



**Transcript of interview with Howard Clark on Casey Radio, as part of the Equine Show (Thursdays at 8am) with hosts, Geoff Ablett, Sharon Wyatt and Gary Hartigan.**

**The Equine Show discusses all aspects of the horse and horse activities. Experts from many areas of the horse world are involved in the show e.g. Horse Breeding, training programs, horse care, diet, pasture care, all equestrian activities, thoroughbred racing, harness racing, fire safety for your horses and more. The show can be listened to live using Windows media player.**

**Casey Radio: Can you tell us how this love-affair with horses started?**

**Howard Clark:** It goes back to my grandfather...the stud started in 1902, that's how long I gauge the Souvenir bloodline goes back to. Through my father, I took over in 1962. Souvenir was born in 1960 and I took him to the Royal Melbourne Show where he won. Someone asked me what his service was and I didn't know what a service fee was then! Off the top of my head, I said 40 guineas and came home with a book of 10 mares. I thought I was made! It's gone from there ever since.

**Casey Radio: So Souvenir was by a jumping horse, by Request?**

**Howard Clark:** Yes, he was by Request, who was my father's stallion. He ran him in a paddock with a few mares but in those days, jumping wasn't a big thing. They didn't have the Olympic discipline of jumping as we know it now, they had the hurdle jumps and that was about it. But they [the Request horses] could certainly jump, we always knew that. The first horse to come out of the first crop was Burgundy, who Lindsay Ball had—he was Australian Showjumping Champion when he was five years old. That's unheard of nowadays because they have to go up through the grades. The courses in those days were bigger than they are now, they were mighty huge courses!

**Casey Radio: It can't be missed that 90% of horses competing at international level were bred by you from Souvenir and Koyuna mares.**

**Howard Clark:** That's correct. I think it goes down to our eye and being able to pick the type of mares. It wasn't about bloodlines because there's wasn't so much known about bloodlines then...which bloodlines jumped and which didn't. It was about picking the type of mares that we liked at the time and they turned out to be the right type to produce the jumpers from.

**Casey Radio: Back then, they would have all been Thoroughbred mares?**

**Howard Clark:** Absolutely, all thoroughbred mares. The Warmblood certainly weren't out here then; Flaneur was the first Warmblood I ever saw.

**Casey Radio: How have you selected the both mares and then the stallions that you've used over the years?**

**Howard Clark:** The stallions were always by Souvenir or Koyuna Souvenir bloodline. The mares we selected on type, conformation and then breeding as we got to know what were jumping bloodlines. Today we have the benefit of databases where we can see which horses are jumping

and producing jumping horses but what Darren and I are doing now (Darren has taken over the stud), we have a 15 year plan. We had a break of around six to eight years and that break is going to show up now where not so many young horses will come out until next year. The ones overseas now and the ones competing now, all the Koyuna horses, from then until now there haven't been many new ones coming through but now you'll start to see them again, hopefully next year. What we're doing now is line-breeding back with Brilliant Invader daughters and Koyuna Genesis...we put him over the Souvenir mares. We also put our other stallion, Koyuna Quarterback over Souvenir mares. We've kept the filly sections of both and then cross them back to the other stallion. That's creating what we have today and we feel that these are the best horses we've ever bred. Time will tell as it does with horses but the horses we're putting on the ground now have everything we've ever hoped for...type, and temperament which is the thing that's really excited me because we are very closely line-breeding and the temperament has just got better and better. We can go out in the paddock with those horses and assimilate with them much, much better than we ever did before. The temperament is just fantastic.

**Casey Radio:** *Koyuna horses related to the great Souvenir have competed in the Olympic Games for the last 40 years, making it 10 consecutive Olympics and a world record in itself. Tell us something about those great horses.*

**Howard Clark:** Some of those were out of Souvenir mares; some were by Souvenir, some were selected to go but didn't get there due to injury, such as Mickey Mouse and Tongala. Tongala definitely would have gone but at that time professional riders couldn't compete. Autograph was probably the best horse we ever bred, he was in England with Jeff McVean and was due to compete in the Moscow Olympics but they were boycotted, so he took Autograph to Rotterdam to the alternative games where he placed fifth. I think he was around five or six years old at the time and I remember Jack Gilchrist, who was Chef d'équipe at the time, telling me he'd never seen a bigger course and never seen an Australian horse jump better than Autograph did there. His half-brother, a horse called Photograph that we sold to Jeff, was a dead ringer for Autograph, and he was by Supreme. He went overseas and Jeff eventually sold him to Belgium. We lost track of him until an Australian friend of mine who wasn't into horses, was on a world trip and went to Belgium and finished up at some horse show over there. He got to talking to someone who told him Belgium's top horse was Australian...that was Photograph. That was the last I ever heard of him.

**Casey Radio:** *You mentioned your latest crop of foals were the best you've ever bred...that is a big call.*

**Howard Clark:** Yes it is, and I'm certainly not one to make calls like that if I can't back it up. These are the third lot of foals we've had. The first two lots are with Anthony Thomas in South Australia and four of those are coming out this year, but everything they're doing so far is pointing to what we believe are our best horses. We're only breeding 18-20 mares a year between the two stallions. We don't take outside mares and we run the stallions with the mares now and that's why we think the foals are much better to get on with because we go among them and become one of the herd so they associate better with you. Before when we were running a stud, you'd go out every morning to the paddock and run the mares in to be teased, and then run them out again. So what you were doing was always be chasing them away from you. Now we go along them and always take a bucket of pellets or bit of hay and they'll come out and eat out of your hand and you can rub them over and they accept you. Once the alpha mares accept you then the stallions accept you and the whole herd accepts you.

**Casey Radio:** *So you run the mares with the stallions?*

**Howard Clark:** Yes...in two separate lots of course. We had 100% in foal last year, never had one vet bill or problem. Since we've been doing that, I've learned more about horses than what anyone could ever teach me, or by just observing. Just watching what the horses do themselves in nature. You learn so much more about how the stallion reacts, how the mares react, how the foals react...you just watch them. You can pick out the different personalities the foals have. You throw

you hat on the ground and some foals run away which shows their personality. Others come up and sniff it, and that personality stays with that foal

**Casey Radio:** *Some mares won't accept the stallion even after teasing, but you've had 100% success.*

**Howard Clark:** Absolutely. I've got two Souvenir line mares over 30, Maid of Silver by Silverneer, she foals every year. At the moment she has a colt we're looking at maybe keeping for a future stallion, we've always got to keep one of abeyance in case something happens to the other two.

**Casey Radio:** *How do you go about that selection, its important to be critical when looking to keep colts?*

**Howard Clark:** The first thing you look at is balance. The horse has got to be 'right' to your eye...it's upstanding up front, it's got a good shoulder, is good-quartered, a good temperament. Certainly, we know the bloodlines behind it right back, so that's a given. Then it depends on the mare...how big she is and what he might throw back in future. So there's a lot of working out which stallion we'll use. We've only used Souvenir, then Supreme and Majestic Supreme, and now on to Quarterback. Then we brought in Brilliant Invader and have got Koyuna Genesis by Brilliant Invader and Lady Dorothy (by Copperglow, by Souvenir) and she was also dam to two four star eventers, Azgard and Koyuna Sun Magic. So all those things are taken into consideration.

**Casey Radio:** *Silverneer by Souvenir went on to be a successful stallion as well.*

**Howard Clark:** Very much so, he was a magnificent horse. Neville Rose had him in Queensland and he was a stock-horse man, he said Silverneer was the best stockhorse he ever rode, for cutting cattle and that sort of thing, he was good on his feet. That's how he won a lot of his events because he could cut other horses couldn't get near by cutting the course short. He also won the Australian Showjumping Championship on two or three occasions, before there was such as thing as the World Cup.

**Casey Radio:** *Have you still got any Silverneer mares?*

**Howard Clark:** Yes, Maid of Silver...Koyuna Levi that Stuart Tinney has now is by Koyuna Genesis out of Maid of Silver. The rest have all passed on but we did have five. A mare called Lace only died about four or five years ago and she was the dam of a World Cup winner. At that final in the six placings, first, second and fourth were Koyuna horses and below them were five horses imported into Australia for over \$1 million.

**Casey Radio:** *How did you come by Brilliant Invader and what made you decided he would be the 'out-crop' to the Souvenir line?*

**Howard Clark:** In fifty years of breeding, I've been offered an enormous number of stallions but never did one grab me as the horse I needed to have. When Reddy Teddy won the World Championship in eventing, I took notice of his bloodlines, which I always do, and did a bit of research. I found Brilliant Invader in New Zealand where he was standing as a racehorse, there was quite a few that were very good showjumpers and eventers. One of McVean's that was sixth in the World Cup final was out of Flower Power who was by Brilliant Invader. That mare was sold in a multi-million deal. That's was what started me looking, and I went looking for his mares in Australia as he'd been standing at stud here. I couldn't find much at all until I ran into a thoroughbred breeder and asked him where I could get Brilliant Invader mares and he suggested I get the horse himself! I said I thought he was dead and he told me the stallion was sitting in a paddock in Mickleham (Victoria). So I went and found him there, doing very little. He was about 15-16 years old. So I eventually got him and have no doubt that this year he'll be number one eventing sire in the world again. Majestic Supreme and Brilliant Invader are both in the top 50 in the world.

**Casey Radio:** *If these horses were from any other country, they'd be shouting it from the rooftops!*

*Here it just slides under the radar.*

**Howard Clark:** That's the disappointing part for Darren and I. When Art Uytendaal had Tongala...a genius of a horse ridden by a genius rider...an Italian came over to ride Tongala with view to buying him and he visited the stud. I'll never forget his exact words, "If you were in Europe, you'd be made for life with the type of horses you're breeding; these are the types of horses we're trying to breed."

*Casey Radio: How was it a horse like Brilliant Invader left sitting in a paddock?*

**Howard Clark:** People weren't astute enough at the time maybe? He was only here one day when I got a call from someone who wanted to buy him. It wasn't until after I got him, that everyone else wanted him.

*Casey Radio: Perhaps it was because he was a sire of thoroughbred racehorses, people weren't looking at him from the same perspective you were?*

**Howard Clark:** Absolutely, he wasn't that successful as a racing sire. He had a lot of winners but wasn't given a fair go by getting good mares. He had four class one winners on his dam's side and was brilliantly bred.

*Casey Radio: We should be looking at our own stallions, but there's a lot of imported semen coming in, from Warmbloods in particular, yet they're not doing anything.*

**Howard Clark:** This has always been the bane of Darren and myself. I know they've been bringing in semen from the best stallions in the world for at least 25 years and...where are those horses? If you go to the World Cup, 90% of them are thoroughbreds. In eventing, they're nearly all thoroughbreds. I've also got a theory, and this is based on observation and not statistics (and anyone who knows me well knows I'm big on observation)...to get the best of the Warmblood, I think you've got to have a thoroughbred stallion over a Warmblood mare. Last year in Europe, there were 36,000 Sport horse foals bred. In Australia, you'd be lucky to have 3,500. So that's what you're up against for a start. If I go back to Wendy Schaeffer, who has five Koyuna horses in Europe now competing very well, three qualified and in the elite squad for the London Olympics, including one for eventing and one for showjumping! Paul Schockemohle had 3,000 mares in Europe, yet to get a horse to go to the Olympics, he had to buy one from somebody else. The five horses Wendy took to Europe...she came up to the stud and Darren and I picked them out for her, from two year olds to weanlings and they have succeeded in World Cup showjumping and four star eventing. There were no duds. That's why we're only breeding very few horses and that because we can nearly guarantee every horse will be a four star eventer or a World Cup showjumper.

*Casey Radio: What other horses do you have out there at the moment?*

**Howard Clark:** World cup showjumper Koyuna Ted was unfortunately injured when he went to New Zealand and is now in Queensland. Koyuna Tora Bora (Amanda Ross) is having a rest for a while, she's a top showjumper. Both were short-listed for the Olympics too.

*Casey Radio: What about Megan Jones' horse?*

**Howard Clark:** Megan's horses, they all go back to Souvenir. Kirby Park Irish Jester's is by McCartney who is by Souvenir. She wasn't shortlisted in the elite squad and I don't know why because she's about the best.

*Casey Radio: In talking about importing semen, I would say we're bringing in the wrong sex, we should be bringing in the mares.*

**Howard Clark:** Yes, that's what I was referring to before. We own a Graf Lando mare (?) who I bought in the Echuca saleyards for \$250. An enormous mare, Darren nearly killed me when he saw her! But the foal she has by Koyuna Genesis is stunning. It will be put up for sale. Our weanlings are sold as weanlings but we don't worry too much if we don't sell it because of it's

breeding because it'll go back into the broodmare pool and go to Koyuna Quarterback.

**Casey Radio:** *Are you fussy where your horses go?*

**Howard Clark:** ABSOLUTELY! Let me go back a little and tell you the reasons why.... Many years ago when I was at the height of breeding, I had one particular fellow who had a lot of money and was offering me amounts I couldn't refuse but most of the horses we sold him were never heard of again because it was money, not ability they were going to. So I vowed that would never happen again. Now that we're a 'boutique stud' (for want of a better word), there's a 100 years of breeding gone into where we are now and two things have to happen. One, the Koyuna name has to be retained on whatever we sell and the horse can only have the Koyuna name if we've bred it by our stallion out of our mares. That way we can control what they are because we had too many mares sent to us in the past where really, they were trying to breed silk purses out of sow's ears. We'll sell 13 foals this year and will probably approach the people rather than people approach us. If we had an auction, and two went through auctions about two years ago, I know I'll never hear about those horses again because I know the people who have them aren't the right people for them. It's not about money for us now, it's about the passion...wanting to improve the horses and prove the Australian horse is as good as anything else in the world given the opportunity.

**Casey Radio:** *When it comes to selling your horses, do you have a problem with people buying a Koyuna horse, doing a bit of work and selling it on for a lot of money?*

**Howard Clark:** I don't have a problem with that. If they get \$1 million, I'm happy for them but I'd sooner they be like Wendy because they want to get to the Olympics. I've heard about people getting an ex-racehorse, saying they might have to go through ten to get nine duds and one good one. Believe me, that's going to cost you a fortune. It's not about money with us but we've still got to get the best dollar we can but we have to make them affordable to people who are going to get them to the top.

**Casey Radio:** *I see you've got Stuart Tinney on one of your horses now?*

**Howard Clark:** Yes, Stuart approached us and bought two Koyuna horses.

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