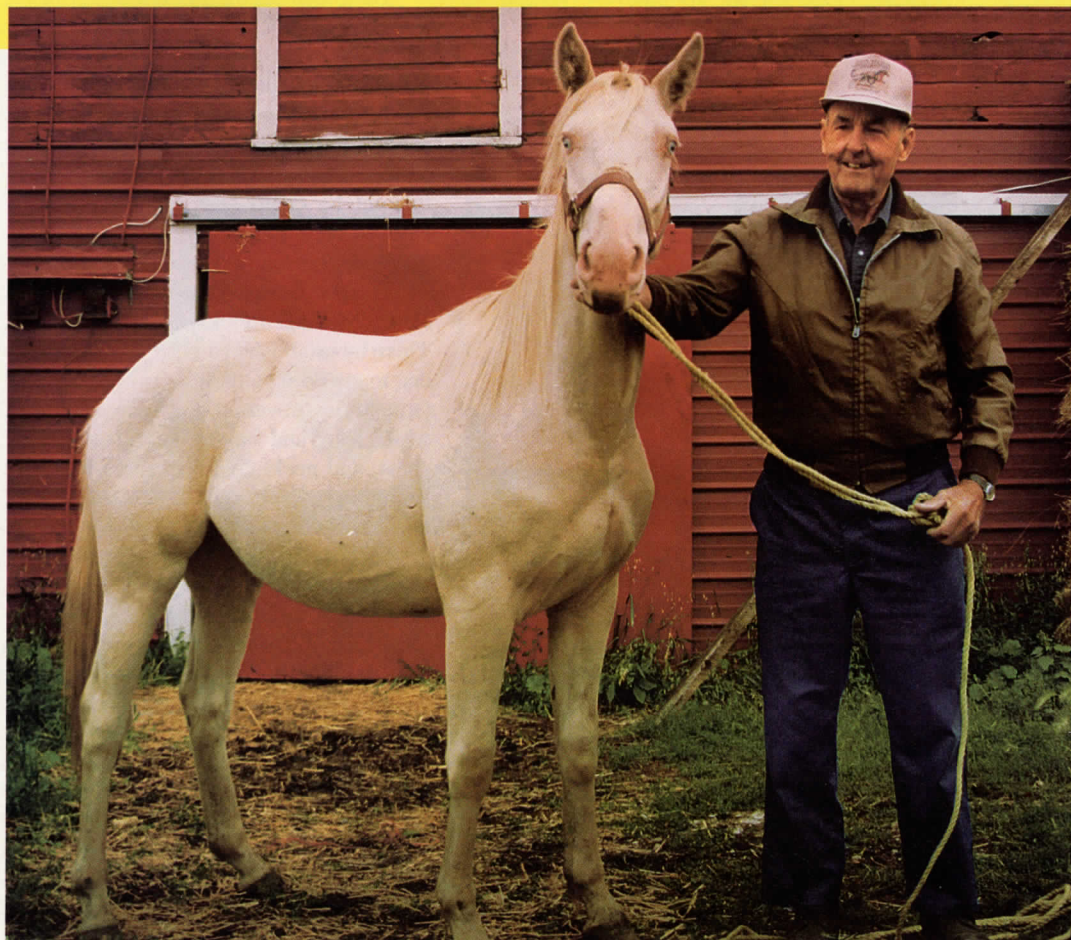


When White

Goes Wild

Standardbreds Can Have Eye-Widening Hides

By Ardith Carlton



He's all white and all Standardbred! Spontaneous albino yearling Mr. Clean poses with owner/breeder Bob Scott of Manitoba. (Photo by Cheryl Wishart)

Coat color didn't put the "standard" in "Standardbred," but sometimes it seems that way. Bay, brown, kindasorta-sunburned-black...nearly every Standardbred you see is clad in a plain brown wrapper.

But every once in a while, Mother Nature throws a curve, and out pops a baby with a white-splashed hide. Colorful and charismatic, these "wild white" Standardbreds rarely make headlines, but they always make heads turn.

Genetic mutations can drive a horse's

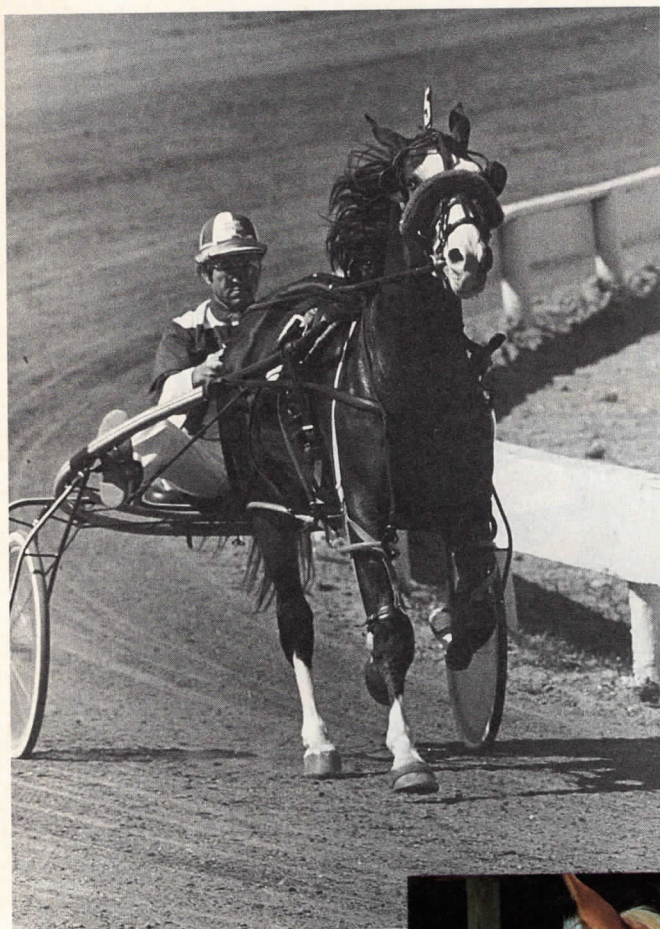
inherited dose of white wild, manifesting in a spontaneous white Standardbred. In 1937, as Walt Disney's animated feature "Snow White" was capturing hearts, the bay Peter Volo son Hollyrood Harkaway was bred to bay Diamond Dewey. The shocking result was an all-white filly, quickly christened "Snow White."

Owned by Dr. George Newell of Wisconsin, Snow White became a darling of the press and appeared several times in *Hoof Beats* as she grew. She entered training under Dr. H.M. Parshall...but there the

record ends. She did not reach the races, and left no foals.

Interestingly, Diamond Dewey's only other foal, a full sister to Snow White named Hi-Lo's Diamond, was bay and produced only bays.

Half a century later, in 1992, Robert Scott of McCreary, Manitoba discovered that "white lightning" had struck again. His chestnut mare Shyloh Robin presented her astonished owner with an albino colt, sired by bay Roarin Snortin! (The previous year, Shyloh Robin had foaled a bay



Always easily spotted on the racetrack, Dapper Baron transmitted splashy markings and blue eyes to more than one-third of his 170 registered foals. Granddaughter Eyes Of The World, shown below snarfing a snack from owner Christy Markos, is clear evidence that Dapper Baron's wild-white gene lives on. (Dapper Baron photo by George Smallsreed; Eyes Of The World photo courtesy Christy Markos)

filly with no white by the same sire.)

Named Mr. Clean, the blue-eyed, white colt enjoys a starring role on the track, although not as a racehorse. Friend Jim Hill reports, "He appeared at the harness racing at Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, and delighted fans as he paraded in front of the grandstand."

Less drastic mutations can happen to the gene responsible for leg and facial white markings. The result is a horse with high leg stockings, a wide blaze (sometimes with blue eyes), or even a pie-plate-sized spot on the belly, stifle, or throat.

And that mutated gene can be passed along from generation to generation. Just look at Dapper Baron p.3,T1:57.3.

Dapper Baron, whose three full brothers and sister were all respectable bays with no white, must have nearly scared his dam to death when he arrived in 1972. A bright bay with a bald face, blue eyes, a white splash on his throat, and three white legs, Dapper Baron made a big impression on the



track—in appearance and ability alike.

The son of Baron Hanover-Our Time Wick-Gene Abbe was guided throughout his career by Bruce Nickells, who began to suspect early on that Dapper Baron's hide wasn't the only thing unusual about him.

"I'd holler at him and nothing would happen; but touch him, and on he'd go," Nickells recalls of the colt's first few months of training. "So one day I went behind him and hit two feed cans together real hard—and he didn't move! So we followed up and confirmed that he was deaf."

What to do? Nickells, always an innovator, simply taught his flashy charge hand-signals!

Communicating with Dapper Baron by

moving the bit, reins, or whip in a certain way, "I let him know everything," explains Nickells. "For example, I'd twitch my hand, and he'd feel it in his mouth and respond. After we learned to communicate together, he was like any other horse."

Dapper Baron soon had his opponents seeing spots all over the Ohio stakes scene. "At two he was a letter-perfect horse and wore no boots," Nickells recalls with pride. But at Lexington the colt got his leg hung up in a wheel, and after that season-ending mishap, he wasn't the same.

"He got to hitting his knees terrible at three," says Nickells. Even so, the pair dogged the heels of the best of their generation, horses such as Nero and Whata Baron. "'Dapper' wasn't quite good enough for those kind of horses," Nickells admits. "But what a great attitude—he thought he could beat anybody. I really enjoyed racing him."

After compiling a record of 65-12-17-11, Dapper Baron went to stud at owner James Michael's Pickwick Farm in Ohio. There he established a line of colorful pacers, many with china-blue eyes, bald faces (sometimes covering the chin and jaw), white legs, and large spots on the belly, chest, and neck. "A lot of them look like something you'd see in a road show!" notes Nickells.

According to U.S. Trotting Association Registrar Robert Luehrman, Standard-breds with a splashy body spot or three are registered as being a solid color, such as bay or chestnut. "Their body spots are recorded as white markings," explains Luehrman. "A couple of spots like that doesn't make a horse a 'pinto'."

Dapper Baron died in 1990. His get and grand-get are still seen on tracks around the country—and that wild white gene can be seen in many of their own foals.

Dapper John Mac D p.1:58.3h is a typical Dapper Baron son—bay with a bald face, white chin, and four white legs. Still racing at age 10, he had a fling at stud a few years ago, and four of his six offspring display their genetic jackpot.

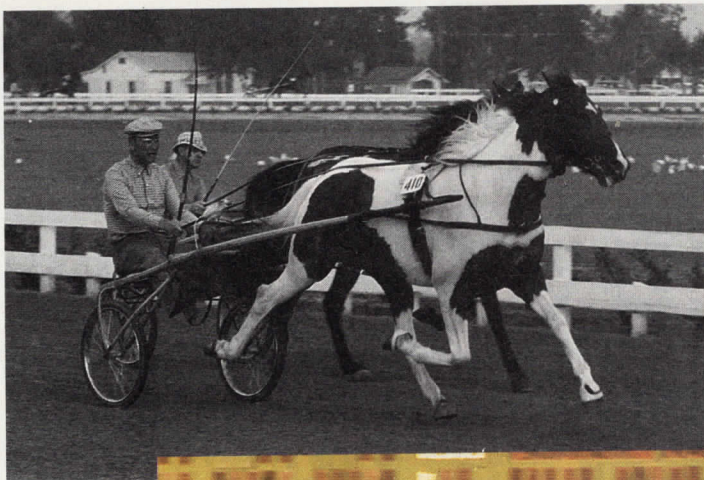
One of Dapper John Mac D's daughters is Eyes Of The World, a filly who means the world to 24-year-old Christy Markos of Dundee, Michigan. The splashy lass, whose chestnut coat comes from her Melvin's Woe dam, is Markos' first horse.

"People laugh about her and say she'll never be much, but I don't care," asserts Markos. "I've had offers to sell her as a show horse. Some lady offered \$4,000, but I'll never sell."

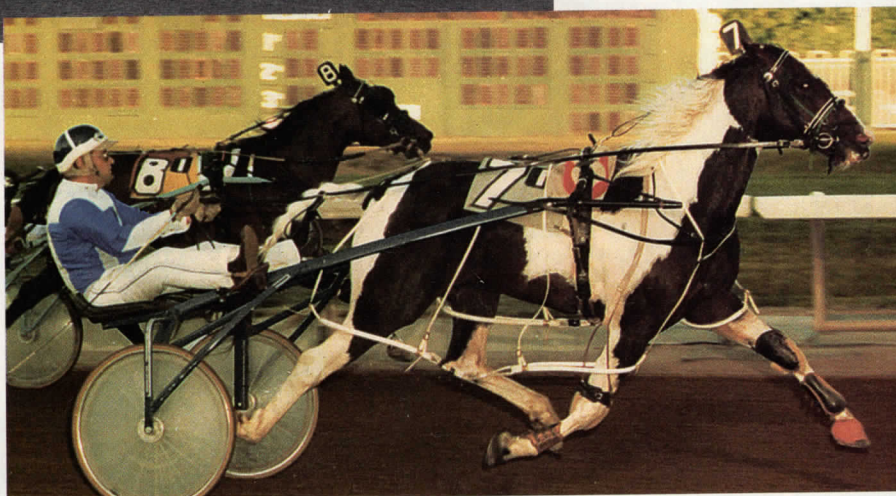
Dapper Baron's daughters also can transmit a mosaic of markings. When bred to Chairmanoftheboard, blaze-faced Desert Vixen foaled Gramma Riri. Now three, Gramma Riri contested Ohio Fair Stakes last year and wants to be a racehorse. Co-owner Darla Conklin of Waldo, Ohio writes that her blue-eyed, high-stockinged filly "has a great attitude, and especially loves attention!"

But you don't need Dapper Baron blood to get a spot or two. The 1992 pacing filly Egret's Little Dot comes from stock with little white (Egret-Lamme'-Sterling Sparkle), yet sports a spot on her left hip. "As you may have guessed, her nickname is 'Spot,'" confesses breeder/owner Kenneth Miller of Bloomfield, Ohio. "We have to watch when we call her so that all the coon dogs in the neighborhood don't come running!"

An extra helping of white is by no means limited to pacing stock. Once in a while, a trotter is born



New Zealand import Snow Time, a grandson of Adios, trained free-legged for Aime Choquette and the Del Miller Stable at Ben White Raceway in 1962. His gelded son Chief Nakia raced from coast to coast, including this Bay Meadows win for Gerry Kazmaier; now age 21, the charismatic Chief continues to welcome fans in California. (Snow Time: USTA file photo; Chief Nakia photo by Frank De Vol)



with an eye-widening hide.

Noble Aries is an example. Sired by Noble Jade, who bore only the faintest suggestion of a star, and from a mare with no markings, Noble Aries was the "white sheep" of the family, so to speak. "He was beautiful, black with three white feet, bald face, and both eyes were baby blue," breeder Lois Benedetti says fondly of the

Illinois gelding. "When he looked at you with those eyes, it was spooky. We had no problem watching him on the track!"

A trio of square-gaiters is currently proving that horses with spots can trot.

Rachel Rain 1:57.3f (\$108,000+) has contested events like the Dygert and the Su Mac Lad series, and the seven-pointed star on her left stifle is a familiar sight to



Nature isn't particular about the gait of her canvas; trotters and pacers alike can be splashed. Above, trotter Noble Aries got all the white his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents missed out on! At right, Winnie Morgan shows off her family's racy Rachel Rain, a square-gaiter with a seven-pointed stifle star. (Noble Aries photo courtesy Lois Benedetti; Rachel Rain photo courtesy Dot Morgan)



her rivals as she flashes past.

"We named her Rachel after the Biblical character," explains owner/breeder Dot Morgan of Laura, Ohio. "Rachel's husband, Jacob, had to work 14 years for his father-in-law. When he left he asked for the 'spotted and speckled' sheep and goats. They turned out to be stronger and more vigorous than the solid colored ones."

By Speed In Action from five-time 2:00 producer Bingo Winner, Rachel Rain has no other siblings with much white, much less spots—although a full sister produced an Ambro Goal filly with a white lightning bolt discreetly decorating an inside hind leg.

The patchy chestnut hide of Ontario breeder Syd Norris' Ambro Bullet-T-Star Shot yearling was anything but discreet. Dam T's blazed face and three high stockings played a part, and Norris cannily named T's white-legged, barrel-spotted youngster "I'm A Standardbred" before sending him saleward in 1993.

Horseman Erwin Stewart of Carp, Ontario signed the slip, and his gelding has drawn plenty of attention as well as some friendly flak.

"Convincing people of his true breed has been a task and a half," says Cathy Stewart. "The first comment made by people who see him is, 'Oh! You bought the kids a riding horse.' One day I hope to prove the point that color does not make the horse and looks don't win races."

All the same, she says, "My mother



would like us to wear black brace bandages on all four legs, along with a very wide belly band!"

I'm A Standardbred repaid the Stewarts' faith last year, pocketing checks in 16 of 17 starts, usually in rein to his owner. He banked \$45,537 in a season of duelling with Eager Seelster and Ambro Norbert for Ontario Sire Stakes gold, and rivals will be watching for more than the whites of his eyes in 1995.

Another spotted sophomore is Golden Express, a chestnut filly by Sir Taurus. Her dam, Sandshu Gold by Easter Bud, is chestnut with a blaze; Golden Express' facial white is even more extensive, and she also has hind stockings and a big spot on her girth area.

"When I purchased Sandshu Gold and her suckling Golden Express at the Meadowlands August Mixed Sale in 1992, I was told by everyone to have the foal blood-typed, and laughed about it," says co-

owner Guy Howard of Binghamton, New York.

"I took Golden Express to my trainer at Vernon Downs, and people asked, 'What's that?' Now," reports Howard "they look at her for different reasons!" Golden Express nabbed a check every time in three months of New York Sire Stakes racing, and the spotted filly will try to extend that spotless earnings record this year.

Sometimes things happen that just plain defy explanation. Take the bizarre



A crazed hairdresser? An alien abduction? No one knows exactly how Happy J A P went from being brown in her racing days to becoming strangely grey as a broodmare. Sweet little angels like her Williamsburg One filly Colonial Spirit wouldn't make a mother prematurely grey...or would they?! (Photo courtesy Lee Ann Pooler)



If "cookies-and-cream" was a color, Phoenix Jack would be it! His heavily speckled coat was registered as "roan," but technically it is fleabitten grey. Shown here at age 12, Phoenix Jack poses after a Golden Bear triumph with owner/groom Stacy Black and driver/trainer Gene Vallandingham. (Photo courtesy Stacy Black)

case of Happy J A P p,4,2:04.1f, a typical chocolate-brown mare with no white, by Happy Motoring, a typical bay with no white. There was nothing unusual about her dam Saipan, and ditto with Saipan's sire Gamely.

Rod Serling is unavailable to tell this "Twilight Zone" story, but Lee Ann Pooler, a friend of Happy J A P's co-owners Gail Darling and Margaret Hickey of Massachusetts, will explain.

"What makes 'Happy' so unique," writes Pooler, "is that when she was racing, her color was brown. It wasn't until her career as a broodmare that she turned charcoal grey with the white mane and tail!"

Yet the 12-year-old mare's closest grey or roan ancestor is seven generations back!

Of Happy J A P's four foals thus far, none have been registered with unusual coats. The only possible explanation is that motherhood can turn hair grey, whether you're a human or a horse!

What about a grey registered as a roan who doesn't look *either* color? That's Phoenix Jack, an Australian import who became a West Coast crowd-pleaser.

Nicknamed "The White Tornado," Phoenix Jack p.1:58.1 (\$103,660) had an unusual pelt: white, heavily speckled with black and dark grey flecks. Technically known as "fleabitten grey," his coat didn't change from the time he arrived in the U.S. at age eight until mandatory retirement in 1985.

Stacy Black bought the gelding at the Los Alamitos Spring Sale when he was 12 and she was 22. "I had heard that grey or white horses weren't good racehorses,"

she recalls, "but he had been racing good. How could someone not want him?"

Black groomed, trained, and owned Phoenix Jack. Racing in the stable of Gene Vallandingham, for whom Black worked, "Jack" paid for himself in less than a year.

After retiring with a 210-27-34-33 stateside record, the fleabitten-grey gelding became a dependable saddle horse. "I would love to have another horse just like him, with the same color and personality, but I haven't found one yet," says Black.

It is tempting to call a horse with body spots a "pinto," but only a tiny number of Standardbreds have true pinto coat patterns. A pinto foal cannot be born without a pinto ancestor somewhere in the genetic mix, and the pinto coloration is not native to our breed.

Yet pinto-patterned pacers have found their way into competition, thanks to a few non-Standardbreds roosting in their family trees.

Ruth H. was an enigma—a bay mare, age unknown, pedigree unknown. In the '50s and '60s, Amishman Mel Schwartz of Indiana bred her to local pacing stallions...and after two bay babies, out popped a chestnut-and-white overo pinto

filly with one eye blue and the other brown.

Registered Non-Standard, the pinto filly was dubbed "Flaming Jet," and Ohioan Glen Florence bought the flashy lass. In June 1964 the white-sided sophomore won her first test, a qualifier at Scioto Downs, and went on to prove that a solid racehorse didn't need a solid-color hide. Racking up a 94-10-13-13 lifetime record, Flaming Jet retired with a mark of 2:07.2h after astonishing crowds in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.

"She was not an outstanding horse in anything except color, but racing was never dull while I trained her," recalled trainer Dave Koch.

Sadly, Flaming Jet died at an early age. Of Ruth H.'s eight foals by Standardbred stallions, only Flaming Jet was pinto; the rest were bay or chestnut, and produced bays.

Flaming Jet was the most widely raced pinto pacer in North America, but not the first; a brown-and-white tobiano pinto horse named Snow Time had earned that distinction a month earlier in winning a May 1964 qualifier at San Mateo, California.



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The imported pinto first triggered a wave of media attention in 1962, when he began training for Delvin Miller in Orlando. In anticipation of his planned U.S. premiere at Roosevelt Raceway, Snow Time was even featured in a cartoon in the *New York World Telegram And Sun*.

Owned by Noel Simpson, the Down Under's own "Mr. Trotting," Snow Time was by Meadow Chief, a bay Adios son whom Miller had sold to New Zealand interests. After Miller met Snow Time on a visit to New Zealand in 1961, a deal was arranged for him to train and race the horse in the U.S.

Folks all over were eager to see the patchwork pacer, and Miller paraded his eye-popping pupil at several tracks while honing him for his debut. ("He's as much a show-off as his color," Miller quipped.) But first splints and then a bowed tendon sidetracked Snow Time. Two years later, his U.S. career finally began, and ended: two qualifiers and a single purse start.

"He did have a good gait and everything," Miller recalls, "but he had been handled so much, I was a little reluctant about bringing him over here. I found out that he was a nice horse, but paced about

four seconds slower than anything in the United States."

The source of Snow Time's flashy hide was his world-champion dam Snowflake, a black-and-white tobiano pinto who raised a ruckus in her own racing days, winning the 1946 Great Northern Derby and setting the record for two miles by a three-year-old from a standing start. The source of her pinto coat, however, was a mystery to both Miller and Simpson. Snowflake's sire was the bay American expatriot Dillon Hall, and her dam, a New Zealand mare named Silk Stockings, was also bay.

It turns out that third dam Mapou was the secret ingredient. Mapou was a black-and-white tobiano pinto, sired by a black-and-white tobiano pinto show pony imported from England!

After a promotional trip to Great Britain, Snow Time entered stud in Australia. Today, a trio of his pinto sons—Damien Chief, Snow Prince, and Snow-time Adios—carry on the quest to add more color to the breed Down Under.

Two of Snow Time's four offspring that found their way to North America to race were pinto. The first, four-year-old gelding

Adios Snow, won a total of \$16.

Then along came Chief Nakia.

"Chief Nakia was a pint-size pinto with the heart of a lion," recalls Terry DiCicco, who trained the gaudy gelding in 1980. "He came over from Australia after winning 22 races, including six of nine during the month he was honored as their 'Pacer Of The Month.'"

When the black-and-white wonder left his native Australia for America, a "bon voyage" parade was held for the crowd-pleasing pinto. Owner Stuart Hunter entrusted the six-year-old to DiCicco, then 23, who soon found himself in the spotlight with this horse of a lifetime.

"Chief Nakia was one-of-a-kind, not only in looks, but in personality also," DiCicco recalls. "People would always stop and stare or make a comment. He knew he was a looker! I must admit, I also liked the attention."

"He never acclimated quite properly once here, but he would give his all every time you put a race bike on."

That season, the pinto pacer raced at Los Alamitos, Roosevelt, and the Meadows before taking his 2:02.2f mark at Brandywine, leaving DiCicco with a sea-

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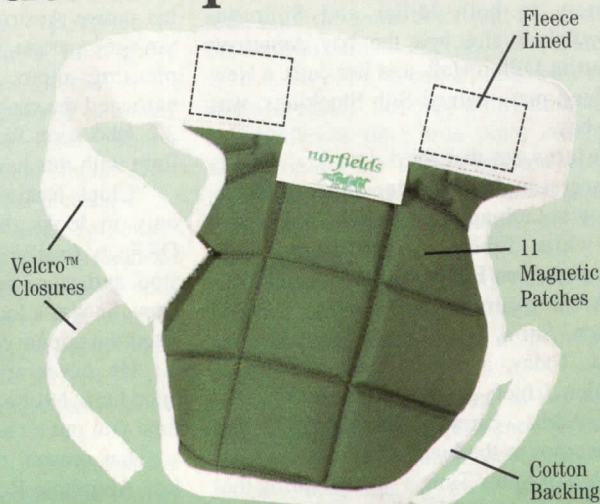
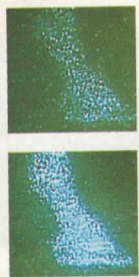
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son of memories he treasures. "It was a great time with a special horse," DiCicco sums it up fondly. Chief Nakia was sold to Elizabeth Foley, nee Bagatelos, and Arthur Naddour of California.

West Coast crowds were treated to Chief Nakia's performances in 1981, and he won once more. But in 1982, all was not right with the piebald pacer, and his career was over.

Chief Nakia retired to Jack Bagatelos' Man-Mar Farm in Dixon, California, where, says owner Liz Foley, "he has always been a topic of conversation for all the visitors and veterinarians in training that have been to our ranch." Now 21 years old, Chief Nakia continues to welcome his fans and open the eyes of folks who are used to Standardbreds in plain brown wrappers.

While Chief Nakia is the last known pinto Standardbred to have raced in the U.S., interest in preserving and propagating pinto bloodlines is growing Down Under.

Royce Wilkie of New Zealand, who raced the bright bay tobiano pinto stallion Wilkie's Wonder (whose fourth dam is Snowflake), writes, "Not only is a pinto revival flourishing in New Zealand but in Australia even more so. There were 16 pintos foaled in Australia last spring. From 1992 to 1993 the number of entire male and female pintos in both countries rose by 25 percent. There are currently 39 pinto mares of breeding age in Australia and three in New Zealand."

Pintos aren't the only ones increasing in number there; so are their owners. The Association of Pinto Pacers and Trotters of Australia and New Zealand (APP-TANZ) has been formed. Their newsletter, *The Pinto Pacer*, is designed "to keep informed those obsessed with pinto pacers and those vaguely curious about them," says editor Darryl Brennan. He can be reached at 12 Caston Court, Birkdale 4159 Queensland, Australia.

Whether by intentional breeding, as with the pintos, or by the whim of wild-white roulette, our breed's future should continue to be colorful. It just goes to show that, as far as Nature is concerned, *nothing* is "standard"—least of all the colors of the Standardbred! ■