

8 COMMANDER KING

He proved that quality, not quantity,
is the true mark of a great stallion.

By Glory Ann Kurtz

THE FACT THAT Commander King was born in the right place at the right time and was owned and trained by the right people might have influenced his accomplishments, as well as those of his offspring. But credit also has to be given to his royal breeding,

which gave him and his offspring an indisputable license to perform and beget performing offspring, as well as producing daughters.

Commander King, foaled in 1958, was a double-bred King P-234 (see *Legends 1*) horse. He was by King Command by King, and out of Bay Reba, an own daughter of Leo (see *Legends 1*) out of Duchess H by King. King Command's dam, Crickett McCue, was a double-bred Peter McCue (see *Legends 2*) mare.

J. O. Hankins, Rocksprings, Texas, who also owned his sire and dam, raised him in the heart of performance-horse country. Hankins' brother, Jess L. Hankins, also from Rocksprings, owned his legendary grandsire King P-234.

It was a time when roping and cutting were the rage and horses in a cutting class often numbered more than 100. This newborn colt was bred to either chase a cow or cut one, and would certainly get a chance to test his ability.

Although his lifespan was short (he was 14 when he died) and the number of colts that he put on the ground was very limited, his influence on the performance horse industry has been phenomenal.

In 1959, when Commander King was a yearling, Hankins consigned him to a sale in Fort Worth. James Kemp, a wealthy oilman from Dallas, Texas, was just getting into the cutting horse business and had an experienced horseman, Cotton Marriott, helping him.

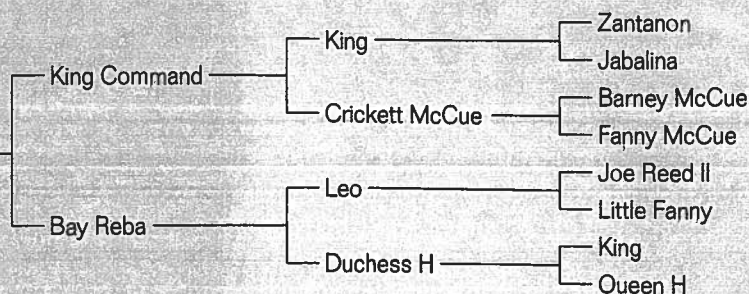
"He was the best colt at the sale," said Marriott in a 1981 interview. "I thought he was



COURTESY JACK NEWTON

Commander King made a name for himself as a performance-horse sire, with 56 of his 109 offspring being AQHA point-earning performers.

Commander King 1958-1972



just what Mr. Kemp wanted to start his horse program." So he purchased the stout bay colt.

Marriott remembered the young stallion being auctioned off at \$6,000, which was a good amount of money even in those days.

"But it wouldn't have made any difference to Mr. Kemp if it was \$16,000," said Marriott. "He wanted the horse."

Within a couple of years, Kemp, with the help of Marriott, had a pretty good string of horses put together, but one thing was missing. Kemp needed a top trainer.

Kemp was good friends with G. B. Howell of Seagoville, Texas, who had a successful young trainer named Matlock Rose working

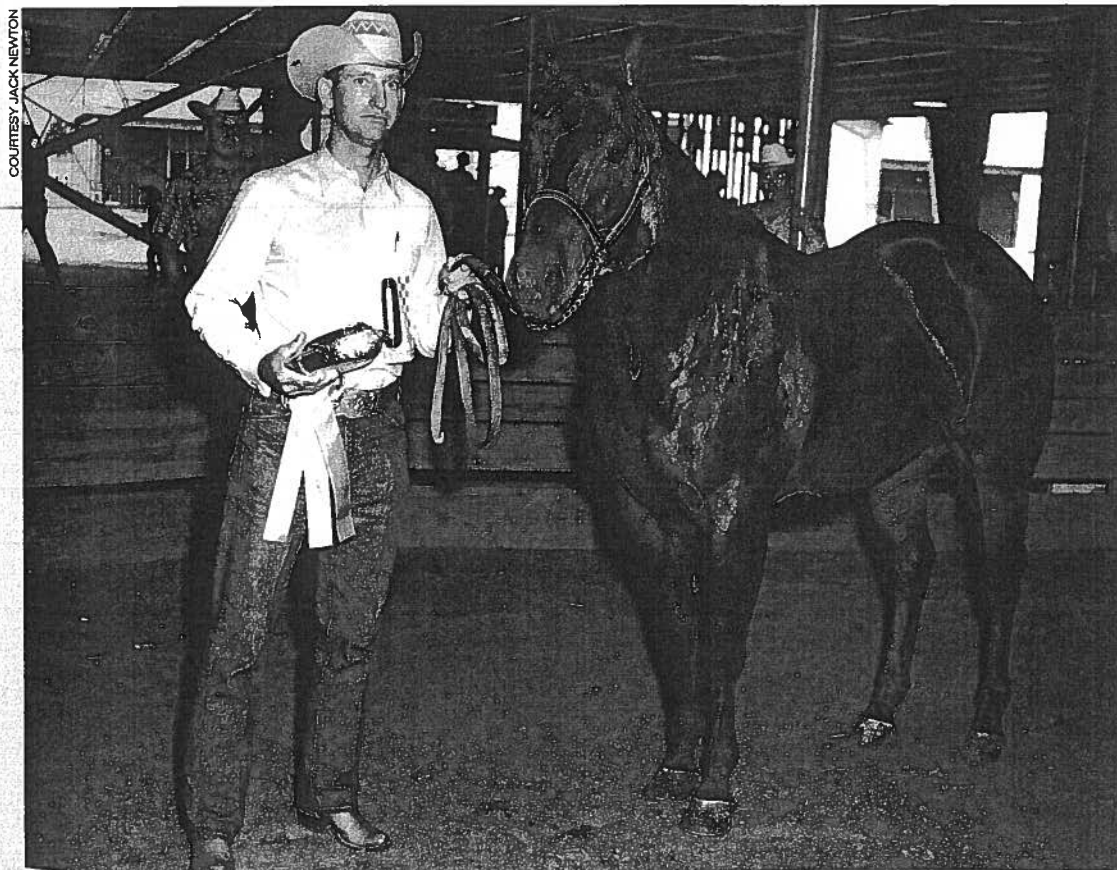
Halter and Performance Record:

**AQHA Performance Register of Merit; AQHA Champion;
AQHA Superior Cutting.**

Progeny Record:

Foal Crops: 13
Foals Registered: 109
AQHA Champions: 5
Halter Point-Earners: 21
Halter Points Earned: 247
Performance Point-Earners: 60

Performance Points Earned: 1,522.5
Performance Register of Merit: 36
Superior Performance Awards: 5
NOHA Earnings: \$71,538



Commander King, a double-bred King stallion, was shown by Jack Newton to his AQHA Championship in 1964. Newton and the stallion are shown at a 1962 Abilene, Texas, Quarter Horse show.

for him. In friendly rivalry, Kemp sent Marriott to look for a trainer who would "make Matlock have problems."

Marriott knew of such a man. His name was Jack Newton, and he was living in Abilene, Texas.

Newton had already ridden Poco Stampede to a National Cutting Horse Association world championship and had made two AQHA Honor Roll rope horses.

It wasn't long before Newton was on his way to Dallas to work for Kemp. The year was 1961 and Newton had just been introduced to a three-year-old Commander King, the stallion that would make a difference in his life.

Show Time

According to Newton, Commander King was a brown horse standing only 14.3 and weighed 1,100 pounds. Newton showed him as a four-year-old, getting all the points necessary to make him an AQHA Champion in 1964. He had 18 halter points, having stood grand

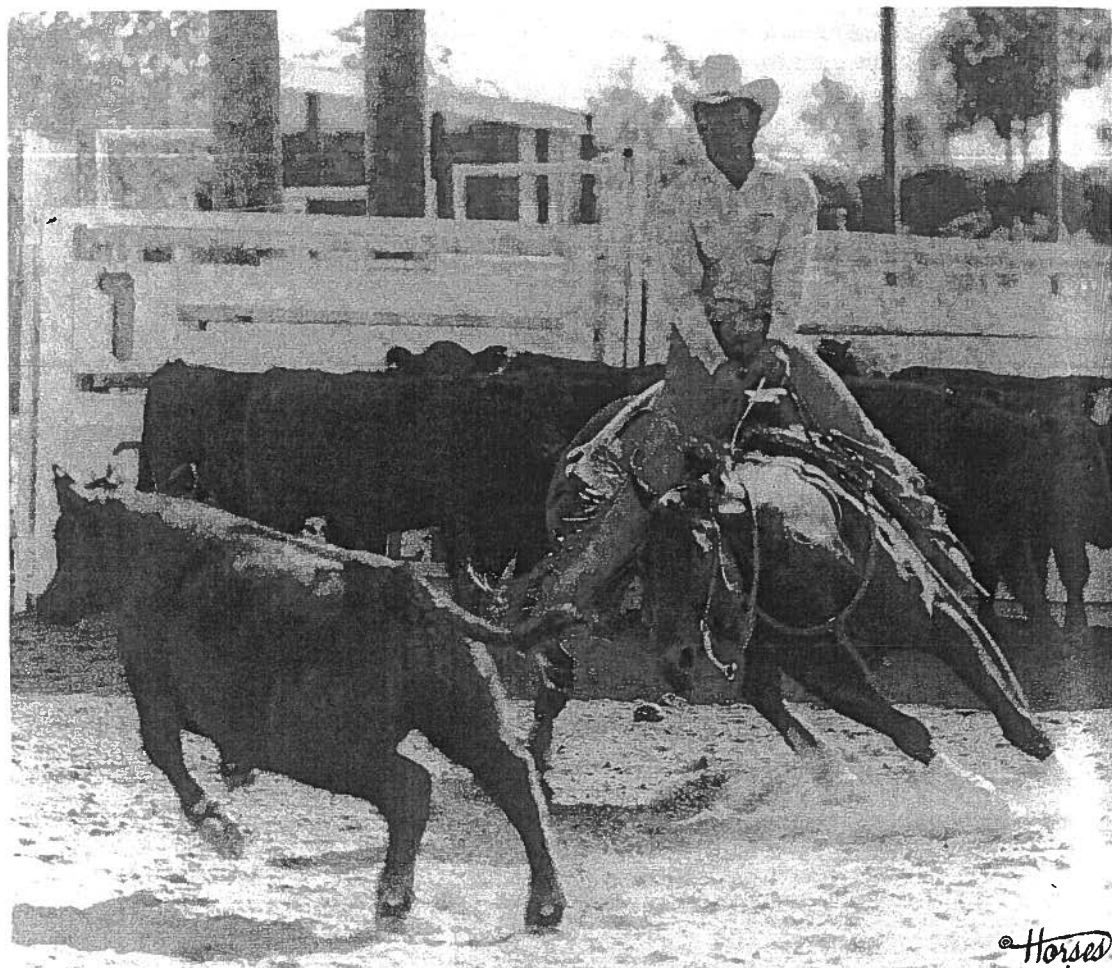
champion three times and reserve champion four times. He had 50 cutting points and had earned his AQHA Register of Merit (ROM) in 1962, AQHA Superior in cutting (1966) and NCHA Certificate of Ability.

"In 1962, the AQHA allowed you to show two junior horses. I had Swen Miss 16 and Commander King," Newton said. "Commander King would beat her sometimes and sometimes she would beat him. Lots of times, they'd place first and second. But Commander King beat her more than she beat him."

Swen Miss 16 was in the Top 10 of AQHA Honor Roll cutting horses in 1962 and was inducted into the NCHA Hall of Fame.

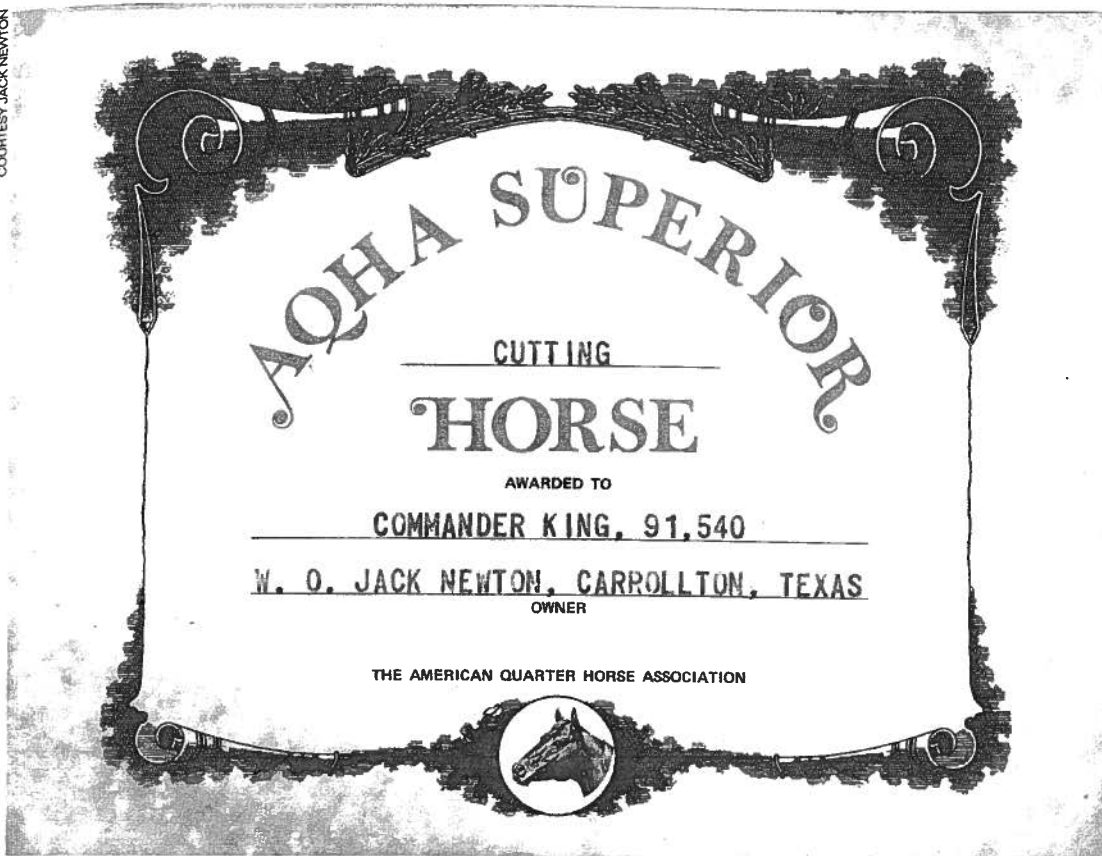
"I was the first one to put two horses in the NCHA Hall of Fame," said Newton, referring to Swen Miss 16 and Poco Stampede.

But even though Newton rode many great horses, Commander King was the horse he loved the most. He still believes Commander King was the best horse he ever rode.



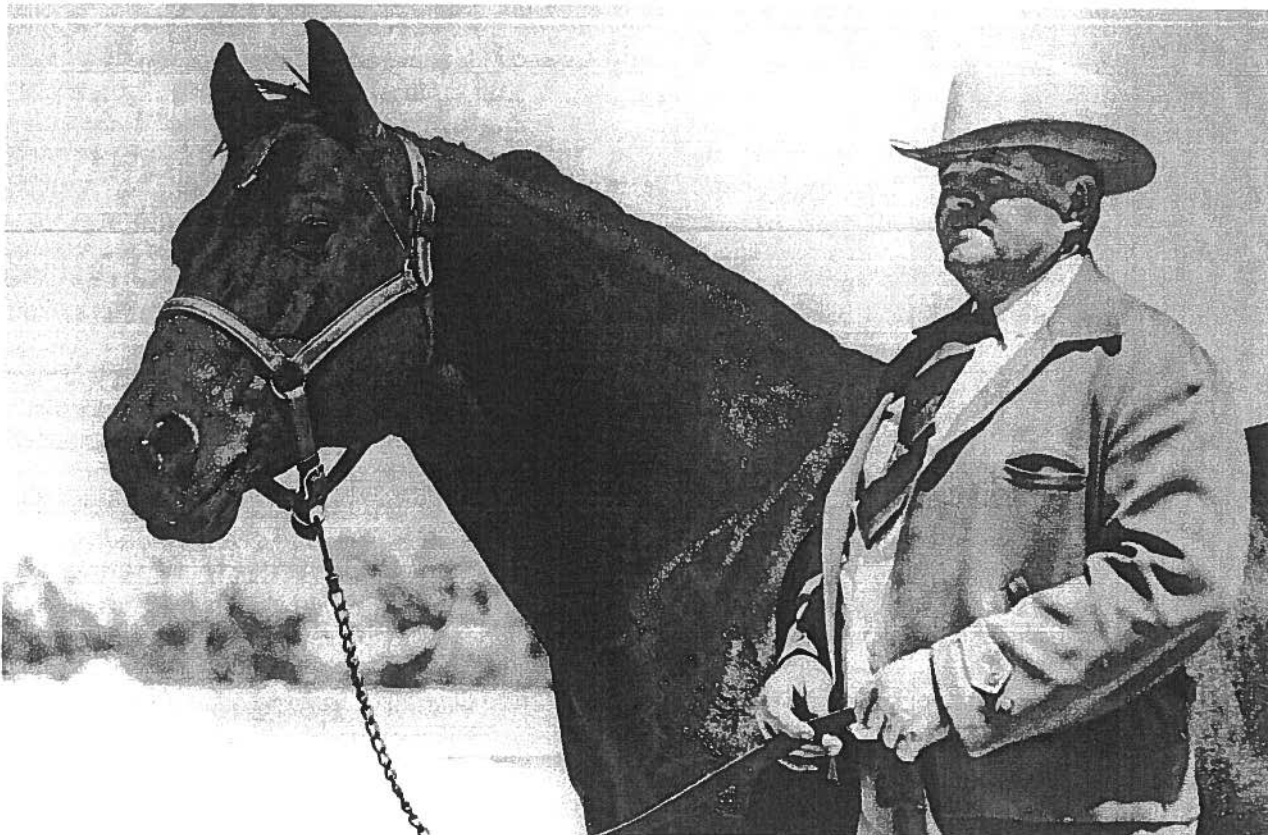
Hesa Commander was the highest money-earning offspring of Commander King in the cutting arena. He is shown being ridden by owner Jack Adams.

COURTESY JACK NEWTON

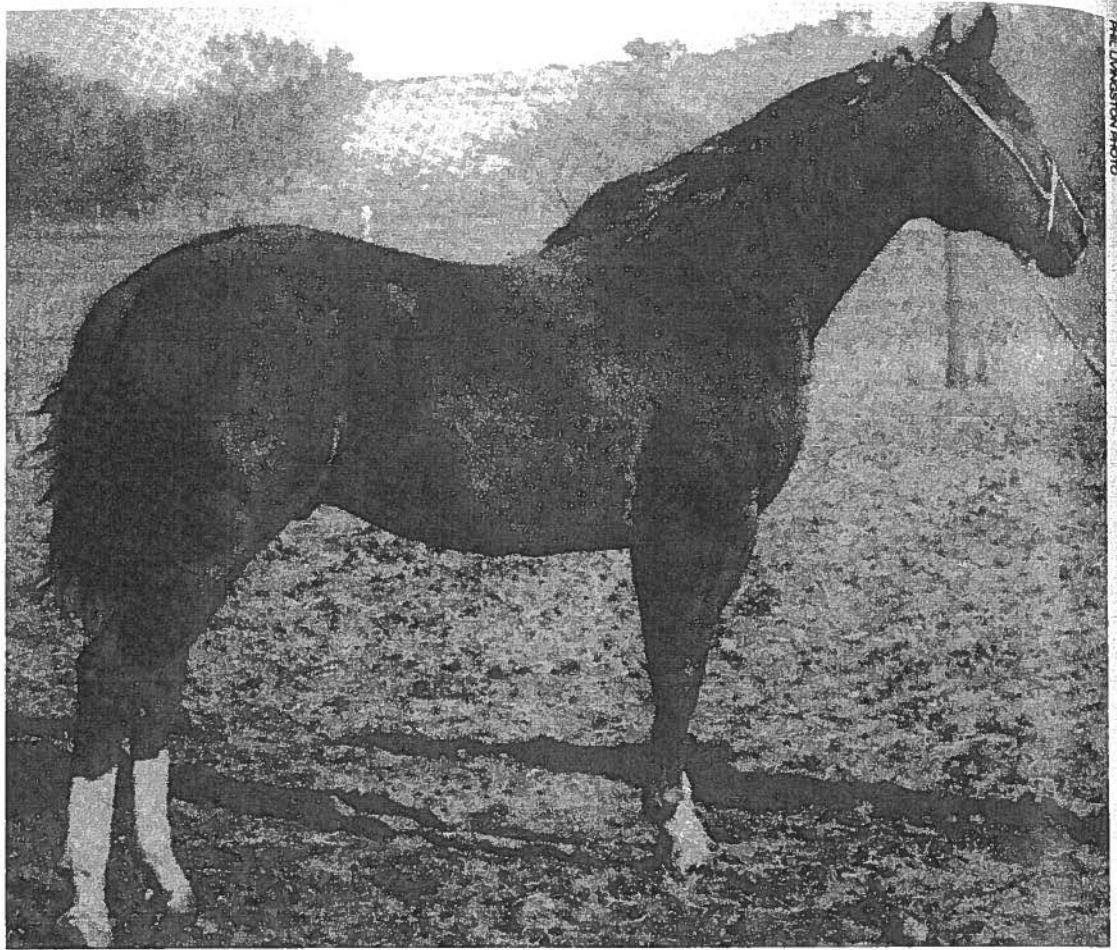


Commander King earned his AQHA Superior in Cutting in 1966.

COURTESY QUARTER HORSE NEWS



Jess Hankins and his prized stallion King P-234, who was the model for the Quarter Horse registry. Commander King is double-bred King, being by King Command (son) and out of one of his granddaughters.



Leo, one of the greatest broodmare sires in the history of the breed, sired Commander King's mother, Bay Reba.

Problems in the Breeding Barn

However, it wasn't long before Newton realized that Commander King might have been a champion in the arena, but he had a serious medical problem.

"Every time he urinated, he would pass blood," said Newton. "He was slowly bleeding to death. They had taken him to Texas A&M, where several veterinarians had worked on him, but they just gave up on him."

Newton told Kemp that he knew a veterinarian from Abilene who could stop the horse from bleeding. So Commander King was taken to Abilene, where the veterinarian finally stopped the bleeding. But that was far from the end of the young horse's problems.

There was no longer blood in Commander King's urine, but when they tried to breed the stallion, there was blood in his semen Newton remembered. The vet said that the horse needed surgery, but he didn't have the necessary equipment, so Commander King was sent to the veterinary school at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

Although the breeding problem was finally overcome, it was still not in the cards for Commander King to become a potent sire.

"The next spring we went to breed him and he wouldn't ejaculate," said Newton. "We worked with him and worked with him and the vets tried as well. Nothing worked."

"Kemp wanted to geld him," said Newton, "but I didn't. He was too good a horse for that."

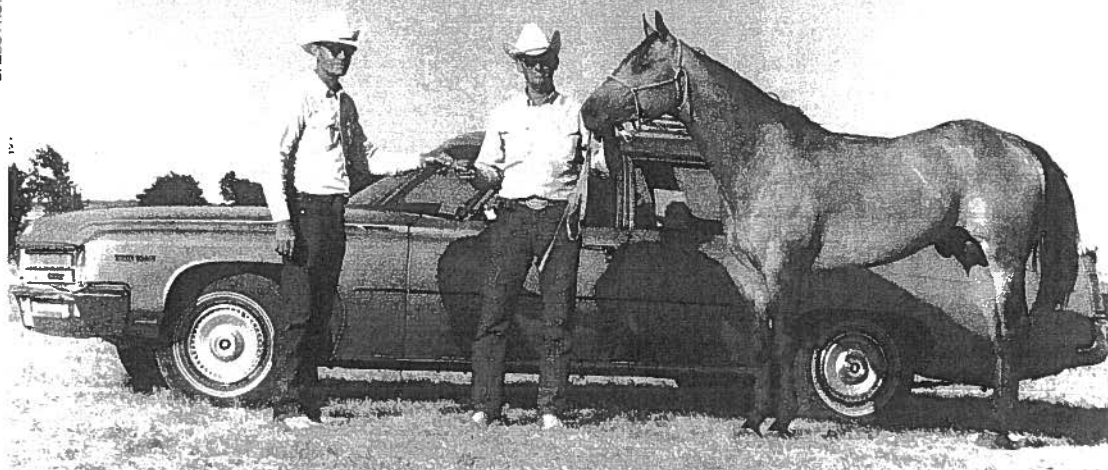
Kemp reminded Newton that he'd spent all the money in the world on Commander King and nothing had come of it. But Newton talked him into waiting and giving the horse more time. Kemp agreed, but told Newton to geld the horse when he was tired of fooling with him.

Newton, in turn, told the vet the same thing and one day the vet told him to take over, that he'd done all he could with the horse.

Newton started treating the stallion by cutting down on his regular feed and feeding him raw eggs.

"I got him up to 18 eggs a day," said Newton. "I just put them in his oats. He was slick as an eel and all drawn up."

DALCO PHOTO



One of Newton's favorite offspring of Commander King was Dun Commander, a 1968 dun stallion who earned a total of 354 performance points, 3 halter points, 13 all-around saddles and 3 Buick automobiles. Jack is shown with Dun Commander, receiving the car keys after winning one of the Buicks at a July 4, 1971 Quarter Horse Show.

"I had this little ol' mare, and one day I led her up to Commander King," said Newton. "Because she was little he could get up on her real good — and he bred her!"

The first thing Newton did was call Kemp, saying, "You're not going to have a gelding." Then he called the vet. Newton remembers that the vet wouldn't believe him. So the next day, the vet came out and Commander King bred the little mare again.

"When he ejaculated, we collected a little and checked it. It was about half alive," said Newton.

Commander King was a difficult breeder and, according to Newton, got only four mares settled that first year. The second year, he got eight mares settled.

"But you couldn't breed a mare that was big unless you dug a hole and put her in it," said Newton.

Commander King Sells

In 1965, Kemp had problems with the Internal Revenue Service and decided to get out of the horse business. On Oct. 19-20, he had a complete dispersal sale. He'd accumulated some of the country's best bred horses during the four years he was in the horse business.

The broodmares that sold included 14 daughters of Royal King (see *Legends 3*), 12 daughters of King, seven sired by Hollywood Gold (see *Legends 1*), six by Poco Bueno, five by King Glo and five by Beaver Creek.

The stallions included Leo San (see *Legends 5*), a stallion Kemp had purchased from G. B. Howell for \$50,000. Leo San

COURTESY OF JACK NEWTON

INDIAN COMMANDER

795541

SIRE: COMMANDER KING 91540
BY: King Command

DAM: MISS SAN JAY 159284
BY: Leo San

Height 15.1

AQHA POINTS IN 8 EVENTS

Halter
Western Pleasure
English Pleasure
Reining
Western Riding
Heading
Heeling
Calf Roping

...
4 ROM'S
...

GRAND CHAMPION STALLION
AND
ALL-AROUND CHAMPION OF
STATE FAIR OF TEXAS
OCTOBER 1977

WINNING HORSE TRAILER
AND SADDLE



Fee: \$500.00

CONTACT: BOB KURTZ
ROUTE 2, BOX 103
IRVING, TEXAS 75062
214-247-5094
or
214-291-1368

OWNER: JACK NEWTON
817-477-3275

This breeding flyer brags on the accomplishments of Indian Commander, a 1971 sorrel son of Commander King out of a double-bred Leo mare. He had 121 performance points earned in calf roping, team roping, reining, western and English pleasure, western riding and halter.

brought a \$46,000 bid at the sale and was kept by Howell.

Wimpy Leo, an own son of Leo out of a daughter of Wimpy P-1 (see *Legends 1*), brought \$20,000 from L. D. Minges. Hollywood Bill, a stallion Newton had ridden to a junior honor roll cutting horse title in 1963, brought \$18,000 from Luther White Construction. The Florida company also purchased Swen Miss 16 for \$15,100.

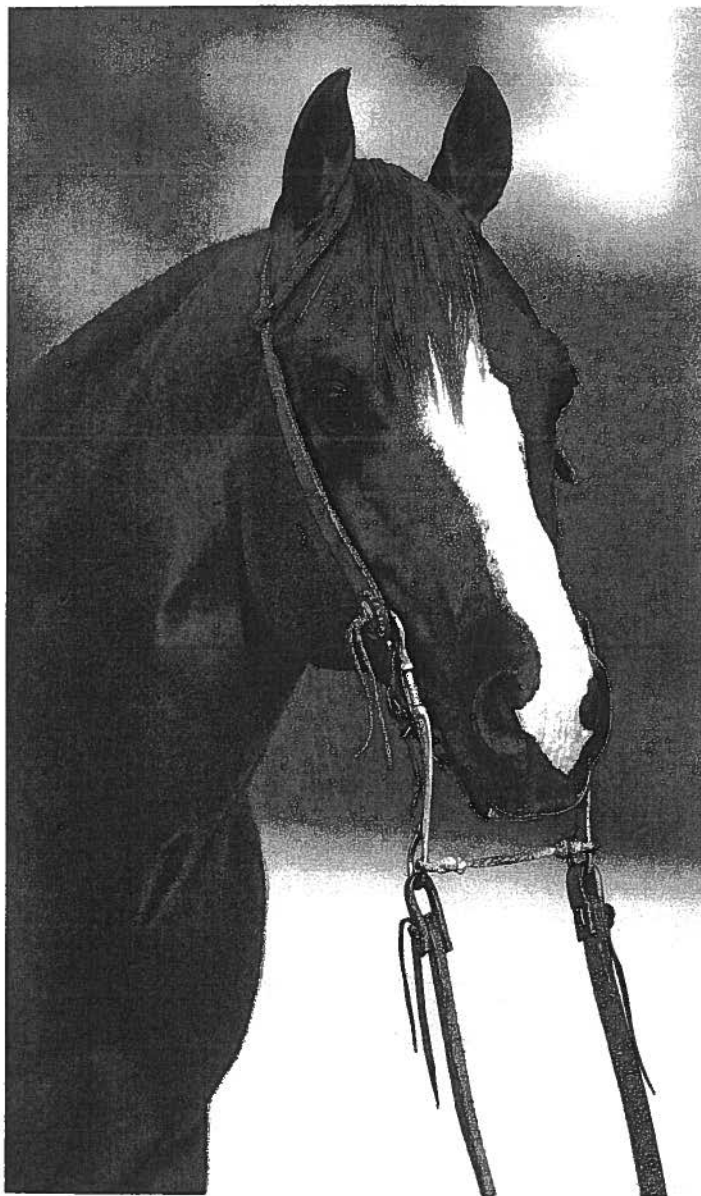
It was reported that Commander King, seven, was auctioned off for \$20,000, but Newton had made arrangements with Kemp prior to the sale to purchase the stallion.

Kemp also let Newton pay the horse out on Newton's terms. That might have had something to do with the fact that Newton had made Commander King what he was; also, had it not been for Newton, Commander King would've been a gelding!

Newton owned and stood Commander King from 1965 through 1971.

"He still had a problem breeding," said Newton, "and one could never A-I (artificially inseminate) that horse."

Newton estimated that the most mares he ever got bred in one year numbered 25, but not all conceived.



JOHN BRASSEAU PHOTO

Not Quantity, but Quality

According to AQHA records, the stallion had 13 foal crops — the best year being 1968, when 18 were registered to him. There were 17 registered from the 1969 crop, 10 in 1970, 7 in 1971, 9 in 1972 and 8 in 1973. Prior to 1968, there never were more than 11 foals registered to the stallion in one year.

It wasn't the quantity but the quality that counted for Commander King. During his lifetime, he sired only 109 colts, but 56 were AQHA point-earning performers. That's 53 percent, a phenomenal figure!

Eighteen of his get earned 214 open halter points, 34 received their open AQHA Registers of Merit and 4 were AQHA Champions. With 49 point earners in open performance classes, Commander King's offspring earned 1,350.5 points. In youth activities, 33 halter points were earned by 3 horses, and 10 horses earned 159 performance points, with 2 ROMs and 1 youth AQHA Champion. One amateur earned three amateur performance points.

Commander King also sired six NCHA Certificate of Ability winners and four of his get have been in the finals of the prestigious NCHA Futurity.

Although he wasn't known as a halter stallion, Commander King did sire four AQHA Champions: Beauty's Red Boy, a 1963 stallion with 19 halter points and 26 performance points; Coal Miss 25, a 1964 mare with 35 halter points, 33 performance points and 4 youth performance points; Port Command, a 1966 stallion with 17 halter points and 18 performance points; and Miss May Seven, a 1969 mare with 18 halter points and 20 performance points. She was also an AQHA Youth Champion.

Commander King had made a name for himself as a performance sire, with 34 of his

Quixote Mac, a 1989 grandson of Commander King out of his daughter Spooky Sophie, had \$124,673 in lifetime earnings. He was the 2002 NCHA World Champion Cutting Horse and Cutting Horse Stallion.

MIDGE AMES PHOTO, COURTESY QUARTER HORSE NEWS



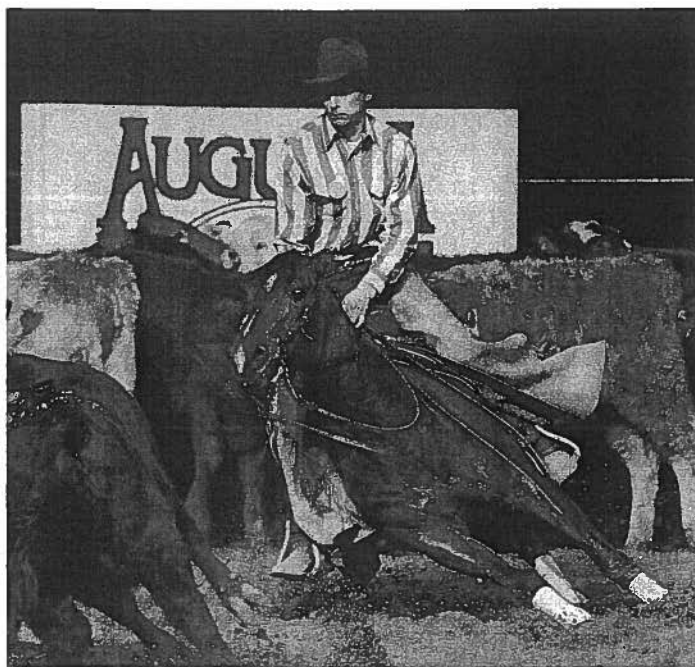
Shesa Moondust, ridden by Judy Adams, is shown capturing the 1987 Nevada Spectacular Challenge. The Commander King granddaughter is one of Hesa Commander's top money-earning performers.

performing offspring — an uncanny 60 percent — earning their AQHA ROM in performance events. These included such well-known horses as Dun Commander, 354 points; Indian Commander, 121; Commander's Go Go, 91; Holly Commander, 89; Belinda King, 83; Boggie's Boy, 42; Hesa Commander, 36; Winnie Miss, 35; Miss Black Tano, 37; Commander's Bay, 25; Commander's Boy, 23; and Hava Commander, 22.

With the all-around horse being popular in the 1960s and 1970s, Commander King sired pleasure horses, roping horses, reiners and cutting horses.

The NCHA Futurity finalists he sired included Belinda King, Cedar Command, Boggie's Boy and Commander's Boy. Belinda King also earned her AQHA Superior in cutting, as did Holly Commander, who also finished fourth in the 1976 AQHA open high-point cutting standings for the year. She also finished sixth in the open AQHA world show senior cutting in 1976 and eighth in 1977. Other AQHA world show qualifiers included Cedar Command and Brenda's Boots. Winnie Miss finished 1975 in ninth place in the AQHA high-point cutting standings and Commander Boy was the 1976 Open Reserve World Champion Junior Cutting Horse.

COURTESY QUARTER HORSE NEWS



Commandas Wilson, a 1985 mare by Doc Wilson out of Cody Commanda, was ridden by Ronnie Rice (pictured) and Phil Hanson to \$156,411 in lifetime cutting earnings. The Commander King granddaughter also produced seven offspring who won close to \$259,475.

Since Newton was also an all-around hand and a top roper, several of Commander King's offspring rose to the top of the roping industry. Dun Commander was an AQHA world show finalist in senior heading and heeling; Comandante Rey earned his AQHA Superior in steer roping; and Indian Commander was an AQHA world show finalist in senior heading.

In reining competition, Commander Gold finished eighth in the 1976 world show senior reining.

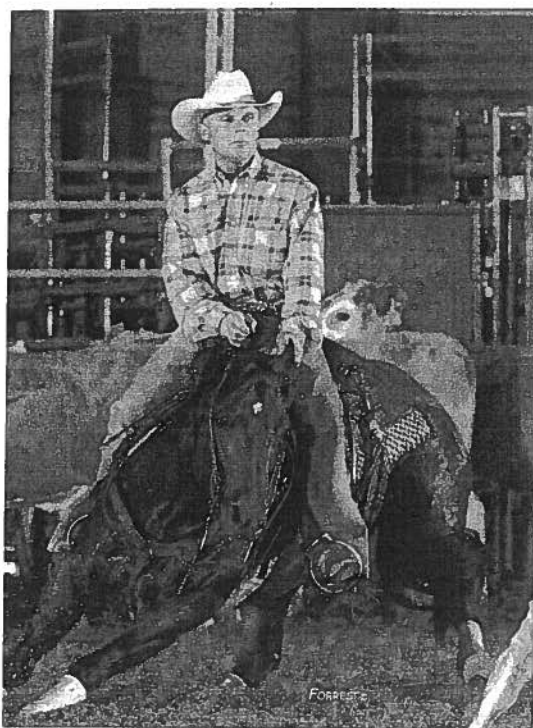
The Good Die Young

With all of Commander King's success, Newton got a telephone call one evening.

"Rex Jordan, from Tulsa, Oklahoma, called me one night," said Newton, "and wanted to know if Commander King was for sale. I thought he was pulling my leg. He said, 'What would you want for him?' I said, '\$25,000' and he said, 'Well, we want to look at him.' I said, 'Well, you can sure look at him.'"

"We kept talking, and he asked when I would be there and when could he come to see the horse. He showed up with Eugene Berger, from Stockton, California."

Berger said he wanted a good King-bred horse and had heard about Commander King.



FOREST PHOTO

CD Command, a Commander King grandson out of Commander's Bay, qualified for the 2005 AQHA world show in senior cutting ridden by Clay Johns, Millsap, Texas.



MOORE JAMES PHOTO. COURTESY QUARTER HORSE NEWS

Dee Bar Commander, a 1978 mare sired by Hesa Commander, is a paternal granddaughter of Commander King, earning close to \$21,000 in the cutting arena.



COURTESY CLAY JOHNS

Clay Johns shown riding Miss Passover Command, a maternal granddaughter of Commander King and a half sister to CD Command.

"I also had three mares by Commander King," said Newton, "and he ended up buying Commander King and one of the fillies. I got \$25,000 for Commander King and \$4,000 for the filly."

According to Newton, Commander King lived only a year and five days after Berger bought him in August 1971 and sired only a few colts that final breeding season. He died from colic in the fall 1972.

According to AQHA records, Commander King's final crop of eight foals hit the ground in 1973.

Newton's Favorites

Although Newton rode a lot of Commander King's offspring, he feels that the best cutting horse sired by the stallion was Cedar Command, a 1971 gelding out of Bella Senorita by Pon Dude, but he didn't live long enough to make his mark on history. After Newton had trained the gelding and placed fifth in the 1975 AQHA world show junior cutting, the five-year-old colt was sold to a man from Florida.

"A young girl showed him," said Newton, "and he really made a good horse. But they had him only about a year and a half when he colicked and died."

Commander King's last colt, born May 1, 1973, was NCHA Bronze Award winner Hesa Commander, a black stallion out of Red Bars by Three Bars (TB) (see *Legends 1*), owned by Jack Adams and Randy Lynn, Acampo, California. He was not only a talented cutting horse, earning more than \$23,000 in NCHA earnings, and later a great sire, but he also turned out to be a great broodmare sire.

According to Equi-Stat, the statistical division of Cowboy Publishing Group, Hesa Commander sired 95 offspring that won more than \$917,082. Some of the larger money earners included Hesa Rockin out of Cutter's Roxie by Cutter Bill (see chapter titled "Cutter Bill"), \$73,826; Shesa Moondust, out of Docs Moonlighter by Doc's Dynamo, \$69,817; Cal Commander Bar out of Cal Filly Bar by Cal Bar, \$43,780; Shesa Lou Too out of Terracito by Lee's Duke, \$42,427; Sheza Sally out of Condon's Lady Sal by Doc's Zimfandel, \$38,350; Hesa Moon Shadow out of Dock's Miss Bolsis by Moon Dock, \$30,461; and Moonlighters Pride, also out of Docs Moonlighter, \$30,457.

As a maternal grandsire, Hesa Commander had 110 grandfoals that earned more than \$836,100.

Two of Commander King's sons were better known as all-around horses rather than strictly cutting horses. Both were raised, trained and hauled by Newton to a majority of their winnings.

Dun Commander, a 1968 dun stallion who later sold to Ellen and Jon White, Chappell Hill, Texas, earned a total of 354 performance points and 3 halter points. He won 13 all-around saddles while being campaigned by Newton and three Buick automobiles. He had his AQHA Superior in western pleasure with 235 points, 36 points in reining, 17 in calf roping, 38 in team roping, 17 in western riding and 8 in cutting.

Dun Commander sired offspring with the same talent, with 36 get earning more than \$308,000. His highest money earner was Dun My Time out of Docadoodle Doo by Doc Bar (see *Legends 1*), with earnings of \$81,351. He also sired Caleb Commander, \$55,125; Commanders Sherry, \$32,543; and Commanding Luv, \$30,421. He was an AQHA Champion sire and also sired get that received their NCHA Certificates of Ability.

The little dun stallion also turned into a great maternal grandsire, with 77 grandfoals earning over \$780,616. Highest on the list is Commanders Legacy with \$96,588 in lifetime earnings and Handle Bar Hallie, \$92,873. Both are producing dams.

Indian Commander, a 1971 sorrel stallion, was out of Miss San Jay, a double-bred Leo mare whose mother was by Poco Tom. The stallion had 121 performance points, with 15 earned in calf roping, 39 team roping, 19 reining, as well as points in western pleasure, western riding, English and even halter.

Newton and Indian Commander won many all-around titles at Quarter Horse shows, including a horse trailer for being the all-around champion at the State Fair of Texas in 1977. He was owned by Desoto King Quarter Horses, Shreveport, Louisiana, when he died.

Just as Commander King had been a great sire with fewer colts in a lifetime than most current, popular stallions sire in a single year, he also was a great grandsire. In fact, as a grandsire, Commander King had paternal grandfoals that have won over \$1.3 million.

Broodmare Sire

In later years, Commander King also was recognized as a great broodmare sire. He seemed to pass on his great mind and good bone that made not only aged-event champi-

ALL AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE CONGRESS



Cougarand Command, a great grandson of Commander King, won the 1995 All-American Quarter Horse Congress Non-Pro Reining Futurity and was a non-pro finalist in the 1995 NRHA Futurity. He's shown with his owners Mr. and Mrs. Garry Smith. He's sired by Cougarand, by Peppy San Badger, and out of Indians Miss Jody, by Indian Commander.

ons but also weekend warriors. According to Equi-Stat, his maternal grandfoals have earned over \$1.2 million.

Commandas Wilson, a 1985 mare by Doc Wilson out of Cody Commanda, ridden by Ronnie Rice and Phil Hanson, is the highest money-earning maternal grandfoal, with \$156,411 in cutting lifetime earnings. With most of her money earned in weekend competition, she turned out to also be a great broodmare, producing seven offspring who earned close to \$259,475, averaging \$37,068. A stallion, Wildcat Wilson, led the list with \$163,091.

In fact, the cross of Commander King on Doc Wilson mares was the "magic cross," with Cody Commanda having five offspring that won more than \$190,923.

Another great cross was Doc Quixote (see *Legends 6*) on Commander King mares, with five offspring of that cross earning \$143,708. Quixote Mac, by Doc Quixote out of the Commander King daughter Spooky Sophie,

leads the list with \$124,673 in lifetime earnings. He was the 2002 NCHA World Champion Cutting Horse and World Champion Stallion.

The third best cross was with High Brow Hickory, with High Brows Winnie, a 1989 syndicated stallion out of Commander's Babe, topping the list with \$65,836 in earnings. Ridden by John Tolbert, he'd finished third in the 1992 NCHA Futurity.

Miss Bob Acre, a 1988 mare by Bob Acre Doc out of King's Miss Ce, was ridden by Mike Mowery to more than \$76,000 in lifetime earnings. While most of the money was won in NCHA weekend competition, she was a finalist in the 1991 NCHA Futurity and in 1992, was a finalist at the NCHA Super Stakes, Augusta Classic and Montgomery Futurity and Classic.

In 1981, a sale of Doc's Lynx offspring was held in Austin, Texas, and a 15-year-old daughter of Commander King, Commander's Doll, in foal to Doc Quixote, brought \$35,000.

HAROLD CAMPION PHOTO

Newton kept one broodmare, Commander's Bay, a 1972 mare that was a full sister to Indian Commander. She produced 16 foals with 9 performers. The last, born in 1997, was a stallion, CD Command by CD Olena. One of the last siring grandsons of Commander King, the stallion was sold to O.L. "Buck" Daniel, Okeechobee, Florida, in 2004 and is being trained and shown by Clay Johns, Millsap, Texas. Johns is a lifelong friend of Newton's. In 2005, the stallion qualified for the AQHA world show in senior cutting.

Best Horse He Ever Rode

According to many who were around in Newton's heyday, he was probably one of the best all-around cowboys who ever lived. Often referred to as a "cowboy's cowboy," Newton competed against such greats as Matlock Rose, Shorty Freeman, Buster Welch, Don Carr, Jim

Lee, James Kenney, Pine Johnson, Jim Calhoun and Minor Johnson, just to name a few.

While Poco Stampede may have earned Newton the most money, Commander King proved to not only be a great performer, but also one of the industry's greatest sires, grandsires and maternal grandsires.

"He was the best horse that I ever rode," said Newton. "He was the most balanced, the prettiest and had a good brain. Besides that, he was the sire of great stallions as well as the sire of great producing broodmares.

"It's funny to watch this business. You really don't realize what you have until it's too late. I told Doc Curry (his veterinary friend from Brenham, Texas,) when I sold Dun Commander that we should get as many of his daughters as we could because one day, everyone would want one. Now, here I am, and I have none left."