

# **Ronald T. Pace**

## **AQHA Legacy Award**

### **50 Year AQHA Breeder**

#### **1. The Story:**

##### **What Starts in Vegas doesn't always End in Vegas....**

There are many people in the world who are passionate about horses but there are only a handful of individuals who can truly say horses are their passion.

To those who know and love Ronald T. Pace he is an example of what a true horseman should be. His love for his family, his church and for the preservation of the American Quarter horse is part of his everyday life. When asked how he would describe himself he states "I'm not a roper, I'm not a bulldogger and really I am not even a cowboy. I am a horseman". His love for the horse has found him immersed in the horse industry and he wouldn't have it any other way.

Ron's love for horses began at a young age he recalls seeing "Steeldust" horses at the Union Pacific stockyards in Las Vegas, NV. They arrived in a caravan of wagons, some in front pulling the wagons and others being led. It was 1939 and he was only 12 at the time but he never forgot how impressed he was by their quality, type and confirmation. In his words, "they were awesome."

While Ron's interest for the horse started early in life, his history and passion for the American Quarter Horse started on the Stewart Brothers ranch many years before Ron became acquainted with the ranch. You see the ranch gave Ron the 2 most important things in his life. The foundation for his family and the foundation the horses he has been successfully breeding for over 50 years.

At the peak of production, The Stewart Brother's Ranch spanned 2 million acres, maintained 600 head of cattle and managed 200 head of horses on ground what has now become famous for being Area 51 just outside of Las Vegas, NV. The Stewart Brothers (Dell, Cornell and Ronald) traveled to Elk City, OK in 1944 to purchase their first registered quarter horses. Upon returning to their Nevada ranch the Stewart family quickly became part of quarter horse history. The Stewart's primary focus was on family and they involved everyone in both ranching or racing. A commitment to excellence found the brothers regularly on a race track in NV, TX, CA and AZ.

In 1948, at the age of 12, Sandra Dee Stewart, Cornell's daughter, was commonly found in the winners circle at the "old ranch track" located on the Stewart Brothers Ranch aboard Comet Gal. Later that year Comet Gal earned her Racing Register of Merit. (See photo) Sandra's self taught horsemanship skills continued to develop and

in 1951 at the age of 16, she was selected as the Helldorado Days Rodeo Queen. (See photo) While representing Helldorado Days, she traveled to many locations including the Palm Springs rodeo. There she met cowboys and actors including Andy Devine and Rex Bell. (See photo)

In 1950, Ron leased a grade quarter mare from his aunt. He in turn took the mare to the Stewart's ranch to breed her to a son of Joe Reed P-3. At that time, Ron had no interest in the young 14 year old daughter of Cornell Stewart however that would change. A few years later after serving in the Navy and attending college at the University of Nevada, University of Oklahoma A&M and Brigham Young University Ron returned to the ranch and found his lifetime partner. On November 24, 1953 Ron and Sandra were married.

After marriage both Ron and Sandra continued their studies at Brigham Young University and made Provo, Utah their home. Sandra and Ron both took quarter horses to school with them. Sandra took her horse Banner and Ron took a gelding loaned to him by his new father-in-law. When it was time to attend graduate school Sandra made the ultimate sacrifice and sold Banner to pay for their studies. A decision she doesn't regret. Sandra states "it was the right thing to do for our family".

In the spring of 1954, Cornell gave Ron and Sandra a yearling filly her name was Vegas Chance and with the delivery of her first foal in 1959. Ron and Sandra were in the horse business and for over 50 consecutive years they have registered an American Quarter Horse.

While attending Brigham Young University Ron was named the President of the Agricultural Club. It was while serving in this capacity he arranged for 3 horses to be donated to the university by Jack Wollenzien. Jack donated 2 stallions and a mare. Sizzler P-760 a son of Oklahoma Star, Jandy B a son of Beggar Boy (TB) and Estarleta a 1948 daughter of the great Three Stars who had obtained her Racing Register of Merit.

In 1961 Brigham Young University approached Ron and asked him to develop and manage a self sustaining equine science program. It was clear to the university that Ron would need Sandra to assist with the development of the program and she joined him as the trainer and riding instructor. As a team they worked together to educate over 6,000 students who were part of the BYU horse program and at the same time they raised a family of 8 Layne, Susan, JoDee, Gregory, LaMont, Weston, Rande and Jenna.

It wasn't easy to establish a quality program. In the beginning they had to rely on borrowed horses and equipment to meet the needs of the students. Ron stated "without the donations to the program it could have never survived". As the program began to develop it was clear a strong, sturdy and versatile animal was needed to meet the day in and day out needs of the riding program. It was never a question whether

they would utilize quarter horses but Ron knew it would take a very specific all-around horse to withstand the daily routine.

To help establish the program, Dell Stewart donated a yearling stallion and it seemed only fitting to name him Vegas BYU. Vegas BYU had a very special relationship with both Ron and Sandra. Ron as his stallion manager and Sandra as his trainer Vegas BYU excelled in all disciplines and received his Performance Register of Merit in 1966 and his AQHA champion in 1971.

Ron has contributed to the horse industry in countless ways. He organized the first quarter horse clinics sponsored by BYU in 1962, 1963 and 1964. He served 2 terms as the Faculty President for the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. He has spent time with some of the best known names in the horse industry including Dr. J.K. Northway from the King Ranch and was quoted by Bob Monson regarding his first hand memories of Three Bars (TB). Ron has traveled the country and his name and accomplishments provided him with multiple opportunities to continue to pursue great quarter horses. He was commissioned to locate stallions for a group of business men who planned to ship them to New Zealand and the results of his breeding program can be found from the hunter jumper world championships in Kentucky to the racing and rodeo arena.

Although Ron's occupation allowed him to pursue his passion for horses he also continued to develop and established a breeding program at home where the horses could be utilized by his family. His children and grandchildren have excelled by competing at the AQHA Youth World Show, Queen Competitions; State 4-H competitions, as well as the Junior, High School and Intercollegiate National Finals rodeos.

Ron's passion for horses, commitment to his family and to his church will be his legacy. He not only developed one of the best College Equine Science programs in the country but also had the opportunity to work, play and love everyday with his wife. Ron retired from the university in 1995 after having held the position for 34 years. Sandra soon followed him in 1997.

## **2. Occupation:**

- a. Horseman
- b. Horse Specialist/Assistant Professor of Animal Science Brigham Young University, Retired

## **3. Company/Ranch/Farm Name**

- a. Ron Pace Quarter Horses, Provo Utah

## **4. Ron's description of the size and scope of the his operation**

Ron has managed and cared for over 250 mares in his career. He has managed 29 stallions through 50+ breeding seasons.

## **5. Ron's Memorable Horses:**

Ron stated

“There are so many memorable horses but these are a few of the special ones.”

### **a. Mares**

- i. Vegas Chance – 1954 – Brown Mare**
- ii. Vegas Della Reddie – 1983 – Bay Mare**
  - 1. By: Off Tackle Out of: Miss Merrie Moore**
- iii. Twilights Choice – 1974 – Brown Mare**
  - 1. By: Unojo (TB) Out of: Vegas Twilight**
    - a. Racing Register of Merit - 1977**
- iv. Miss Merrihand – 1970 – Sorrel Mare**
  - 1. By: Vegas BYU Out of: BYU Sizzlin Star**

### **b. Stallions**

- i. Sizzler – 1937 – Chestnut Stallion**
  - 1. By: Oklahoma Star Out of: Lad's Run (TB)**
    - a. Racing Register of Merit 1949**
- ii. Vegas BYU – 1961 – Sorrel Stallion**
  - 1. By: Vegas Moore Out of: Vegas Kittie**
    - a. AQHA Champion – 1971**
    - b. Performance Register of Merit - 1966**
- iii. Oh Moore Cash – 1988 – Brown Stallion**
  - 1. By: Sir Casanova Out of: Twilights Choice**
    - a. Racing Register of Merit - 1991**
- iv. My Guy Hancock – 1992 – Red Roan Stallion**
  - 1. By: JP Hancock Out of: My Gal Hancock**
- v. Off Tackle – 1968 – Chestnut Stallion**

## **6. Ron's Thoughts on Achievements:**

### **a. What has been your greatest achievement with your horses?**

“The people I have come in contact with and my ability to influence their love for the horse. The horse has been at the center of our family. I am most proud of the powerful, indescribable, interaction with my father-in-law. I knew he could count on me to carry on the quarter horse tradition”.

## **7. Ron Describes the ideal horse:**

“There isn't a perfect horse. I can find a flaw in all of them. I am the worst critic of my horses. Some have been too refined, a little course, long backed or had a thick neck. I look for a top line, shoulder, back, loin, hip and neck. It never hurts for them

to have a pretty head and they need good bone and feet”. Ron’s passion for breeding is a result of take two imperfect horses and seeing the results each spring.

## **8. Ron’s Thoughts**

### **a. How do you perceive the future of the American Quarter Horse?**

“The future is bright for the American Quarter Horse. Although I have mixed emotions about what the future holds. For those of us who choose to breed these great animals we should always remember to breed with a goal in mind. If we don’t the versatility that we have come to enjoy could easily slip away. It’s important for current and future breeders to remember the heritage and history of where the horses came from. The quarter horse played a large role in developing our country. As stewards of the breed, the American Quarter Horse Association plays the role of maintaining the pedigrees and history. I am appreciative for that”

### **b. Who & What contributed to your longevity in the American Quarter Horse industry?**

“Without question the biggest contributor to my longevity is the relationship I have with Sandra. She has supported me since the beginning. I have never had to ask if I could breed a mare and that is because we are working towards a common goal. She has high expectations for the horses care and I have pretty big shoes to fill following behind her Dad (Cornell). We are lucky to have the opportunity to work and play together 24 hours a day for over 50 years and the best part is that we still love each other. One thing for certain, I learned early on I wasn’t the guy to saddle her horse. Our roles are clearly defined and it has made all the years enjoyable.”

### **c. What is your most memorable experience with American Quarter Horses?**

“The time I have been able to spend with my immediate and extended family; those who were relatives and those who seem as though they should have been. The Quarter Horse as been the center for all of my memories and I am grateful for all they have given to me.”

### **d. What has your involvement with the American Quarter Horses added to your life?**

“Indescribable”

**Interview and information conducted by and compiled in support of recognition from AQHA  
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