

This letter was sent to Sharon Williams and Glen Conley years ago by John Kappes. He explains how the Curlies ended up in the Rock Springs BLM area of WY. John shares his memories of the ancestors of the Rock Springs Curly horses, the Laramie Stud, Rocket and more. Retyped from the original handwritten letter by Carol L. Erickson for ICHO.

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Dear Sharon Williams and Glen Conley;

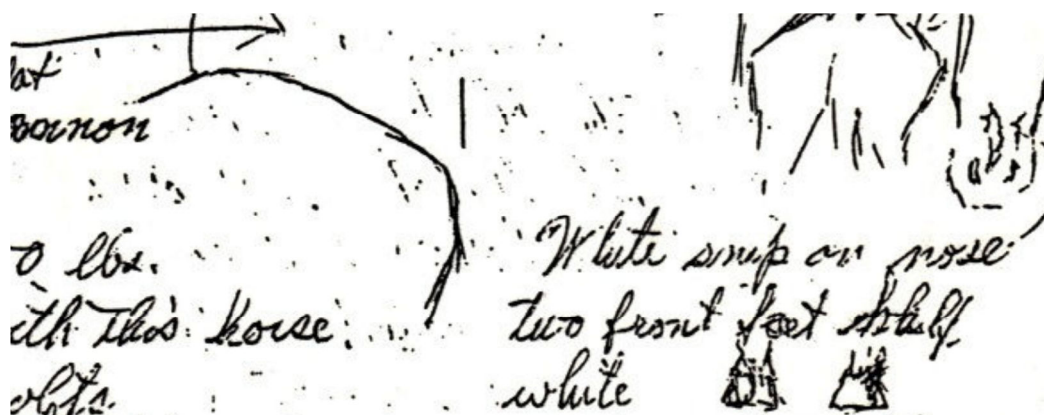
You're right, I don't know you. However, pleased to meet you!

Yes, I did own some Bashkir curlies, and I was always well mounted. Of the (9?) horses that I personally broke and rode 2 were not very good. The rest both possessed and had the ability to "put a cow up a tree."

I have been trying to pick my memory bank for those bits of information I've long forgotten about, but to the best of my ability, here goes.

Somewhere between 1942-1945 my foster uncle Isaac Newton Brooks, bought a black curly stud colt from a horse trader around Laramie, Wyoming, whose name I believe to be Fawcett. The person who would absolutely know was Ike's foreman of 40 + odd years, a Dean Smith. He now resides at my foster mother's ranch which is now owned and operated by my sister in law Patricia Jean (Tanner, maiden) Kappes. PO Box 726 Rock Springs, Wyoming 82931

This above stud colt lived only 18 years, due mostly to a condition called "parrot mouth" where the upper teeth protrude somewhat forward of the lower teeth, making the snipping of short grasses nearly impossible. Conformation wise he had a dish face, with a rather round almost bulging forehead, short ears, very fine muzzle. His legs were too long for his short back. He was "rafter" hipped with a long length to his hip and long forearms with short flat cannon bones. A good deep chest. He only weighed about 950 lbs. White snip on the nose, two front feet (half?) white.



However, I fell in love with this horse and he threw some very fine colts. The horse was barely broke and seldom ridden. He just was turned outside with the "wild bunch".
Over-

2.

Let me explain this wild bunch.

Two neighbors owned most of the horses about 98% South of Rock Springs, Ike Brooks and the Sweeney family. Ike's range ran from Green River on the west to the railroad town of bitter creek 75 miles to the east. It extended from the UP railroad on the North to the Colorado, Utah line 40 miles south.

Sweeney's range was within Ike's range.

They both raised their horse(s) on open range. Sweeneys had about 1400 head at one time and Ike had more than that. The last time the(y) gathered and sold the(y) each sold over 1200 head. They were unable to keep gathering these horses after the cowboys got old and government stopped "running" horses with airplanes. They didn't know at that time that was the most humane way to handle those wilder horses. Those horses that weren't ridden regularly were called the "wild bunch".

Enough of that. You know by now the BLM wound up with most of the horses.

Back to our story. I broke two seven year old colts out of this Laramie stud; one grey, Frosty, rafter hipped, one black with a snip on his nose, not rafter hipped. The grey looked a dead ringer for the old stud except his legs were not so long, and his back was longer. The black horse's head didn't look at all like the Laramie stud, in fact no part of him did except the long forearms and powerful muscles. Both horses weighed about 1200, Frosty, the grey was very gentle Snip the black was never gentle. However he was without a doubt, the strongest horse I ever sat on.

Both horses had an exceptional walk and trot. When Snip would stretch into a fast trot his hind foot would pass his front from 32" to 36". Few horses could run as he could trot. None anywhere could match that walk. _____

3.

No horse in the "wild bunch" including the Morgans, Standardbreds, "army remount Thoroughbreds" or "Tennessee Walkers" which had been purchased and turned into the mares to improve their blood lines, none could come close to outrunning Snip. Frosty was only shortly behind in speed.

Dean Smith and I would gather and brand and cull those wild horses every year. When we rode those two horses the wild horses would be kept on a constant $\frac{3}{4}$ out run for distances of 20 miles and more with dean in front on Snip and me behind on Frosty. Neither one of us would ever break a trot except if one of the mares would try to break.

Those wild horses could never match the burst of speed those Curlies could turn on.

However, I realize that those two were exceptional horses and there may never be any more like them but I had to 2 more that matched them in every way in looks and nearly as ability. Slower trots and slower walks. They were out of the Laramie's stud son, Rocket.

These two Iron greys were named Peewee and Knots.

Peewee was better looking than Knots, having a finer head and muzzle, much easier to train than knots who was named by my brother for being "knot headed".

Both attained a mature weight of 1150 lbs.

Both short eared.

Both excellent cow horses, able to rope and drag one or put a cow down a gopher hole.

Peewee was "kid gentle" from early age. Knots never was; being more of a man horse who never really liked humans at all except one in his later years.

He fell in love with my present wife's daughter and the two of them became the greatest pals.

Since I've started this letter, (I hope you can read it)___

4.

I have received from you folks a bundle of papers on Curly horses. Since I have very few photos of my curly horses I will attempt to compare these horses with some of the ones you have in the registry.

My horses all stayed curly their whole life through except as they grew older, they lost some of the summer marcelle until they were nearly straight haired except in winter.

A list of the curls I broke and rode (except the Laramie stud)

	Color	marks	white heel	front right	tail	Fellock hair
Drup	Black	1200	white heel	front right	rat tailed	short-spars
Frosty	Iron grey	1200	None	short	rat tailed	short-spars
Eagle	Iron grey	1300	None	short	heavy tail	long
Scar face	Black	1100	white heels	front long	rat tailed	no-feathers
Rocket (stud)	Black	950	none	short	rat tailed	none
Laramie stud	black	950	starlet	white heels front	rat tailed	short-spars, none
	color	marks	heel	tail	feathers	
Peewee	iron grey	1150	none	short	rat tailed (summer)	short
Knots	iron grey	1150	none	short	long (year around)	long
Tommy	chestnut	1000	starlet + amp	short	long year around	long
Patrick	black	800	3 boots one back left hind	short	medium	none

above horses out of the Laramie Stud, Rockets off spring

Patrick was so small I never took the time to break him. He was exceptionally smart extremely agile, able to run wide open across patches of ice a 100 yards across. I never saw him fall. When the horses would run and play before an impending storm, he was always 50 yards out in front. No horse on the ranch could outrun him. Looked like Frostfire's Capt. Kirk.

5.

I'm hoping that you folks can get the pictures I'm sending you copied, and perhaps return them to me as I have no negatives. However, if you can't I will understand and hope they help you in your investigations.

Tony was never a cow horse. Hated to turn or reign. Was easy to ride but never possessed a free easy gate. Always thought he was born to kidney troubles as he was always dull of wit and slow movement. He couldn't learn as he couldn't remember what was taught him. Sort of had to retrain him once a month.

We had two filly colts out of rocket. One wound up a Don Rodger's the other Marvin Hopkins of Pinedale, Wyoming. An Iron grey nearly identical to Peewee. I never saw a man love his horse more. Her head was shaped like the horse in the right in the two page Photo of two horses nose to nose. One blaze faced on right having (bare) showing of a star.

The horses I am sending pictures of I leave as self-explanatory those I have no pictures of, I will compare to those you sent me.

Laramie Stud showed many of the traits or those of the brown black Rock Springs mare. He had shorter ears set wider apart, shorter back. No withers either. Very similar shoulders, legs rump, (croup) only a few hairs on his tail at any time. Very similar markings. Many of his colts exhibited the longer head such as she does. He was nearly ewe necked too.

The very different types of offspring from him and Rocket seemed to depend much on the dams blood. Those crosses with Arabians were similar to this R.S. (Rock Springs) mare.

Snip 1200 lb. Black looked remarkably like the Sorrel? Horse similar to old style Morgans on PP#74 and same horse center of pictures showing two horses in water, Jay's Boy at top he and lady+ fetlock pic bottom. Snip was out of a Sweeney's Morgan stock.

Snip never liked people but was intelligent and commanded very well was extremely strong.

6.

He looked a lot like Jay's Curly Boy when he trotted.

Frosty 1200 lb. Frosty the iron grey's head as was Peewee, looked a good deal similar on side view to Nevada Mary owned by Betsy Parillo. Neck, legs, shoulder slope, withers very similar. A bit longer crop. Curly coats on all my horses and Ikes were like hers.

Frosty and Peewee have very little mane in summer, sparse in winter. Snip and Knots had long manes and tails all the time. Knots was built more like Snip too.

Eagle Iron grey 1300 lb. Very similar build, head, and carriage with a thicker neck to Pat's Diamond ABC P. 33. He was easy riding, very intelligent easy stride for just making long hard rides on. However... He did not possess the ability to stop and turn. He had the "want to" and could herd most running cows on his long trot, but when he had to "shut down" he seemed to always manage to stumble and fall a hundred yards or so but if you roped the biggest bull, he was yours.

Rocket 850 lb. Black Black I will dwell awhile on this one. He was such a joy to ride. Looked somewhat like Jay's Curly Boy, even judges in Pleasure and reigning classes admired his free and easy gait.

When I broke him at 3 years of age he was very callable of a 75 mile day. At maturity he could put in a 150 mile day with ease 4 and 5 of them in a row in fact. I never tired of riding him even though it was hard to hold a saddle when he was fat because of small withers.

I could rope any cow on the ranch. While they would pitch and beller in every direction, he would just stand there slightly spraddle legged and look around as if nothing were happening.

7.

(Please excuse the poor writing)

He never had any trouble outrunning horse or cow, on hillside, soft ground or ice.

We have many badger holes in our country. They have attributed to over 75 falls on various horses in my lifetime over 25 on frozen meadows. I've been hung up 3 times with only one serious injury, but in the 15 years I rode this horse, he fell only once. When he jumped over a badge hole it caved in on him 3 ft. deep and sort of tied his front legs to the ground. Since we were loping right along it was a short fast trip to the ground, no fault of his.

Most of his colts were good ones, but I only had a few mare so his greatest potential was not realized until I retired him to stud on open range about 1974. He fathered all the present day Curlies around Rock Springs, some of which were good looking stock. Some out the heavier mares from Ike's Belgian stud were not so good.

In closing I wish to thank you for taking the time to find me. One of my lifetime dreams was to raise a Curly Breed out of rocket. That fell by the wayside long ago – with the passing of my first wife Anna. I am so glad someone besides me has found and enjoyed the "Curly Horse".

Around 1952 to 54 Ike sold about 9 filly colts to a horse buyer who took them east toward Kansas and Iowa. Maybe some of those showed up in Indiana.

I also found my Time Life Book, "The Kingdom of the Horse", H.H. Isenbart- E.M. (BiiKrer ??) The Bashkir horse is listed there as a Soviet Union horse of Mongolian and (Kirdhy??) blood used by the Ural Cossacks.

Again, Many Thanks to you, feel free to contact me at any time.

Signed:

John L. Kappes

Retyped by Carol Erickson

Photos provided by Patricia Kappes from her photo collection.



Ann Kappes and Rocket 1964



Pee Wee 1969

Rocket Photo comments by Patricia Kappes: Finally found that picture I was telling you about. Was taken in 1964. Dated on back of photo.

Pee Wee photo comments: Patricia Kappes said "Found this picture of a curly colt from Rocket and John's mare "Betsy". Picture was taken in 1969 here at the ranch."

Rebecca said: "Bunny here is the second one. This colt's name is "Pee Wee" When I was a child in the 80's I remember my brothers and sisters riding this horse, but he was white then. I might have even rode him in the late 80's, so he had a long life span especially for a ranch horse."

More info from Rebecca Reinhart (Patricia Kappes daughter)

Bunny,

Actually I grew up on the ranch that John Kappes grew up on. My brothers and sister are related to John (well he was the adopted son of the Kappes's). I guess Ike Brooks (John's adoptive mother's brother) bought the curly stallion and John turned the stud out with the mustangs. It was Ike's intention to improve the mustang stock. When the ranchers gathered the mustangs the good ones were either turned back out on the range or broke to ride. Up until the blm management of the herds I believe the ranchers did a very wise thing by trying to improve the herds, using what they could and selling off the junk. But anywho, the two curlies that were on the ranch used as ranch horses were half brothers, one was out of Honey and the other Daisy. But when my mom runs across the pictures (see above) of them I will definitely . ttl Rebecca

Bunny

Yes you may use this on the website. History of a breed is important, and pictures make it so much better. Plus the pictures will eventually be lost if not shared. it is neat that an introduction of a stallion to the herd in the 60's is still showing the curly traits 50 years later!

Then on Pee Wee I also recall that he is the horse that all of us kids rode because he was so safe and dependable. That was something because training of horses in Wyoming isn't the training out in the east. The horses were allowed to get to 4-5 years of age before they were started. When they were ready to work they were played with a little to accept the saddle and a rider, and then saddle thrown on cinched up tight and rode all day herding cattle. I don't understand it but not very many breast collars were used even though the terrain was rugged. It wasn't uncommon for ranch horses to have wither white spots, and white girth spots. If a ranch horse got loose or was turned out it was easy to pick them out from a mustang herd because of the saddle spots. On the picture of Pee Wee I never knew he was anything other than white.