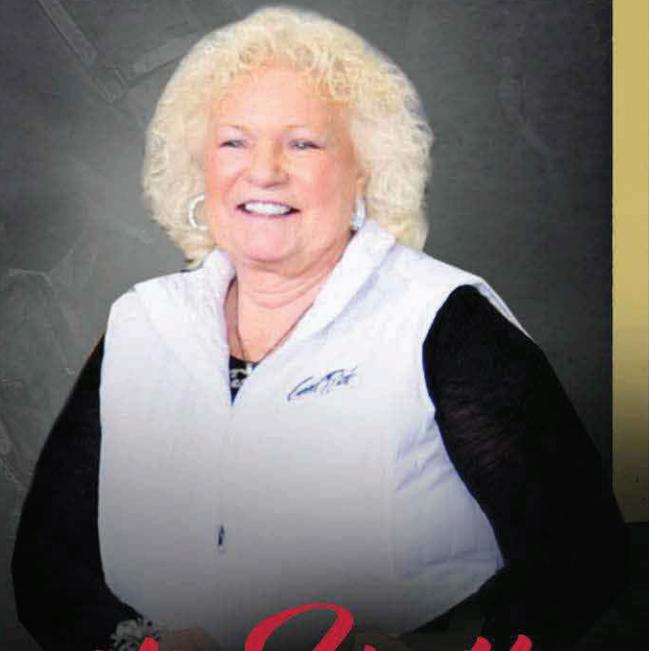


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Cecilia Hylton
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ON THE COVER

Hylton Quarter Horses

FOR THE LOVE OF HORSES

by Brittany Bevis

Adjacent to 20 acres of rolling pasture in Prince William County, Virginia sits the grand, whitewashed entrance of Hylton Quarter Horses. The purveyor of this dreamlike estate is renowned AQHA breeder Cecilia Hylton.

Always with a mind for preservation, Cecilia has helped grow the industry by contributing to reproductive research, granting funds to the American Quarter Horse Foundation, and spearheading the Hylton Maiden Western Pleasure Futurity that's held annually in her home state each April at the Virginia Quarter Horse Classic. This year's show will take place April 7th -10th at the Virginia Horse Center.

One of the first to emphasize the value of maiden classes for older futurity horses, Cecilia created the Hylton Maiden in 2004 in an effort to provide a venue for those competitors who chose to wait to develop their horses until they reached a reasonable level of physical and emotional maturity. "Her main focus was she didn't like two-year-olds becoming fried, in both their minds and bodies, while trying to prepare for futurities," says Head Trainer Lucas Cash. "If they make it as a two-year-old, that's great. If they need more time to develop, and don't show during their two-year-old year, they still have a venue to go to and show for big money. The whole concept came about in order to let horses mature at a slower pace and continue to be a benefit to the industry for a long time."

Here at Hylton Quarter Horses, they certainly practice what they preach. In 2015, the farm entered a horse in the Masters Two-Year-Old Western Pleasure at the All American Quarter Horse Congress. By the time August rolled around, it was clear the prospect wasn't maturing as quickly as they would've hoped. "Instead of pushing and forcing the horse to get ready to show, we scratched the horse and decided to take a slower pace," Lucas says.

To give riders an incentive to wait to campaign this type of horse until the age of three or older, Cecilia contributes \$50,000 in added money to the Hylton Maiden each year. The total payout in 2015 was \$91,050, more than any other futurity class of its kind. In 2016, it's estimated the winner will walk away with \$31,500, as based on a 20-entry average.

"This class is her baby," Lucas says. "It's one of the things she's most proud of. She will continue to do this year after year, as long as the Western Pleasure industry keeps supporting it."

In addition to the Hylton Maiden, everyone at HQH is excited about the future of their stallion line-up: Doya Think Im Flashy, Slip Slydun Away, and the 2004 AQHA World Champion Stallion

Invitation To Flash. "Flash's oldest babies are three this year, and we're letting them mature at their own pace to make sure they're ready for the show pen," Lucas says. "We have one in particular in mind for the three-year-old and novice horse classes. His babies are so good-minded to train. The best assets he passes along are really good conformation and trainability."

Cash adds, "All of the colts I've started so far don't have a lot of fight or fuss to them. They take everything in stride. To me, as a trainer, that's the best asset a horse can have. They don't get sour, are very intelligent, and like to learn."

According to Lucas, Flash's offspring are showing considerable promise in Western Pleasure, but he also sees a future for these horses in all-around events. "They're very good movers, but they also have the minds to go on

to all-around events because of how quiet they are. In the future, as these horses get older, I expect we will have some successful Horsemanship, Trail, and Western Riding horses," he says.

On the Hylton home front, one team that's been seeing quite a bit of success is Cecilia's daughter, Jamie, who closed out 2015 by taking the 2nd place spot for Novice Amateur Western Pleasure High Point in the nation with her horse Gettin Pretty. "Jamie had a phenomenal year," Lucas says. "The development she had from our first show to the last show...she has grown leaps and bounds. She's a better showman and horseman. As a trainer, nothing makes me more excited."

As far as their goals for 2016 are concerned, Lucas plans to "show some horses, have some fun, and see where it develops throughout the year."

"One of the biggest perks of this job is when we sit down to talk about the future, it's not that we've got to win a World Championship or a High Point title. It's more about letting the horses develop at their own pace and taking success as it comes. I think it's a lot easier for both the horses and people to handle when there isn't all that pressure from the get-go. We've had a very high success rate with this type of program," he says.

While it might seem intimidating to work with such an influential member of the horse industry, like Cecilia, Lucas let us in on a little secret. "She's the boss and matriarch up here," he says. "Initially, I was a little hesitant about working with such a big name and the pressure that comes along with that. But, she doesn't put any pressure on you. I enjoy sitting down with her and discussing things; she has great ideas. Working for someone in the business who has so much experience and knowledge makes my job that much easier."



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