

Excerpt taken from *The History of the Tennessee Walking Horse*

By Ben Green

"There was never a person who loved horses better than Albert Dement and he knew a good horse when he saw one," said Bob Murchison about his friend in Ben Green's book "Biography of the Tennessee Walking Horse. "He was tops in Walking Horse men when it came to riding, showing, training, feeding and general care of horses. Mr. Dement had a nerve of iron, knew how to train horses and was never afraid of them."

Albert M. Dement was born in the community of Porterfield in Cannon County, Tennessee, on June 1, 1868. His interest in saddle horses began early in life about the age of 14. In 1892 he moved to Bedford County and sometime after the turn of the century, around 1902, he began an extensive experimental horse breeding program.

At a time when many people thought the automobile would do away with the riding horse, Dement never believed that a day would come when the Walking Horse would not be in demand. He dedicated himself to the breed of horse he loved and to the horse breeding program that would become his legacy.

He purchased Nell Dement F-3 along with four other Stonewall Jackson bred mares. But it was Nell who was to become the key foundation mare of Dement's breeding program. He showed the sorrel mare with flax mane and tail as a three-year-old at the Tennessee State Fair in 1905 and after winning each of her classes, Dement was offered a high price of \$950 for the show mare, but refused to sell.

Dement made what later became known as the "Water Glass" class popular with Nell. He would enter the ring in a full running walk on Nell with a water glass held in the palm of one hand which was filled to the brim with water. He would circle the ring without spilling a drop of water to demonstrate Nell's smooth ride.

After four years of less than satisfactory results of breeding Nell to four different studs, Dement selected Old Black Allan (Allan F-1) to cross with Nell. Dement purchased Allan F-1 from his good friend, J.R. Brantley, in 1901 for \$140. Allan died at the Dement farm near Normandy on Sept. 10, 1910, having produced only one colt from Nell. The result was Merry Legs F-4, foaled in April of 1911. She began her show ring career as a weanling under the direction of Henry Davis and was undefeated. Nell Dement died at the age of 28 and foaled her last colt at 26.

Merry Legs was referred to by many fans as "the greatest show mare that ever lived." Horseman Bob Murchison of Wartrace fondly remembered Merry Legs. "She did one thing that mares do not do nowadays. She would foal a colt in the spring of the year, then Mr. Dement would wean that colt two or three weeks before the State Fair in Nashville and would enter her in the show, where she would win first place."

In 1914, Merry Legs became the first three-year-old to not only win the Three-Year-Old championship, but also the Grand Championship Stake at the Tennessee State Fair. The only three-year-old to match her title was Merry Legs' granddaughter, Dement's Merry Legs II 360021 in 1936 with Floyd Caruthers, trainer.

Dement's Merry Legs II, or "Little Merry Legs" as she was known, was also bred by Dement, along with her sire, Merry Boy 350189 and her dam, Skip 350101. Mr. Dement was quoted as saying a few years before his death, "I got a little more finish, more head style with plenty of pep and conformation, and by this production the fullest aspirations of my dreams are complete."

Another Dement-bred Walking Horse out of Merry Legs F-4 and by Hunter's Allen was the stallion, Last Chance 350034. Mrs. Olive Caruthers Diekroger credited Dement and his belief in Last Chance with returning her husband Floyd Caruthers to the show ring. "It was Dement who persuaded Floyd to start training again," she said. "He called Floyd and asked him to train Last Chance. Dement had good horses and many consider him to have been a Master Breeder."

Last Chance was the last colt foaled by Merry Legs F-4 before she died of colic at the age of 21. As the announcer read a tribute to Albert Dement at the Columbia Horse Show a few weeks after his death in March of 1940 Last Chance was saddled and led around the ring without a rider, followed by close friends, show officials and members of the Breeders Association.

Great early Walking Horses bred by Albert Dement include the black roan stallion foaled in 1925, Merry Boy, considered one of the breed's most influential sires. Others include Merry King 360121 foaled in 1916; Major Allen 350059 foaled in 1917; the great Bud Allen foaled in 1918; Skip foaled in 1927; Snip 350038 foaled in 1928; Nell Don 350039 foaled in 1928; Miss Merry 350111 foaled in 1930; Lady Chance 350040 foaled in 1935; King Merry Boy 360183 foaled in 1936 and many others.

Merry Wilson 391278, foaled on May 28, 1939, by Wilson's Allen out of Lady Chance (by Last Chance) was the last winning show horse bred by Albert Dement. She was also the last contender for the World Grand Championship to be sired by Wilson's Allen.

Dement was one of the first to realize that if his Plantation Walking Horses were to achieve widespread identity, they needed a registry of their own. He had his horses registered in the American Saddle Horse Registry of Louisville, Ky., before becoming instrumental in the organization of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' Association of America which was chartered on May 11, 1935.

Dement served the association in its first three years of organization in the roles of second vice president, as a member of the executive committee and as a member of the board of directors. He served as president from 1939 until his death in 1940.

Albert M. Dement died on Saturday, March 16, 1940, from complications of the flu at the age of 72. He was well known in his community of Wartrace not only as a farmer and prominent breeder of Tennessee Walking Horses, but as a respected religious and civic leader. He was an elder in the Wartrace Presbyterian Church, a director and officer of the Bedford County Farm Bureau and president of the Bedford County Walking Horse Association.

Dement was buried in the Hollywood Cemetery in Wartrace. His survivors were his wife, Mrs. Mina Preston Dement; two daughters, Mrs. Huda (George) Shoffner of Knoxville and Mrs. Maude Brevard of Nashville; two sons, E. Miller Dement and Arthur J. Dement, both of Normandy; a sister, Mrs. Martha Hogwood of Woodbury, and a brother, Wilson Dement, also of Woodbury; three granddaughters and seven grandsons.

A news article later the same year on the front page of the Bedford County Times following the 1940 Wartrace Horse Show read, "An impressive tribute was paid the late Albert M. Dement at the Wartrace Horse Show Friday night when two of his grandsons, Kenneth and Joe Jack Dement, rode Nell and Snip, two of the pioneer horseman's favorite horses in the ring as Floyd Caruthers, Henry Davis and Bob Murchison walked in front of them with bowed heads."

Tennessee Walking Horse magazine editor, Emmett Lee, documented Dement's contributions in a 1946 article as follows: "Albert M. Dement, recognized as the most outstanding breeder of Tennessee Walking

Horses, herein receives our contribution in an effort to establish his name, by his achievements, as the all-time Master Breeder.

"The rich blood he left throughout his noted horses and the trail he blazed so successfully encouraged us to chronicle some of the experiences of Mr. Dement as a reminder of accomplishments that will be beneficial to our breed for many generations. The pedigreed horse he left, will, in our opinion, reflect his worthiness in after years — wherever the Tennessee Walking Horse may wander."