

Because They Were So Bred

by Lyn Jank

Benson's Choice

Fifteen years ago George Pardi of McAllen, Texas, asked his trainer, Jack Benson, to find a stud replacement after the untimely death of Three Storms, an outstanding Three Bars son. Pardi wanted another young Three Bars son of breeding age.

About Benson's choice. He searched for a couple of months before sighting in on a sorrel colt with three socks and a blaze at Jerry Wells' farm in Purcell, Oklahoma, in December of 1969.

The colt, out of Hanks Peppy Lou, a foundation mare of Peter McCue heritage, was a Three Bars paternal grandson rather than an own son. His sire, Zippo Pat Bars, had raced in AAA time, but his racing career had been cut short when an injury left him with knocked-down withers and no future in racing or halter. Down the line Zippo Pat Bars would gain attention and respect as a sire, but in 1969 he was relatively unknown, and about all he had going for him was that he was a Three Bars/Leo cross, his dam being Leo Pat.

The colt that filled Benson's eye was a member of Zippo Pat Bars' first foal crop, and Jerry Wells had put a price on him—\$10,000, a considerable amount of money in 1969.

Although Pardi had been specific about wanting a Three Bars son of breeding age, "Benson's choice" was only eight months old, and every hair in his shaggy winter coat seemed determined to go in a direction

counter to all the others.

Pardi was understandably hesitant and demanded to know why Benson was sold on the colt.

"Because he is a mover, George," Benson said with deep feeling "He moves like a dream, George."

"Well then," said Pardi, "bring him on home."

They named him The Investor. He matured to 15.1 and weighed about 1,200 pounds in performance condition. From weanlinghood through today, The Investor has demonstrated one enduring quality. He knows how to be congenial and cooperative, but he is unquestionably his own horse. The same Independence marks Benson, a probable reason why their alliance became so close. Those two understood each other from the beginning and always found ways to leave the other's pride intact.

In late January of 1971 Benson admittedly "jumped the gun." He was convinced that The Investor was good enough to steamroll the rest of the yearlings at the Fort Worth Stock Show.

"But he still had all of his long hair, and he just couldn't do it. As well as I remember he came in third or fourth. But then he took San Antonio, he took Houston, he collected some grands and reserves. He was never again defeated as a yearling, and before he was retired from halter and performance (1973) he had collected forty-five grands and reserves."

The Investor was a late yearling in December of 1970 when, with the idea of bringing in a Supreme Champion, Pardi and Benson entrusted him to one of the most respected trainers of turfbusters in the Southwest, E. R. Beddo.

A good way to capsule The Investor's brief sojourn in racing is to consider a schooling race early in 1971. Flanking "Benson's choice" was another two-year-old hopeful, Mr Jet Moore. The following year he was named World Champion Quarter Running Horse, Stallion and Three-Year-old Colt.

The Investor put plenty of daylight between himself and Moore during the first few jumps out of the gate. Farther on in the duel, Moore closed the gap and headed the colt. The same thing happened each time Beddo tried The Investor in the gate. He was poison on the break in the tradition of Oklahoma Star. An old timer who loved that mahogany bay once said, "Star had a motor in his britches. Before you could say There He Goes, yonder he had went." The same could

be said of The Investor. But Oklahoma Star raced in the days when distances were often 150 to 250 yards, literally contests to see which horses could break the fastest. The Investor came on the scene when the running horse brigade had trained all reverence toward sustaining speed for a quarter mile, and more, and The Investor could not maintain his velocity for that distance.

The decision was to pull him from race training. No insult was attached to the judgment call. Under strict and concentrated training The Investor could have been conditioned to sustain his speed. But he would still be known as a shortrunner, and, once at stud, the best mares would be hauled past his court. Right or wrong, the fashion in running horse breeding is to haul to sprinting Thoroughbreds or "almost Thoroughbreds" in pursuit of the attempt to lengthen stride and help the Quarter Running Horse remain master of the quarter mile.

Together again, Benson and Investor entered halter and arena wars. Investor earned his AQHA Champion award, a Superior in halter, collecting performance points in cutting, reining, western and english pleasure. With Benson aboard, he missed the semi-finals of the 1972 NCHA Cutting Futurity by only a point and a half.

As the arena wars wore on, The Investor and Benson became tried and true hauling partners, and during that time the sorrel stallion had eyes for no human other than his own trainer.

"In turn I can describe my feelings for him in two words. Love and respect. Lots of both. All along we had been giving him a chance to make himself known so he wouldn't go begging when he went to stud. He took advantage of every opportunity to make sure his name was remembered. We put him to stud to a very limited number of mares after he turned four in 1973.

"But it was during the breeding season of '73 that George decided his horse operation was too big, wasn't what he really wanted, what he wanted was to keep a mare or two, and keep some horses for his kids, and sell the rest. Apart from business, we were friends, and George knew how I felt about The Investor. And he made me a deal I'll never forget—\$25,000 for the horse, \$5,000 down and four years to pay the rest. I borrowed the down payment from another good friend. And The Investor was mine."

At the end of the '73 breeding season The Investor accompanied the Benson family to Belleville, Texas, where Benson hired on as trainer-manager



The Investor also known as "Benson's Choice."

for Irvin Catchman. Stud facilities for The Investor were excellent, and in return for the favor Investor shared profits from his foals with Catchman.

In due time a youngster appeared at the Catchman place and said that all he wanted was to be around horses. He was willing to take on any job for that privilege. His name was Brad McCamy.

"Brad was born with hands that know horses, and he was particularly good in the breeding shed. The situation was good at Irvin's place. But my wife, Shirley and I kept on thinking about striking out on our own. In 1977 we decided that if we didn't do it then, we never would. We talked to Irvin Catchman, and he understood. And we talked to Brad McCamy. He said he wanted to go wherever The Investor went. That's how Stallions Unlimited, Inc., got started, and Brad has part of the action."

Today Stallions Unlimited, Inc., continues to flourish in Brenham, Texas. The original idea was to offer stud facilities to stallion owners who, by choice or for other reasons, had no facilities of their own, and to offer, in addition, a comprehensive training program.

"Those were the plans when we put the farm on the ground in the summertime of 1977. We never did lack for good customers, in the breeding shed or the training arena.

But overhead costs kept going up with inflation, and we didn't own any oil wells. I got worried. When a man wants quick cash he looks to whatever asset he has that will bring the most dollars the quickest. I had The Investor and almost sold him. Brad went around with his lower lip hanging out, and I didn't feel too good, either. The luckiest thing that ever happened is that the deal fell through. Not long afterward, I sat on the back of a pickup and had a talk with my good friend, Jim Reno, who gave me some pointers on syndication. Jim became the first one to syndicate in the cutting horse business when he put the deal together on Doc's Quixote. After talking with Jim I felt like we could syndicate the senior partner in Stallions Unlimited Inc., which was The Investor, and that we could do it without losing him.

The Investor was duly syndicated in 1979 on the basis of sixty shares, one breeding each per year, with Stallions Unlimited, Inc., retaining twenty shares. Thoughts behind setting the sixty shares and sixty mares limit were based on the knowledge that each year some mares will fail to conceive, or foals may die, which usually means rebreedings the following year. Jack and Brad didn't want annual breedings to The Investor to exceed 70 or 75.

Today The Investor is a leading sire in multiple halter and performance

categories. His continual ascendancy at stud ultimately changed the entire thinking that put Stallions Unlimited, Inc., on the ground in the first place. Outside stallions no longer call it home. The Investor shares his territory with only one other—Red Dee Hobby, own son of Hobby Horse out of Dee Bar Sue.

Red Dee Hobby arrived in Brenham in 1982 and was syndicated by Stallions Unlimited, Inc., in 1983. He is now receiving, among others, some Investor daughters. A respectable number of believers are predicting that when offspring of that cross move on to the arena it could be a Katy-bar-the-door situation.

Today the sorrel stallion that came into Jack Benson's life as a longhaired weaner, and literally changed the course of Benson's life, contours to live as his own horse and in his own tradition. He spends whatever time he chooses to spend in his private paddock which overlooks the pasture where broodmares roam. Ever selective in bestowing his affections, on other horses or mankind, he gives a stud-yawn or two in the direction of all the mares, but when a particular one appears, he loses all his dignity and degenerates into silliness.

Brad McCamy: "The grand old bay mare is Bo Chant by Bar Chant out of Duchess Bo. She was foaled in '63 and was there on George Pardi's place when The Investor went there in '69. She was one of the first mares he was ever bred to and one of the few mares he was bred to naturally. She went with him and the Bensons to Bellville and came with us here to Brenham. She gave The Investor foals (ROM Arena) like Safe Investor and The Mover.

"The thing about The Investor is that he just does not throw his feelings around lightly. It took him a long time to accept me. We're friends now, and have been, for a long time. But I'm not Jack Benson.

"Quite some time ago Jack limited training operations here to include only foals from The Investor and Red Dee Hobby, but Jack is still on the road a lot. Whenever he's here, though, the first thing he does is go see The Investor. You say you're calling this story 'Benson's Choice.' It works both ways."

"The only time the old horse really smiles is when Jack's there."