

Ambitions Fulfilled

by Christine Davies

Part One

Why an Andalusian? Who knows about them? Are there any in the UK? These were questions few people were interested in back in 1966. I had been competing at Wembley in the Combined Training Class, when I was invited to have breakfast with a mutual friend and the great Nuno Olivera. This meeting led to me having a ride on Corsario, one of the young stallions which Nuno had brought to England for his displays. Riding this lovely horse was like dying and going to heaven. It was such a thrill. My ride was even mentioned in a short interview with Nuno by Horse and Hound. I still have the cutting in an album to this day.

It was eleven years later in 1977, as a result of my friendship with Mike Curson, whom I had taught to ride five years previously, that we decided to try and buy some Andalusian horses and form a stud. Mike had the only independent A.I. centre for pig breeding in the UK and he had been exporting semen and stock all over Europe, including Spain. Hence the opportunity to bring back some horses on an empty livestock lorry returning from Spain.

I had to start somewhere, so I rang the Spanish Embassy and they kindly gave me the address of the Association of Spanish Horse Breeders. My subsequent letter to them was received by a wonderful lady, Senora Maria Paz Murga Igual, who was the secretary at the time. After reading my letter she wrote back to say that she would love to help me find some horses and she gave me a list of all the Andalusian Horse Breeders in Spain. Surprisingly, there

were only fifty breeders registered in Spain at that time. It is amazing how in the past twenty years, even in Spain, how the breed has expanded and developed. I will always treasure the friendship and advice given by Maria Paz. Not only in pointing me towards the good breeders, but her generosity with her time when I finally went to Spain on my buying mission.

The next stage of this venture led me to write to every registered breeder of Andalusian Horses, requesting information of horses for sale. I am afraid that this was not very successful as I had very few replies. In fact some replies were still arriving twelve months later. It gave the word "Manana" a somewhat broader definition. During this time I had also been to see Ray Saunders

in Somerset. Ray had recently imported two horses from Spain with the assistance of Neil Dougall, an Englishman deeply involved with the Andalusian breed and closely linked with the establishment of the American Andalusian Association. I was able to contact Neil who gave me some pointers and kindly offered me some help should I need it.

Some time before going to Spain, I took part in a Phone-In radio programme called "Tuesday Call" which, as some may recall, tried to give listeners assistance with any subject and put them in contact with other listeners. I asked if there was anyone listening in who owned an Andalusian or who could give me any more information regarding the breed. I had one reply, from Christine Neeson, who many of our members will know.

Christine wrote me a lovely letter telling me all she knew about the horses and, in particular, about her own horse El Gallego Andaluz, whom her friends had found looking rather poor and forlorn in a monas-



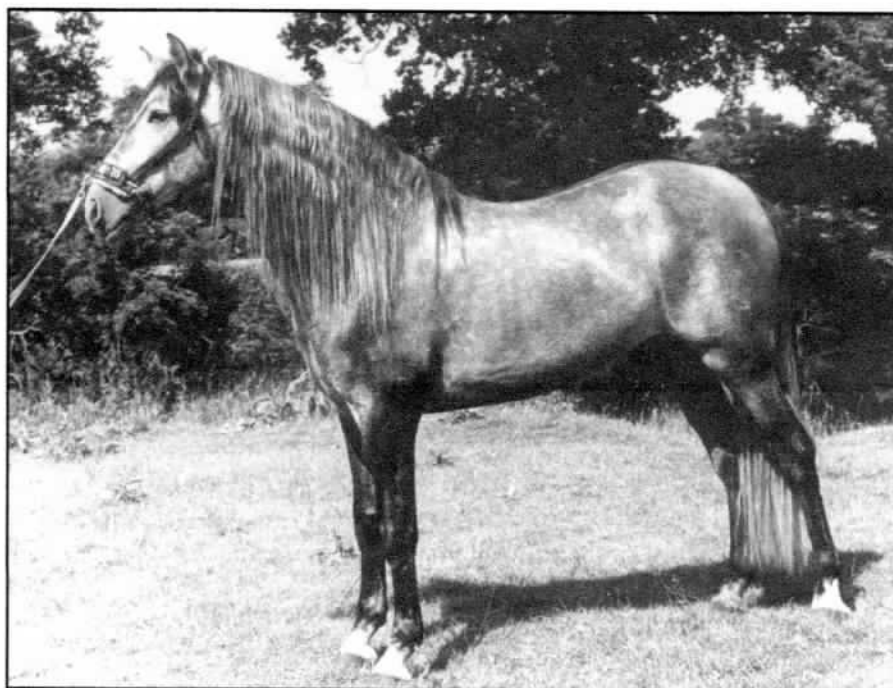
tery garden in Spain. He was apparently brought over to England with a consignment of donkeys but Christine did not get any papers with him. Christine loved the Andalusian breed and a few years later bought Campanero XIV, the horse she now stands at stud.

We had researched and planned my visit for about a year and I finally departed England on August 20th 1978; destination Madrid. The following day I met up with Maria Paz Murga Igual in the lovely Hotel Valasquez. Further plans were made and telephone calls confirmed arrangements.

The very next morning I was off to South Western Spain, to Badajos in the heart of Extremadura. The train journey lasted eight hours, through ever changing and beautiful countryside. The carriage was packed with people who were obviously wondering what this mad young Englishwoman was doing travelling across Spain on the train. I found myself having to try and hold a conversation with curious Spaniards wanting to know everything about me and what I was doing there. Finally I arrived in Badajoz and was met at the station by Maria Paz's eldest son who, I believe, worked for the Ministry of Agriculture in that area. He kindly delivered me to my hotel and later entertained me at dinner. Tomorrow, the real business of my trip was to begin. We were going to meet Senor Francisco Fernandez Daza, who is a highly respected breeder of Andalusian horses and an old friend of Maria Paz's family.

Early next morning we set off along empty roads with piles of melons staked up in various places awaiting collection. The road was almost deserted apart from the odd donkey or mule pulling a cart. This is a land of stark contrast, vast acres of fertile land but with some dry, rocky and barren areas. We arrived in Almendralejo, where we finally met Senor Fernandez Daza and his wife. We were given a quick cup of coffee and then we were off to see the horses.

It was a short trip out of the village by road, then we turned up a dry stony track into what I can only describe as a wilderness. In fact we



Ultimado II at four years old, soon after his arrival in England

did not go near a road for the rest of the day. The first place we visited was a small finca which housed all the young stallions. I think I saw more than a dozen beautifully behaved horses being shown with great style and obvious pride. As we had arrived I noticed one of the three year olds being lunged in the Picadero. To me he looked the perfect Andalusian, with classic proportions and movement. Seeing him at close quarters a little later impressed me even more and a big tick went beside his name in my notebook. His name was Ultimado II. He was the son of the very well known stallion Hosco I.

We were to return to this location later to study all the stud books of Fernandez Daza. But first we carried on to another location to see the brood mares and the fillies. They were gathered under some olive trees growing in this somewhat desolate landscape and as we approached a little scrap of a filly came boldly out to greet us. This was Convenida, who later turned out to be our foundation mare. She was small for her age but had a lovely charm all of her own and a very self assured nature. I felt an immediate attraction to her so asked about her background. Apparently she had been orphaned at an early age, but was of good breeding; again with Terry blood in her veins. I had a strong gut feeling that she would

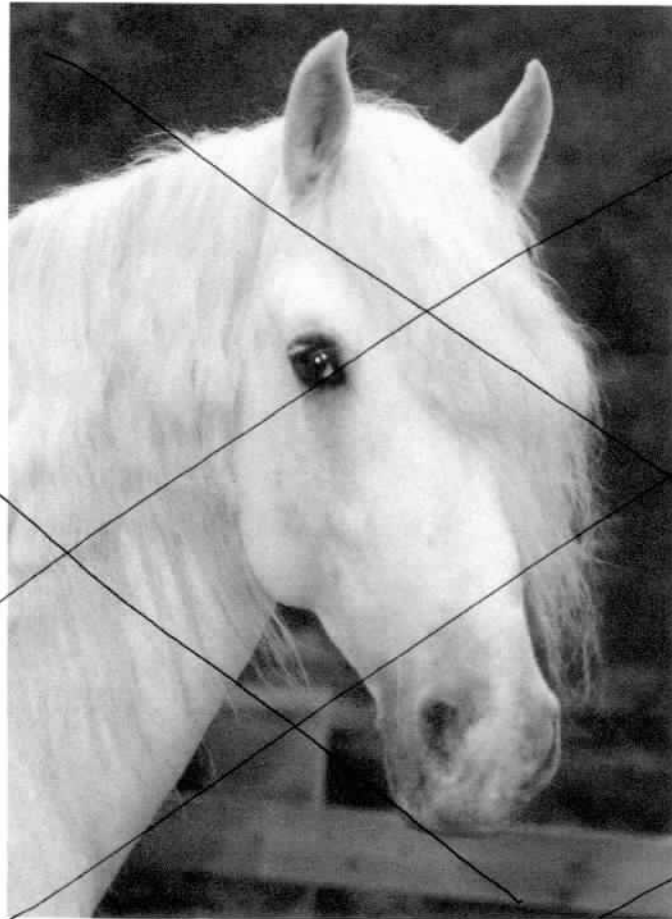
make a good brood mare and produce stock better than herself. History tells us how right this intuition was to be.

Diplomada was only five months old when I saw her. A very attractive foal standing amongst another group of mares I was looking at. Again I was attracted to her and although Fernandez Daza did not want to sell any females, as their job at the stud was to reproduce more horses, I got my way eventually and he reluctantly agreed to sell them to me.

We had seen six or seven large groups of horses during the day and I was invited the next day to see even more. I couldn't believe that anyone could have so many horses on one stud farm. Here in England twenty breeding horses would be considered a large stud.

The day had been a long one and I had seen so many horses that I was really glad that I had taken notes for reference later on. We returned to Almendralejo and Fernandez Daza's house for a welcome drink and talked about the horses, their breeding and most importantly, if we could do business.

The stallion I had seen and admired at the beginning of the day, Ultimado II, was apparently earmarked for another buyer in Spain. But Senor Daza could see how much I wanted him. I think that the thought of one of his horses being exported to England intrigued him. I will always



CREMA DE LA CREMA
ANDALUSIANS

INTRODUCE

COLORIN 1

Sire: Arorio

Dam: Nereida II

*15.3rd Grey Stallion, 9 ins Bone
Fully Approved for Breeding
Previously stood at stud on the Continent
Standing for the First Time in this country for the
following season.*

Enquiries to:-
Peter & Lizzy Nicholson
Tel: 01508 482550

be indebted to Fernandez Daza and his wife for their kind hospitality and the help he gave us in eventually getting the horses home. It had been such a lovely day seeing so many wonderful horses, most of them living in herds roaming the open countryside.

That evening back in my hotel in Badajoz there was a telephone message awaiting me from my husband in England regarding an invitation to go and see the horses of Hijos de D. Jose Marin y Ayala in Huelva. This was ironic as I had written to them six months previously. Call it coincidence that they should respond whilst I was in Spain. I must admit that I was tempted to go but it would entail another long train journey, so I reluctantly declined the offer. I was by this time also extremely tired, the responsibility of buying horses for someone else, and being on my own in a foreign country was beginning to tell. I felt happy within myself. I had already found the horses I wanted as the

nucleus of our new stud, so , the following day I returned to Madrid by train and got on the next flight home.

Back in England Mike Curson and my husband Jeremy were eager to hear how the trip had gone and I was pleased to be back and excited to tell them of this adventure. Although we discussed a number of horses from my notes that I thought could be considered Mike decided on my choice of Ultimado II, Convenida and Diplomada. I quickly rang Fernandez Daza and he agreed for the sale to go ahead.

We were getting on with the daunting task of arranging the horses transport. From Badajoz to Barcelona, a trip of 650 miles to the farm where our own transport was taking its load of pigs. This had to be carried out so that they arrived at the farm together. Then a major hitch came in the shape of a telephone call

from Fernandez Daza to say all the Ministry Veterinary Officers had gone on strike and therefore no papers could be signed to enable us to move the horses.

To be continued in Part 2 in the Winter issue.

Below: Convenida at 3 yrs old with Christine Davies

