

Hello All!

John Fusco here, fellow-mustanger and author of “Hidalgo”. Seeing that the debate continues over my movie, I thought that I’d comment from the horse’s mouth as it were.

Firstly, with all due respect to freedom of opinion and to all fellow horsemen, Frank T. Hopkins was a man who loved and lived for the Spanish Mustang. This is an undisputable fact.

At a time when no one stood up for this endangered breed, Mr. Hopkins wrote impassioned and inspired essays on the value of our under-appreciated horses and he did so from the 1920’s right up till the time of his death in 1951.

He never made a penny in his outspoken campaign for the Spanish Mustang.

He also wrote essays and articles on the training of endurance horses that have been vetted as not only “knowing his stuff”, but also being “ahead of his time”.

Recently – after the start of my movie – materials were located in a box in a Wyoming museum that are assumed to have been written by Frank Hopkins. I have reviewed all of this material and find a distinct bifurcation between author’s voices.

It is my opinion that the majority of the handwritten materials found in this “secret box” was composed by Hopkins’ widow Gertrude. This was after she had been approached by an author who conveyed an interest in writing a book about her husband many years after his death.

Gertrude herself confessed at that time to being “impoverished and living from one moment to the next”. Here she was in the 1960’s, approached with the possibility of a book about her late husband that might convince the author that there was a book there.

Trust me: Frank Hopkins knew enough about the American West – as evidenced by his earlier published interviews and writings – than to state that Geronimo was Chief Joseph’s brother and that they both were Sioux (!).

While Hopkins was a live a great many respected horsemen and scholars knew him. They spent a great deal of time interviewing him and all came away confident enough to publish historical accounts of his horsemanship.

Recently, I heard from Kim Kingsley, who all of you know for his outstanding records. I was informed that Kim used the writings of Frank Hopkins to train his endurance mounts through the years. Kim’s record is solid evidence of Frank Hopkins’ equestrian knowledge and experience. He is not the only one who has drawn on Hopkins’ legacy to train champion horses in the distance world.

We mustangers have all known of Frank Hopkins for years. He remains an enigmatic figure and always will, but one this is certain: he loved the Mustang, knew how to ride him over long distances, and pleaded for his future.

I would not have written “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron” without the inspiration of Frank T. Hopkins. Nor would I have committed myself to the cause of Spanish Mustang preservation.

“This country is vast enough,” wrote Frank Hopkins, “to have a horse of our own.”

That horse is the Spanish Mustang.

I hope that you enjoy HIDALGO.

John Fusco