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HORSING Around

Chalani celebrates 40 years of excellence

Jeanette Gower was only 16 when she bred her first of many Australian Stock Horses. "I was riding polo ponies at the time, and there was one mare I particularly loved," Jeanette said. "Her owner kindly let me breed a foal from her, and then gave me the use of her for the rest of her life. That was how it all started, really."

Jeanette married well-known equestrian photographer Peter Gower, and they immediately saw the potential of establishing an Australian Stock Horse stud.

"So many exotic breeds were coming into Australia and we thought 'Well, what about our own stars?'" Jeanette said.

"We heard that the Australian Stock Horse Society was being formed in New South Wales, so Peter and I decided to start a South Australian branch, and at the same time we founded Chalani Stud at Mount Barker."

That was 40 years ago, and the stud continues to flourish.

It was the foundation stallion Rannock which put Chalani on the map. "He was just the type we were looking for," Jeanette said.

"Beautifully built with a totally unflappable temperament and the ability to excel in any number of disciplines."

Rannock was bred for polo, but an accident he suffered as a two-year-old blinded him in one eye and put an end to any thoughts of playing him on the polo field.

Jeanette and Peter bought him when he was seven, showed him in hand and under saddle, and used him for breeding until his death 10 years later.

He threw superb progeny, excelling in competition.

"He put us on the national scene," Jeanette said.

"There was one year when there were Rannock-sired horses playing A-grade polo in gold cup tournaments in four different State teams. He was on the Top 20 sires list, and his picture is on the 'wall of renown' in the Stock Horse office - one of only two SA horses to be recognised."

One of Rannock's sons, Littlewood Montego, proved to be an outstanding polo player and sire of polo ponies. 75 per cent of his progeny went on to become A-grade international players, and he



STUD SUCCESS: Jeanette Gower with Chalani Pivot. After many wins in the showing as a youngster, Pivot has now joined the ranks of Chalani broodmares.

caught the eye of Kerry Packer, who leased him for breeding and said that 'Monty' produced the best polo players he ever had.

Chalani-bred horses have also excelled in the hack ring, dressage, eventing, polocrosse, endurance, and as working stock horses, and the Gowers' daughter Kim has competed on their home-bred horses with great success.

Since Rannock's day, Chalani has been home to seven different stallions. They have included Chalani Mystic, with the combined bloodlines of Rannock and other lines of proven performance horses; Chalani Paper Man, an outstanding performer in the show ring and sire of many show winners; and Chalani Pacesetter, which produced exceptional endurance horses.

Current sire Splashdance is standing at an interstate stud this season, but frozen semen is available from Chalani.

Selected broodmares have been added to the property, and the Gowers' carefully-planned breeding program has seen more than 200 Chalani horses produced at the stud since it was established.

"That's really only about five



FOUNDATION SIRE: Chalani's first stallion Rannock, combining quality, temperament, athleticism and prepotency to found a dynasty.

each year," Jeanette said. "There is a huge demand for them, and most are selected as weanlings by their prospective owners, and then sold as youngsters. "Our broodmares at the moment include five royal show winners - two champions and one reserve champion."

The aim of the stud is to produce excellent examples of stock horse: type, combining ability, athleticism and temperament with careful handling and raising in a natural environment.

"My greatest pleasure is seeing other people do so well with our horses, and considering most haven't been bought by top name people, they have gone on to great things," Jeanette said.

Jeanette's knowledge of bloodlines is invaluable. She is an acknowledged authority on colour genetics in horses, a respected judge and a lecturer in equine studies at TAFE.

"People who want to specialise in particular areas such as eventing or endurance or polocrosse come to us," Jeanette said. "We provide

the basis, and they develop the skills. "One of my greatest disappointments is that so many mare owners will not breed from their good mares because they are too busy riding them, so they send lesser quality mares to stud. This happens in all breeds and results in good bloodlines eventually being lost."

"We use selective inbreeding and our knowledge of genetics to perpetuate the very best bloodlines, including those of Rannock."

"Of course we want to preserve his bloodline for future generations. After all, the quality is already there. We don't need to reinvent the wheel."



WORKING WINNER: Melbourne Royal Show winner and twice Barastoc champion, Chalani Catlow



PLAYTIME: Excelling on the polocrosse field, Chalani Paper Chase combines Chalani and imported bloodlines.



VERSATILE: Chalani Cavort, successful in stock horse competition, jumping and eventing, and a proven brood mare, has Rannock on both sides of her pedigree.