

Legions of Angels

IBHA Hall of Fame Inductee

March 19, 2022

Every now and then, there comes a horse that surpasses all expectations of him. A horse whose athletic ability, natural movement, good mind and yes, beauty is truly second to none. A horse that makes you pinch yourself to make sure you are not dreaming. A horse that you consider Your Horse of a Lifetime.

For Ron Peters a that horse is Legions of Angels.

Legions of Angels, a son of the great Kay Cee Leaguer, was born February 25, 2000 at Mari Woolsey's farm in Nebraska. Affectionately known as Bill around the barn, he was sold to one of Mari's youth kids, Nikki Meier as a 3 year old and from there, Bill's legacy began.

Mari stated that starting Bill was both easy and hard. Easy because he has a great jog and lope, naturally wanted to go slow and didn't want to pick his head up. Hard because, well, he was Bill. Bill was obedient and very eager to please; until he wasn't. As Nikki said, as sweet and easy-going as Bill is, he would once in a while become very, very stubborn. It was almost comical how stubborn he got, probably because he didn't do it often, but it led to him halting and not going anywhere, until some softly, lovingly thrown lightweight cones got his attention. This typically happened during trail practice or a longer trail clinic.

Bill was one of those horses who could really do it all. He was competitive in everything from Western Pleasure to Trail to Huntseat Equitation. He was a real trooper as Nikki kept wanting to do more and more events. He just went along for the ride. Mari said that in 2004 she hit the road with Nikki and her daughter Jessica, Bill and Jessica's gelding to see what they could do. Who knew Mr. Bill could really, truly fulfill a girl's horse dreams? Together, Bill and Nikki won numerous All Around awards in AQHA shows, 5 saddles, 5 ABRA World Championships the only year they went, many Year End High point awards and State 4-H Championships.

One of Mari's favorite sayings is Life is a journey, enjoy the ride. And she said that from 2004 to 2007, the three of them had a journey of a lifetime!

Nikki told me that Bill was truly there for a lot of her life's most cherished moments and besides all the showing and awards, one of her fondest memories was having the surprise of seeing Bill in 2014 during a trip to Wisconsin and that it was a true Hallmark moment. She stated that it was so surreal when she walked up to him and he immediately began nibbling her coat, like he would when he was younger. It was his way of telling her hello

and that he remembered her. She got to spend about an hour riding Bill and enjoyed every moment of it. She even said something along the lines of "this is the best day of my life."...not knowing how truly more special that day was to become. When she hopped off Bill and walked around to his other side, her boyfriend, Bret, was down on one knee to propose.

Nikki said that she was so grateful she had the opportunity to own Bill, as he's the best horse she has ever ridden and will ever own

When Bill first came into the Five 'O' Barn, he was owned by Sandy's cousin's daughter, Kristen Luczak. They had a very successful show season with this duo. At the World show in 2008, Kristen & Bill won 10 World and one reserve world championships and naturally took the All Around Title that year. They closed the season with winning the Honor Roll All Around Youth title.

One of Kristen's fondest memories of showing Bill – besides the before mentioned world show was at her very first WBHA show on Mother's Day Weekend. They went into the ring for trail and because she was smaller, she had a difficult time reaching the rope for the gate. Bill decided to take matters into his own hands or head in this case and actually reached over and nudged the gate so she could reach the rope. They were able to get thru the gate and finish the trail class. Apparently, he was a little impatient with how long it was taking Kristen to reach the rope or... he wanted to add a little entertainment to the class that day.

Kristen stated that Bill made her feel like she had a purpose and that she had a hard time being around horses after they sold him. She still loves him to this day and fondly remembers her time with Bill and being out at the Five 'O' Stables.

Through different circumstances, Bill came up for sale in 2010. It was at that point that Ron Peters purchased him. Ron & Ed had a lot of success showing Bill and together they won many world championships and Honor Roll All around Titles. Sandy said that her most memorable win for Ron & Bill was watching them win the Big Amateur Western Tail class at the IBHA World Show. And her most memorable win with Bill & Ed was the Sr Western Pleasure Class in Memphis. She said that this was the toughest Western Pleasure class that she ever recalls seeing at an IBHA show. For everyone who knows Sandy, knows that she is very critical, yet open minded of their customers as well as her & Ed as competitors. She was watching this class with Ron and he turned to her and asked "what do you think". She told Ron had Ed & Bill in 3rd. When they announced him as the World Champion, she burst out in tears.

The next phase of Bill's show career was with Ed & Sandy's Granddaughter, McKenna Williams. They are forever grateful to Ron as he unselfishly leased Bill to them so McKenna could show. I remember standing at the rail with Sandy at McKenna's first show with Bill in the Youth Walk Trot division. I asked Sandy if she was nervous at all. She smiled and told me that with any other horse, she would have been so nervous, but not with Bill.

McKenna and Bill had a successful year in the Youth Walk Trot Division and the following year they showed in the youth division. At just 11 years of Age, McKenna earned the IBHA All Around Youth Title. McKenna is the youngest person in the history of IBHA to win this award. She then did it two more years – at age 12 & 13. A back to back to back win.

McKenna said that Bill came into her life when her former horse JBL Magic Trick Too passed away. She had a hard time coming to terms with Trick's passing and there were times that she would go into Bill's stall and he would wrap his head around her. It was as if he understood what was going on and wanted to make her feel better in his own way. She will be forever indebted to Ron for the opportunity of a lifetime to show Bill. He was the horse that was put on a pedestal in the Five 'O' Barn so it was a cool feeling that she was offered the opportunity to show him.

Everyone that showed him told me that Bill made them better riders. With Bill, mutual respect was the name of the game. He had to respect you as a rider in order for you to get the best out of him. They all said that Bill was a steady ride, but he was not an easy ride and you had keep riding him and not let up. You know how it is...when your trainers keep telling you "more leg...more leg". Bills least favorite classes were Huntseat trail – because he didn't like the jump and barrels and poles, but he did them anyhow and managed to take care of his riders. McKenna said that his favorite class was western riding and she swears he had the patterns memorized as he just knew when to change his leads.

The last year that Bill showed was 2018. He had given his all over the past 14 years and Ron, Ed & Sandy could tell that he was getting tired. The last year ended with a bang as Bill once again earned the IBHA Honor Roll All Around Horse title and winning the Western Trail class at the IBHA World show was truly special. But one of the special moments that year was at the World show, when one of the judges placed Ed first in the SR Western Pleasure Class and as he was standing in the lineup, he told Ed that it was fun watching him ride and that the horse looked so happy. Bill gave it his all at his last world show in and once again won another saddle. Bill was retired at the end of the August, 2018 WBHA show in Jefferson.

Some of Bill's showing highlights are:

- ❖ 3099.5 IBHA points, 232 AQHA points and 88 ABRA points
- ❖ 42 IBHA Honor Roll and 17 Reserve Honor Roll Titles
- ❖ 46 World Championships & 14 Reserve World Championships
- ❖ 39 IBHA ROMs
- ❖ 16 IBHA Superior Titles
- ❖ 12 Saddles
- ❖ 7 World Show All Around & 5 Reserve All Around Titles
- ❖ 6 IBHA Honor Roll All Around Titles
- ❖ 3 IBHA Supreme Championships

Today, as you walk into the barn at Five 'O' Stables, you will see a familiar face in the first stall on the right hanging his head over his stall guard. He is always allowed to hang his head out of his stall – 24/7 and is the only horse in the barn that is allowed to. As you first walk up to him in his stall you can get a totally different opinion of him as he stands there with his ears back. But it is all just an act because all he really wants is a carrot...and because there is always a carrot bag by his stall, he has a steady supply of them. No one can walk by him without the temptation to feed him. He really has a big personality and is the barn favorite, and is more like a person than a horse.

One would get the feeling the Bill thinks he is special and everyone at Five 'O' Stables says he is right!!

Ron told me that he feels incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to own Bill. It was a stroke of luck and fate that he was able to purchase him when he came up for sale. He said that Bill is an incredible horse and a much better horse than he ever thought he would own. It is because of Bill that he got involved with showing and is fortunate to become part of the Five 'O' Family. His one regret that he did say is that it is a shame that Bill isn't eight so they could do this all over again!

Mari Woolsey told me that one of her biggest horse regrets is not buying him from the Luzcak family when he came up for sale but that she is very grateful that he ended up where he did because he is loved and appreciated at Five 'O' like he was at her farm. She asked me to extend her congratulations tonight to everyone involved with Bill's Journey and Legacy and on his induction into the IBHA Hall of Fame

Legions of Angels is truly a horse of a lifetime in a lifetime of horses!

Respectfully Submitted,

Michele Zimmerman
IBHA Hall of Fame Committee Chair