

# THE PEOPLES' *Invitation*

*Invitation Only becomes AQHA's All-Time Leading Sire of Point Earners*

BY CONNIE LECHLEITNER



Invitation Only's presentation for ascending to the top of the AQHA Leading Sires List during the 2014 All American Quarter Horse Congress (Photo by Emajes Design and Photography)

**I**t was a day like any other at the Congress – yet it was a day that will long be remembered by those in the horse industry. On October 17, 2014, AQHA Stallion Invitation Only became the all-time leading sire of AQHA points earned, with 77,062 pointed earned by his get. He surpassed Zippo Pine Bar, who held the record since 1996.

The 24-year-old brown stallion has been at the top of the charts on a yearly basis for several years. Invitation Only has been the AQHA Leading Sire from 2006-2013; holds the top all-time sire title of AQHA Register of Merit earners at 1,110; number one all-time sire of Western Pleasure earnings at \$3,307,610.00; is the number one all-time sire of Equi-stat Western Pleasure earnings at \$2,833,658.00 and is the number one all-time sire of NSBA earnings with \$2,417,929.00.

'Invy' has also been the leading sire of money earners in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. He was inducted into the NSBA Hall of Fame in 2008.

The show management of the All American Quarter Horse Congress rolled out the red carpet for a special recognition of Invitation Only's achievement during the Congress Masters Two Year Old Hunter Under Saddle and Masters Two Year Old Western Pleasure performances.

In addition to Invy's long-time managers Debbi Trubee and Roger Landis, the stallion was joined on the red carpet by long-time owners David James and his wife Janet; Tim and Barb Delf, representing mare owners; Jeff Long, who represented trainers of Invy's offspring; OQHA Executive



Dianne Eppers and Scott Myers present Invitation Only with a rose neck wreath during a ceremony at the 2014 All American Quarter Horse Congress (Photo by Emajes Design and Photography)

Director Dr. Scott Myers, OQHA President Chris Cecil-Darnell and Congress Tri-chairmen Vic Clark, Skip Salome and Denny Thorsell.

NSBA Executive Director Dianne Eppers presented Invitation Only with a rose neck wreath on behalf of the association. Also present were Lauren Erk, broodmare manager, and David Whitney, who tracked the statistical progress of Invitation Only's offspring, as well as Dr. Curt Honecker, Invitation Only's veterinarian.

During the ceremony, those who owned Invitation Only sons or daughters were asked to stand, and those who had any horses with Invitation Only's bloodlines were asked to stand. A large number of attendees standing in the Celeste Center reflected the tremendous influence the stallion has had on the industry.

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

Invitation Only was bred by Gene and Frieda Maxwell of Waterford, California. "Mrs. Maxwell kept her mares at my ranch, and Invitation Only's dam, Bears Raisin Kane, was always one of my favorite mares," said David James. The mare was bred to James' stallion, Barpassers Image, and foaled at James Ranch in 1990.

"Invy was one of four of five colts I bought from Mrs. Maxwell that year. He was a beautiful colt. He was always just a really special horse, and he's always reminded me of his mother," James said. When the colt turned two, James started him.

"I had mostly shown older horses, and Invitation Only was the first two year old I ever took on," he said. "He was really talented, and a really good mover. Doug Huls helped me with the two year olds that year and was a big help."

When James began bringing the young stallion out to shows, the reaction was always the same. "Everybody liked him," James said. "I had lots of opportunities to sell him, but I just committed to keeping him. I thought he had the makings of a good breeding horse, but in this business, that's never a given."



Janet and David James stand with Invitation Only and Ohio Pineview Farms managers Roger Landis and Debbi Trubee. (Photo by Emajes Design and Photography)





Invitation Only with Roger Landis  
(Photo courtesy of Debbi Trubee)

Invitation Only earned 43 AQHA performance points and was third in the Two Year Old Snaffle Bit Western Pleasure and seventh in Junior Western Pleasure at the American Quarter Horse Association's World Championship Show in 1992 and 1993.

As James began to develop the stallion's breeding list, he had the same challenges that owners of many young stallions face: getting quality mares to breed to him. "I think that first year, we bred maybe 17 or 18 mares, and I think I owned half the mares and foals," James recalled.

However, people began to sit up and take notice when Invy's first foal crop produced the Congress champion and

reserve champion Two Year Old Western Pleasure Futurity winners, in Dee Invitation, shown by Gil Galyean, and A Special Invitation, ridden by Jody Galyean.

"We had some things in mind that we wanted to accomplish with him," James said. "He was the center of our whole program. I have had other really nice horses, but he was always special."

"Invy is so kind and so intelligent. He is a gentleman through and through," said Debbi Trubee. "He knows he's famous. When people come to the farm, he poses. His ears go up, and he turns his head to just the right angle. He works it!"

Milt Alderman, who managed Invitation Only for the first four breeding seasons after he was purchased by Ohio Pineview Farms, also recalls his time with the stallion.

"I was very fortunate to get to work with him," Alderman said. "He was just put together great structurally, with good bone, a great neck and strong back and loin. Then when you added to that his personality – he is so good minded – that you knew he was going to produce great foals. Great minded horses make great show horses."

## FINDING THE NIC

As a mare owner who bred to a number of stallions, Tim Delf had not heard of David James or Invitation Only until he and his wife, Barb, saw James and the stallion in 1994 or 1995 at a Midwest horse show.

"He was just beautiful," Delf said. "I remember David being a pretty tall guy, about 6'2" and Invitation Only fit him because he's big and pretty.



Invitation Only and Roger Landis (Photo courtesy of Debbi Trubee)





For One Night Only, owned by Capital Quarter Horses LLC and by Invitation Only, won the Open and Limited Two Year Old Western Pleasure Stakes as well as the Limited Non-Pro and Non-Pro Two Year Old Western Pleasure Stakes at the 2014 All American Quarter Horse Congress. (Photo by Shane Rux Photography)

“But on top of that, he’s so well conformed. The two most important things to me when I look at a horse are is he taller at the withers than the hip, and does he have short cannon bones, and Invitation Only has both. He has such self carriage and cadence, and a perfect top line, and he keeps that cadence perfect at any speed.”

Delf made a mental note about the stallion. “At the time we first saw him, we couldn’t afford to breed to him,” he said. “But later we had this mare, Goodbars Glamourgirl, who is by Zippos Mr Good Bar, that we thought was worthy to breed to him. So we did. Her produce with Invitation Only have earned more than 2,700 points. We really love that cross, we love that horse and just feel he has been great for our program.”

By the time Invitation Only sold in 2005, he wasn’t searching for mares anymore, noted Alderman. “I remember a lot of mares came in, and I looked down at the mare stalls and we had six world champions one spring,” he said. “That horse drew them. And he crossed so well on so many different pedigrees.”

Statistics in the *2015 Pleasure and Halter Breeders Guide* show that ‘magic crosses’ with Invitation Only include mares sired by Zippo Pine Bar, Zippos Mr Good Bar, Zips Chocolate Chip, A Passing Breeze, Hotrodders Jet Set, Flashy Zipper and Radical Rodder, just to name a few.

“It is so great to see the Zippo Pine Bar bloodline, one of the greatest sires in our industry, have such a great nic and continue to shine,” said Debbi Trubee.

## TRAINABILITY

As the Invitation Only offspring began to make their way to trainers, the stallion’s good nature and natural movement became apparent. Jeff Long trained several Invitation Only get, including Only In The Moonlite, with whom he won the All American Quarter Horse Congress Masters Two Year Old Western Pleasure in 2006.

“Invitation Only produces such beautiful horses,” Long said. “They are so elegant, but strong. They just have a look to them that a lot of the other bloodlines don’t. I know there



Only A Breeze, owned by Capital Quarter Horses LLC and by Invitation Only, is a multiple AQHA Open and Select Amateur world and Congress Open, Select Amateur and Non-Pro Maturity champion. (Photo by Shane Rux Photography)





Hot Ones Only, by Invitation Only and owned by Tammy Dyer and Sharnai Thompson, has won more AQHA world championships than any other AQHA stallion. He is passing his winning ways on to his offspring, who are now winning Congress and AQHA world championships as well. (Photo courtesy of Tammy Dyer)

are a lot of nice horses out there, but he just stamps them. Next to Debbi and Roger and David, I think I'm Invitation Only's biggest fan."

And along with the conformation and movement, Invitation Only passed along his good nature, Long noted. "There's no way these horses could have earned as many points as they did if they weren't good minded," he said. "Once you're done with them, it stays there. They remember everything you taught them three years ago. They are extremely talented horses and such athletic horses."

Long believes in a methodical process that produces a solidly trained horse as an end result. "I don't believe in short cuts," he said. "As competitive as this business has become, you've got to cross all your t's and dot all your i's and go step by step – then all the good will be there."

Long also admires the longevity of Invitation Only's get. "I think it's great that he had his first foals winning in the Congress Two Year Old Western Pleasure Futurity in 1996,



Only In The Moonlite, owned by Rodrock Ranches and by Invitation Only, is a Congress Masters and Three Year Old Western Pleasure champion, NSBA world champion whose get have earned more than \$500,000. (Photo by LaRena)

and here we are in 2014 and his foals are still winning that Two Year Old Western Pleasure at the Congress. That is utterly impressive, the staying power he has had – it takes a great horse to do that," he said.

"I don't think some of the people realize that we're witnessing history here," Long said. "I don't think we'll ever see that record broken in our lifetime. And with all those horses out there showing, who's to say where his numbers will end up. I don't see any other horse coming close to that."

## THE LEGACY

Invitation Only's impact on the pleasure horse industry reaches far beyond the world of show horses and into the breeding industry as well. "His blood makes up so much of our show horse pedigrees today," said Debbi Trubee. "When you look at the leaders list, you almost can't find one that doesn't have a part of him."

"He's been a great producer of both sons and daughters," James said. You need look no further than a horse auction commentary, and watch faces light up when "out of an own daughter of Invitation Only" is mentioned.

"When you have a great stallion, they don't always reproduce themselves down the line," Long said. "But with Invitation Only, his sons and daughters are continuing the legacy. You see them reproducing him. There will never be another one like him."

From the successful crosses with Invitation Only daughters to his sons standing at stud today, Invitation Only permeates all facets of the breeding industry as well.

*The 2015 Pleasure and Halter Breeders Guide* lists the 'best crosses' with daughters of Invitation Only include the stallions Blazing Hot, RL Best Of Sudden, Lazy Loper, Zippo Pine Chex, Zippos Old Gold, Certain Potential and Too Sleepy To Zip, to name a few.

"Invitation Only daughters are our number two cross on RL Best Of Sudden. That cross on the Invitation Only mares

has produced horses that have earned more than 1400 AQHA points. It's an amazing cross," said Amanda Ringer, manager and trainer at Masterson Farms LLC.

"In fact, we've added a few Invitation Only daughters to our broodmare band. They bring conformation and great minds, and added to RL Best Of Sudden's great qualities, it's the best of both worlds for us."

Among the sons of Invitation Only that currently stand to the public are Coats N Tails, Hot Ones Only, One Hot Krymsun, The Only Escape, Righteous Invitation, Sophistication Only, Willy Be Invited, and Only In The Moonlite.

"When you see Invitation Only at the top of the sire list and then see two of his sons below him on that list, that's just unheard of," Long said. "And they're not just dominant in the Western Pleasure. You see them strongly represented in Hunter Under Saddle, Trail, Western Riding, even Performance Halter and Halter classes.

"It's so cool how that horse's get don't just excel at one event – they excel at tons of them!"

For David James, invitation Only left another legacy. "That horse did so much for me," James said. "First, in what we accomplished, and second when we sold him at the dispersal sale. His selling allowed me to have a life that I had only dreamed about."

Invitation Only sold at the James Ranch dispersal sale for \$2.35 million to Mike Farina in 2005. After standing in Oklahoma for four breeding seasons, Invitation Only moved to Farina's Ohio Pineview Farms where he stands today.

"I wish I could say that this was a planned purchase, but it was more spur of the moment," said Debbi Trubee. "It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Invitation Only was already doing well on the leading sire list each year, and we just wanted to maintain that status and add to it. We wanted to give him the best care in the world and supply him with the best quality mares we could."

From 2005-2008, Invitation Only stood in Oklahoma under the care of Milt Alderman. "What we found was that the heat was hard on him, so we brought him to Ohio," She said. Today, Invitation Only stands at Ohio Pineview Farm, in North Lawrence, Ohio, under the direction of veterinarian Curt Honecker.

David James had not seen Invitation Only since his move to Ohio. Before the ceremony honoring him at the Congress, James visited with his old friend. "I'm not an emotional person, but I got pretty emotional seeing him again," he said. "That horse changed my life."

"We've been blessed to be around him," said Trubee. "Invitation Only has always had people around him who always wanted the best for him. That doesn't always happen. But he's so worthy of our support. He's a step above most other horses."

One Hot Krymsun, by Invitation Only and owned by Bailey Farms, is a triple AQHA world champion, winning the AQHA Two Year Old Western Pleasure, Junior Western Pleasure and Senior Western Pleasure. The stallion has more than 500 performing foals from 11 foal crops that have earned more than \$1.3 million and more than 23,700 AQHA points. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Bailey)

