Hey Neighbor

For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Big Palomino Quarter Horse Dances To Spanish Tunes As Trainer Sings Along

It was reminiscent of a movie trailer with Trigger dancing and being guided by singing cowboy Roy Rogers at the International Livestock Show Parade in Chicago.

Then we recalled again seeing Trigger in real life as the palomino Tennessee Walking Horse stallion strutted his stuff at the Mid-America Fair in Topeka, with Rogers again mounted on his silver saddle, giving the cues.

That particular day, a half-dozen matching palominos, including Trigger Jr. and Little Trigger, performed at liberty to modern dance tunes under the direction of renowned trainer Glenn Randall of Hollywood fame.

However, this time it was none other than the big beautiful palomino registered Quarter Horse gelding named Golden dancing to every style of music known, and world famous trainer Al Ragusin in the Aussie saddle giving the cues and singing along.

The Dancing Horse Show was at the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita, where Ragusin, from McAllen, Texas, sang country, rock and Mexican music as Golden matched the rhythm of each song, dancing to the beat.

"You do have to be able to know music and match the beat yourself in order to train a dancing horse," Ragusin freely admitted before entering the pavilion.

Before becoming a dancing horse, Golden, standing 16-plus hands tall, was a rodeo rope horse. "He just didn't like that, and I was able to purchase him for $750. I recently turned down an offer for him for $100,000. Actually, the man said he'd give me a blank check. Golden just isn't for sale. I really couldn't replace him," Ragusin insisted.

Some people think dancing horses must be a gaited breed, but according to Ragusin that definitely is not the case. "It will depend on what you want to do with your horse," he evaluated. "Different breeds have different movements. Personally, I never look at the breeds or their crosses.

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ity to want to learn, and if he has the conformation to make the movements I need," Ragusin clarified.

Golden, now 21 years old, is considered Ragusin's best dancing horse. "Some successful dancing horses can do four dance steps, but Golden does 12 dance steps," Ragusin informed. "It takes a minimum of five years to train a dancing horse."

When Ragusin was competing on Golden, they beat many different breeds. Ragusin's horse training career, spanning nearly 50 years, started in the Quarter Horse show ring competing in halter, cutting, reining, western pleasure and gymkhana events. He's collected over 300 trophies and awards.

Proud of his Spanish heritage, Ragusin, who has been a successful rodeo competitor as well, is a champion charro or Mexican cowboy. He's also a rejaneador, meaning he's a bullfighter on horseback using the Portuguese bloodless method of bullfighting.

Ragusin has trained horses in nine different disciplines including dressage. He claimed, "My horses are the only true dancing horses in the world.

"Of course, I love all Spanish horses, and I do have an Andalusian that I dance with. I really like the breed. They seem to have higher movements in the legs, which I can use with different songs.

"It's kind of like a man and a woman having four sons. Each one is different. Well, the same is true with horses," Ragusin emphasized.

Singing and dancing to songs ranging from Michael Jackson to Hank Williams to the rumba and boogie to Spanish tunes which Ragusin sang in Spanish, the pair brought loud applause from the responsive audience. With reins, spurs and a light quirt, Ragusin cued Golden to make his dozen maneuvers to precision.

"Golden slobbers some, and people often ask me why? I guess he's just excited about dancing," Ragusin suggested.

Admitting he loves being a horseman, Ragusin insisted, "I really like getting into the mind of my horses, so that we can work together as one."

Ragusin's riding and training has been featured in all media, including shows on CBS, Real-TV and RFD-TV. With his dancing horses, Ragusin has performed at the Rose Bowl and is an annual participant in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

He's in demand for his dancing horse show and training clinics throughout the United States and Mexico. With 8,000 subscribers to his e-mail Train Your Own Horse column, Ragusin responds to training questions at ragusin@dancinghorseshow.com.

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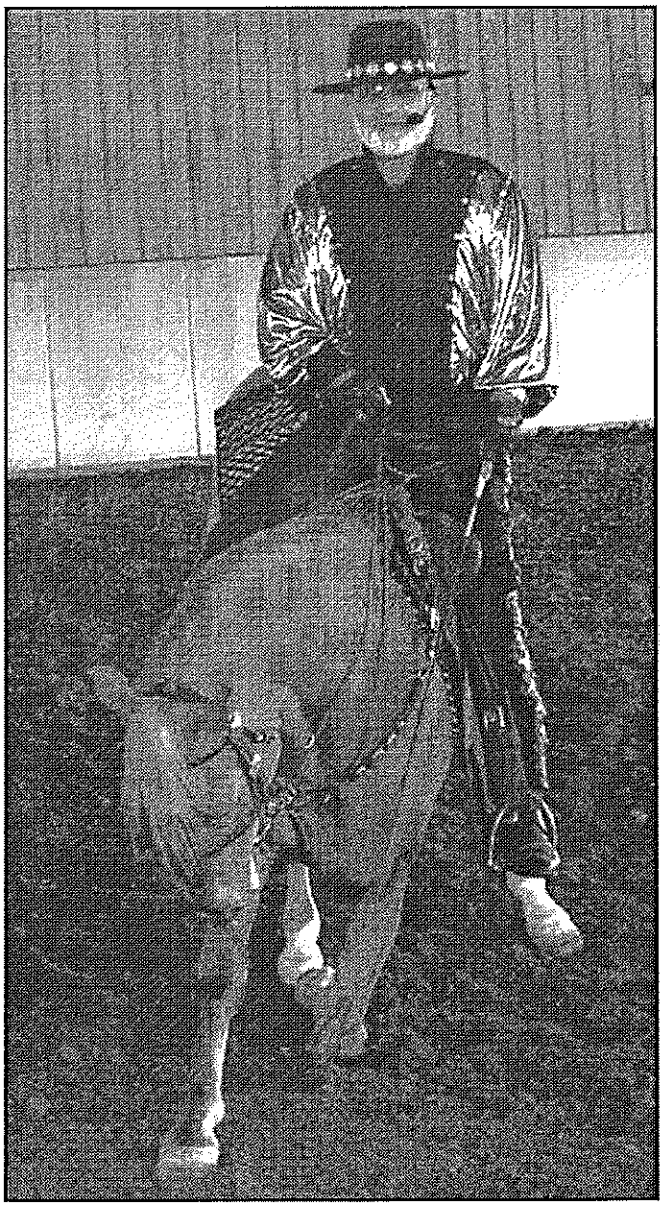

The registered Quarter Horse Golden is living proof that a horse doesn't need to be of a gaited breed to be a successful dancing horse. Texas horse trainer Al Ragusin put the 16-plus hand former rope horse failure through his paces in 12 dance steps to a wide range of music during the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita. Unashamedly, Ragusin declared Golden to be the best dancing horse in the world.