horses, and ended with the result that some new, outstanding representatives of our breed will be soon be coming Canada. They will bear the initials of the two most successful breeders in Peru, JRM and AV. I expect that they will bring their share of ribbons to the Vista Ridge Ranch and moreover, I predict that their offspring will make an impact on the North American scene for generations to come. Suzanne plans to honor their heritage and their breeders by registering the horses with the full initials and names as chosen by the breeders. She says that she always does new things in "baby steps", but I predict this group will be a big step forward!

After a whirlwind of activity, including the pulling of hair for DNA testing and bloodtests and paperwork needed for exportation, both Anylu Vasquez and



Suzanne, Cristobal Duarte, and Mimi

When at the Peruvian National Show in April 2005, Suzanne was able to watch *JRM Intendente* win his class and see the success of all the Vasquez and Risso horses shown. It was wonderful to see the two accomplished horsewomen, Carla Risso and Anylu Vasquez, riding in the show. The horses left for North America shortly after the end of the show. Suzanne and I would

