

"We always seemed to sell everything we wanted to each year, and we also had quite a few repeat customers, which was always nice and made for some enduring friendships over the years.

"Another thing that I can tell you is that most people who came to our ranch during those years left with a horse. We're not exactly on the well-beaten path up here, and most folks who took the time and trouble to show up already had a pretty good idea of what they wanted. And it was kind of seasonal — we sold a lot of horses during the summer, but I can't remember too many after-Christmas clearance sales."

In 1974 a colorful chapter in both the history of the Warne family and the Appaloosa breed came to an abrupt end with the unexpected death of Bambi E. Ironically, that same harsh, unforgiving climate that Lee Warne and his ancestors have successfully contended with for over 100 years played a direct role in the passing of the popular leopard stallion.

"We had one of those late spring blizzards in 1974," remembers Warne. "We were virtually paralyzed for three days because of the weather. It was all we could do to just get out and feed the stock.

"Bambi was up in one of the corals with a couple of geldings. We'd bundle up the best we could each day of the storm and go out and feed him and the rest of the horses and cattle. What we didn't realize was that the storm was fatiguing the old horse so much that he'd lay down in his alfalfa hay and get it all wet from his body heat and then munch on it. Well, he got colicky and the roads to town were plugged tight, so I couldn't even get a vet out. All I could do was try to see him through it, but he just didn't make it. He was 20 years old at the time, but looked like a ten-year-old and had run with his normal band of mares the summer before."

As devastating a blow as the death of Bambi E was to the Warne breeding program, it was not totally unforeseen.

Sully's Lancer, a beautiful-headed



Sully's Baby Grand was one of Lee Warne's favorite show mares.



At an early Sioux Nation Appaloosa Show, Randy Warne basks in the limelight with a youth class win with Sully's Little Sparkle.



Winning the produce of dam class at GEAR, a show which has long enjoyed a position of prestige within the industry, Sully's Foxy Lady and Sully's Little Sis do their parents, Sully's Lancer — Annie K., proud.

red leopard great-grandson of Bambi, was already being groomed as an eventual replacement for the old horse. Necessity dictated that he assume that role a bit sooner than originally planned.

Although bred by the Warnes, Lancer's pedigree was just different enough to enable him to be used heavily on the ranch's Bambi E daughters and granddaughters.

"In 1967, I got wind of a Quarter Horse half-brother to Wapiti that a man by the name of Clarence Thode owned down in Pierre," Warne recalls. "He was sired by the great Peavy stallion, Gold Heels and out of Fleet P-268, one of the greatest daughters of Ding Bob P-269. This old horse, Heel's Melody, was in his middle 20s when I heard about him. I made arrangements to take a daughter of Sully's Pattern down to be bred to him but they couldn't get him to breed her.

"I talked Thode into letting me take the stud back to the ranch, and we worked all summer and got the mare in foal. Lancer was the result, and he was the stallion's last foal. We showed him as a two-year-old 11 times and he won ten firsts and a third. He's sired a bunch of good horses for us and is a medallion sire. He's 20 now, but we still pasture breed him to eight to ten mares and I've kept 12 of his daughters for the broodmare band."

As it did throughout the horse industry, the depression of the 1980s hit the Sully Appaloosas of South Dakota.

"The market sort of dried up at the start of the '80s," says Warne. "It didn't upset me as much as it did a lot of folks. Of course I missed the business, but I was ready to slow down. Randy was married and assuming more and more of the everyday management of the ranch. Even more than being ready to slow