

FONT STUD - NEVILLE COMLEY

The following is a record of Neville Comley reminiscing on his life with horses and what they meant for him:

“I did not come from a horse family although we had 15 to 20 farm horses. I was born with a degenerative eye disease creating a severe eye problem for me. My dad was a fantastic farmer farming cattle, sheep and goats on 29 farms scattered around in the Eastern Cape; there was no time to fiddle around with horses although I did teach them tricks from time to time.

“Because of my poor eye-sight, my dad received a letter for the school reporting that on the advice of the specialist they felt that further schooling would be difficult and he therefore removed me from school in the 3rd term in Standard 7. I was 15 years old at the time. To me that was the biggest mistake that could have happened in my life in addition to going to work for my dad who was a hard task-master. Today I thank him for what he did for me which at the time was considered horrible; because I think that is why I became a success – I wanted to prove to him that I am not just this blind thing. That had a lot to do with what happened in my life later on, bad and good, maybe.



Neville Comley with Aberdare Sepal and Font Seniorita

“After I had worked for two years at the age of 17, I had enough money to buy my own horse and pay for its keep because show horses could not graze off the farm. And why horses – I just loved horses. With my background and somewhere along the line I had a dream. I had about 30% sight at that stage and when I was about 15, I had a dream that I got a horse from Uncle Mynie de Klerk, who farmed near one of our farms, who had beautiful saddle horses and in my dream I was at a show with the horse Uncle Mynie had given me and I became totally blind. This worked on my nerves terribly and I could not tell my dad or my mom and I was therefore determined to get a horse to see whether that would happen – a stupid reaction of a youngster. I hardly slept that night regularly checking whether I could still see or not. The night was long, and yes, I could still see a bit and show horses successfully.



Bernet Pinocchio and Shaun Suttly

against horses much taller than him and he came 2nd.

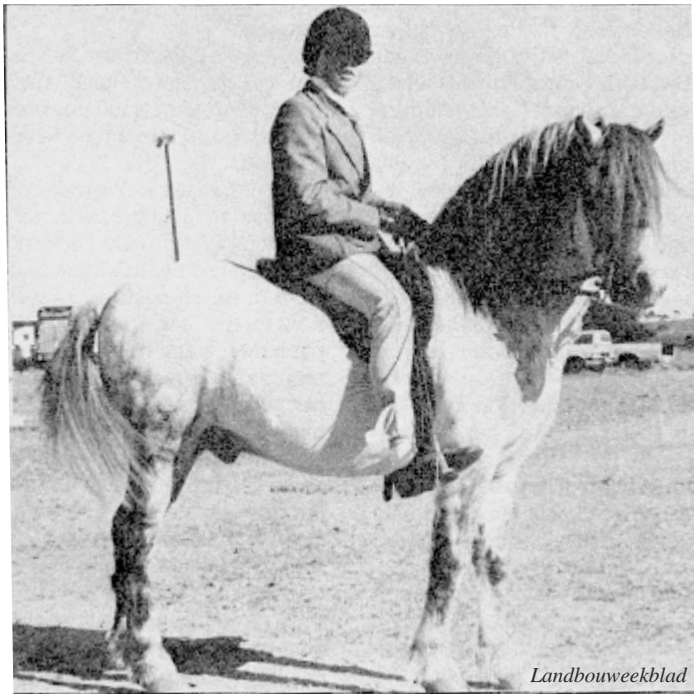
“Font Nicole who was by Aberdare Nicholas 2 (Bukkenburg Billy x Aberdare

“I just loved them; they were my comforters. If I got in a bad mood, or my dad riled me I used to go to the stables, give the horses extra food and just listen to them chewing – it was soothing and restored my soul. They meant a lot to me. I was on medication for the eye optic nerves as a kid which only stopped at 29 years of age and I only went back onto medication when I finally had to stop riding when I had to have an operation to my back. Although I had a deep love for horses, unfortunately I could not continue showing. Things never happen the way we want them to happen.

“Font King Cole who was not recorded because I was no longer a member of the Society, was out of Font PTW by a Section D Stallion Medway Victor (Kallista Russell x Bukkenburg Gloss). He was about 14.1hh and jumped his heart out at the EP Champs

Lotus) out of Aberdare Dozzy (Coed Coch Prydus x ??) was also not recorded but at the time birth notified and could compete at championship shows of the society. I went to visit this lady with a stick who bred Welsh ponies and part breds. I felt her two part bred fillies and said to her 'I am sorry to say, Miss Illingworth, but my little part bred filly, Nicole is much nicer than your two fillies. She replied 'you are very honest and very daring'. It was a few weeks later that the Bloemfontein National championships were to be held. I had a Sausage dog that always ran around freely without a lead. Ida Illingworth said 'I see that blind man's dog, where is he?' I replied to her and she asked me if I was coming to feel her fillies again to which I replied in the affirmative. I felt them and responded that Nicole will definitely beat them. The next morning the class was held and Nicole won the class as well as being part bred champion filly of the show. She is recorded on the Wall of Fame at the Bloemfontein Showgrounds. I believe that if I am sure of something I will give my opinion but if I am slightly unsure I will say 'I don't know'.

“Aberdare Nicholas was very successful at shows when Chad rode him. At most shows they won the prize for both the pony and the child with the most points.



Aberdare Nicholas at the 1989 East London Show. Best 3-gaited pony with Chad Comley



Aberdare Nicholas driven by Chad Comley

“Bernet Pinocchio (Coed Coch Nerg x Badgemore Petria) also did well and at one Nationals won the award as the best SA bred stallion in the line-up as all the others were imported. Although he was only a small pony, when I showed him he grew about 2hh taller because I used to have a rag in my pocket with urine of a mare on it and when he smelt this, he showed much larger.



Bernet Pinocchio driven by Rhys Comley

“Font Sonic could not be registered as he had less than 25% Welsh blood in his veins being out of PTW by an Arab stallion. Someone called me and I rushed to the

television when the SA Children's Championships were being held. Rogan Asken was the commentator and he said that the next pony coming into the ring was bred by Neville Comley who had not bred many ponies; he was a blind man from Kommadagga, loves horses and much could be expected from this pony. Sonic came into the ring, did a clear round and became winner of the SA Children Championships. His full brother is Font Scarface who is still competing in show jumping and eventing.



Aberdare Nicholas ridden by Chad Comley

“I learned to know Mrs Cecily Niven of the Aberdare Stud, who was a large lady, and her lovely husband who used to grow flowers, dahlias in particular. I loved showing her horses if I did not have any to show myself. At one show she did not have any stabling and I was able to help her with stabling for two of her ponies. At the end of the show she came to me with her cheque book asking me how much she owed for the stables. I told her that I did not take payment from friends but when I wanted to buy my children ponies, she must not sting me. We spent a lot of time together discussion breeding and mating sire to dam and visited her on her farm on many an occasion. One day I was looking for a pony for my sons and could not find anything worth-while for under R10

000. I could not afford that amount. I went to Mrs Niven and selected Nicholas as being suitable. She quoted a price of R100 and when I paid her, she gave me R10 back, so Nicholas cost me R90; a gift if ever there was one.

“I have had a very interesting career with horses. I feel that I achieved my philosophy in breeding, not only with ponies. God has given me a gift of feeling animals so that I can sense who to mate to whom, even the Warmbloods. No-one could have achieved what I did with the little bit of money I had. I have been given this gift to feel and listen; I first thought it was me but soon realized that it was a God-given gift to me. What I lost in my sight, I more than made up for that in other ways.

“I then started breeding chickens and did exceedingly well, having the SA Champion in breed as well as colour at times.

“In the history of Boerbulls, the Male beat the Female of the breed every time. We have searched the championship records going back as far as we could find and it was always the Male which won the Grand Championship. That was until 2016 when a female I bred, Font Carine made history when she was the first female to win the SA Grand Championship. I am also the only Eastern Cape breeder who has had three SA female Champions.”

Neville has registered 73 Saddle Horses, 24 Warmbloods and recorded 6 Welsh ponies; he was Sportsman of the year as well as amateur rider with the most points at many shows. He used to teach children Equitation and has been SA Equitation Champion, Standard seat. Queenstown used to host one of the largest shows in Equitation and Neville was Champion 17 times in a row in the Standard Seat class. His sight slowly deteriorated until he became totally blind a few decades ago.

The name of the stud came from the farm name TweeFONTEin. It was Leigh Kaplan who decided on the name when Neville didn't reply to her question about what he wanted as a stud prefix.



Font King Cole ridden by Claudia Hennop