

The Flying Williams

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Bruce Stewart

Lex and Heather Williams have built a movie theatre, run an opera house, bred champion sheep, bought a yearling that appeared twice in the sales ring then went on to win a million dollars, and owned a mare that's left foals that have collectively won over one hundred races.



A lot of achievements in their fifty years of married life. And looking at the racing calendar both on and off the track there are more possibilities in store in the next few months.

With the Harness Awards coming up shortly, two horses bred by the Williams – Cracker Hill and Ultimate Stride, have been nominated for the Three Year Old Trotting Colt or Gelding of the Year. Whilst One Apollo, also bred by the couple, is a nomination for Four Year Old Trotting Entire or Gelding of the Year.



Ultimate Stride – Photo Bruce Stewart

The Williams have shares in both Cracker Hill and One Apollo.



One Apollo – Photo Bruce Stewart

Cornerstone to the couples breeding operation are trotting mare One Over Kenny and In The Pocket pacing matron, Fleet's Pocket.

Between them they have left the winners of one hundred and fifty four races with Fleet's Pocket accounting for one hundred and seven of those.

Most of their horses have the words 'One' or 'Flying' in them.

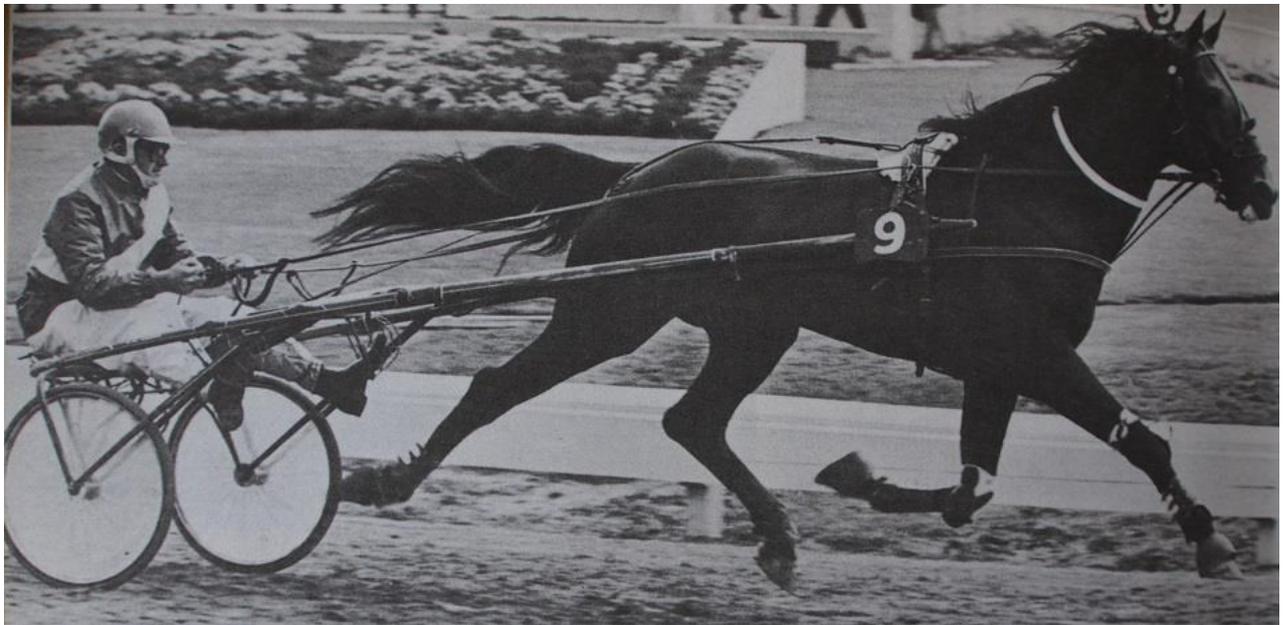
Neither Lex nor Heather came from a racing background but Lex, who was born in Lawrence, spent a bit of time at Forbury Park.

"My father (Tom) was a great gambler and a regular at Forbury Park. We used to go with him all the time. He never owned a horse but he loved his trotting."

And keen to impress Heather, Lex choose a night at the trots as a starting point for their relationship.

"Heather and I had our first date at Forbury about fifty years ago. I remember telling her that one day I would own a horse."

In those days pacers like Intrepid, Garcon Roux, Stella Frost, Chequer Board and Manaroa were racing at Forbury. The trotters included Johnny Fling, Philemon, Precocious and Tony Bear.



Tony Bear

Married in 1970 Lex and Heather initially farmed at Lawrence before moving to Waimate where they spent thirty seven years running a stud sheep and beef farm.

Originally 600 acres, the farm was reduced down to 140 acres when the Williams sold to an expanding dairy industry.

“The lot that was left had a lot of hills on it and I think it was a great thing for developing yearlings. We bred South Suffolk and Texel sheep and won the National Lamb Competition in 1992 with three cross bred lambs from our own stud. Conformation was my thing. I did a lot of eye muscle measuring. The yield that they gave, blew the others out of the water. The meat to bone ratio was way higher than anyone else. That’s what helped me when I was buying horses. I was a great one on the muscling.”

In 2002 they went to the yearling sales and bought Fleet’s Pocket and Galleons Memory (Albert Albert – Galleons Beauty). Galleons Memory qualified for Oamaru trainer Phil Williamson but never raced. She was from the same family as Chokin while Fleet’s Pocket trained by Tim Butt raced four times for a best placing of fifth at Greymouth.

“We mated her as a three year old.”

Of her first fifteen foals two year old and older, twelve have qualified with eleven winning races.

Her first foal by Badlands Hanover ran four seconds in New Zealand before winning four races in Australia and that started her stunning career as a broodmare, in which she’s left the winners of 107 races.

Her biggest winner has been Mighty Flying Thomas which won twenty four races. Her first twelve foals have qualified and nine have won races. Other mares that I can recall to leave winners of over one hundred races are: Loyal Trick (128), Belladonna (115), and Significant (104).

The following year Lex and Heather went back to the sales and bought One Over Kenny under interesting circumstances.

“We wanted to buy a trotter that year. Phil Williamson sorted One Over Kenny out – \$20,000 was our budget. We got to twenty and the auctioneer said he’d take a half (\$500) but he took a \$1,000 from the next bidder. When the sales staff went to get the buyer’s signature he said oh no it was only twenty and a half.”

The auctioneer then decided to bring the yearling back into the ring three lots later.

“Heather said ‘why you don’t put in another bid.’ The other guy went to twenty and half and I went to twenty one. He said bugger you and pulled out and they knocked her down to me. We’ve spoken to the guy a few times since. It was his trainer that was more gutted about it.”

One Over Kenny had a brilliant career as a race horse.

Not only did she win thirty two races and won over a million dollars she was also named New Zealand Three Year Old Trotting Filly of the Year in the 2004/2005 season and Five Year Old and Older Trotting Mare of the Year in 2006/2007 and again in 2008/2009.

She won seventeen Group or Listed races. In New Zealand she won nineteen races for Phil Williamson and seven for Tony Herlihy. Fifteen of her twenty six wins were at Alexandra Park. She won the Rowe Cup twice – in 2007 and 2009. One Over Kenny also won the six races in Australia winning just shy of a quarter of a million dollars there.



One Over Kenny in action – Photo Race Images

Her biggest win was in the Group One Australasian Trotters Championship but Williams has a special spot for the VHRC The Holmfield which she won as a three year old in 2005. Her son One Over Da Moon won the same race in 2014.

“I’d love to go back for The Holmfield with another one from the family. Timing hasn’t worked out at this stage,” Lex says.

In recent years the Williams have bought into some of the best New Zealand trotting lines in purchasing Petite Sunset, Anna Castleton, Leithe Ellen and Landora’s Pearl.

“I love my trotting so I said I’d like a mare out of the best families in the country. The trotters have a natural gait which appeals to me more than the pacer.”

Petite Sunset which died in 2013 was a Sundon daughter of thirty five race winning mare Pride of Petite who won \$811,816. Her dam was globetrotting mare Petite Evander. She won twenty one races in New Zealand and twenty six in America where she won \$713,923. She also raced successfully in Europe. Lex and Heather bred two foals out of Petite Sunset including Petite One which won seven races for Greg and Nina Hope. She was bought by Taffy Limited in 2018.



Petite One winning at Addington – Photo Race Images

Anna Castleton bred by the late Lachie Marshall is also from one of the best trotting families. Her third dam Castleton’s Queen left Sir Castleton (44 wins) and 1975 Interdominion Trotting Champion Castleton’s Pride (11 wins). The Williams bred eight foals out of the mare before she died in 2018. Her best foal was her last, One Apollo.



One Apollo on Jewels Day at Addington – Photo Bruce Stewart

Leithe Ellen by Muscle Yankee, is a half-sister to twenty eight race winner The Fiery Ginga. The Williams bred a number of foals out of Leithe Ellen without too much success before selling her two years ago. Leithe Ellen's three year old daughter Light Of Da Moon has had one start for Robbie Holmes.

Landora's Pearl by Earl was another well bred mare the Williams bought and bred from. She's a granddaughter of Landora's Pride the winner of thirty four races including the 1987 Rowe Cup and 1988 Dominion Handicap. Landora's Pearl's best winner in New Zealand so far has been Da Moon's Mission which has won two races for Otago trainer Graeme Anderson. Landora's Pearl is now owned by the estate of CJ Roberts.

The Williams started taking yearlings to the sales in 2005 and as a breeder Lex is particularly interested in the dam side of pedigrees.

“Most stallions are well bred. The maternal lines of the stallion and your own mare are important. When you look at the Angus Hall breed and his dam Amour Angus it's absolutely staggering. She must have been the greatest mare ever.”

As a yearling Cracker Hill went through the sales ring in 2018 but failed to reach his reserve.

“We ended by syndicating him and we got Gary Preston to look after the group because I was looking after six other syndicates at that stage.”

Trained by Brad Williamson he’s been one of the rising stars in the trotting gait and he has a couple of big assignments coming up next month in Auckland – the \$85,000 Listed PGG Wrightson New Zealand Yearling Sales Three Year Old Trot on the 9th October and the \$50,000 Group Two Haras des Trotteurs Sires Stakes Three Year Old Championship on the 23rd October.



Cracker Hill – Photo Bruce Stewart

Outside of Cracker Hill the couple have some other promising types.

They bred One Apollo and also retained a share in the talented trotter. He’s one of the first foals by their stallion One Over Da Moon (Majestic Son – One Over Kenny). One Apollo has won seven races from just twenty eight starts including the Group Three Four and Five Year Old Trotting Championship at Addington last season. He’s trained by Brent White.

“Being by our own stallion there’s a special attraction to him. Brent’s always had a very high opinion of him. He’s tried to look after him because he’s aiming at the Dominion this year.”

Another trotter with White is Samanthas Moon. She’s also by One Over Da Moon out of Eyrewell Pegasus.

“Brent’s very upbeat about her. We borrowed the mare. He’s excited about her but he said he’ll just have to take his time and that we won’t see her until Christmas.”

Although they have sold Juneamy Castleton the dam of Cracker Hill, they’ve retained one of her daughters in Oneamy Vici who is due to have her first foal. By Orlando Vici, she qualified at Rangiora for trainer Robbie Holmes but never raced.

“She was going to be a nice racehorse but got injured. She’s having her first foal to One Over Da Moon. They’re closely related because Juneamy Castleton is by Majestic Son and so is One Over Da Moon. I used to do that type of breeding when I was breeding sheep dogs. We called it two by two. It’s going to be interesting. It’s as close as you want to get.”

At stud One Over Da Moon has left seventeen foals. Four have qualified with One Apollo (7) and Da Moon’s Mission (2) being his first two winners.

Although initially hesitant around horses particularly young stock, Heather soon found a way of managing the youngsters that works for her.

“She’s a good stock lady. She was a good trainer of dogs and became very very good at handling the foals. In the last few years we never had to break them because they were so quiet. She said there’s got to be an easier way than tying them up and having flank ropes on them so she read the Horse Whispers books. You have to start on them (the foals) when they’re very young. It became a trust thing between her and the foals. We got a lot of accolades from the trainers who said our horses were so easy to break in.”

Outside of racing the couple were also in the entertainment game for sixteen years.

“We ran a movie theatre for the Waimate community for five years and leased the Opera House in Oamaru for ten years before building a three cinema complex in Oamaru which we managed for two to three years.”

Lex said it was a big part of the couple’s life and provided them with some entertaining moments.

“We managed all the live shows that travelled through, acts like Charlie Pride and Kevin ‘Bloody’ Wilson. I got a licence when he (Wilson) was there and I sold 800 cans of Speights. There were 400 people at the concert. Kevin liked it when they were enjoying themselves. It took us all day to clean up the next day.”

On the racing administration front Lex was President for the Waimate Trotting Club for ten years and filled in as Chairman of Forbury Park for a short period. He plans to get back into racing administration in the future.

The couple have three sons; Stacey and Nigel who reside in Western Australia and Bradley who farms at Milburn just north of Milton.

All three have a share in the One Over Da Skye's (Majestic Son – One Over Kenny) yet to be born foal by Love You. One Over The Skye won four races for Greg and Nina Hope.

“When we sell that at the sales they'll be there to get their share (laughter).”

These days the William's mares are spread around stud farms in the south and their yearlings are prepared at Winton by Julie Baynes.

She's currently preparing a half-brother to Ultimate Stride by Majestic Son and an Art Major colt out of Fleet's Pocket.

With a new house that's just weeks away from being lived in overlooking Ocean View Beach I suspect there's already space allocated for the many racing photos the couple have collected over the years and extra room for those that are still to come. Reminiscing over racing photos and watching the sea roll in has got to be the perfect mix.

The Williams mares and racing team

Mares:

- **One Over Kenny** (Sundon – Frances Jay Bee) – in foal to En Solitaire
- **Fleet's Pocket** (In the Pocket – Fleet Vance) – in foal to Sweet Lou
- **One Over Da Stars** (Love You – One Over Kenny) – Andover Hall
- **One Over Da Skye** (Majestic Son – One Over Kenny) – Love You
- **Muscle Girl** (Muscle Hill – Anreca Hest) – One Over Da Moon
- **Oneamy Vici** (Orlando Vici – Juneamy Castleton) – One Over Da Moon
- **A Glass Of Tanqueray** (Raffaello Ambrosia – Springfield Tiz) – One Over Da Moon

Racing Team:

- **One Apollo** (Five Year Old Gelding by One Over Da Moon out of Anna Castleton)
- **Cracker Hill** (Four Year Old Gelding by Muscle Hill out of Juneamy Castleton)
- **One Over Da Son** (Five Year Old Gelding by Muscle Hill out of One Over Kenny)
- **Da Moons Mission** (Five Year Old Gelding by One Over Da Moon out of Landora's Pride)
- **Samantha's Moon** (Three Year Old Filly by One Over Da Moon out of Eyrewell Pegasus)
- **Bev K's One** (Four Year Old mare by Love You out of Petite One)

- **Flying Heathers One** (Three Year Old Bettor's Delight Filly out of Fleet's Pocket)
- **One Over All** (Three Year Old Angus Hall gelding out of One Over Kenny)
- **Light Of Da Moon** (Three Year Old Filly by One Over Da Moon out of Leithe Ellen)
- **You Fly With Me** (Three Year Old Somebeachsomewhere colt out of Flying With Mrs Williams)
- **Gotta Elect Bill** (Two Year old Auckland Reactor colt out of Gotta Elect Neil)

