



**UNEXPECTED
RANCH HORSES**



Sturdy Under Saddle

Harvey Seidel became a believer in working-style Morgans 40 years ago, and the stout, versatile horses prove their worth every day on his Bar None Ranch in Wyoming.

Story and photography by MELISSA HEMKEN

WHEN HARVEY SEIDEL RODE A MORGAN for the first time in Cody, Wyoming, in 1974, it was an enlightening experience.

"I always rode Quarter Horses," recalls Seidel. "We went up into the mountains, and friends put me on this old horse, and I was offended—I really was. I had been riding all my life and they put me on this 17-year-old gelding named 'Rowdy.'

"Rowdy was full of fire. There was no stop to him. We ended up at the top of Blackwater Peak first. I said 'What am I riding?' And they all had these big grins, and they said, 'You're riding a Morgan.'"

After that first ride, Seidel was sold on the breed and began raising Morgans for his family's Bar None Ranch, located near Thermopolis, Wyoming.

"Shortly after, we bought our first stallion, 'Bombo,'" he says. "I paid good money for him, and [my wife] Lois wasn't real happy. She said, 'He could die tomorrow!' We had four boys and money was tight, and I spent \$2,000 on a horse. Bombo became part of the family. All the kids learned to ride on him."

Seidel's second stallion, S Bar B Pierre Noire, had the same calm personality as Bombo.

"Pierre' was one you could bring in the house. I know it sounds crazy, but we have

done just that out of orneriness to Lois," he says with a chuckle. "Not just foals either, the full-grown ones and the stallions. One time the boys brought one of theirs—he was a pretty good-sized horse, saddled and everything—into the living room. I came in and cautioned them, 'If he spooks he is going to tear the door off, and your saddle, too.' [They said] 'Oh, he's okay, Dad.'"

The Bar None Ranch sits in a valley bordered by the Bridger and Owl Creek Mountains; a place known as Wedding of the Waters, where the north-flowing Wind River changes its name midstream to the Bighorn River. It is home to what is proclaimed as the world's largest hot spring.





Harvey Seidel (foreground) and Jack Sheldon trail the Bar None broodmares, foals and yearlings to summer pasture.

In this southern anchor of the Bighorn Basin, two ranches have been integral in the development of the Western working type of Morgan bloodlines: the LU Ranch of Meeteetse and the Dvarishkis Ranch of Hamilton Dome. When Ramul Dvarishkis retired in the mid-1990s, Seidel purchased the Morgan breeder's broodmares.

"Ramul purchased his first two mares from the LU—Midnight and Lulu Belle," Seidel says. "They were 1944 models, and their registration numbers were 6400 and 6401, respectively.

"Our horses are Western working-style horses, the old-style Morgans. They are square and blocky, have a low headset and quiet disposition. The style developed in the East is what we call 'park horses.' They are high stepping, and there is no comparison. They're like a different breed. The registry introduced the Saddlebred into the Morgan bloodline in 1940, and some of us have had a fit about it ever since."

Dating back to 1788, the Morgan horse was the first breed developed in the United States. It began with one horse, Figure, obtained by Justin Morgan of Vermont as a debt payment. Figure sired three sons that were important to the development of the Morgan breed: Sherman, Woodbury and Bulrush. Seidel's Morgans come from the Sherman line and typically feature more size and denser bone than many other popular bloodlines within the breed.

"A few years ago we went to the [University of Vermont's] Morgan Horse Farm," Seidel says. "We were appalled at the smallness of the Morgans there. Morgans on the East Coast are much smaller. People—especially in the West—want big horses. Our Morgans average 15 hands and mature late, growing until about 7 years old. Ramul's horses were just huge. The breadth and height of my horses come from his bloodlines."

The LU, Pitchfork and Cross Ranch of Dubois were the first to bring Morgans to Wyoming. In about 1930, David Dickie of the LU and the Phelps family of the Pitchfork Ranch purchased stallions Linspar and Flyhawk from J.C. Brunk, an Illinois resident who was one of the earliest Morgan breeders and a founding member of the American Morgan Horse Association.

The Pitchfork, LU and Dvarishkis all stood Flyhawk before Helen Brunk Greenwalt, J.C. Brunk's daughter, purchased him back. Greenwalt also helped influence Morgan bloodlines in Wyoming, leasing her Morgan stallions to the LU.

"The Dickies raised colts for Helen, and she would get her choice, and they would keep the remainder," Seidel explains. "Ramul would often lease the studs the following year, and keep them in Wyoming longer. That is how Ramul got the famous old bloodlines."

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Significant Western working-style Morgan sires include Flyhawk, Warhawk, Stetson, Beamington, Senator Graham, Jubilee King and Beckridge Como. Many great stallions have been raised by A.B. Cross of the Cross Ranch, and they carry an H Bar prefix in their names. Seidel also has tapped into the Cross bloodlines.

"My bloodlines are half Cross and half Dvarishkis," Seidel says. "I have the best side of the Cross Ranch, which is H-Saracen, and good mares out of Dvarishkis [Ranch]. I really feel my

bloodlines are carrying on the legacy of both ranches.

"Shawnee Lass, Ramul's Midnight, Midnight and Lulu Belle were exceptional mares of Dvarishkis. I think the mares in any bloodline are not paid enough attention—people focus on the stallions. But if you don't have a good mare, you aren't going to get a good colt."

One of Seidel's stallions, 6-year-old Truwest Silver Suede, is by Pierre and out of Truwest Adobe Rose—a bloodline developed in Glendive, Montana.

"Suede' handles really well," he says.

"You can do anything with him, and when you stop, he stops. If I don't ride my stallions for three months, it doesn't matter. I can throw a saddle on him, and get on and go. That is the type of horse I breed for.

"There aren't a lot of [Western working-style] Morgans available, as there aren't many breeders. Also, if someone has a Morgan, they usually don't sell it. I get calls all the time, 'Do you have an older Morgan, a 10- to 12-year-old?' 'No I don't. If you want an older Morgan you have to grow it.'"

LEFT: Truwest Silver Suede, a 2008 stallion from the Cross and Dvarishkis bloodlines, is one of Seidel's top Morgan studs.

BELOW: Morgan mares and their foals settle in the high country, where they graze from June 15 to November 1, developing "lungs and legs," as Seidel puts it.



Cross Ranch bloodlines introduced colorful genetics in the Bar None horses, and that attracts buyers.

"I select mares based on disposition first, conformation is an important second, and after those color is a plus," Seidel says. "Today, everyone wants color. If it's a good horse it doesn't matter what color it is. But colored horses—palominos, buckskins, duns, grullas—they sell faster.

"If I tell buyers that the horse is a chestnut, they don't want to pay as much money. We're talking a \$1,000 difference. In the Morgan breed there is no such thing as a sorrel. They are either a light chestnut, dark chestnut or liver chestnut. That is unique to the breed."

The Morgans of the Bar None have good bone and strong hooves, along with pretty faces and quiet personalities. The broodmares and yearlings are turned out near Guffey Peak on Copper Mountain for the summer and fall months. The mountains develop strong muscles and toughness in the colts. The Seidel family works each colt in a round pen before it's 2 years old, desensitizing it and teaching it to lead and load in a trailer. The 2-year-olds that remain unsold do not return to the mountain pasture. Instead, they stay at headquarters to be started under saddle.

"Versatility is my favorite thing about Morgans," Seidel says. "There is nothing you can't do with them. Morgans are as cowy as Quarter Horses. They will get right down and work, track a cow, rope and hold cattle, and are good at cutting.

"Morgans have a drive that won't quit. Other horses have to stop for a breather. If you want to cover ground for a long time, ride a Morgan."

In addition to size, endurance and versatility, Seidel admires the intellect of his Morgans. It is why he has remained a dedicated breeder for nearly 40 years.

"You don't have to re-train, re-teach or re-educate Morgans," he says. "They remember where you were when you stopped. They make a tremendous family horse for that reason. Most of us don't ride a lot in the wintertime, but we ride all summer. Where they were when you got off is where they'll be when you get on."

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