

Small Breeders

GREYMOOR FARMS

by Morgan Moore

BIG RESULTS



Left and above: 2000 U.S. National Champion Stallion, 1999 Canadian National Champion Stallion, and 1999 Scottsdale Champion Stallion **First Cyte** (Out of Cyte x ROL Wild Flower), purchased by Donna as a two year old.

with *Arabian Horse World* to discuss what has made her small program such a resounding success, and to talk about the bay colt she met in 1997 that changed her life forever.

How would you characterize your breeding program?

My program is small, focused and successful. I breed and show halter horses that are able to go on to performance careers. I generally have three broodmares, averaging one to two foals a year.

How did First Cyte come into your life?

I purchased two mares in 1994 and began showing them in halter. Owning a stallion was not part of my plan, but there I sat at a Minnesota Class A show in 1997 when a dark bay colt trotted into the two-year-old halter class and into my heart. I couldn't take my eyes off that young colt! I had to take a closer look so I walked outside, where First Cyte (Out of Cyte x Rol Wild Flower) was waiting to return for the Senior Championship, after winning the two-year-old class and the Junior Championship. I watched him from a distance and I knew! Three days later, First Cyte was mine and our future together had begun.

In the early 90s, the CEO of a technology company was engaging in long hours of work and a rigorous travel schedule. She was a powerhouse business-woman, driving her company's success, who passed her free time (what little there was) nurturing a budding passion for the Arabian horse. She poured over pedigrees, dissected the success of prominent farms, and studied the market for Arabian horses. This passion blossomed in 1995 with the establishment of Greymoor Farms. It was then that Donna Hentges formally established herself as a breeder of Arabian horses. However, Donna didn't follow convention in her pursuit of breeding Arabian horses. She has bred only a small number of foals (sometimes only one a year), but has managed to produce seven National Champions from her program across multiple disciplines. This month she sat down



Donna's foundation mare and national champion producer **Padrons Nike** (Padrons Psyche x Niya), above, dam of the multi-National Champion **Relentlyss** (First Cyte x Padrons Nike), right.



How did First Cyte influence the formation of your breeding program?

My breeding program was built entirely around First Cyte, the 2000 U.S. National Champion Stallion, 1999 Canadian National Champion Stallion, and 1999 Scottsdale Champion Stallion, whose pedigree on both sides boasts generations of winners producing winners in both halter and performance. He is a beautiful, correct animal who truly and honestly represents the characteristics of the ancestors in his pedigree. First Cyte also has that amazing Arabian temperament — a gentleman in the training and breeding barns but a no-holds-barred competitor in the showring.

As I studied First Cyte I developed criteria that are the foundation of my program. I wanted to breed animals that had (1) great pedigrees, (2) physical attributes that supported the pedigrees, and (3) great attitudes. The foals I bred that went on to be show horses taught me that I needed to add a fourth criterion. Call it "heart" or "charisma," but whatever you call it, I knew it when I saw it and it was irresistible.

Who are your foundation mares and how did you select them?

My foundation mares were carefully acquired. I learned that "like begets like." Foals should look like their parents. I knew which First Cyte traits I wanted to breed on, so I tried to find mares that had all the visible traits I was after. My plan was to breed strength to strength. If the visible traits were not there, it was crucial that these traits were in the pedigree of the mare. I also looked at the historical ability of the mare's ancestors to produce winners. I loved the older mares and bought proven producers whenever possible. I didn't just look for mares that were being offered for sale. I knew which bloodlines I was after, did my research, and actively tracked down mares I wanted and tried to buy them. I couldn't always get them the first time I tried, but I am persistent and that persistence paid off over time.

My first two foundation mares were Klassic (Bask Clasix x Khemogina) and Padrons Nike (Padrons Psyche x Niya). Klassic produced Drama Qyeen (by First Cyte), a National Champion producer herself, and Padrons Nike produced

multi-National Champion Relentlyss, currently AHA's all-time leading purebred halter gelding at the National level with 14 National Championships, plus multiple performance top tens.

What lasting impact do you feel your foundation mares will have on the breed?

My foundation mares are carrying on the legacy of winners producing winners. For example, Klassic produced seven champions, two of those being national champions and four, producers of national winners. Now, Klassic's daughters and granddaughters are carrying on her legacy as I'd hoped that they would. Klassic's dam Khemogina was the dam of six champions. Khemogina's dam Darling Gin, produced three champions and three producers of National winners. A foundation mare must come from generations of good producing mares.

What, do you feel, will be First Cyte's lasting impact on the breed?

I believe that First Cyte will be remembered most for his daughters, which have been both successful show horses and producers of winners at the



Top left: Another of Donna's foundation mares, national champion producer **Klassic** (Bask Clasix x Khemogina). First Cyte's daughters have been both successful show horses and producers of winners at the highest levels. Here is 2004 U.S. National Champion Sweepstakes Yearling Filly **Drama Qyeen** (First Cyte x Klassic), top right, and **Cinnamon N Spice VLA** (First Cyte x Cinnamon Candy V), bottom left, who produced last year's Gold Champion All Nations Cup filly at Aachen.



highest level. Two examples: Cinnamon N Spice VLA produced last year's Gold Champion All Nations Cup filly at Aachen, and Drama Qyeen is a multi-National Champion mare herself has already produced Euphoryia (by Its Sshow Time), a National Champion, and Entycing (by Magnum Psyche), a National Top Ten. Euphoryia has just produced her first foal while Entycing will have her first foal in 2017. I believe that her 2016 colt, by Kanz Albidayer, is the best foal she has produced to date.

Because I stood First Cyte at my small farm, and not with a trainer, I

knew he would breed fewer mares, which meant that those mares had to be of the highest quality. In 2015 Arlene Magid, the noted pedigree researcher, dropped me a note and told me that at that time First Cyte had the all-time highest percentage of champions of any U.S. National Champion Stallion. Now that's impact!

What advice would you give to a breeder just starting out who is in the process of mare selection?

Because I was initially breeding just to First Cyte I studied his pedigree and his physical traits and selected mares that I thought would cross well with him. If I were starting out today, and did not own a stallion, I'd look for older mares that were proven producers, using pedigree research, even if I had to pay to have it done, on the dams of the dams

of the dams. That is how my foundation broodmares were selected. There are a lot of pretty mares out there that have produced nothing of note. Do your research! If you purchase older mares you can go back and look at which stallion lines crossed the best with them. Then focus your stallion search on stallions that have those lines in their pedigree. I hate it when people are looking for a stallion to "fix" something on their mare. I know no horse is perfect, but you should get as close to perfect as you can in your broodmares so that the stallion you select enhances and expands upon the mare's attributes, not "fixes" her problems. Again, breeding strength to strength.

I'll never forget a comment that I heard one year at Scottsdale. After the champion stallion was crowned, a man sitting behind me said, "Well, I guess



we all know who we'll be breeding to next year." While a showing win can certainly be part of your selection criteria for a stallion, it shouldn't be the only one. True breeders breed for generations, not for the "flavor of the month."

How have you selected outside sires to bring into your program?

I selected outside sires for my First Cyte daughters in much the same way I selected my broodmares. I knew all I needed to know about the daughters I was breeding, so I looked for stallions that would complement the attributes of each of my "girls." The Internet is a wonderful, valuable tool in the stallion selection process. Once I found a stallion that I liked (physical attributes, pedigree, show record) I researched his foals, looking for the mare lines that crossed the best with that stallion as well as considering what the foals looked like as youngsters and what they accomplished later on.

When did you know Drama Qyeen was going to be a star?

Drama Qyeen's dam was older when she had Drama Qyeen. The mare stayed down in the stall resting for quite a while after foaling. The filly got up before the mare and within minutes pitched a fit because the mare wasn't up. Hence the name Drama Qyeen. My experience has been that the truly great ones are great the minute they are born. It was that way with Drama Qyeen. She was an hour old and I knew.

What is your most memorable horse show experience?

After standing in the showing with First Cyte when he was named U.S. National Champion Stallion, I thought that was the most emotion I would ever feel. Four years later, however, those feelings were eclipsed as I stood in the showing with Drama Qyeen, a First Cyte daughter that I bred, just named U.S. National Champion Sweepstakes Yearling Filly. I highly recommend this to any breeder. There is no better feeling than seeing a horse you bred wearing the roses.

What do you feel, as a breeder, is your greatest accomplishment?

For me, my greatest accomplishment has been achieving

the goals I set for myself when Greymoor Farm was established. I've made living with these animals on my farm a way of life, and I look forward to seeing my breeding program carried on through the sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters I've bred.

What advice would you like to share with new breeders?

This is an easy business to get lost in. I've seen a lot of people enter the business with the goal of being a breeder only to exit the business in a few years. You don't need to breed thirty mares a year to produce winners. You need to breed one great mare to a stallion that is a good match. Buy the best mare you can, and do your homework. Most successful breeders know the value of bringing new breeders into our business and are generous with their time and their opinions. Talk to them and learn not only from what they have accomplished but from the mistakes they've made. The key is to know what you want to produce and take the long view.

What is the best advice that you have been given by a breeder?

To educate myself and then breed what I liked. If you follow that advice you are less likely to get caught up in fad breeding and more likely to develop a program that is known for certain characteristics that are faithfully reproduced. Greymoor-bred horses generally have beautiful necks, big eyes, and large round jowls. They are balanced and bred with an eye toward a performance career once halter is behind them.

What breeding programs have most inspired your own program?

I read and studied everything I could get my hands on about Lenita Perroy's breeding program. I didn't stop until I had a chance to meet her. Over the years we have become friends and I remain fascinated by what she accomplishes.

Any other secrets to share?

My "secrets" are focus, dedication, hard work arising from an all-consuming love for this breed with an immense desire to leave the breed better for my presence as a breeder.