

The Sheila Varian Museum, located at Varian Arabians, opened up in August 2016 and has already welcomed thousands of visitors from around the world. The museum is free to visit with an appointment. Opposite page: The Sheila Varian Memorial Trophy, created by artist Carol Fensholt Nierenberg, was debuted at the 2017 Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show and is annually awarded to the Senior Stallion Champion.



Varian Arabians

An Update on the Farm, the Programs & the Varian Way

*“From the ashes, a fire shall be woken.
A light from the shadows shall spring....”*

~J.R.R. Tolkien

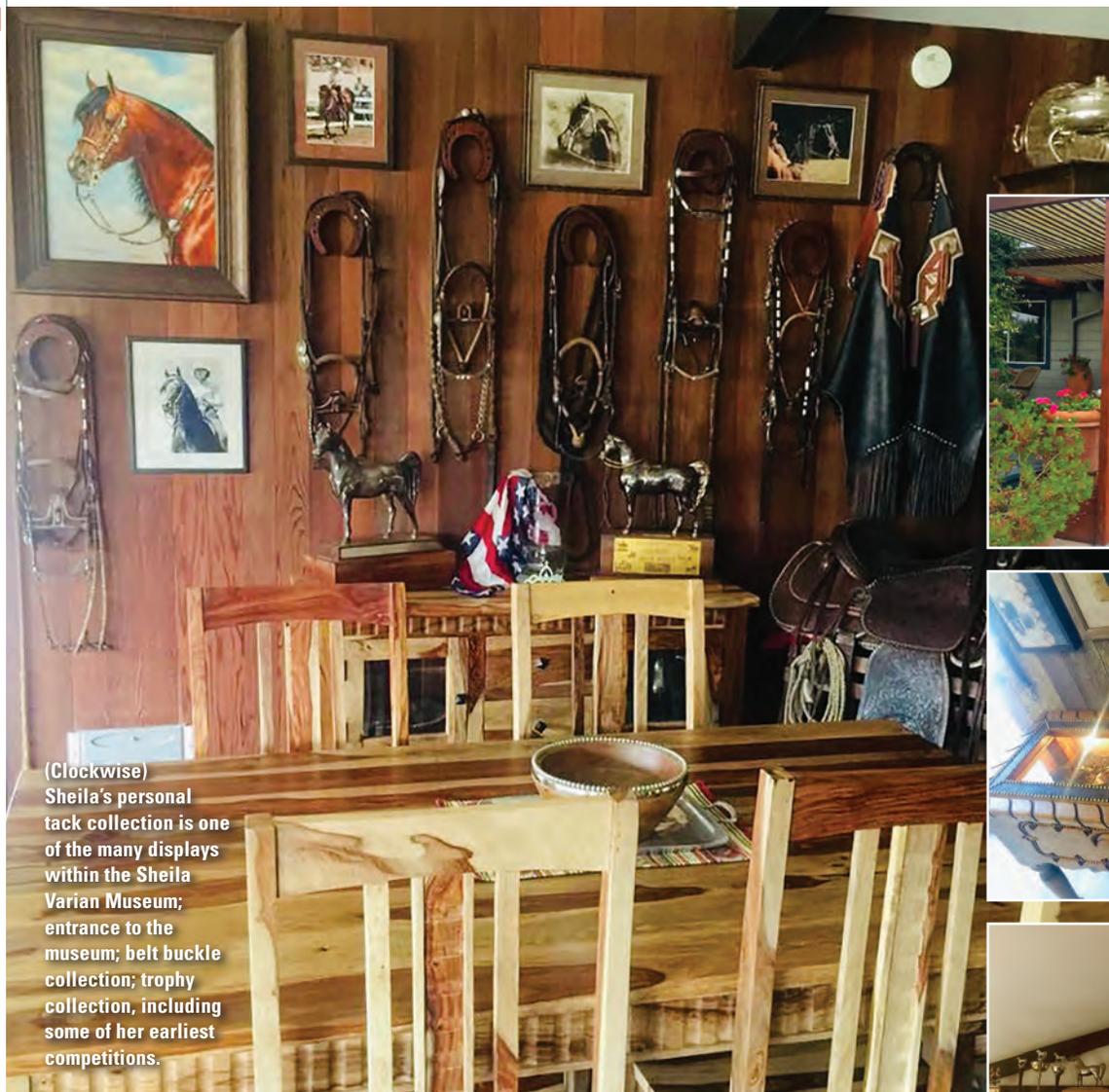
The timeless quality of Sheila Varian’s principles — on horsemanship, on breeding, on life — that embody “The Varian Way” has proven truer than ever in these last three years since Sheila’s passing. This truth, combined with Sheila’s foresight and a handful of key individuals seeing her vision through to the future, has allowed Varian Arabians to gracefully evolve, and even thrive, in this new reality that has transitioned from being led by Sheila to honoring and encapsulating her beliefs now more than ever.

Visitors from all corners of the world stream onto the historic property of Varian Arabians to meet the horses, walk the show barn and soak in the famous History Wall (fifty years of history and artifacts are encased behind glass around the entire show barn). The Varian Arabians History Wall, created in 2002 by its longtime breeding manager (now general manager) Angela Alvarez, is a bucket-list item for every Arabian horse enthusiast.

Additionally, the farm is now home to another historical novelty: the Sheila Varian Museum, which was opened August 5, 2016, during Sheila’s Celebration of Life weekend at the annual Summer Jubilee. Visitors can tour Sheila’s actual office/living room and lounge which is now



By Evie Tubbs Sweeney



(Clockwise) Sheila's personal tack collection is one of the many displays within the Sheila Varian Museum; entrance to the museum; belt buckle collection; trophy collection, including some of her earliest competitions.



luminously appointed with a blend of personal artifacts and equine accomplishments that give guests a personal peek into Sheila Varian as a person and horsewoman. Such items include the bottle of unopened champagne Sheila was given when she and Ronteza won the 1961 Reined Cow Horse World Championships together; Sheila's personal Vaquero tack collection; the dress and Vaquero hat Sheila wore when she was inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame; loads of equine awards and trophies that tell their own stories; and so much more.

Most Arabian horse enthusiasts know about the award-winning full-length documentary "V: The Legacy of Sheila Varian" that was released in August 2015 and is a personal recount by Sheila of her own life. (She heroically agreed to film it in the midst of aggressive chemotherapy treatments earlier that spring.)

But many may not be aware that Sheila's intimate memoirs were finally published in December 2018. "Let's Ride: The Personal Memoirs of a Legendary Horsewoman" is a collection of poignant short stories Sheila had written over the years, and it is as if she is speaking directly to her

readers. Through her classic humor, wit and raw emotion, Sheila opens up on personal moments in her amazing life journey. It is a must-read for every equine enthusiast, though her inspirational life story is vibrantly translatable to young and old who are on a quest to pursue their passions in life.

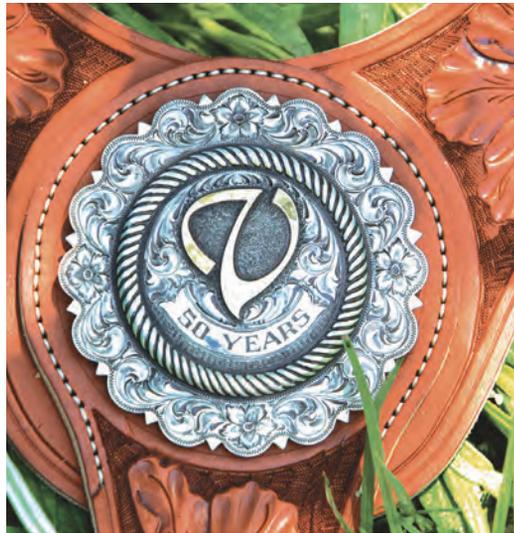
Education is at the heart of The Varian Way and, as such, has increased (and will continue to increase) over time. Long-running annual events such as the Spring Fling and Summer Jubilee have been gradually replaced by a calculated focus on enlightening and informative clinics. The vision of Angela Alvarez is for Varian Arabians to be a mecca, a global center of equine education with a slew of guest clinicians hosting seminars multiple times throughout the year. (Check out www.VarianArabians.com for upcoming clinic information.)

Many are aware that one of Varian Arabians' longest employees, senior performance trainer Jaime Hernandez, sustained a serious injury following a round pen accident on December 17, 2018, that left Jaime with a compound

CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

The iconic Varian Arabians farm sign; the V concho; the Clock Barn.

Sharon P. Fibelkorn Photography



Sharon P. Fibelkorn Photography



The Ten Commandments of Breeding Arabian Horses

By Sheila Varian

1. Breed toward your ideal horse. Don't be swayed by the voices of others. If you have done your homework, in time others will appreciate what you have accomplished.
2. Recognize that you are breeding Arabians and stay within your interpretation of the breed standards.
3. Breed equally for Arabian type, performance qualities, disposition and trainability.
4. Never forget: no foot, no horse.
5. Always strive toward a horse of usable disposition plus beauty. Neither is good without the other. However, if forced to make a choice, I'd keep the usable disposition.
6. Follow the lead your horses set for you. The next generation need not be similar in phenotype to the generation before, but each generation must be consistent in overall quality.
7. Breed forward. Look ahead. Wonderful new surprises may be awaiting you. Recognize them when they don't occur.
8. It is not difficult to improve the produce of a poor quality mare in one generation. It is not even difficult to improve the produce of an average mare in one generation. What is difficult is to improve the produce of an exceptional mare generation after generation. That takes real skill, knowledge, gut instinct and vision.
9. Don't be afraid to appreciate the qualities of other's horses. Breeding is a competition with yourself, not with others.
10. Consider your horse's attributes before you consider his/her other negatives. All horses have both. It is for you to determine how positive his/her good qualities are before you dwell on the negatives.



LEFT

Senior performance trainer, Jaime Hernandez.

RIGHT

Andres Castaño will be bringing his talent to Varian Arabians October 2019.

fracture of his right ankle and a torn meniscus in his right knee. This marked his first and only serious injury in his 28-year career at Varian Arabians. The healing process for the popular trainer — who consistently sustains a waiting list of outside horses — has been extensive, and Jaime will soon enter into physical therapy before resuming his training services hopefully this fall at Varian Arabians. The day this talented trainer returns will be one full of rejoicing for both staff and clients.

Meanwhile, Varian Arabians recently announced that, for the first time in 25 years, it is expanding its training team with the addition of the uber-talented Andres Castaño. Born and raised in Medellin, Colombia, Andres was raised around horses in the Colombian mountains since the tender age of three. Through a natural horsemanship approach, he has gained a worldwide following hosting clinics and entertaining through live performances that showcase the versatility of the Arabian breed... anything from tricks, liberty work and bareback jumping to mounted shooting, roping and more.

It is not hard to see how effortlessly Andres Castaño's philosophy fuses with that of Sheila Varian's. He begins his chapter at Varian Arabians in October 2019, and will provide training services for young horses, desensitization,

trail and the show ring alongside senior performance trainer Jaime Hernandez, as well as continuing to host horsemanship clinics under the Varian banner.

One of Sheila's most loved horse shows was Scottsdale. Her favorite class? The Senior Stallion Championships, of course. In her honor, the Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show and a group of close friends teamed up together to create a memorial perpetual trophy for the Senior Stallion Championship class. The trophy, exquisitely designed by artist Carol Fensholt Nierenberg, was unveiled at the 2017 Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show in perpetual honor of Sheila each year. Its first recipient appropriately carried Varian blood.

We've covered the topics of history, education and training. But what about Varian Arabian's historic breeding program? Sheila's sixth-generation breeding stallion, Major Mac V, was only three years old when she passed away. Yet Sheila knew full well that he was the culmination of Varian Arabians' fifty years of breeding. (We recommend watching "The First of Many", a short film that documented Major Mac V's first ride out in a California hackamore requested by Sheila less than two weeks before her passing. It has been called "breathtaking, heart-wrenching, inspiring... like watching all of history in a single ride.") And, to no one's surprise, Sheila was right.

In the last three years, Major Mac V has proven himself as a sire extraordinaire. His Facebook page (@MajorMacV) enjoys a loyal audience of over 11,000 followers; he consistently books upwards of 50 mares each year; and his progeny proclaim his breeding prowess time and time again. Major Mac V's first foals are now hitting the show ring as well (such as El Dorado Mac V who was recently named Region 13 Western Pleasure Jr. Horse Champion with Abe Cotton for owner Staci Callison. El Dorado Mac V was from Major Mac V's first foal crop.) It is wildly apparent the Major Mac V will capably fill the shoes of his superstar predecessors... particularly in the performance world.

Because Varian Arabians has been heralded as one of the premiere breeding management facilities in the world, it was only natural that it expanded its stallion station services with the Varian Sire Center in 2018 and has stood upwards of ten stallions at a time, including Lightning Strike V, Santino V, Monticello V and Mr. Mereeke V. Varian Arabians will continue to expand both its management of outside stallions as well as broodmare care, breeding and foaling services.

Angela Alvarez and her dedicated staff, along with a board of trustees appointed by Sheila herself, have continually demonstrated their resolute dedication to Sheila's vision of The Varian Way. Their united devotion to ensuring the continued vigor of Varian Arabians and its worldwide



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visual workshops

Helpful Links to Varian Arabians

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- Varian Sire Center (@VASireCenter)
- Varian Arabians (@VarianArabians)

Join the Varian Arabians Blog

- VarianArabians.com/Blog

Join the Varian Arabians e-Newsletter

- VarianArabians.com

Be added to the Varian Arabians Training Services Waiting List

- info@varianarabians.com

Inquire on Varian Sire Center Stallion Management

- info@VarianArabians.com

Available on VarianArabians.com/Boutique:

- "Let's Ride" Book (Also available on Amazon.com)
- "V: The Legacy of Sheila Varian" DVD
- "The First of Many" DVD



audience has paid off. They've taken great lengths to make sure its global community feels supported, encouraged and included through three primary platforms: a dynamic social media presence, the Varian Arabians newsletter and the popular Varian Arabians blog.

Varian Arabians perceptively led the way in the Arabian horse industry as one of the first to actively engage social media as a method to embrace their followers. The farm currently maintains three Facebook pages that provide daily inspiration, education, and information. (See sidebar at left.)

Signing up for the Varian Arabians e-newsletter is also ideal to follow the most up-to-date news on anything related to Varian Arabians.

And lastly, readers rave about the Varian Arabians blog, "Bloggin' Along." Lisa Thompson, one of Sheila's closest girlfriends and riding compadres, writes in a way that takes her readers on every ride. She naturally seems to channel

Sheila's gift of entertaining stories that also inspire, educate and encourage.

Sheila passed away March 6, 2016 from a long battle with ovarian cancer. It was difficult to envision a world without Sheila Varian, much less a Varian Arabians without her. And it certainly has not been easy. In addition to the difficult transition of life without her — designing the Sheila Varian Museum was a cathartic experience, Angela would tell you — the farm also lost its patriarch sire, the Fame VF son+ Audacious ps this past February... Valentine's Day, no less.

The fact is, never has there been an era where the timelessness of The Varian Way has been more challenged. Alternatively, never has its timelessness been more vibrant than it is today. It is intensely alive in the heart and soul of Varian Arabians. Every part of the farm speaks to its vivid existence: the museum, the pastures full of mares and foals, the roses, the smiles on the faces of each staff member, the nicker of each new foal, the powerful greeting of every stallion, the steady stream of visitors ready to soak in its wisdom... even the walls seem to speak its truth.

Yes, things change. Yes, change is difficult, testing you in ways never thought possible; it is a complicated grief. But out of ashes can rise a most beautiful new chapter.

It is just as Sheila intended it to be. And just as it will continue. 🐾

Evie Tubbs Sweeney is a 20-year marketing veteran in the Arabian horse industry. She owns EvieInc Marketing Agency and resides with her husband and son in Santa Ynez, Calif.