

Introductory Chapter

As the pages of this book will testify, the story of the Chilean Horse starts many centuries ago; long before Chile became a country, a colony or even an uncharted territory destined to be scouted by conquistadors employed under the Spanish crown. It seems strange that having been a “horse crazy” child who grew up reading every bit of horse literature I could get hold of that I did not know of this breed before coming to Chile. It is even more perplexing to think that as an Animal Science major in the University of Kentucky I was never told of this breed, or that the shelves of its well-stocked agricultural library, where I spent so much of my free time, did not contain a book that even recognized the breed’s existence. Nonetheless, what seems completely incredible is that in more than 20 years as a professional animal scientist with a specialization in equines, whereby I managed top notch **Thoroughbred** horse farms in Central America, Kentucky and Virginia and later got involved in international bloodstock agent work that eventually led me into consulting work throughout Latin America, I would still not come to know of the existence of the **Chilean Horse**.

Certainly this omission was not due to literary aloofness, as my one-track mind has stimulated me to read more horse books than I care to remember. My personal library on the subject of animal production has more than 2,000 books, of which the great majority is related to the equine species. Knowledge of breeds is something I prided myself in knowing more about than most people in my field. My early interest in this subject matter can be detected by the fact that the only old issues of *Western Horseman* I have kept from my high school days are the Annual All Breed Issues that are worn from fingering the many dreams that overflowed on its pages.

Surely in 1992, when I started going to Chile three times a year as a nutritional consultant, I should have learned of the breed. Incredibly, I didn’t. In spite of the fact that I was born and spent the first nine years of my life in this country where my parents were educational missionaries, I was clueless to its existence. My upbringing in the small northern city of Iquique, which at the time had only 40,000 inhabitants that were surrounded by the world’s driest desert, planted the seed of a horse lover in me in the most unlikely of places. One Christmas Eve, as a practical joke, fellow missionary friends of my parents carried a donkey foal with a big red ribbon around its neck into our living room. “Panchulo”, as he was known, was probably responsible for initiating the attraction to the *Equus* genus that I would have the rest of my life.

In a city where cars were scarce, the taxis were mostly horses pulling Victorian carriages that were the object of my daily fascination. The bell that announced the passing of the little old lady who paraded her lactating donkey through urban streets in hopes of selling thimbleful doses of donkey milk that was believed to have an invigorating and curative effect for all types of infirmities, motivated me to sprint out to the street as quickly as track and field runners reacting to starting pistols in a race. The few riding lessons I was given at the prestigious military post of “Granaderos” served to both scare me out of my wits atop what seemed incredibly tall horses, and establish both a regretful admission of fright and wonderment that would challenge me to grow closer to horses at every opportunity that came my way from then on.

Horses Became My Life

Most of you reading this book know the feeling. No matter where your parents’ lives took you, you lived searching for the next horse to stare at through the car window, or hoping to see an article or advertisement about anything horse-related at the turn of every page in a magazine and surely watching every single horse-related show or commercial that came on TV, no matter how early you had to get up. All these things that broadened my possibilities to fantasize were made possible when my parents returned to the United States after a decade of field work for the Methodist Board of Missions and in spite of the fact that where they eventually chose to settle was Oceanside, Long Island, New York. Fortunately, my parents were the ones to nurture the varied dreams that each of their three children possessed. I was the only animal lover in the

family, and my obsession with horses and country life permitted them to arrange for summers away from their suburban surroundings. Long, solitary trips in Greyhound buses that entailed several challenging connections for an insecure young teenager, took me back to my parents' roots in Iowa. There, I lived and worked on farms of friends my parents had made when Dad preached at three little country churches back in his college days.

Repeated summer pilgrimages to the Matthes farm in Wellman, Iowa and the Hennessee Farm in Mount Pleasant, Iowa gave me a rising sense of confidence with horses. These midwestern adventures gave fruit to varied experiences that provided the opportunity to try out all the things I had been reading about the other nine months of the year. Every spare moment in Iowa was spent riding horses and ponies that permitted me to dream of life in the 19th century or riding the long dusty cattle drives of the old west. The highlight of every month was spending the day at the Kalona stockyards, where I would see more than 500 head of horses of every size and shape go through the auction ring. When I was ready to graduate from Oceanside Senior High School, going to a college of agriculture was my only consideration. Although I applied and was accepted to both the University of Kentucky and Iowa State, I chose the former because of the reputation Kentucky had as horse country.

The choice of university turned out to be a good one, as Kentucky offered me as much knowledge and experience about horses outside of the classroom as it did within the walls that hosted the venerable leadership of accessible professors who were generous with both their time and knowledge. I was fortunate to have gotten to know the Kentucky of old, where horsemanship was dictated by the old traditions of "hard boot" horsemen that employed consecutive generations of loyal help with their roots in either Appalachian or rural Afro-American culture. Those were the years when horse fences were still white. It was the times when the hotel on Main Street was still the place to get the latest gossip. In those days, the Keeneland track kitchen lacked the luster of its successor, but had that irreplaceable character than only a long history of notable horsemen and happenings can provide. It was an ambiance that mixed the smell of cigar smoke, cooking grease and horse manure with the hopeful conversations of dreams and disappointments that accompanied the rustling sounds from the turning pages of *The Daily Racing Forms*.

A Varied International Horse Experience

My friendship with the renowned veterinarian Dr. James D. Smith would entice me to leave the "wildcat country" with its manicured fields of Kentucky bluegrass, specialized professions and cutting edge technology. As a volunteer in President Kennedy's Good Neighbor Policy, Dr. Smith offered me contacts that exposed me to the captivating moist aroma of the tall, lush green vegetation and the test of producing quality **Thoroughbreds** in the most trying of conditions, the humid tropics of Panama. After a year in the lowlands, I took on the challenge of moving to 1,920 m (6,240 ft.) above sea level to develop a horse farm in a valley surrounded by a tropical highland rainforest in the western province of Chiriqui. Here, in the land of the precious few remaining Quetzal birds, six-foot-tall carnation plants, fields of Kikuyu grass that originated in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro and with a mean temperature of 19 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit), the stereotypes made of the life that revolved around the Panama Canal were not even suspected. In having moved to what seemed the end of the world, I met the most influential person of my young life, Don Fernando Eleta. Together we pursued the dream of state-of-the-art horse production in a country that neither justified nor fully appreciated such investments. However, Don Fernando was as much a dreamer as I was, and together we made many of those imaginings come true as his **Thoroughbred** horse farm, Haras Cerro Punta, broke all national and Caribbean Basin records for **Thoroughbred** production.

Don Fernando and his lovely, intelligent and polished wife, Doña Graciela Quelqueye, were also avid fans of the **Peruvian Paso** horse, so aside from permitting me to bloom professionally while heading up their establishment, through their "hobby horse" they exposed me to my first South American breed. The admiration I acquired for the hardiness of this breed that seemed to defy all needs for the precautionary measures we commonly take in

Thoroughbreds would be an indicator of the qualities that I would later realize were so common in all breeds of Iberian origin.

Sixteen years after landing in Panama, I returned to the United States to take on various management and consulting jobs in prominent horse farms in Virginia and Kentucky. I graduated from these positions to pursuing a market for my professional services throughout Latin America, where the credentials of stateside experience accompanying a bilingual and bicultural background were rare. In time, an expanding foundation of nearly a dozen of the best **Thoroughbred** breeding farms in Chile motivated me to take residence in this, my country of birth. However, upon being put on retainer for one of the best farms in the country, my consultation opportunities were curtailed. I then chose to take up racehorse training, as this was the only facet of the **Thoroughbred** industry that I had not been exposed to. As a college student, I had worked as an exercise rider and groom at local tracks in Kentucky. As a horse farm manager I had years of experience in natural methods of starting two-year-olds, which I conditioned until they were breezing (training at racing speeds) fit enough to go into the hands of the farm trainer. However, being at the helm of a commercial training stable was a new challenge for me.

How I Discovered the Chilean Horse Breed

Although there are many accolades I could mention about my years as a racehorse trainer, what befits this book is the fact that it is in this racetrack environment that I first became acquainted with the **Chilean Horse**. In looking for a horse to “pony” my **Thoroughbred** pupils who had injuries or back problems, my vet took me out to see a field of horses that were destined to be slaughtered for the “horse jerky” market in Chile. A good-looking dun caught my eye and for around \$650 I took this registered **Chilean Horse** gelding back to the track and saved him from becoming the dried out contents of a neatly packed bag of “charki”.

I could not help but admire that, in leading the various **Thoroughbreds** around the track, oftentimes this stout little horse worked three to five times more than his blue-blooded stable companions and many of those laps were at the brisk pace we ask of **Thoroughbreds** in training. Incredibly, he ate about half what they did and stayed roly-poly fat over all that fit muscle that obviously lay below. His superb disposition made him everybody’s friend, and there was not a day that he showed signs of not wanting to do what was asked of him.

Having bought a great-looking **Quarter Horse** stallion from Pitzer Ranch in Nebraska as my own “pony” on which to oversee the **Thoroughbred** workouts, I rarely rode “Bayo”, as we unappreciatively called the blue-collared dun. However, a growing friendship with my stable veterinarian led me to start to take Dee Jay (officially DJ Jacks Revisal, of Three Eyed Jack breeding) and “Bayo” out on mountain trail rides. What started as a casual initiative turned into a routine both Dr. Manuel Valenzuela and I looked forward to twice a month. As our horses became more conditioned, we rode over most of the mountains within a one-hundred-mile radius of Santiago, and also made some overnight trips to beautiful trails high up into the Andes Mountains much farther to the south. Most of our treks were in rugged, precipitous terrain and we went from the extremes of sandy coastal hills up to the rocky bottoms of eternal glaciers that poured down into mountain valleys where streams and waterfalls froze to a standstill during the cold and windy nights. We crossed rampant rivers, crossed snowy bluffs and traversed slippery shale rock. We picked our way up mountain passes that required jumps up to ledges with barely enough space to turn away from a deadly cliff in order to follow the zigzagging path that lay ahead of us. The daily outings varied from eight to 13 hours of riding, and our horses progressively fine-tuned themselves to the task.

The importance of this mutually gratifying experience for Manuel and me was that we noticed that the 450 kg (1,000 lbs), 1.45 m (14.1 hand) tall “Bayo” outperformed my 565 kg (1,250 pound), 1.57 m (15.3 hand) tall “Dee Jay” in every respect. The little horse that carried a heavier load in my friend Manuel was a faster walker and a better climber than his gringo counterpart. “Bayo” was a steadier horse in crossing streams, he was more surefooted on narrow mountain trails, he was bolder in confronting the unknown and withstood better the rocky abuse down endless dried-up river beds or crossing piles of jagged rock that formed landslides across

our path. To say the least, each outing we took made me stand up and take notice of this hardy dun horse that was proving to be an exceptional trail horse in every respect.

Constantly, I inquired more about this native breed of horse. My growing friendship with my trail horse buddy provided me with a lot of my first insights, since Manuel had started his experience as a practitioner with representatives of this breed that performed in the Chilean Rodeo. Enthused with the interest I was showing for his national breed, Manuel invited me to see the Champion of Chile that is held at the national championship half-moon arena in Rancagua. There, Manuel had purchased the rights to some privileged seats that he had long-term use of. When I witnessed the ease of lateral movement, the cow savvy in sticking to the steer, the boldness of not hesitating to make contact in the pins, I became sold on the stock breed that unfolded before my very eyes in this fascinating sport that had been hitherto unknown to me.

As I sat in the stands I asked a zillion questions to everyone and anyone around me. What bewildered me was that no one seemed to be sure what the official name of the breed was. “Corralero”, “Chileno”, “Criollo”, were the three most often suggested answers, but the uncertain tones gave away the fact they had no clue which was the definitive name of the registry. In further reading, I also learned that in the past they were referred to as “de Trote”, “Topeadores” and “Pecheros”. This unjustified lack of a clear identity would be my first hint as to why the breed was so poorly known outside Chile’s borders. For the most part, **Chilean Horses** are simply not mentioned in horse breed books, web pages or breed associations, but the few places they are listed, they have mistakenly been identified by some of these misnomers that are too often used by Chileans themselves, even die hard huasos (Chilean cowboys) that live to ride their next rodeo.

For whatever reason, it started to become clear to me that there was a lack of definition about a breed that I mistakenly assumed must have a vague and undistinguished origin. How wrong I was. In starting to read about the **Chilean Horse** I became aware that this was one of the oldest and most unique breeds of the Americas. My curiosity was now permanently aroused. This coincided with a growing disenchantment with a variety of underhanded dealing I had become aware of in the business of track management. One of them affected me personally as an insistent effort was made to relocate me to more numerous and modern stables when I had grown attached to my historic stables that I had restored to their old luster. The intent was to demolish the remaining stalls that dated back to the late 19th century when the Club Hípico of Santiago was built. It was ridiculous that the convenient contracts that were being schemed in order to construct a modern office building took place in a city that had 40 percent of its offices unoccupied. Moreover, I had publicly stated my concern over an unduly incompetent drug testing program that put all honest trainers at a tremendous disadvantage. All these simultaneous realities made me give serious thought to the idea of retiring from training to start working on a book about this little-known breed that had no literature available to the English speaking horsemen of the world.

After bringing to public light the importance of conserving the century-old stables, I obtained enough media attention that the demolition project was put on hold. Next, I assured my stables were put in the hands of someone that would not permit their destruction. To my great satisfaction, the entire Club Hípico of Santiago has recently been declared part of a typical zone that is now under the auspices of the National Monuments of Chile and thus the future of my old stables is now secure.

When I parted ways with the **Thoroughbred** scene, I was fortunate to have made memorable friends in all rungs of the social ladder, from the most humble track maintenance personnel to the most prestigious members of the industry’s board of directors. I will always be thankful for having had the opportunity to train. Experiencing the thrill and satisfaction of developing equine athletes of the highest caliber was a privilege, to say the least, and my exploits on the racetrack were not limited to just training. I was also involved in TV programs that dispersed knowledge about international racing, exemplified natural methods of starting race horses under racetrack environments, initiated and got recognition for the specialized profession of exercise riders, and participated in the scholastic training that was given young men in the Chilean jockey school. What I hope to indicate with all this commentary is that I

took a great deal of expertise with me when I started to focus my attention on the **Chilean Horse** world.

After meeting my wife Romy -- a nickname that shortens the Latin enchantment for long names reflected in her real name of Cora Roma Maria Moragas Wachtendorff -- I moved to northern Chile to commence my literary mission. I bought a two-year old **Chilean Horse** stallion and gelding to prevent me from going mad in a city that had now grown to 200,000 citizens and had virtually no quality horse activities. Over the past years I have occasionally gone back to the central region of Chile to teach people the art of natural training methods with **Chilean Horses, Arabs, Thoroughbreds** and **Holsteiners**. Occasionally, some quality **Chilean Horses** from good breeding farms in the south were sent the 2,000-plus km (1,250 mi) for me to train in the north. However, the underlying objective of my everyday life has been to progress in writing this fascinating story you are about to read.

Why this Is an Untraditional Horse Breed Book

I want to warn you that this is not your traditional horse breed book. One thing this undertaking has taught me is that, for the most part, horse breeds are a reflection of the people and places that justified their formation. Rarely is a breed created for capricious purposes. Usually, a breed is formed as a result of a regional history that ties into the geographical definitions of the country involved. Often, the objectives of the breed are determined by the type of topography that it was nestled in and by the functions that the breed was expected to perform in a given set of climatic conditions. Lastly, the breed must mold itself to the traits of the culture that has defined its need. All of these aspects are factored into a formula that gave rise to a unique set of criteria that were best met by a breed of choice that helped the men and women of those societies progress.

I make these remarks because the conventional presentation of a horse breed book is to tell you briefly its origins as a registered breed, its characteristics, its functions and some of the most representative examples of the breed. From the moment you open the first page, you dive into the facts about the breed as it is known today and you quickly come to learn how to identify the breed by established generalities whose justifications are not always clarified to the reader. It's a quick fix that satisfies most uninformed readers and frustrates most knowledgeable followers of the breed because there is always much more to the story than that.

Under this format, many horse breed stories have a familiar ring to them. If we look at those that refer specifically to stock horses, the resemblance would be even greater. In this globalized world there is an uncanny similarity in the conformation of the various stock horse breeds that are oftentimes distinguished more by color than by shape or other distinguishing traits. If the breed fits this stereotypic cowhorse mold, we can also be at ease with the similarity of its origins and reinforce our unquestioned generalities of what in fact constitutes a stock horse. Every new stock horse breed we read about seemingly reinforces our subjectivity.

However, you are about to commence a story of a stock horse breed unlike any other you might have ever read about. Your past perceptions of what you are seeing perform in World Equestrian Games reining, National Reining Horse Association championships, Working Cow Horse, Team Penning, "Doma Vaquera", "Acoso y Derribo", "Rejoneo" "Coleando" and Camp Drafting may entice you to hastily make the judgment that this is not a "real" stock horse at all. Some will belittle it as a pony breed that should be meant for children in developmental stages leading to learning to ride the 1.62 m (16 hands) specimens that are becoming a more frequent part of North American stock horse events. Others will disparage the idea of it being a breed of true contention when they learn it has no hot-blooded **Arabs** or **Thoroughbreds** in its background. Many will give little credibility to its quality as a stock horse because Chile is never mentioned as a significant beef cattle producing country and there is no knowledge of a cowboy culture within its borders. After all, aren't the cowboys of South America the gauchos and aren't their mounts the **Criollo** breed? Some will be reluctant to think that any horse with such an uncommon type of conformation could ever be a useful athlete. Others simply won't know what to think from its incomparably thick voluminous forelock, mane and tail.

Hasty critics may predict a limited intellect that is denoted by it's the **Chilean Horse's** often semi-convex facial profile. Many will presume that a breed where stallions stand gently next to each other must surely be lacking in spirit and heart. The point is that under the traditional format of a breed book, many impetuous judgments would have been made before truly understanding why the **Chilean Horse** is the way it is. More importantly, such a layout would overlook explaining why the unique qualities of the **Chilean Horse** merit it serious consideration among the best stock horse breeds of the world.

Various Ways You Can Read this Book

For the reader to work past the many preconceptions that have been made over the last 60-some years of stock horse breed development, he or she will benefit from reading the whole story in this book. Only in this manner, step by step, will the credibility of this incredibly interesting breed take hold until all the generalities are turned upside down and an objective appraisal can come forth. My goal is to entice you to read the entire story, if for no other reason than the fact that every aspect of it is interesting in its own right.

However, the truth is that many parts of that overall formula that gives rise to a breed will not deal with the breed itself. Much of it will have to do with related history; other parts will deal with culture, geography, topography, climate, and so on. I know well that oftentimes when our desire lies in a specific realm of knowledge we are not tolerant enough to sit through the many precursors that lead us to the preferred subject matter.

I remember trying to read the Sheldon Kopp book *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* that was highly recommended to me by my philosophical brother. I started in on the book and after forcing my way through 30 pages I wrote my brother and begged him to pardon me, but the reading was just too dense for me and I could not get "in" to the book. My brother Ron wrote back and told me to not give up on it and to start reading the book somewhere else and maybe I would later find interest in returning to the start. It turned out to be wonderful advice, and after putting it into practice I did go back to the beginning and found that my impediment in taking in its contents were self imposed from a lack of motivation and a preconceived idea that I did not like what I was reading. The second read of the beginning made perfect sense to me, and the book has left a lasting impact in my life that I would not have had if I was not willing to give the "whole story" a chance.

Hopefully, most of you will be motivated horsemen that will not shy away from interesting bits of paleontology and history that should be common knowledge to all interested in American horse breeds. Much of this knowledge unfolds a better understanding of the horses you deal with on a daily basis, regardless of what breed you are most interested in. However, understanding these facts along with the ones that relate specifically to Chile will offer you a more complete understanding of the breed at hand. This is especially so since this breed has a greater similarity with the horses in America's past due to the fact it has not been subject to all the fickle changes brought on by fads and contemporary commercial pressures.

Others of you may be spellbound by the wealth of historical information in the book, while being less certain about how you will relate to the more horse-specific material. The broad nature of the topics touched upon in these two texts should weave an interesting story that shares a common thread regarding one of the most fascinating horse breeds in the world. Having said this, some of you will think your interests are very specific and may prefer to dive right into the subject matter that has enticed you to make this acquisition. For this reason, I have divided the subject at hand into two books.

The first volume is the *THE CHILEAN HORSE: The History* and this takes the reader down a path that starts with the evolution of the horse and ends with the appearance of the **Chilean Horse** breed. The second volume is the *THE CHILEAN HORSE: The Breed*. This part of will describe in great detail what makes up the **Chilean Horse** breed, as well as the Chilean huaso cowboy culture that simultaneously developed with the advent of a unique stock horse event that has given this breed a sense of purpose for more than a century.

For those of you who do not feel comfortable reading Volume I, I would suggest that you feel free to start by reading Volume II first and then hopefully the uniqueness of this breed will strike a curious chord in you that will take you back to read Part I, desirous of understanding how such a distinct breed came about. In whatever order you choose to read the contents, my objective is to introduce you to one of the most interesting stock horses known to man. In journeying through the harvested information you will find you are also learning a great deal about the Spanish expansion into America and the specifics about a marvelous country -- Chile -- that perhaps up until now, you knew very little about. Most of the information will tie into some aspect of the **Chilean Horse**, but nevertheless, it will give you a feel for the political and physical definitions of an enchanting nation with a culture that has made its people as inimitable as its national horse.

There are various sections of these books that have been included to make this reading experience more enjoyable for you. There is a generous glossary of both English and non-English terms that are mostly horse-related, since some of you may be attracted to reading this book even when you are not intimately involved in the horse industry. There is also a series of appendices that offer more detailed information about Chilean stock horse events, and reference material regarding horses and riders that have made history in Chilean competitive disciplines. There is a long list of bibliographical material that can provide insight as to where much of this information came from, but moreover I hope that it provides additional supplemental reading for those that wish to expand their knowledge about the breed.

What Kind of Reader Are You?

No doubt some will criticize the fact that I have not chosen the kinds of readers I wish to target, because of the wide expanse of information that is offered in these two books. I suppose that is part of the price you pay when you choose to tell the "whole story". There are people that read the Bible, the Koran or the Torah from cover to cover repeatedly and there are others that do so only once. Some persons only read sections, while others choose to use these books to look for specific bits of information that they like to refer to. I don't believe there is just one way to read a book any more than there is only one way to look at a horse. You always have a first impression that hopefully entices you to look further. However, the more you look, the more you see, and the more you see, the more you want to look some more. Looking at the same things over time or with differing amounts of knowledge and experience can also vary what you take in.

To many English speakers this may be the only book they ever read about the breed. It is my desire that the book will serve to give a thorough introduction to the breed by giving the reader an opportunity to have a very profound understanding of how the breed came about and what it represents today. If the material sparks an interest in becoming a **Chilean Horse** owner, then I hope this book can continue to serve as a powerful reference to its holder who may contemplate implementing **Chilean Horse** disciplines, or perhaps ignite a further desire to delve into **Chilean Horse** breeding. As more practical experience is obtained, no doubt the contents of the book will take on new meaning and rereading this story will give an even more important appreciation for the horses you ride or see foal.

To the readers that do not have an opportunity to consider the ownership of a **Chilean Horse**, I think the material contained within these pages should still seem extremely interesting due to the novelty of the contents. Regardless of what breed you are associated with, the information on equitation, training, prominent breeders, tack, etc., all make for an intriguing read because they offer such original examples, some of which may serve to re-evaluate the reader's manner of thinking about these topics, regardless of whether they agree with them or not.

Horses Can Be a Common Ground to Broaden Our Outlook on Humanity

In the end, my friends, the story about horse breeds is the story of mankind and how societies reflect the image of their surrounding world. The study of any common ground throughout the human race should help us to identify with foreign cultures, regardless of how different they may seem from our own. Furthermore, this permits us to more openly contemplate those differences between us that make the world such an interesting place. Oftentimes, it takes a universal interest such as the appreciation of the horse to broaden our outlook in a manner that will permit us to acknowledge the fact that we are all honorable members of humanity. I truly hope this “whole story” of the captivating **Chilean Horse** breed will bring you closer to such an understanding.



Figure I.1



Figure I.2

From the most humble horse to the national Champion, the representatives of the Chilean Horse breed have unique characteristics that are united to a very pure genealogy that evolved over a long and a distinguished history.