

# Carl Fudge Sturgeon Creek Arabians



Photo Credit: Shereen Jernett

*Carl Fudge and Terre O'Brennan, current Chair Endurance Canada*

## Endurance Canada's Award of Excellence

At the recent Equine Canada Annual Convention in Winnipeg, Endurance Canada presented Carl Fudge with their new Award of Excellence, in recognition of his achievements, positive influence and his "Exceptional Contribution to the Sport of Endurance".

As of January 2014, Sturgeon Creek Arabians (SCA) horses have completed over 25,000 miles in Endurance competitions. This involved almost 600 Endurance races, with an 87 percent completion rate, 35 percent top tens including nearly 100 first and second place finishes, and 30 "Best Condition" Awards.

Fudge is the genius and force behind the SCA breeding program, formed when he purchased a share in a young Arabian stallion called Pyatigorsk who carried exceptional racing bloodlines. Fudge believes that SCA's success is entirely due to this stallion.

Fudge's breeding philosophy is based on years of research and places a large emphasis on specific dam lines. SCA has been consistent in breeding good, structurally sound, well-built horses with great minds and attitudes.

### **The starting post**

As a young boy, Carl frequented Manitoba's race track and loved watching horses gallop. At one point, he considered claiming a Thoroughbred, but a friend suggested he purchase a share in Pyatigorsk. Pyatigorsk looked like a racing Thoroughbred to Carl. He became a member of the Pyatigorsk Syndicate – and the journey began.

In 1984, he asked Marilyn and Helios Hernandez if they were interested in buying a weanling filly, the very special Moment Of Mine, to breed to Pyatigorsk. With the mantra "dream big; start with the best", Sturgeon Creek Arabians was born.

Pyatigorsk came from exceptional racing bloodlines, and with their passion for racing, SCA started sending their horses into race training in the US. When a Pyatigorsk son won a Stakes race in California and was purchased by the United Arab Emirates, SCA also sold a Pyatigorsk x Moment Of Mine filly to the Sheikhs. Although SCA horses won at Los Alamitos in Los Angeles and at Delaware Park, it was felt their overall results were disappointing.



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*Reason To Believe at the 2008 Eastern Sierra Classic endurance ride in California. He was named 2006 US National Champion 100 Mile Endurance horse by the Arabian Horse Association and was ridden by his owner, Dr. Cheryl Dell, DVM.*



Pyatigorsk

### **The turning point**

SCA had sent Mistansza, a \*Sekstans x Moment Of Mine filly, to the race track in Los Angeles. Their trainer suggested they sell Mistansza to a girl looking for an Endurance horse. They agreed and, through her, sold about two dozen horses into the Endurance market in California.

It became clear that the horses were doing very well in Endurance, and SCA began to focus primarily on that market. But, whether it's 5 furlongs or 50 miles, 'racing is racing' and the SCA breeding philosophy remained the same.

The first three horses involved in the sport did very well: Mistansza completed the Tevis the year after she was sold; SCA Dartagnan (\*El Kasaka x \*Dolly) won multiple IAHA Regional Endurance Championships; Seek The Moment (\*Sekstans x Moment Of Mine) came either 1st or 2nd in 9

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of his first 11 races in California against fields averaging over 50 horses, and he won the IAHA Region 1 Endurance Championship.

## The Beginning

While Carl loved watching horses gallop, he had no hands-on experience with them until he was in his mid-30s. After SCA purchased Moment Of Mine, Carl read every book on breeding theories and horse care he could find. Fortunately, the breeder of Pyatigorsk and Moment Of Mine, Dr. George Allen of Willomar Arabians, was most generous with his advice and expertise. After attending one of his breeding seminars and buying Dr. Allen's book: "To Breed An Arabian Horse", Carl consumed this book, then read all the books found in its bibliography, and then the books listed in the bibliographies of those books. Eventually, he developed a reading list that was six type-written pages long! Thanks to Dr. Allen's book, Carl found two small publications written by H.D.C. Hampton in New Zealand. These rare books, published in the early 1950s which he purchased from a bookseller in London, England, significantly influenced SCA breeding philosophy. Carl was also fortunate to receive a number of books from the library of Dr. Allen, authored by Bruce Lowe, Federico Tesio and others. He didn't want to read someone's interpretation of these Masters; he wanted to read their own words for himself. One of Carl's greatest assets was in recognizing just how little he knew, and to be willing to learn and to seek out those who did know and who were willing to teach him.

## Development of the gene pool

What became obvious to Carl from reading the books written by these breeding theorists, was that virtually all placed more emphasis on the dam than the sire. All of SCA mares trace their female tail line to mares that have won Stakes or other races. SCA stallions are from sire lines that nicked well with those families in Russia or Poland. When the opportunity arose to stand Pyatigorsk at stud at the farm, Carl studied the pedigrees of all the mares that he had been bred to (about 250) and determined which of those mares had produced the very best. Then, SCA acquired as many of those mares as possible. The breeding program was designed to maximize the genetics of Pyatigorsk.

Mares from the Mlecha dam line were most prevalent on that list, and today Mlecha horses are the largest group in the SCA herd. Interestingly, the great Italian

## The statistics

*Starting with the first foal crop in 1988, Sturgeon Creek Arabians has bred 111 horses. Of those, 27 have competed in Endurance in the US and Canada:*

- 1 US National Champion*
- 2 selected for World Championships;*
- 2 Tevis Cup finishes;*
- 6 Regional Championships;*
- 5 Reserve Regional Championships;*
- 2 AERC Decade Team members.*

*Out of 596 total competitions, there have been 206 Top Ten finishes (35%), 55 wins, 38 seconds and 30 Best Condition awards. There has been a remarkable 87% completion rate, covering 25,000 miles in competition – beyond the distance around the world! Five horses have over 2,000 miles in competition and four others have between 1,400 and 2,000 miles.*

Thoroughbred breeder, Federico Tesio, whose horses won 22 of 40 Italian Derbys and produced Nearco, grandsire of Northern Dancer, primarily used only three main dam lines. The SCA breeding program became very refined and focused. Their produce has remained consistent; there may be some that are 'prettier' than others, but they are good, structurally sound, well-built horses with great minds and attitudes.

Pyatigorsk appears in either the 1st or 2nd generation of 21 of the 27 endurance horses. Pyatigorsk was line-bred to \*Pietuszok (Priboj x Taktika), a known source of racing blood in Poland. When planning their matings, SCA tries to maximize the number of infusions of Priboj and Taktika. Currently, Priboj x Taktika appear as many as eight times in the pedigrees of SCA offspring. Priboj won six of his eight races, including the Russian Derby, and produced about 200 offspring in Russia, the ones out of Taktika being the very best. Their son, Topol, won the Russian Triple Crown of Racing and their daughters Ptashka, Platina and \*Potencja were all Stakes winners. Another son, \*Pietuszok, did not race in Russia, but was sold to Poland in order to restart the Koheilan Adjuze sire



*Mistansza climbing Cougar Rock, part of the Tevis Cup ride in California. Ridden by her owner, Charlene Lewis.*

line in that country. During WW II, the Russians evacuated Priboj's sire, along with 200 other Arabians, moving them from Poland to Russia. In view of this, the Polish breeders chose to use \*Pietuszok for breeding purposes only. When \*Pietuszok was dying, at age 18, they allowed Dr. Allen to purchase him, and Pyatigorsk, one of the top Arabian sires of all-time in Canada came to be. Carl believes that SCA's success is entirely due to this stallion. Everything Carl did was because of him. He says, "The mares I bought were all ones that I knew had nicked with him."

Today, SCA's senior stallion is Philosophy, out of a Pyatigorsk daughter. (Philosophy's full sister, Spirited Music, completed the gruelling 100-mile Tevis Cup.) Philosophy was sired by the \*Salon son, Pistaschio, who set a track record. Pistaschio's dam, \*Panntera, was a granddaughter of Platina. SCA also has a young stallion, Vested Legacy, whose paternal great granddam, \*Pustinia, was a daughter of Ptashka. \*Pustinia held a track record in Russia. Also, SCA is co-owner of the stallion Imagine That Ma, a former race winner in Texas, who stands in New Mexico. He is a son of Monarch AH, who was US National Champion Race Horse before being sold to the

United Arab Emirates. Imagine That Ma carries the blood of two \*Pietuszok daughters, Wilma and \*Orla; both of these mares were excellent racehorses. SCA is extremely pleased with their Imagine That Ma offspring.

### **And the journey continues**

Carl has been the creative, driving force behind the breeding program of SCA. He is as passionate about the horses today as he was at the beginning of this amazing journey. SCA has just agreed to buy another stallion and two mares, basically an extension of their breeding program. Carl said, "As much as we have done to date, I am very excited about the genetic potential of the horses we now have to breed with!"

At a recent competition in California there were three horses bred by SCA. SCA follows each of their horses entered in Endurance competitions, relishing each completion; Carl recites in detail their histories and pedigrees. The SCA Facebook page has a large, and

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growing, following of 'friends' from around the world. Carl has such a wealth of knowledge that he is enthusiastically willing to share; he continues to inspire. People still talk about his excellent clinic on conformation given a few years ago at a FEI Endurance event in British Columbia. Today Carl chairs the Breeds and Industry Subcommittee of Endurance Canada, imparting his wisdom and his vision relating to this aspect of the sport, encouraging other breeders to 'dream the dream'. The Committee's mandate is to develop a program to recognize Canadian breeders of Endurance horses.

### Acknowledgements

Life has not always been kind and straightforward for Carl. He was in a terrible, life-threatening, accident 25 years ago but, with the same grit and determination with which he faces all else in his life, he met the struggles head on, repeating over and over again: "If I take care of my horses, my horses will take care of me." Ever so slowly he regained his stamina and, while the brain injury still brings many challenges, Carl has created a world in which he can operate and excel. He has a wonderful partner,

family and friends who nurture and support him. And he has taught us all so much – about perseverance, passion and perfection.

At the Equine Canada awards ceremony he said, "This great honour that Endurance Canada has bestowed upon me is absolutely incredible and very humbling. It really does look like my horses have taken care of me! I have been truly blessed in my life and this is just more evidence of that." He added, "My dream has been shared by my family and my dear friends, Marilyn and Helios Hernandez, who have been my partners since the beginning nearly thirty years ago. They have stuck by me through thick and through thin. They are special people, as is Dr. George Allen, my friend and mentor. Whenever I have needed his advice and counsel, George has been just a phone call away."

It has truly been an incredible ride for the SCA team, as their horses start on their second journey around the world. ✨

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