



“Cowboy Conference Call”

by R.S. Riddick



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Lovable Lightning

By Dan Talbot

Champion trainer Pete Lichau has known WA White Lightning for 17 of his 20 years, and there was always something uncanny about the Half-Arabian gelding.

Start with his shocking coloration: all white with a chestnut head shading to charcoal around the eyes and muzzle, a white stripe and mane, black forelock and tail, and a big chestnut “war plate” on his chest.

Then there is his personality, which Pete describes as “spiritual.”

“He looks into your soul. I *listen* to him more than I *tell* him. He actually picks out the people he decides to bond with, and his communication with them is almost like talking.”

Bred by Betty Wheeler of Crowley, White Lightning is a son of the chestnut Spanish Arabian stallion Vallejo Macho and out of a grey grade mare.

He was purchased by Colleen Grounds as a three-year-old, and Pete trained him for her.

“We competed him in area Arabian shows but never qualified for Nationals. Toward the end of the 2004 season, with a little money left in the budget, we decided to take Lightning to the two-week Pinto World Championship Show in Tulsa. We drove in on a flat tire, and the Chevy truck door fell off as we got out - not a good omen. I was really nervous, there at my first Pinto show with a basically unproven horse.”

Pete and Colleen could scarcely believe it when they came back to

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Lovable Lightning

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Texas with two world championships in hunter and Western pleasure, two reserve world championships, a Top Five, a Top Ten, and two PtHA Registers of Merit.

“Where did *that* horse come from?” people were saying,” remembers Pete. “By the time we left, Lightning *owned* Tulsa.”

In seven trips to the Pinto World, even with a six-year hiatus, they accumulated 37 world placings. In the years they skipped, the colorful horse actually moped around the barn, says Pete.

This year was Lightning’s show finale, and he added two Top Fives at the World Show in June as he entered retirement.

Although he has been Pete’s personal horse since 2010, Lightning has bonded with several young Rose Gate riders, including Betsy West, who has cerebral palsy, and nine-year-old Jason John. “He’s impacted a lot of lives over his 20 years,” says Pete.

These days at his Rose Gate Farm in Argyle, he keeps about 15 horses in training, with the assistance of a staff of five and a couple of interns. Currently, he has nine show horses and over the next three months, Pete and his team will compete at the Morgan Horse Club of Texas Open Show in McKinney, the Andalusian World Cup in Las Vegas, this International Friesian World & Grand National Show in Springfield, Ohio, and several smaller Texas shows. He also offers riding instruction to a few clients at a time, who must be “engaged, goal-oriented, and all-in.”

Now in retirement, Lightning will continue to be Jason’s special horse and will still accompany the Rose Gate team to horse shows, following Pete around the grounds, unbridled, like a dog. “He loves the activity, he loves the people...and he loves the camera!”

For more information, see pages 12 and 27.

TOP LEFT: Pete Lichau takes a farewell bow at the end of White Lightning’s show career at the Pinto World Championship Horse Show. Jeff Kirkbride Photography.

BOTTOM LEFT: Lightning became a therapy horse for Betsy West, making her feel special for three years, and has helped young Jason John fill his room with ribbons. David Williford photo.



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