**Pinto Paint Horses & Fritz**

*by Gary Haider, Hart Volunteer*

Bill Hart once said, he would give his boots, with his feet in them, to get his beloved Fritz back. We all know the deep devotion Bill had for his "Pinto Pony" Fritz. We know little history of this first famous movie animal, with the exception of Fritz being a pawn in producer Thomas Ince's attempt to hold onto Hart's contract. We also know little of Fritz's blood line. Yet one thing's for sure, he was obviously a Pinto or “Paint” horse, given the identifying "splash of varying colors" that look like paint thrown by an enthusiastic child all over a hapless four-legged beast!

The first recorded Paints came to the New World with Cortes in 1515, described as "Dark Horses with white patches or stockings on their feet." By the 1800's these horses roamed the plains of America, in wild herds that became the aboriginal American Indian's favored mount. The Sioux & Navajo Nations named the Paint, "Medicine Hat", also translated into "colorful headdress". The Apache & Comanche tribes were the first to acquire the Paint in the Southwest, trading or sometimes stealing them from the Spaniards. They preferred them too for their colors, which were easiest to camouflage against the changing seasons. The names varied from Pinto, Paint, Skewbald to Piebald.

Fast Forward to the early 1960's: A small group of Texans, led by Ms. Rebecca Lockhart, began the preservation & registry of The American Paint Horse, after a difficult beginning in assembling a viable group. On August 11, 1962, Rebecca logged the first horse into her registry, a black & white stallion (Fritz comes to mind) named Pintos Bandit. By the mid 1960's and after merging with various other Paint Horse groups, membership grew to 1300, with almost 3000 registered Paint Horses. The name was made formal as well: The American Paint Horse Association (APHA). It also laid the foundation for the APHA World Championships. Today, the Paint Horse is the second largest breed category, following behind the American Quarter Horse.

The APHA designates three classes of Paint Horses, based on their patterns: Tabiano, Overo & Tovero. Fritz would likely be considered a Tabiano which had the most commonly recognized Paint pattern. Tabianos are characterized by exaggerated & typically large vertical, rounded markings on the back & neck, with white legs/socks, often times having a white blaze, multi-colored main and blue eyes. Overos are what we might consider "more discrete" in their patterns, characterized by smaller, more horizontal markings and less variation, typically with white legs/socks. Sometimes Overos will be primarily solid colored, have a single tiny white spot and maybe a white sock or two with a blaze on their face. Note the photograph of this writer's Overo Paint, Baby Rusty, compared to Fritz, a Tabiano. A distinct color-pattern difference, yet both are Paints. The Tovero is simply a combination of both the Overo & Tabiano patterns.

One of the interesting little tidbits we know of Bill Hart's Tabiano, is his spoiled and obstinate nature sometimes observed on movie-sets. Although anthropomorphic, because of their marked colors they do indeed believe they are 'rock stars' and thus probably get away with more than they should. Especially those with 'splashier' color – or as the cowboys say, those with "lots of chrome” – are much admired and fussed over. There's an old saying: "Do you know why the Indians lost the war? They were too busy fighting their spoiled Paints on the way to battle and were worn out when they arrived!" Nevertheless, Paints are known for their good nature and intelligence.

So now that we know a little more about Paint horses, the next time you see Fritz, you can impress your fellow Hart fans and say... “*Look at all the chrome on that Tabiano!”*