



Merry Christmas

From Sheila Varian 2009



This year has moved so fast it seems, I know this because there's steam coming off the bottom of my shoes. November 20th is much too late to be starting a Christmas letter but I like to keep you informed on things that happen in my life. Why, you might ask? I don't know... seems like I am suppose to document some of what occurs to me and Varian Arabians each year and so here I go again.

The Scottsdale All Arabian Show feels like the beginning of the new year to me. Although the show is held in the middle of February we start planning and working towards the February dates in early October thinking about which horses we might take to show. I enjoy Scottsdale except when it rains, snows, or the wind blows dust and dirt all over and through everything in one of those Scottsdale weather temper tantrums. When the weather is in one of those moods we bury our heads into our coats, stand around in mud boots, shovel water out of the stalls and wait for that well-known Scottsdale sun to poke its head through the clouds and cheer us all up again.

I've been going to Scottsdale in February for nearly all the years that the show has been claiming to be a show. My mother and I would drive while my dad stayed home to take care of our (little at the time) ranch. In 1973 we once again loaded our two-horse trailer, hooked to the back of our station wagon and set off for Paradise Park with Bay-El-Bey (Bay-Abi x Nagaka). He was Champion

Stallion that year with me proudly at the lead as owner, breeder and handler. What an influence he has had on the Arabian breed with his blood now all over the world. At the show in those days we could ride for miles out on the desert getting our horses ready to compete, that was my excuse to saddle up and ride out anyway. My mother and I stayed at a little motel called



**National Champion Stallion
Bay-El-Bey++**

The Bunkhouse with two very small twin beds, no phones, no TV. Back then The Gainey Ranch was exactly that, a beautiful ranch full of Arabian horses, not the huge hotel complex it is today. Lasma was growing quickly as a leader in the Arabian world. The La Croix family was a warm and gracious one and Dr. La Croix would gather me along with Mrs. La Croix, Gene, Kathy and Raymond for a trip to The Pinnacle Peak Steak House. In those days The Pinnacle Peak Steakhouse was at the end of a dirt road known mostly to locals of Scottsdale and was a highlight for a Scottsdale evening. Dr. La Croix would laugh and we would all scream in delight as he stepped on the gas and the car skid around corners throwing dirt in all directions. I won the English Pleasure Championship on Huckleberry Bey (Bay-El-Bey x Taffoma) in 1982 and with Comment (Mikado x Ostroga) won the Park Horse Championship.



Sweet Inspiration V (Huckleberry Bey x Spinning Song) won the 2 Year Old Filly class and started her own dynasty. I began to use the "V" following the name of the horses that I bred in 1978 and Marigold V (Bay El Bey x Moska) won the first Scottsdale Junior Western Pleasure Championship ever.

*Today we show in the huge West World complex in Scottsdale. The big permanent stalls are wonderful and cost more than you can imagine. The rubber (cheap) stalls are the same as always but safety is much more carefully monitored. The first time I hauled to Scottsdale in the 60's, the show was held at the beautiful McCormick Ranch, the stalls were bedded, water buckets were filled and waiting for you and someone was there to help you unload and set up your tack room. Things have changed as Scottsdale has grown.... It's just the way life is. More is not always better or cheaper but it is what it is and I still enjoy, after all these years, seeing old friends and making new ones, watching to see who the new stars of the horse world will be and hoping one of them will be mine. Scottsdale is a gathering place to start off the New Year with the young horses making their debuts into the world of the show horse. This year I am concentrating on three spectacular babies that will show in the Yearling Filly and Colt classes. *Jullyen El Jamaal is solid as a sire of Western horses so now I will concentrate on his influence in the Halter arena.*

Our Book Club girls; Lisa Thompson, Kristin Reynolds, Audrey Griffin and Anna Lisa Thompson are spread out between Sun Valley, Idaho, the Central Coast of California which involves Arroyo Grande to Santa Ynez, and San Miguel El Allende in Mexico... however with the magic of email, we stay in close touch and manage to get together physically often. This year we flew to Sun Valley and for five days we played. I had been dying to ride a bicycle since the last bicycle I rode was as a little kid with the big balloon tires. In those days, bicycles were simple; you pumped forward to go and pumped backwards to stop. David Thompson, Lisa's husband, took me out for a little lesson. Like you need a lesson to ride a bike, I thought! It is true... you now need a lesson to ride a bike... Gone is simplicity, in is high tech. So David says, "Sheila, see these little handles on the handle bars?" "Yes", I say... "These are the brakes and the gears." OK, I think, let's ride. Just like me to want to get on with something before



Sheila, David and Kristen

I know what I am doing. We pushed the bikes out from the house, I got on and we headed down hill. The tires are little narrow things and the bikes go way faster than they use to so I pump backwards... nothing. I think OK, OK, one of these handles on the front is supposed to stop me... one handle is for the back wheels and one handle is for the front



Kwesturas Juell V



Santa Barbara V



Master Jullyen V



wheels. David had told me not to use the handle for the front wheel or it would throw me forward over the nose of the bike and I was trying to remember not to pump backwards and slowly squeeze on the handle to slow me down hoping it was the right one. Got it! I survived. OK, now the gears... A whole bunch of gears that these good friends of mine change while whizzing along, one handed, at 30



Sheila, David and Kristen

didn't run over anyone or crash into anything...that I admitted to anyway. We rode miles and miles, down into Ketchum for breakfast, along the river, to the chair lift looking up to Bald Mountain. We went, sans bicycles, to the Ice Show in the evening, we loved the opera in the most beautiful outdoor Sun Valley Pavilion, ate dinner at The Pioneer, rode to the top of Bald Mountain on the gondola and hiked The Aspen Loop trail. The exercise felt so good in the

great air of Sun Valley. With the trip coming to an end we all reminded ourselves just how lucky we are



Kristen, Lisa, Sheila and Audrey at Mt. Baldy

to have our little Book Club clan of girl friends that we each know is for life.... I can only wish that everyone has the friends I do.

In April I drove to Las Vegas to the Arabian World Cup to get an understanding of that venue which is quite a different crowd of people than we see at Scottsdale and the U.S. Nationals. Jeff Shall was going to show Lightning Strike V (Audacious ps x Lalique V) in the yearling colt class. I like Jeff Schall, a very nice guy with an understanding hand with the horses. Lightning Strike V is a very complete yearling colt with substance, great feet and legs and wonderful balance, top that off with a beautiful head and



Audacious ps

I thought it would be worthwhile to show him to that crowd of breeders many of them International. Lightning Strike V had won the Yearling Colt class to be named Champion of his age group at Scottsdale in February, which was a huge win out of a large number of colts. Breeders need a colt of the quality of Lightning Strike V. Many are inbreeding tightly and he will give them the substance while retaining the beauty in an outcross stallion they need. Lightning Strike V showed a second time what a great colt he is when he was Reserve Champion in his class at Las Vegas and I was delighted.



Reserve Champion Lightning Strike V in Las Vegas



Our Spring Fling in April was a worry this year with the economy in the doldrums and both Angela and I began to fret over the low numbers of people that were signing up to attend. Angela began to cancel tables and food and I paced around with scrunched up eyebrows worrying. Four days before the event, all of a sudden the emails began to overflow, the phone didn't stop ringing and we were in another quandary. Now how do we feed all these people we didn't think were coming? How Angela gets these things handled is miracle work. We ended up with the biggest attendance ever with more than 250 attendees at our Spring Fling with barely sitting room.



**Jullyen El Jamaal
(*Ali Jamaal x
Jullye El Ludjin)
at the
Spring Fling*

Our Summer Jubilee in August was also filling up slowly but we weren't going to be fooled this time and sure enough, in came the sign up's, just later than normal. We had some really interesting variations to our three days. To start the festivities off on Friday Joao Serra Coelho, who is married to Terry Polk who's father always showed Fadjur back when, did a mock Portuguese bullfight on the Bravado Bey V son Once N Alifetime. A large bull's head pushed on a cart by Joao's assistant was enough to get any horse running for his life. Joao was dressed in original bullfighting dress and Once N Alifetime is well-schooled as a bullfighting horse. It is really pretty to watch the dance and the control that it takes from both horses and rider. People loved it and so we



Joao Serra Coelho and Once N Alifetime

invited Joao and Terry back for next year. Brett Becker was our seminarian and did a fine job, as you would expect. Brett has a good sense of humor and was willing to ride any horse that we put him on. Brett



is impressive helping a young horse relax in the turmoil of umbrellas and people. Jaime Hernandez and I did what I was all excited to present. I hear about de-sensitizing all the time so I thought it would be interesting to de-sensitize a horse and then explain how to re-sensitize the area's that you want. It was fun and people were definitely into our demonstration. As usual, our Sunday Mare Walk was truly a highlight. In a natural setting those people that were interested in breeding could see the mares that enable Varian Arabians to stay on the top as the #1 breeder of Arabian horses. Many of our mares have been here for generations and have been participating in the Mare Walk all of their lives so when they see a couple of hundred people heading for them in our big fields they look up and say to each other, "Oh look, here come all the scratchers again" and up they amble instead of dashing away believing that many people advancing towards them can't be good.

Those people interested in breeding were enthralled with the quality of the mares, while other people simply needed a horse-scratching fix.



Varian Mare Walk

Fifteen of the Summer Jubilee group of horses found new homes during and before that weekend and three afterwards.



This year there were two events at the V6 Ranch, my cousin Jack Varian's ranch in the tiny town of Parkfield, which is about an hour and a half from Arroyo Grande. John Varian, my cousin Jack's son and his family



Photo by Scott Davis Images

organize an event for the Arabian Horse Association and one for the Quarter Horse Association that includes four and a half days of riding, roping and sorting cattle.

Really... by the time the folks drive or catch airplanes for their homes they can read what a cow is thinking, have roped the dummy and the hot heels, ridden out on gathers, eaten the most delicious food and made lifelong friends. It is truly fun to work with people that desire a taste of the old life all the while I get to work my horses solid for a week with no computer or telephone to interrupt.

This is just a moment of life here at Varian Arabians... the staff has remained the wonderful staff that it is with very little coming and going of new people. All of us are thankful that we live in a relatively secure environment and are grateful that our horses are still sought after by people that we like, whether old or new friends.

To close out the year I hauled Jubilation (Maclintock V x Jortalia V) to Santa Ynez for the Vaquero Days this past weekend. I've been doing whatever I can think up in the way of an interesting demonstration at the Vaquero Days Celebration on the old time training of the hackamore to the two rein into the spade bit for numbers of years. I can't help it, when I am invited I go, I'm sure that people are going to finally say, "Oh lordy me, not her again." But to do a demonstration in the beautiful Spanish patio around the lovely old fountain from many years ago is truly a step back in time and hardly one I can resist. People continue to come and stay for the hour and a half so I just keep riding and talking. The advertisement this year for the show

was the best ever and so the Gala Dinner for Friday night was sold out a month in advance. No surprise as Audrey Griffin, one of our book club girls was this year's honored Vaquera. Audrey can doll herself up, always in good taste but above and beyond the rest of us. No surprise, Friday evening she didn't let us down... dressed in flowing white down to her white boots and white hat, our Audrey was a picture that made us all proud. Saturday night my dear old friend Linda Grimm and her husband Jim put on a barbeque for at least 500 people in their personal museum which without doubt I can say is the finest collection of Vaquero bridles, bits, rawhide, books and saddles there is anywhere in the world. Worn out from our weekend of wonderfulness, we book club girls agreed to ride at Jerry Williams' Bar M Ranch Sunday morning to check out the cows and calves, look for any problems and remember who we really are when we have on our old levis, shirts and hats and are on the back of a good horse.



Audrey & Sheila moving cattle on the Bar M

It has been a fine year even though these have been worrisome times. I am healthy, my staff is healthy and my friends are healthy... I am grateful. Love to everyone. Sheila

ps. Congratulations to all the 2009 US National winning horses and their owners this past October in Tulsa, Oklahoma. 124 horses either bred by Varian Arabians or by stallions or mares by Varian bred stallions and mares won US National Championships or Top Tens in across the board disciplines.

SAVE THE DATES FOR OUR 2010 EVENTS
Spring Fling April 24th & 25th
Summer Jubilee August 6th - 8th