



# THE Standardbred — JOURNAL —

APRIL 2022 | VOL. 2 | NO. 2

# HAWKER 850



*Also known as Neely Trainer*

**2021 Amateur Roadster to Bike World Champion**  
Driven by Scott Hagan

Shiflet  
2021



# THE Standardbred — JOURNAL —

*Published by*  
**The Standardbred Journal, Inc.**  
(a 501c3 non-profit organization)  
PO Box 185  
Mount Hope, Ohio 44660

Editor and Advertising Sales:  
Mark Yoder, 330-946-6501  
Email: ymarkjournal@gmail.com

General Manager and Podcasts: Steven Yoder

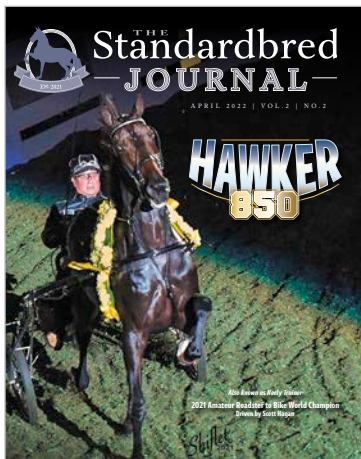
Graphic Design & Layout:  
Beth Miller, 330-473-2253  
info@sugarbushdesign.com

Writing and Proofreading  
Jeff Pratt and Connie Troyer

Road Horse Show Representative:  
Rick Adams, 678-296-7442

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## ON THE COVER



Our April front cover features the 2021 Amateur Roadster to Bike Champion, Hawker 850, also known as Neely Trainer.

*Cover photo courtesy Doug Shiflett.*

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**Mails out Mid July, 2022**  
**Advertising Deadline: June 23, 2022**  
*For advertising information, see page 161*



*Amour*  
ANGUS

# She Completely Changed The Breed: Amour Angus

*2020 Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame Inductee*

*By Rachel Oenema*

*This story is courtesy of Trot Magazine, Canada's official harness racing publication.*

*It originally appeared in their July 2020 issue.*

**ONE OF THE HARDEST ASPECTS** of our industry is the breeding side of the sport. Oftentimes we don't give the breeders of our beloved Standardbreds enough credit. There can be a major investment of time and money with little return. One could spend years—and tens of thousands of dollars or more—trying to get a mare in foal, only to have her not catch season after season. One could spend a significant amount of money breeding a mare and raising a foal, only for that sire's offspring to have a bad season and squander your yearling sale price. From the day a mare is bred, to the day a foal is born, to the day a yearling is sold, to the day that yearling makes its career debut, a lot can happen.

Personally, I've never been closely attached to the breeding industry, aside from watching my father breed mediocre mares to mediocre stallions, which produced less than mediocre racehorses—but I got to help name them, and at that time in my life, that was all I really cared about.

However, more recently I had the honor and pleasure of getting to know one of the biggest names in the history of the North American Standardbred breeding industry: Alan Leavitt of Walnut Hall Limited in Lexington, Kentucky. Walnut Hall is the birthplace of dominant trotting and pacing icons such as Cash Hall, Amigo Hall, Banker Hall, Angus Hall, Andover Hall, Cameron Hall, Cantab Hall, and Blissful Hall.

It is also the driving force behind great stallion careers such as those associated with Striking Sahbra, Tom Ridge, Cambest and Like A Prayer, and today it is still in charge of the stallion careers of Conway Hall and Deweycheatumnhowe and is home to a dozen broodmares.

If you've ever spoken to Mr. Leavitt, you'd soon appreciate the ways that he has helped to revolutionize the breeding game on multiple occasions. He is very observant and never says no to sitting down for a conversation to pick his brain. Rightfully so, Alan Leavitt's name is enshrined in the Harness Racing Hall of Fame in Goshen, New York.

From some of the most successful syndications to some of the most successful pairings, with everything that he and Walnut Hall have accomplished since being established in 1993, Alan Leavitt now has one more thing to be ever so proud of—the induction of Amour Angus into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame.

This story begins in 1987, when unraced trotting mare Kenwood Scamper gave birth to her first foal (by Magna Force) at Fermes Angus in Bedford, Quebec, owned by Pierre Levesque. The filly, named Amour Angus, pursued an average career on the track but did win three Quebec Sire Stakes events at age two, in 1989. She earned \$21,355 in her career, took a mark of 2:03.1f, and was a winner in six of 16 lifetime starts.



*Andover Hall*

Little did anyone know that after her final start on July 6, 1990, at Blue Bonnets, where she made a break in stride while on the lead, dragging her back to sixth place, that she would become, if not the greatest, one of the greatest trotting broodmares of all time.

The first foal to come from Amour Angus was a Garland Lobell filly, Emilie Cas El, who would go undefeated for trainer/driver Dustin Jones and win O'Brien Awards that year for both two-year-old trotting fillies and overall Horse of the Year in Canada. Emilie Cas El furthered her fame abroad while racing throughout Sweden, Norway, Italy, and Finland before becoming a broodmare herself. As a broodmare, she's the producer of winners of more than \$1.6 million and is the dam of 2014 Hambletonian winner and current trotting sire Trixton.

With three more foals on the ground following Emilie Cas El, including another Garland Lobell (colt) by her side, enter Alan Leavitt, who was interested in purchasing the broodmare. Amour Angus's breeder and owner at the time, Pierre Levesque, had recently had his world shaken with the passing of his mother, and after negotiating with the well-known Canadian breeder, a deal was struck to buy the mare for \$50,000. Originally the foal by her side was not to be part of the deal but was eventually included for an additional \$8,500. The mare was also checked and in-foal once again to Garland Lobell.



*Angus Hall*

The purchase would prove to be a well-paying trifecta for Leavitt—a purchase that, at the time, he had no idea of which gold he had just struck.

“Racing in Quebec was facing difficult times, thus provoking the opportunity to purchase Amour Angus. I remember a conversation with Mr. Levesque in which he wanted Amour to have the best chance possible to become a successful broodmare,” says Leavitt, as he retells the tale of how he purchased the new hall of famer.

The foal by her side was renamed Conway Hall—a colt that would go on to earn \$818,884, winning 13 of 29 starts and taking a lifetime mark of 1:53.4 at the Meadowlands. Despite his outstanding racing career, it is his prolific stallion career that Conway Hall is most known for—being the sire of five millionaires, which include Wishing Stone (\$2.3 million) and Windsongs Legacy (\$1.9 million).

“Conway Hall got his name from a friend of mine named Jack Conway, who helped orchestrate the deal when purchasing Amour Angus. At that time my wife Meg was doing the naming, and we decided to name the foal that we bought by her side Conway Hall,” Leavitt proudly recalls.

Conway Hall continued to pass on his dam's legacy through his own foals that became stallions, such as Windsongs Legacy (sire of Lucky Chucky, Chapter Seven, Windsong Soprano, and Tad the Stud), Broadway Hall (sire of Hambletonian winner Broad Bahn and Pilgrims Taj),



*Conway Hall*



*Emile Cas El*

and Wishing Stone. Conway Hall is also a sire of many great mares such as Win Missy B, Creamy Mimi, and Pizza Dolce—the dam of Bella Dolce and Miss Paris.

“Bob Stewart came to visit us at our farm and told me that he wanted to buy Conway Hall, that he had a partnership group lined up to put forth the money. On the morning of the day Conway Hall was to sell as a yearling at the Tattersalls Sale, Bob came to me and told me he couldn’t get it done—he said he could take a quarter and that another partner of his would take fifty percent, but there was still another twenty-five percent to make up for. So I took the twenty-five percent and that was that. To this day I still syndicate Conway Hall.”

The foal Amour Angus was carrying at the time she was purchased would eventually become Angus Hall—another champion offspring of the indestructible pairing of Amour Angus and Garland Lobell.

Angus Hall would sell at the Tattersalls Yearling Sale and enjoy an on-track career where he would earn \$830,654, winning eight of 26 starts, while finishing second in the 1999 Hambletonian. He, too, would go on to have an exceptional stallion career, recently retiring from stud duty with almost \$105 million in progeny earnings (behind only Balanced Image and Speedy Crown), with six millionaires including Peaceful Way (\$3.2 million) and proven sire Majestic Son (\$1.9 million).

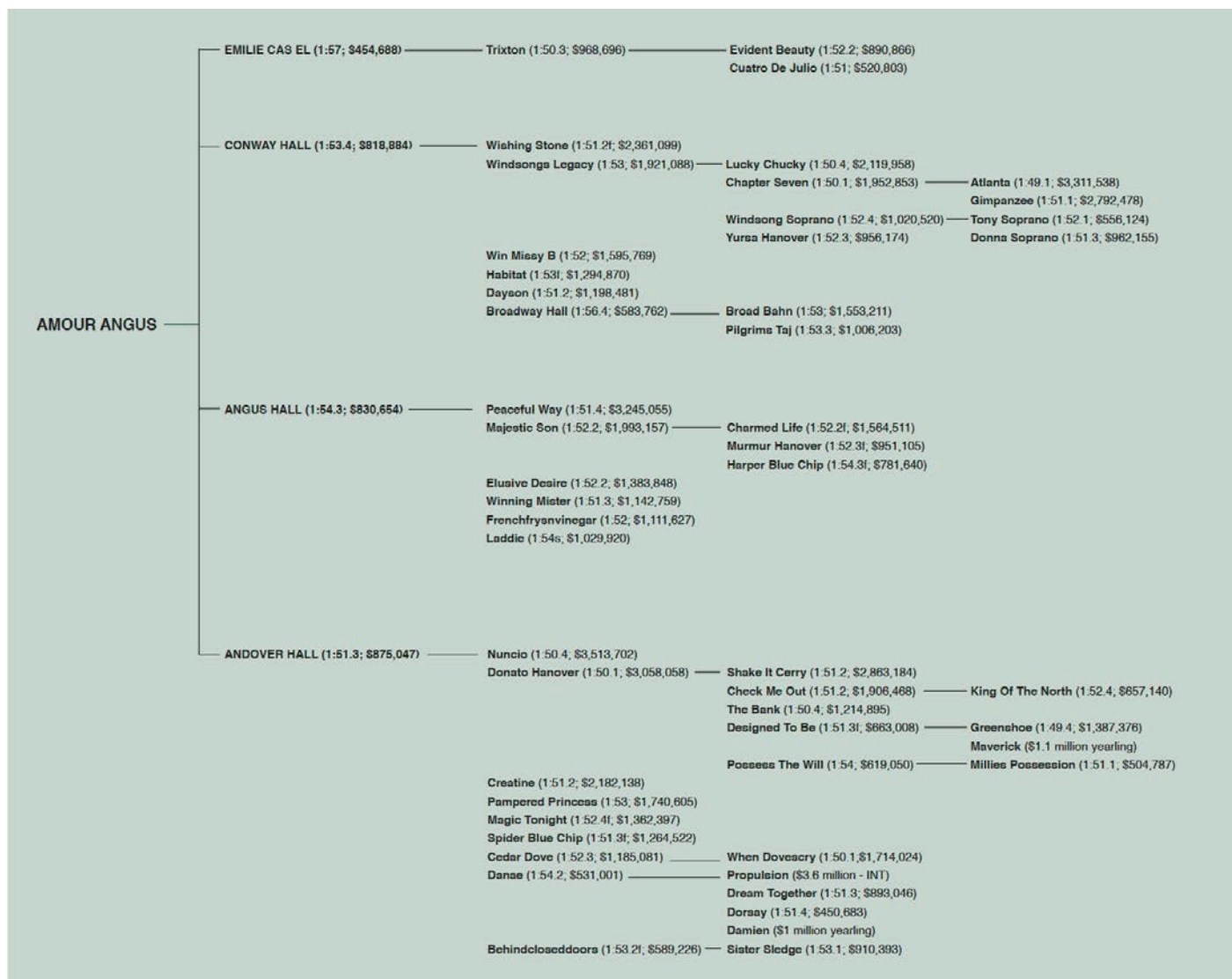
Angus Hall was inducted into the Canadian Hall of Fame in 2019 as one of the most successful trotting stallions in Canadian history.

“Bob [Stewart] was able to successfully get a group together to purchase Angus as yearling, and they paid us \$125,000 for him,” says Leavitt.

Amour Angus would produce pure dynamite at least once more in her breeding career, three years after Angus, when she foaled the spectacular Andover Hall.

Andover Hall, a full brother to Emilie, Conway, and Angus, earned \$875,047 throughout his career while winning half of his 22 starts. He may have actually become a millionaire if not for the fact that he escaped from his paddock at a farm near Mohawk Racetrack a few days before he was certain to be one of the favorites in the Breeders’ Crown for three-year-old trotting colts. He suffered a career-ending injury.

Just like his brothers, while his racing career is not undermined, it is his stallion career that is even more prominent. The sire of nine millionaires including Nuncio (\$3.5 million), Donato Hanover (\$3 million) and Creatine (\$2.1 million), Andover Hall is also the grandsire of stars like Shake It Cerry, Check Me Out, The Bank, Your So Vain, and When Dovescry.



“Andover was the most beautiful colt she threw. He was big, he was strong, he was everything you wanted in a horse. Everyone was all over him, wanting to buy him as a yearling—but when the hammer dropped at \$482,000, it was Erkki Laakkonen who took him home. He gave Andover to Bob Stewart to train because he had done so well with his brothers. Laakkonen purchased quite a few of Amour’s foals.”

Speaking of her foals, the windfall that Leavitt secured as part-owner of Conway and as seller/breeder of Angus and Andover was only part of what made his original purchase so shrewd—in the years following the sale of Andover Hall, siblings E L Stewart, Adams Hall, and Allstar Hall sold for \$450,000, \$250,000, and \$270,000 respectively. Not a bad return on the original \$50,000 investment!

While Leavitt, Levesque, and Amour deserve the bulk of the credit due, Leavitt has no fear in crediting trainer Bob Stewart for the champions he created out of Amour Angus’s offspring. Bob Stewart would indeed be the trainer of record for all the career starts of Conway, Angus, and Andover Hall.

“I have to give Bob a lot of credit—he trained the trio of brothers and did exceptionally well with all of them. I know it comes from Amour, but the job Bob did on training her foals really put her on the map as well.”

We all know in this business that one of the hardest things about the game is to not get too attached to horses, as it’s a business and they come and go. “I don’t get too attached to the foals; you can’t let yourself, because you know when they are born that when they become yearlings they

will be sold....” But if pressed to choose a favorite of Amour Angus’s foals, Leavitt would say Conway Hall.

“Conway was the best sire she produced, for he was the first one to produce a Hambletonian winner. At his peak, he was one of the greatest trotting stallions in North America. He still stands in New York, and when he is retired from stallion duty, he will come home to Walnut Hall. It’s actually quite weird, but none of her foals had a lot of similarities between them. There was no specific stamp that she left on her foals.”

Mr. Leavitt continued to link all the pieces of the Amour Angus family tree that have had a major impact on the trotting breed: “To be frank, the entire family is pure gold. You can spend hours upon hours researching the amazing horses that come from this family line. I bought Amour’s sister Canne Angus and kept one of her daughters, Canland Hall. Canland Hall’s first foal was Cantab Hall—and that name speaks for itself. He produced colts that have gone on to their own stallion careers now, like Father Patrick, Explosive Matter, Mets Hall, Il Sogno Dream, My MVP, Wheeling N Dealin, Musical Rhythm, and mares like Wild Honey and Lifetime Pursuit.

“Look at Conway’s son Windsongs Legacy. He is the sire of Chapter Seven, another name that speaks for itself—he is the sire of another Hambletonian winner, Atlanta. Amour Angus and her family completely changed the trotting breed.”

Amour Angus was inducted into the same [U. S.] Hall of Fame as her owner in 2008 for her accomplishments and contributions to the industry. However, she laid her soul to rest after an injury she succumbed to in 2009. She is buried in the Walnut Hall Cemetery.

“She was twenty-two when she was euthanized; it was a tragic and terrible thing. But she got to live out the best years of her life right on the farm. It’s very bittersweet, as she passed away too soon and [was still] very fertile. We were doing embryo transfers with her foals.”

Perhaps the most important question asked to Mr. Leavitt throughout our interview was not about Amour Angus’s foals, nor about what her foals accomplished and what their foals went on to accomplish, but how it felt knowing that Amour’s name will now be etched into the walls of another Hall of Fame.

“It is the most wonderful thing,” notes a heartfelt Leavitt. “She is one of the few mares that is in both Hall of Fames. She deserves this recognition, and this really completes her legacy. I cannot say it enough times how she changed the whole course of the Standardbred breed.

“The best way to describe Amour in one word was beautiful. She was beautiful. She was the perfect size, not too big and not too small, and she was very laid-back. She was an absolutely fantastic mother to all her foals. She was a prized possession, and you probably will never see anything like her again.”

*Hats off to you, Amour Angus, not only for your successful breeding career but also for the impact you have had on the entire Standardbred breed. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that your legacy will continue on for years to come.*

TSJ

***This story is courtesy of..***

**TROT**  
**magazine**

***Canada’s official harness racing publication.***

***It originally appeared in their July, 2020 issue.***





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