

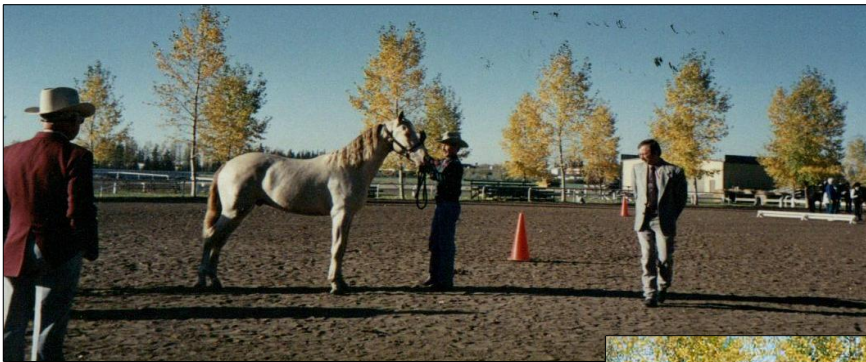
## RUN WALKING ON WITH TOPAZ MERRY GO

On June 16, 1993, a foal was born on a farm belonging to Dr. David Schindler and Dr. Suzanne Bayley of Wildwood, Alberta. The dam was Chiffon's Amber Dream, an (amber?) champagne TWH, and the sire was McLaren's Robert, a buckskin TWH. This colt, although he was perfectly made, was an unusual color. His coat was golden, his mane and tail were a mix of white, gold and black. His skin was pink and his eyes were blue at birth but slowly became a golden amber colour, or topaz, by the time he was a long yearling.

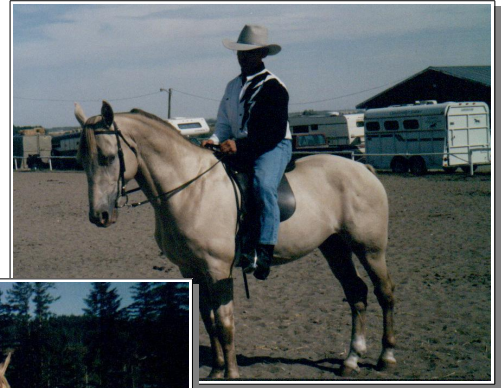
Bill Howes of Ardrossan, AB was interested in a 'horse of a different color'. He liked what he saw in the odd colored colt and bought him on the spot. Weaning and halter-breaking occurred on the same frosty January day that Bill brought the colt home.

At the time Alberta Agriculture held a Horse Improvement Show for Alberta bred horses in Red Deer each September. Each breed that participated had a few classes in this two day event, including Yearling Halter, Two Year Old Halter, and Performance Classes for 3 to 5 year olds. All classes were judged by three judges, one of whom was a veterinarian.

Bill traveled with the yearling Topaz Merry Go to compete in the Yearling TWH class and placed at the top in a class of 21 other entries! Returning the following year he once again came home with the top score over a smaller class of 7 or 8 two year olds! The Horse Improvement Program also awarded Topaz Merry Go the distinction of a SUPREME classification.



He went to BC for some training with Cindy Botkin, and to a few shows after that in Alberta, before beginning his career at stud.



TOPAZ stood at Laurindale Stables at Rosalind, AB and later at Shady Lane Stables of Ardrossan, AB.

Meanwhile, Winston and Donna Curtis of Winfield AB had been bitten by the champagne bug. They already owned Cee Dee Canadian Topaz, an ivory champagne TWH son of Topaz and liked the excitement of the unusual coloring that he was siring on some of their mares

In 1999 Winston & Donna and Bill came to an agreement to have TOPAZ pasture breed their 16 registered TWH mares and some others. Bill had decided this was the best opportunity to show Topaz's potential as a stallion worthy of some recognition in the future of the Tennessee Walking Horse breed in Canada and at the same time to add a little color. That first breeding season, after being taught his manners by some 20 pasture mares, TOPAZ showed his utter happiness at being there by settling 19 of the 20. Nine foals from that first foal crop proved to be champagnes! Donna & Winston sold the offspring of TOPAZ and their other stallions through their annual production sales. Their marketing efforts showed success by placing TOPAZ offspring all across Canada, as far away as Nova Scotia.

Topaz is unique in many ways. During the time of his involvement in the Alberta Horse Improvement Program (A.H.I.P.), nothing was known of the 'Champagne' gene. One of the three judges involved in his being designated a Supreme Alberta Bred in 1995, was inquiring as to his whereabouts during a phone conversation in 2004/05. I asked why he remembered him. "Because he was so unique!" he said.

It was not until sometime in 1999 that a university in California was able to isolate and identify the dilution gene that became known as the Champagne gene. Subsequently several Champagne registries were formed throughout the U.S. Suddenly all those color descriptions of horses throughout history that somehow just didn't fit the color designation of palomino, light sorrel or 'blond claybank' as Topaz's papers show, were now to have a true color as some category of

champagne. The TWHBEA registry in Tennessee and several interested TWH people throughout North America started sifting back through old pedigrees and quickly realized and identified the many hundreds of horses that had been incorrectly designated as to color. In our own area of Alberta alone, it became very obvious that champagne is a much sought after choice of color, judging by the number of TWH breeders that now have champagnes in their pastures & barns.

In January of 2000 when Topaz was evaluated and subsequently registered in the Champagne Horse Registry, a personal survey of Tennessee Walking Horses here in Canada, turned up only one other strong possibility and that was a stallion owned by the Youngs of Lac La Biche. It was to be several more years before another Champagne stallion was recognized here in Alberta. To the best of my knowledge it was a horse owned by the Widmers at Okotoks.

Topaz is currently standing in Saskatchewan, where he's been for a few years. There was interest to have him moved to southern Alberta but he is still looking for a new home and a potential two-year lease. Claudia Duncan in Regina has done well with him in cross breeding to Curlys and a few Walkers, but we would like to have him closer to home prior to our eventual move to Mexico.



Topaz Merry Go