



Norman Conquest

A NEARLY EXTINCT BREED COMES TO LIFE

BY | ABBY LUBY

ALLAN HAMID and Linda Osterman fell in love as high-school teachers in the horsey town of Bedford, New York. It was 1970 and the relationship of the two educators caused a stir. To quiet things down, they moved here to Woodbury and married, and, as it turns out, were not that far removed from a horse connection of a different color.

Osterman, who rode horses for pleasure, fell in love with the white Andalusian while study-

ing in Spain. Thirty years ago the breed was rare in the United States, but in 1983 the couple purchased a Spanish Andalusian pair. “We were some of the first people in the United States to breed Andalusians,” says Osterman, who relates that Jackie Kennedy was the first to bring the breed to America. “The Spanish considered them their national treasure and few were exported.”

Hamid, a history teacher for 36 years, did extensive research on medieval warhorses and discovered that among the Andalusian descendants was the once-extinct Spanish-Norman horse, a horse favored by medieval knights for its powerful strength, and shimmering white coat. Genetic studies done at the University of Kentucky confirmed the Norman’s heritage came from the French Percheron and

Spanish Andalusian. “They did blood targeting, which is more accurate than DNA,” says Hamid. “All the information pointed to the Norman horse.”

Realizing that mating the Percheron and the Andalusian might produce the beautiful qualities of this legendary horse, Hamid and Osterman got to work. “We wanted to get the best characteristics and attributes of both,” says Osterman. After eight years of trial and error they got lucky. In 1992, Romantico HHF was

Afortunado Germaniko F, a two-year-old Spanish-Norman stallion, a breed favored by medieval knights for its shimmering white coat.



Romantico H.H.F., owned by Linda and Allan Hamid of Woodbury, in exhibition at the Greenwich Polo Club.

born—a stunning silvery stallion that combined the grace, elegance, and power that Hamid and Osterman were after. Over the years Romantico has sired Spanish-Norman horses worldwide. “We have exported a Spanish-Norman horse to both France and Spain, the first ones to return, as such, to the mother countries,” Hamid explains.

Romantico became a celebrity as the sole American-bred horse of Spanish descent to win a U.S. Equestrian Team ribbon and numerous competitions such as Freestyle Reining. He has made guest appearances at the Greenwich Polo Club, appearing in full armor

mounted by a fully clad knight at competitions and performances. The stallion was immortalized by Breyer Animal Creations, who produced first a plastic version of Romantico (sold at Toys R Us), followed by a special limited edition in porcelain of the armored, medieval horse. The famous Spanish-Norman equine was a guest performer at BreyerFest in 2005 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington.

Despite Romantico’s notoriety, Hamid says the magnificent 1,600-pound horse still needs the codling attention due any beloved pet. “If I don’t come and ride him for a day he gets angry,” says

Hamid. “But it doesn’t last long.” He and the 16-year-old stallion go for daily gallops at a horse farm near their home that sports an indoor riding track and numerous stables set in an expanse of rolling hills and white-fenced paddocks.

In 1991 Osterman and Hamid established the Spanish-Norman Horse Registry, Inc. The couple says reintroducing the Spanish-Norman horse in the 20th and 21st centuries through their stallion, Romantico, has been extremely fulfilling. “It was not only a passion, it has enriched our lives,” says Osterman. “We’ve met incredible people over the years and have had wonderful experiences.”

The Hamids purchased an Andalusian mare from Alejandro Orfila, a well-known Argentine diplomat and secretary general for the Organization of American States who worked with Jimmy Carter on the Panama Canal Treaty in 1977. “We’ve met the Queen of Spain and Prince Philip, the future king of Spain,” recalls Osterman.

“The best thing my wife has brought to this marriage was introducing me to Spain,” says Hamid, laughing heartily. “But we both truly love these horses. They are such majestic, beautiful animals. There is a real joy riding them and interacting with them and then breeding them.”

SOMETHING

is the Sharon Road Race and Family Festival on May 3. “The annual race benefits the Sharon Day Care, enabling the non-profit to offer tuition assistance for local families and maintain its program quality,” says board member and race organizer Heide Hendricks. The family-friendly Sharon Classic kicks off the race season. Renowned for having one of the most beautiful race routes, traversing through the idyllic Main Street of a New England town as well as its scenic rural sections, it draws spectators and top-notch runners from throughout the tri-state region. The day also features a flous Ridgefield Magazine hat. Congratulations! Future contestants will be entered into a drawing for the prize.

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