

BOUTIQUE BREED

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Bo Derek enjoys an afternoon ride on RCh Ventarrones+, a National Laureado Stallion from Rancho Chahuchu.

THE PERUVIAN HORSE

Azteca,

as noble as his name
steps out over rocky paths,
picking through obstacles,
white legs dashing
a four beat gait.

Azteca, as noble as his name,
carries me up rocky roads,
past people, cars and town.
far out beyond it all, to lands
where panthers roam.

Azteca, swinging his Spanish gait,
tireless legs slashing,
carries me through the brilliance of it.
Moves me past
mountains, lakes, and eagles
and into another realm.

~ Sandy Nathan

Photo: Kerry Perez

text: DEBORAH DONOHUE

photography: KERRY PEREZ & APRIL VISEL

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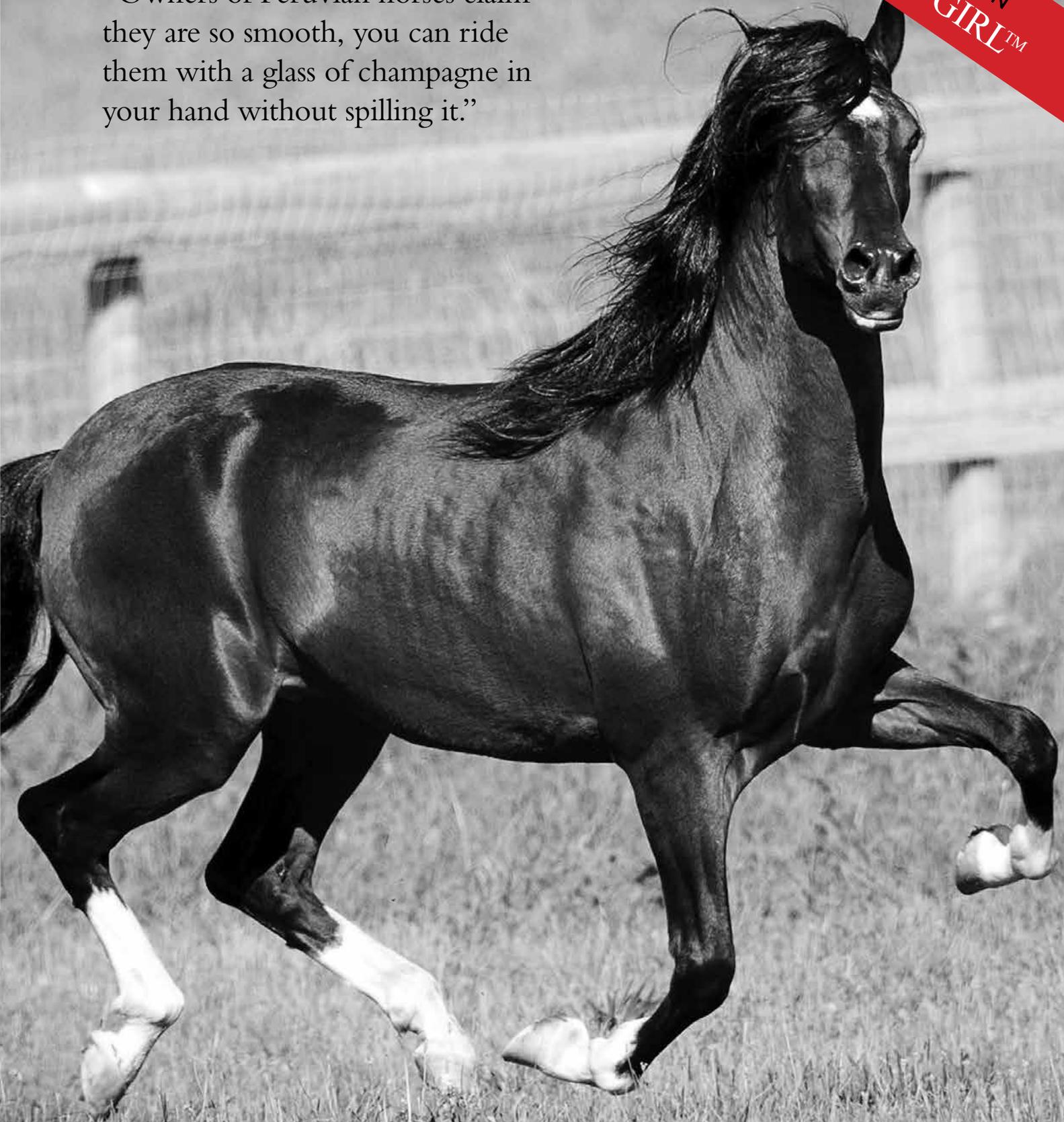


The poem on the previous page celebrates two of the Peruvian horse's most distinguishing characteristics: its magical temperament or Brio, and its luxurious, natural, four-beat lateral gaits, called the paso llano and the faster sobreandando. Most of the world's horses were naturally gaited up until the seventeenth century, when horses that trotted were a rare sight indeed. Termed "boneshakers," trotting horses were relegated to use as servants' mounts or pack animals. By the end of the seventeenth century all of this had changed drastically. The preponderance of roads, horse drawn vehicles, cattle ranching, and the newly popular horse racing—all activities where a trotting horse has the advantage over a gaited one—shifted the equestrian world's

desire from gaited horses to animals that trotted. This conversion proved less unanimous in South America, however, and horseman in Peru continued to revere their "Caballo Peruano de Paso." The Peruvian horse is descended from a fortuitous cocktail of Old World breeds introduced to Peru by the Spanish conquistadors, the world's most prominent horse breeders at the time. Three equine strains are thought to have contributed significantly to what would become the National Horse of Peru: the Spanish Jennet, the Andalusian and the African Barb. The Spanish Jennet imparted its even temperament and graceful, ambling gait. The Andalusian offered its beauty, noble carriage, excellent conformation, spirit and animation, while the African Barb contributed strength, endurance, and energy.

“Owners of Peruvian horses claim they are so smooth, you can ride them with a glass of champagne in your hand without spilling it.”

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ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE: Peruvian Horses exercising their freedom.

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A Peruvian Horse displaying “Termino,” a dramatic movement in which the forelegs are rolled outward as the horse strides forward.

hough the integrity of Peruvian Horse bloodlines was meticulously maintained by breeders in the centuries following its arrival to the continent, it did not always flourish in the New World. Originally used in the north for long treks over the Peruvian sugar and cotton plantations, and in the south for traveling the arid landscape between settlements, the horse’s even gait and superb endurance were historically invaluable and respected. But Peru did not develop a livestock-based economy and in the early 1900s, as motorways and automobiles negated the need for travel by horseback, the use of the Peruvian Horse inevitably declined in Peru. Many prominent breeders gave their best horses to peasants in the quebradas, or valleys. One such peasant, Gustavo de la Borda, would be credited with discovering what would become one of the most valued modern sires of the breed, Sol de Oro. In the north, the Peruvian horse continued to thrive somewhat longer as a necessary means of transportation on the grand haciendas. Unfortunately, the harsh Agrarian Reforms instituted in the 1960s and 1970s by Juan Velasco’s government brought devastating change. Many of the finest horses and breeding stock were lost or exported when breeding operations were broken up, putting the Peruvian Horse on precarious footing in its own country. Still, 400 years of devoted and careful breeding, much of it in isolation, served the Peruvian Horse well. A resurgence of passion and well-deserved interest for this remarkable breed and its continuing survival prevailed. Today, it is coveted within and far beyond, its country’s borders, recognized as one of world’s

last remaining naturally gaited breeds. The instinctual gait is transmitted to all purebred foals. One additional distinguishing characteristic particular to this breed is an aspect of its gait called termino, a graceful flowing movement in which the forelegs are rolled towards the outside as the horse strides forward, much like the arm motions of a swimmer.

Peruvian Horses are generally between 14.1 and 15.2 hands. Their build is elegant and powerful, the chest deep, the neck and body heavy and substantial. There are a variety of colors: chestnut, bay, black, brown, buckskin, palomino, roan, dun or gray. Some have white markings on the face and legs. The manes are lustrous and abundant and may be curly or straight.



Photo: Kerry Perez

A really good hair day: Gorgeous Beatriz Bonilla enjoys a moment with equally beautiful Peruvian Horse "RCh Amante," from Rancho Chahuchu.

The Peruvian Horse's calm, tractable disposition, smooth, comfortable ride, and impressive strength and stamina make them perfect for trail riding. They also possess an exuberant presence prized in competition and exhibition. They love the spotlight! Relatively scarce and multi-faceted, Peruvian Horses are rare jewels in the equine world.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE NORTH AMERICAN PERUVIAN HORSE ASSOCIATION WWW.NAPHA.NET; 707.544.5807



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