

BILL & ANN



Some of the top AQHA halter stallions of yesterday and today have been successfully nurtured by Bill and Ann Lanning's guiding hands. For nearly two decades they put their talents to running one of the best-known stallion stations in the country--Edgewood Farms--for owners Joe Edge and Russell Wood, standing stallions such as Conclusive, Diversified and the incomparable Mr Conclusion. Today, Bill and Ann own Edgewood/Lanning, Inc. of Pilot Point, Texas...where the "Mister" legacy continues.

Their story (and it's a love story) begins in North Carolina...

N LANNING

STANDING THE LEGENDS

by Marilyn Morris Mayer



MR CONCLUSION

BILL SIGNED ON WHEN HE WAS SIXTEEN...

When Bill was sixteen years-old, he went to work after school and on weekends for a noted horse trainer in his hometown of Asheville, North Carolina. Come summer, he was spending all his time at the horse operation known as Chunns Cove Stables. "I'd rode my granddaddy's work horses and mules as a kid, but that was the first time I had any contact with real show horses," Bill admits. The trainer was Glenn Hunnicutt--Ann's dad! (She was all of 12 years-old at the time).

"We broke horses and showed horses," Bill recalls, "...walking horses, gaited horses, and some quarter horses." He notes that Mr. Hunnicutt worked with some very good horses, but he also had a reputation for taking bad horses--horses that had injured people--and turning those horses around into solid citizens. "He was just a natural horse trainer...one of the guys you had to look up to," Bill adds. After high school Bill stayed on with him,

Edgewood/Lanning

living with the Hunnicutts for two years after graduation.

ANN ALWAYS HAD HORSES...

"My dad being a horse trainer, I've never not had a horse," Ann explains. "I got the benefit of growing up around horses so I lived and breathed horses. My dad really had a way with horses and he was the true persona of a horseman. I think, in our industry today, there are a lot of horse people, but not everyone's a horseman." Ann says that oftentimes when a difficult horse was sent to her dad that, after working with the horse just a few hours, the change was remarkable.

Ann's whole family showed horses, her brother and sister, and her mother, too. "We're a close knit family and horses are an additional bond that holds us all together," Ann notes. She says her mom, Dorothy, (or "Dot" as everyone calls her) is a super mother, the kind that was always there for you and was always supportive of everything you wanted to do.

"When I was three years-old my dad gave me a colt...and I had that horse until the horse died at age 28." Ann named the palomino stallion "Trigger" and she notes he was her best friend throughout her childhood. But when 16 year-old Bill Lanning stepped on the property, Trigger had to share his affections from then on.

YOUNG LOVE...

"I was only 12 at the time, so I didn't tell anybody that I had a huge crush on Bill—but I did." Ann says the hardest part was when the girls Bill dated wanted to come see where he worked, and would hang around the barn "ooh-ing and aah-ing" over how great Bill was. "I'd have to stand there and listen to all that stuff," she adds with a laugh, "...and not tell anyone that I had a crush on him, too!" Bill and Ann worked side by side each day and Bill viewed Ann as a little sister. Ah, but time has a way of changing those things.

When Ann turned 18 and Bill was 21, he asked her for a date. Even at that age, it wasn't easy to get Ann's dad's okay. "He was one of those strict southern fathers," she explains. A week after their first date, Bill proposed. On horseback, of course. "There's a road that goes around through the woods in the mountains back there," Bill recalls, "...and we were riding there. Ann always took a good broke horse and I'd take one of the colts that we were breaking to ride; then if something happened she could depend on that broke horse." Bill pauses a moment, then smiles and continues with the story, "I just decided it was time to ask her, so I did. Our first date was October 15th and we got married March 21st."

Ann says her daddy thought the sun rose and set on Bill, but admits her dad wasn't too happy at first that Bill "stole his daughter." It wasn't long, though, before he came around. After a brief weekend honeymoon (her dad wanted them both back to work early that Monday morning) they stayed on working horses with him for two years.

HEADING TO TEXAS...

Ann had always wanted to live in Texas—a childhood dream—and when the opportunity presented itself, the two headed to Texas. In 1979, Bill and Ann signed on with Joe Edge and Russell Wood of Edgewood Farms. At the time, Edgewood was a small operation and they mainly had appaloosas, gradually switching over to quarter horses. "Bill and I have been so blessed in our lives," Ann says. "Not only did we get to work with some super-duper horses—horses beyond your wildest expectation—but also great people like Joe and Russell. They just welcomed us into their life and into their families, and still today we're very, very close to them."

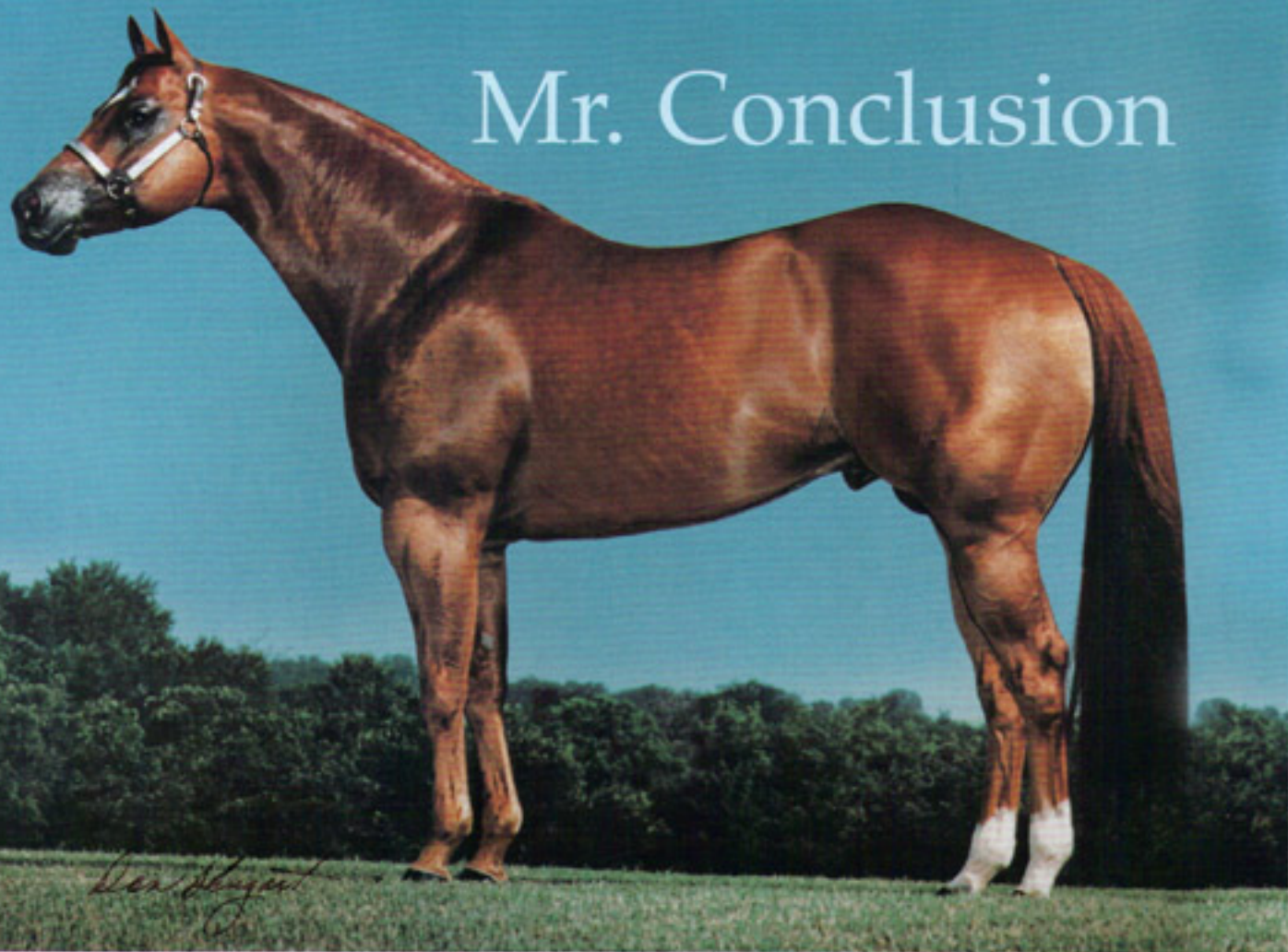
"I had four horses and I hired Bill & Ann to take care of my kids and to teach them and take them to shows," Joe Edge explains. He laughs as he recalls how things just took off from there. "I bought a couple of horses for my children and got them showing and then I basically fell in love with the broodmares and the babies. Ended up with so many broodmares that I had to have a place...then I had so many broodmares that I thought I needed a stud!"

There was no question that Joe had hired the right people to carry out that part of the horse business, as well. "Bill is an expert at handling and breeding, and Ann is, too. That's their niche and their forte," Joe continues. That first stud was Roman Straw Man, an appaloosa stallion that went on to become a leading sire. "He set every record there was; he was a great horse," Joe notes.

Conclusive



Mr. Conclusion



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AQHA HALTER STALLION CONCLUSIVE IS BOUGHT BY EDGEWOOD FARMS...

The next top stud for Edgewood Farms would be Conclusive, whom Joe and Russell purchased after raising Conclusive's first two world champions, Prestigious Maiden and Obvious Conclusion. "We had both of them in the pasture as babies at the same time," Joe recalls, "...and when I made up my mind I wanted to buy a stallion, that's the one I wanted to buy."

For all of Conclusive's attributes as a sire, the stud had a pretty bad reputation at the time that Edgewood bought him as a six year-old. (In the stallion's defense, Joe Edge notes that Conclusive's bad attitude probably was due to the fact that the stud had foundered before they bought him, and subsequently received countless shots and medical treatments while in his stall). In 1983, as Bill and Ann drove to Kerrville, Texas to pick up the stud and bring him to his new home, they were thrilled to get this AQHA World Champion, an own son of the great Impressive. They also gave some serious thought to how they would handle him.

They were counting on the fact that he was going to a new facility with new people and new surroundings to work in their favor...and they decided on two important rules, the first of which was that no one would handle Conclusive but Bill or Ann. Period. If someone came to see him and neither was available at the time, then the visitors were asked to please wait until one of the Lannings could be there. The other rule? Treat him like a horse! Bill says the stud had little turnout at this previous location due to the fact that no one wanted to go in his stall to han-

dle him to take him outside or do anything with him. That soon changed at Edgewood. "We turned him out in the stud pen and treated him like a horse," Bill explains, adding, "If he done something wrong we got after him; if he didn't, we left him alone. That's just the way we handled him."

YOU WANT TO DO WHAT? WHERE???

The "new" Conclusive led for some pretty funny encounters with people who had heard of his bad rep, or even experienced it first hand. About three months after Conclusive arrived at Edgewood, it was time to call on noted horse photographer, Don Shugart, for new photos of the stud. Don wasn't one to ever shy away from a difficult horse, but Ann says he did initially try to sway them into getting someone else to do the photo shoot. Ann told Don to just come to the farm and if for any reason he didn't want to do continue the shoot, they'd pay him his full fee.

When Don arrived and asked where they'd like to do the photos, Ann had another surprise for him. No, she didn't want to do the shoot right outside the barn. She told Don she wanted Bill to take Conclusive out in the pasture by a big stock pond. Oh, and she wanted one more thing. "I wanted all the broodmares right there in the background across the water, and you'd also see them reflected in the water," Ann explains. Bill walked the stud out, decked in his silver halter, and headed out to the pasture with him. Meanwhile, Ann had sprinkled some oats in the grass across the water so the mares would stay right there. "It took us maybe 15 minutes to get the pictures. He stood right there, regal as could be and never acted up, never jumped

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around, never squealed or anything," Ann notes with pride.

She recalls that as they headed back to the barn, Don then shared that when he tried to photograph Conclusive in his former location, he had waited and waited outside the barn ready for the shoot, but they never came out. The stud had apparently trapped two boys in his stall and they couldn't get him out. Ann says after their successful shoot that Don just shook his head and said, "I'm gonna tell you something, Bill Lanning...you're either Superman or you're the greatest stud manager there's ever been."

Another time, when a visitor who hadn't seen Conclusive since his days in Kerrville arrived at the farm, Ann says she told the man, "We're thrilled to death that you came to see him; he's out here in the stud pen--let me go get him." At that point, Ann says the man said something like "Please, tell me you're not going in there with him!" but she just walked in. When the stud saw her and headed to her, she calmly snapped the lead rope on his halter and led him out the gate to set him up. Ann says the fella then shared that he had judged the horse in the past and at that time if you ever lost eye contact with him, he would put you on the ground.

Ann credits the stud's turnaround to Bill's talent, adding that studs are real bright and learn things quickly--good things and bad things. It's just a matter of where you go from there. She says people are always impressed with how quiet and disciplined the studs are at their place--even when there's a whole barn full of studs and you're leading one by the other studs. "To me, Bill is a true horseman. He is a natural; and very knowledgeable."

MR CONCLUSIVE WAS EVER THE GENTLEMAN...

When Conclusive passed away unexpectedly less than a year later, it left a big hole in everyone's heart...and some big shoes to fill in the Edgewood stud barn. Joe Edge searched the country for a son of Conclusive, finally deciding on a 2 year-old Michigan stud in 1984. Bred by Jim Evans and Mark Toteff, the 16 hand sorrel was out of Miss Amber Charge, and had won the Congress as a yearling. His name was Mr Conclusion.

He was an impressive looking horse (those who saw him said he just had a presence about him) who would go on to carve a page in the quarter horse history books as the all-time leading sire of AQHA World Champion and Reserve World Champions--a record that has yet to be equaled today by any horse. He stamped his get with that presence, and it became known as "that Mister look." Some say they could look out in a field and pick out his babies, noting, "Yeah, he (or she) has 'that Mister look.'"

Ann calls Mr Conclusion a superstar in the quarter horse world who was a pleasure just to be with each day. "He was a great horse to be around and the love of our lives," Ann adds. "And you could always tell his babies because they were the first ones to come to you in the pasture." As to what makes a horse like that, Bill has a simple answer, "I think the Good Lord

makes a horse like that."

Ann notes that the Conclusive line was a slow-maturing line and that the majority of the horses seemed to get better and better as they got older. Thus was the case with Mr Conclusion. He won the Congress as a yearling; was AQHA Reserve World Champion Halter Stallion shortly after they purchased him; earned a second AQHA Reserve World title as a 3 year-old; and as a 4 year-old he stepped into the spotlight to garner the 1986 AQHA World Champion Aged Halter Stallion title--the first halter stallion ever to win the World Show unanimously as all 5 judges placed him first. And the great babies with "that Mister look" just kept coming and stepping up to collect their World Show wins.

For 12 years, Mr Conclusion "held court" at Edgewood, accepting visitors from all across the nation and all over the world. "People came from almost every country you can think of," Ann explains. "Mister was so kind and so gentle--he'd just stand there for hours, sometimes with groups of 200 people at a time. The more people, the better he loved it. If they asked if they could pet him, we'd say, 'Sure.'"



(left)
Bill & Ann
with a weanling colt,
Formally Attired



(bottom left)
Bill showing a weanling filly at the 1980
Ft. Worth Stock Show

(bottom)
Ann bottle feeding an
orphan foal
in 1980



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Jim Evans, who raised Mr Conclusion, says he knew the colt was special the moment he hit the ground. "The morning he was born, I called my partner, Mark Toteff, and told him he needed to get out here and take a look. I wasn't sure, but I thought a superstar was just born!" Asked to describe the colt, Jim says it was that long, pretty neck and gorgeous head--and just that look that would one day be called "that Mister look."

Pilot Point veterinarian, Dr. Richard Dennis, who was Edgewood's vet through those years, agrees that Mr Conclusion was a great stallion but he believes that it also took the combination of Joe Edge's business savvy and the Lannings talent with horses to bring the stallion to his incredible peak of success. "Joe Edge had the business talent to let the world know how good that horse was," Dr. Dennis says. "It took Joe Edge to bring him to the forefront while Bill and Ann were taking care of the horses, running the place and making it work."

THE END OF AN ERA...

In 1996, Joe Edge sold Mr Conclusion to Classic Acres in Ocala, Florida...and within days, he sold Edgewood Farms. After 12 years of caring for Mr Conclusion, Bill and Ann personally delivered the stallion to his new home in Florida. (Sadly, Mr Conclusion was put down just two years later due to complica-



Jacks Are Lucky Too

tions of surgery. He was laid to rest on the ranch at Classic Acres with his head facing west toward Texas).

Following the sale of Edgewood, Joe Edge bought a couple hundred acres in Pilot Point and invited Bill and Ann to pick out a choice 50-acre piece to purchase. He also gave them the coveted Edgewood name to use. Thus Edgewood/Lanning, Inc. was created with Bill and Ann Lanning as sole owners. "I gave them permission to use Edgewood because it's a good name...and it was part of them, too," Joe Edge confirms. Ann laughs and notes that for years they had been receiving mail addressed to Mr. & Mrs. Edgewood.

"They're a unique couple," Joe goes on to comment on Bill and Ann. "They are dedicated, they love the horses and they love caring for the horses. They would do without themselves, to care for the horses or their dogs. It's not a thing where it's five o'clock and they turn out the lights and go home. If it takes 'til midnight, if it takes 'til two in the morning...they are there."

Dr. Dennis agrees. "They're the greatest people there are; they help their friends out...and when a friend calls in the middle of the night with a problem, they get up and go." He is proud to have the Lannings as close friends, not just as clients, and says Bill Lanning is the one he would want to have his back should the need ever arise.

John Lewis, of Atwater, Ohio, recalls the time, years ago, that his trainer, Randy Jacobs, took him to see Bill and Ann when John's daughter, Amanda, was showing for the first time at the AQHA Youth World. It was at Edgewood Farms where Mr Conclusion was the leading sire. "I walked in, met Bill and he shook my hand, and then took his time to show me anything and everything--and didn't care if you had all the money in the world or not two nickels to rub together." They became good friends and much later, when John bought his AQHA stud, Kid Silent, he says there was no question that they would stand him at stud with the Lannings. "They're just great people. They'd do anything for you and they go out of their way to make sure things are right. They're probably the most honest people that you'd ever meet in the horse business."

Whitesboro, Texas halter trainer Jason Smith worked at Edgewood Farms for about four years during the time that Bill and Ann were managers there noting that they were great people to work for and with...and that they have continued to have a great relationship with them to this day. "Bill is just a really good,



Kid Silent

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down-to-earth solid guy...and whatever he tells you, that's the way it's going to be." Jason says. "And Ann has a passion for animals, period. Whether it's horses, cats or dogs, she loves the animals--and makes sure that the care given to them is the very best they can have." He adds, "They work hard and treat people fairly. They're great people."

"They're real down-to-earth--real good people," says halter trainer, Ted Turner, of Aubrey, Texas. "They're the best at what they do."

"They run one of the best breeding operations in the United States," says Jim Evans. "They have an awful good eye for good horses...and there's not a thing they wouldn't do for you. I've never met nicer people in my life."

Cathleen Clucas, of Pilot Point, stands her AQHA World Champion western pleasure horse, Jacks Are Lucky Too, with Bill and Ann, and counts them as great neighbors and friends. "Bill is extremely personable and very knowledgeable...and a man who would get up and help you at two o'clock in the morning, if you need it." Cathleen says Ann is always the first one to help out in a situation. "And she is extremely knowledgeable in the industry, and very entertaining with the numerous stories and experiences she can tell about it. As a couple, they are so much fun to be around."

(Ann's love of animals included a lioness that Joe and Russell purchased when the cub was four days-old and gave to them. "Elsa" as they called her lived at Edgewood Farms for many years and then moved to the new ranch, Edgewood/Lanning, Inc. when it was built. "Elsa was a very special part of our lives for 16 wonderful years. In fact, she even slept in bed with us until she weighed about 250 pounds," Ann says. Elsa is buried just in front of their show barn under a big oak tree with a simple little marker with her name.)

Since 1998, Bill and Ann have put their energy and their talents into making Edgewood/Lanning, Inc. a noted stallion station, standing about a dozen stallions each year for various clients, and carrying on the Mr Conclusion legacy with a stud of their own and those Mister-bred mares. With all that goes on in the day-to-day operation of such a large stud farm, Bill credits Josh Larman for helping it all run smoothly. "He's a great guy, and a great family man who has worked for us for several years," Bill says. "We also fit and condition show horses here as room permits,

and Josh works on that end of it, too."

As always, the Lannings are pleased to open their doors to visitors welcoming each and every one who comes to the ranch--whether it be to view the stallions, show off the babies, or look at the show horses. As for why and how Bill and Ann Lanning have been so successful through the years, Bill (again a man of few words), has a ready answer. "The Good Lord." Pausing a moment, he continues, "We let Him guide us in everything we do, and we treat people like we want to be treated." A simple recipe for success for sure.

Bill and Ann never had children, but he notes with a smile, "We've got a hundred of 'em out here in the pasture, though!"



Elsa

