



SAVED FROM THE slaughterhouse

SINCE LEAVING TEXAS, A FORMER SIX-FIGURE SALE
PURCHASE TRAVELED A LONG AND WINDING ROAD
BEFORE FINDING A HOME IN NEW JERSEY

BY SHELBY DOWNS

Cats may be known for having nine lives, but a lucky horse may get a few too. Mr. Campbell Sir, originally named Nacho Pancho and briefly called Mr. Feisty Pants before his latest incarnation as Flynn, has had his share of identities.

After a journey that took him from two trips through the Texas sale ring to the West Virginia claiming ranks to an auction for potential slaughter in Pennsylvania, Mr. Campbell Sir has a happy ending to go with his new name. He also has several people to thank for it – namely Terry Finley, founder and president of West Point Thoroughbreds, and Jo Deibel, president and director of Angel Acres Horse Haven Rescue.

Mr. Campbell Sir, a son of Pancho Villa, was bred in Texas by William Miller and Caroline Hicks. His dam is the Native Tactics mare Luna Negra, an unraced sister to seven winners including Troyanna (GB), a stakes performer and dam of two Group winners in Europe. After selling for \$30,000 as a yearling, Mr. Campbell Sir, then named Nacho Pancho, was consigned by Leprechaun Racing, agent, to the 2001 Fasig-Tipton Texas 2-Year-Olds in Training Sale. There the chestnut colt caught the eye of Finley, who purchased him for \$100,000, at that time the highest price paid for a Texas-bred juvenile since Fasig-Tipton took over the state sale in 1997.

“He’s just a very solid colt,” Finley said shortly after the sale. “He has all the physical attributes you look for in a young horse, and we thought he was an exceptional mover that makes good use of himself. We were very pleased to get him at that price; we thought we might have to go a little higher.”

West Point Thoroughbreds, a public syndicate based in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, first

entered the newly christened Mr. Campbell Sir in a \$27,000 maiden special weight contest at Lone Star Park, but the colt pulled up and did not finish. The next time he faced the starter, Mr. Campbell Sir finished third in a trial that landed him a spot in the \$168,700 Texas Thoroughbred Association Sales Futurity. In his first and only start in stakes company, the colt ran third behind eventual 2001 Texas Champion 2-Year-Old Colt/Gelding Nuclear Assembly. After two poor showings at Fair Grounds, Mr. Campbell Sir returned to Lone Star to wire a field of maiden claimers.

In four years on the track, Mr. Campbell Sir ran his record to 22-2-2-3 with earnings of \$37,777 while competing exclusively in sprints. In October 2002, he was claimed from West Point and trainer Charles Schneider at Charles Town in West Virginia, where, aside from one start at Colonial Downs, he spent the rest of his career. His last start came in January 2004, when he finished fourth while running for a \$3,500 claiming tag.

On March 7 of this year, Jo Deibel, along with Bev Strauss, director of Mid-Atlantic Horse Rescue, watched a chestnut Thoroughbred sell for \$500 at an auction in New Holland, Pennsylvania.

“We hadn’t realized it was a killer buyer who bid on him or else we would have bid on him earlier,” Deibel said. “We found him in the slaughter pen, and he wasn’t real happy to be there so we gave \$600 to the killer buyer. We paid more for him because he is larger and has, in the words of the killer buyers, ‘more meat on his bones.’”

Deibel brought the gelding back to Angel Acres in Glenville, Pennsylvania, where his spirited demeanor soon earned him the nickname “Mr. Feisty Pants.” Deibel ran his tattoo number and learned the 6-year-old gelding formerly raced as Mr. Campbell Sir for West Point Thoroughbreds. She then contacted Finley, who immediately offered to help Mr. Campbell Sir and cover all the expenses, including the price of the horse, vetting, transportation and temporary boarding. In less than three days, he was adopted by Emilio and Loretta Capobianco of Lumberton, New Jersey, and he will live out the rest of his days under his new barn name, Flynn. According to the Capobiancos, Flynn is Gaelic for “my red-headed son,” a throwback to the gelding’s chestnut father, Pancho Villa, and grandsire, Secretariat, who was often called “Big Red.”

“When we lose them through the claiming ranks, it’s hard to keep up with them,” Finley said. “Unfortunately a lot of them end up the same way. We have a couple that we’ve placed, but there are a lot of horses out there. It’s an uphill struggle for all of us.”

Organizations like Angel Acres work to reduce that struggle. In addition to remote-hosting horses whose owners can no longer care



KNOWN TODAY AS FLYNN, THE TEXAS-BRED SON OF PANCHO VILLA IS NOW A RESIDENT OF NEW JERSEY.

for them, Angel Acres rescues slaughter-bound horses, mostly Thoroughbreds, and lists them for adoption on 30 different websites. Between April and December 2004, the organization successfully adopted out nearly 50 horses.

Unfortunately, many other former racers aren’t as lucky as Mr. Campbell Sir. Of the 80 horses Angel Acres has rescued from slaughter since April 2004, only five breeders have responded to the letters Deibel sent them.

“With the help of Terry, Mr. Campbell Sir will be well taken care of from here on out and will not be subject to the fate that awaits so many ex-racers – the decline through the ranks, the sale at auction and possibly a trip to the slaughterhouse,” she said.

According to Deibel, approximately 67,000 horses were slaughtered in the U.S. last year. In 2003, the Texas Thoroughbred Association took an official stance against horse slaughter following an investigative article by *The Blood-Horse* that revealed 1986 Kentucky Derby (G1) winner Ferdinand most likely died in a Japanese slaughterhouse. Deibel hopes Mr. Campbell Sir’s happy ending will inspire breeders, trainers and owners to remember their former colorbearers.

“We all need to be part of the solution,” she said. “Maybe this story will encourage others in the industry to step up and help.” ★