

PROFILE

Twin Creeks Ranch

For Dr. Glenn Cochran, an emergency room physician who sees the toll of accidents every day, the avoidance of injury is a high priority in his avocation of horse training.

To produce gentle and trustworthy horses for his family and clients, he has long been a practitioner of the French classical method developed by 19th-century riding master Francois Baucher and still controversial today.

"It involves lots of in-hand work with a double bridle," explains Glenn. "First I teach collection, then just one step at a time, then balance, and finally I add impulsion—with an eyedropper. The result is a safe and gentle horse, without major bad habits and ready for further training in a particular discipline."

He began to research training styles about 20 years ago, starting with a John Lyons symposium, after being bucked off by a horse named Snafu.

Today, with just one assistant, he trains up to a dozen outside horses in "boot camp" fundamentals, in addition to those he and his wife Sallie raise on their Twin Creeks Ranch, five miles south of Caldwell. All this while working the night shift in the ER at a Brenham hospital.

A third-generation horseman, Glenn spent his teenage years in College Station, where his father had started the nuclear engineering department at Texas A&M in 1959. He joined 4-H and worked as an apprentice to Buck Kidwell, a well-known Brazos County "horse fixer."

Glenn and Sallie met on a blind date in their senior year at Baylor and exchanged vows a year later. "He offered to buy me a horse if I married him, so I accepted," she jokes.

After he earned his M.D. at Baylor in Houston, the couple moved to Col-



ABOVE: "We use Peruvians to rope calves for tagging and vaccinating."



LEFT: Dr. Glenn and Sallie Cochran on their Peruvian Horses, smooth to ride and good with cattle.

orado for his internship and then to Clovis, N.M., where Glenn served as a flight surgeon at Cannon Air Force Base for two years. After his residency in family practice in Colorado and a year in a Western Slope clinic, the Cochrans moved back to Texas in 1977 and bought their ranch, just under a section, in the rolling post oak savanna of the Brazos River Valley.

"I was 36 when we moved to the ranch," says Sallie, whose father was an Air Force colonel, "and it was my 36th move."

In a post oak grove, they built a Greek Revival house they call Cochran Corral. "It looks like it's been there a hundred years," she says.

They keep a herd of about 100 Hereford cows, which are bred to Brahman bulls to produce the popular F-1 "tiger-stripe" calves, and 35 horses of three breeds: Quarter Horse, Andalusian, and Peruvian.

The Peruvian Horse evolved centuries ago as a result of Spanish conquistadors introducing the Andalusian, Barb and Spanish jennet to the relatively isolated country of Peru. For use on the expansive haciendas, the Old World breeds were skillfully crossed to produce an equine with a smooth and distinctive gait, flamboyant movement, and easy-going temperament. Today the "National Horse of Peru" is admired throughout the United States.

The Cochrans were introduced to the Peruvians in 1983 when Sallie tried her new sidesaddle on one owned by neighbor Eileen Craig. "It's a pleasure and delight to ride aside," says Sallie. "And the horse actually treats you more like a lady."

She and Eileen began giving a few sidesaddle exhibitions at local shows on Peruvians and then formed a drill

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team with six riders, including the Cochran's daughter, Clover. That was the beginning of Texas Ladies Aside, which now has about 15 active riders and over 100 members. Named the official Texas equestrian drill team by the state legislature in 1995, the group has performed to enthusiastic crowds from Lima, Peru, to Calgary, Alberta. The team has won three gaited division titles at the U.S. Equestrian Drill Association national competition and last year finished just two-tenths of a second out of first place in the open division.

Their next venue will be at the Texas Spring Roundup Peruvian Horse Show, to be held in College Station April 25-27.

Back at the ranch, the Peruvians make good cow horses, too, says Glenn.

"You don't bounce all over the saddle. They just cruise along and get the job done quickly and smoothly. They don't have that initial burst of speed that a Quarter Horse does, but you can do almost anything on them.

"And when guests come to ride the trails, they can sit in the saddle for hours and never feel sore afterwards. That's a big score for us."

Twin Creeks foals are imprinted at birth and haltered and handled repeatedly until weaning. Then they are turned out onto a remote grow-out pasture until for the next two years. Periodically, they are gathered for worming, hoof trimming, and haltering.

"We can round them up by just

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parking the stock trailer in the pasture and opening the tailgate," says Sallie. "Those colts are so curious they will climb into the trailer themselves."

At three, they start basic training under saddle.

"We teach them in a slow, relaxed, repetitive manner," says Glenn. "We avoid overworking these youngsters, to let them build strong legs and backs."

"Our Peruvians, both geldings and fillies, then progress to more demanding ranch work. Starting with prowling pastures, with cow dogs alongside, we check for new calves, cattle condition, diseases, and fence problems. Then they are taught to remain calm during the excitement of penning the herd into corrals. Another whole step in the process is to learn sorting, while surrounded on all sides by milling, bawling cattle. The Peruvians actually exhibit a surprising amount of talent in sorting and cutting.

"When working one Peruvian gelding who was at first a bit spooky around cattle, Sallie commented that when he found that he could push them up the alley, it was as if he realized they were more afraid of him than he was of them! He became for a while her main cow horse.

"We use Peruvians to rope calves in the old traditional way for tagging and vaccinating, and we have performed roping and reining demonstrations with them at our national show."

The Cochranes especially enjoy the musical freestyle classes, once appearing as Don Quixote and—on a little Peruvian mule—Sancho Panza.

The couple is fortunate to have their two grown children living on the ranch. Daughter Clover is a sculptor and foundry consultant. Son Bill is a network administrator for a research firm in Bryan. He and his wife Sylvia, also a computer expert, have a two-year-old daughter, Samantha.

"Already she loves the horses," says Sallie, who doubtless foresees a third generation of Texas Ladies Aside. ★

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