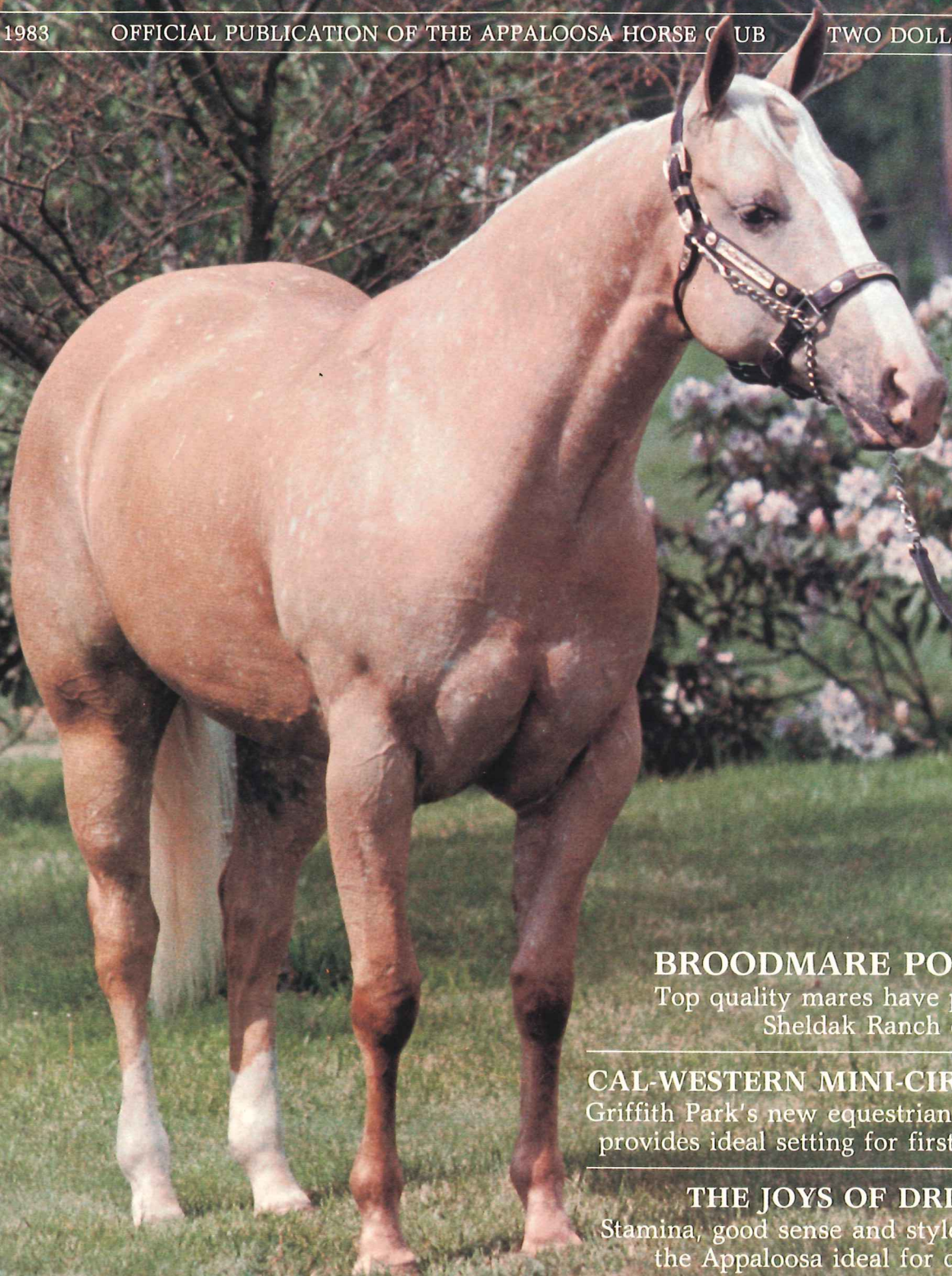


APPALOOSA NEWS

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TWO DOLLARS



BROODMARE POWER

Top quality mares have put the Sheldak Ranch on top.

CAL-WESTERN MINI-CIRCUIT

Griffith Park's new equestrian center provides ideal setting for first show.

THE JOYS OF DRIVING

Stamina, good sense and style make the Appaloosa ideal for driving.

Sheldak Ranch

Broodmare power and dogged determination have made the Sheldak Ranch famous for producing legendary Appaloosas.

Text by Joan Kruse Schulz
Photos by Kim Utke

Nestled in the gently rolling hills of southeastern North Dakota lies a broodmare paradise, Sheldak Ranch. Here graze superstar producers Barretta Bright, Buzz On By, and Nardown, along with 75 other fine mares. When bred to Sheldak's five Appaloosa stallions, Mighty Tim, King David, Spittin' Image, Prince Fury, and Brite Eyes Plaudit, these mares have produced foals so consistently outstanding that they have made the ranch of Dave and Kim Utke internationally famous.

Barretta Bright, ApHC

The Appaloosa broodmare the Utkes credit most for Sheldak's success is Barretta Bright, the only national champion producing daughter of Mighty Bright, who is out of the Quarter Horse mare, Barretta Mount. Her record is impeccable: 100 percent

champions from all of her foals which have been shown. The list is indeed impressive.

Barretta Bright's foals include the 1974 colt, Prince Shannon, a national halter champion and a national and world champion sire as well.

In 1976 she produced King David, who is now one of the ranch's stallions. "We never did send him out to be shown," Kim said. "We were pretty proud of this colt, and we just kept him home where he was safe, sound, and happy. We had an awful lot of offers to sell King David, but if we had sold him, we wouldn't have had him as a sire. He is siring winners all the way up to the national level and is a national top 10 halter sire."

In 1977 Barretta Bright produced Bright Princess, who was quite a show filly. At her first show she won her class, the junior grand title, and the

This 1982 Spittin Image colt shows the results of refined breeding.





"most colorful" class. She's won ribbons since then, too.

Barretta Bright produced Star Of David in 1979. He has won four high point awards as a yearling and 2-year-old, plus fourth at the Canadian Nationals.

Her 1980 foal was Princess Barretta, who injured her eye, so her Wyoming owners didn't show her.

Then in 1981 Barretta produced Lord David, a June colt who has a tremendous show record. He has had many firsts, junior grands, and high point halter awards, and he qualified for the World. "I think he's going to be one of her very top offspring in the show ring," Kim commented.

Barretta was not bred for 1982 due to her late foaling date. But she will have a baby at her side this year.

Buzz On By, AQHA

A Quarter Horse broodmare with star status at Sheldak Ranch is Buzz On By, who is an own daughter of Bar Temis AAA out of an AQHA mare named Buzzie Queen.

According to the Utkes, her first foal was All Lit Up, a 1976 colt. He is a show gelding in Washington state, with a large number of wins and high point awards. He has five national top 10 halter and national top 10 performance awards, plus many state and regional high point awards, including the prestigious Washington state all-around Appaloosa champion award.

Buzz On By's 1979 foal was Crystal Lace. "She injured her leg and had some proud flesh that left a scar," Kim explained, "so we kept her for a broodmare. We did show her, and she ended up North Dakota state champion yearling filly, and fourth at the Canadian Nationals."

Mighty Ambrose was Buzz On By's 1981 foal, and he is now in Indiana. In eight shows from June to August, he had eight firsts and eight junior grands, plus high point awards.

Nardown, TB

Besides the Appaloosa and Quarter Horse royalty of the ranch, a Thoroughbred mare joins the ranks of

These three beautiful Appaloosas typify the style and power produced by Sheldak's broodmares. Crystal Lace, sired by Prince David out of Buzz On By; All Lit Up, sired by Mighty Tim and also out of Buzz On By; Bright Princess, another champion sired by Prince David and out of Barretta Bright.

top producers for the Utkes. This mare, Nardown, is a granddaughter of Nashua. Kim said proudly, "Nardown has had three colored foals in a row, and all three are champions."

Her 1977 colt, Mighty Norsk, was undefeated at halter and has over 180 national halter points in Canada. He has many high point halter awards and has qualified for the World in 1979, 1980, and 1981. He is also a national champion sire.

Nardown's second colt was Mighty Tim TD, who is in Wyoming. He was high point Montana and Wyoming halter stallion, and he earned firsts and grands at many shows.

Her third foal was Cherry Bright, who is now in Wisconsin. She was national top 10 yearling, national top 10 2-year-old, and won five high point awards, including grand champion overall mare.

Broodmare Qualities

These three outstanding broodmares have traits in common. Each is a prolific producer, but more importantly, according to Kim, "Every time they have had a colored baby, it has gone right to the top in the show ring. An average mare might produce one or two super babies in her lifetime, but these three mares are great because each has produced exceptional foals time after time."

The production records of Barretta Bright, Buzz On By, and Nardown are overwhelming proof that the Utkes have a keen eye for broodmare selection. They feel that the mare contributes 70 to 80 percent to her foal, so obviously she must have the conformation, pedigree, and disposition that would make her top quality.

"To have a successful program, you absolutely must select only those broodmares with excellent conformation," Kim said. "Our ideal is represented in our young AQHA filly, Miss Daddy Bonanza, by Big Daddy Bonanza out of an own daughter of Coy's Bonanza." Now a 3-year-old, she was undefeated at halter the whole year she was shown as a yearling and will be bred this summer. Explained Kim, "She's what we look for in a broodmare: well-balanced, with all parts tying in the way they should. She has a small, keen, breedy head; a large, kind, expressive eye; a big jaw; a tiny refined muzzle; a clean, fine throatlatch; and a lengthy, refined neck. She has prominent withers, a good sloping shoulder, a strong top line, and she's very, very deep in the heart girth and "V" chest. Her legs are strong, straight, and squarely placed under her, and she travels right. She's got a tremendous hindquarter on her. If you stand behind her, you see her nice and refined on top and swelling

down into great stifle muscles. When we stand behind the ideal mare, she's shaped like a pear or a bell.

"We like to see an absolutely straight line from the hip down through the hock and the fetlock to the ground.

"When we pick out a mare like Miss Daddy Bonanza, the first thing we look at is the head. If the head isn't there, we don't look any further. And if the head's there, we look at the legs, and if the legs are there, we look at the rest of the body.

"We're looking for the most pleasing halter conformation we can get, but then the broodmare prospect must also be athletic, because our foals do get out and perform, too, after they've won at halter. For example, the owners put one of our foals, Go Meyer Kim, into cutting, and she wound up world champion cutting horse."

She continued, "We can usually judge the full potential of our foals when they are 3 to 6 months old. If they are well-balanced, refined and breedy, heavily muscled, straight-legged, and travel right, they will succeed in both halter and performance."

Besides having top conformation, a broodmare prospect must have a superb pedigree. "We're really

These Mighty Tim fillies are destined to be broodmare superstars.



The Sheldak Niche

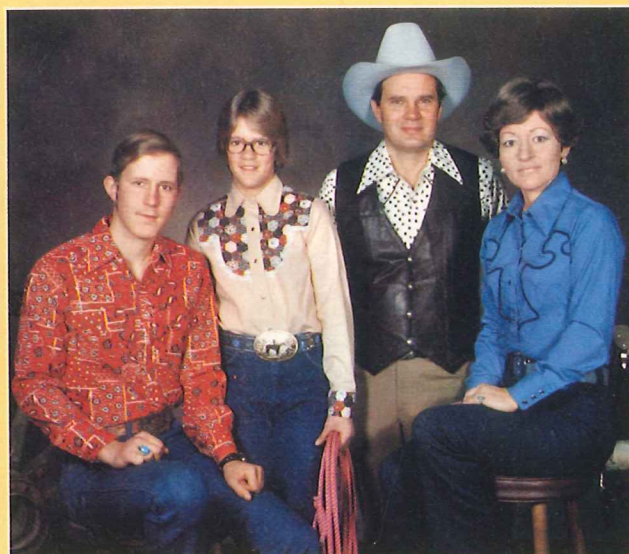
Dave and Kim Utke might be said to run a small family operation in Sheldon, N.D.,—but the only small thing about it is the size of the family.

With help from their two children, the Utkes run a horse breeding operation with approximately 90 head, and a farm with nearly 900 acres—and that's no small chore. Inside help comes from Kim's mother, Ena Evanson, who does much of the cooking and housework.

Keeping an operation of this size running smoothly is a full-time job, plus some. To feed the broodmares, stallions and the resulting offspring, much of the acreage is planted in crops that satisfy these equine palates: 110 acres of oats, 60 acres of corn, and 75 acres of alfalfa.

Although their son Shannon, 19, is interested in a forestry career, he is presently involved with the ranching operation. Lori, 12, has her sights set on showing on the Appaloosa circuit, but for now she's contenting herself with life on the farm where her and her brother's help is greatly appreciated by their parents. One of Lori's specialties is getting the foals to prick up their ears while Kim takes photographs.

Although there's a lot of work involved in running a successful breeding operation, it appears that the

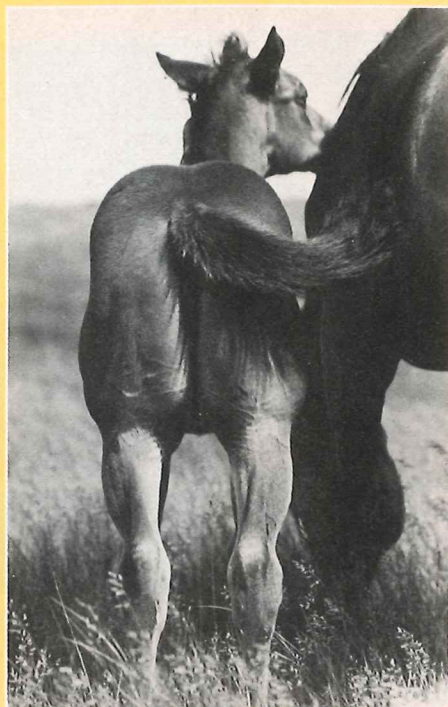


Left to right: Shannon, Lori, Dave and Kim Utke.

Utkes have found their niche in the horse world—and a lot of other horse owners have taken an interest in their number one crop—quality Appaloosas.

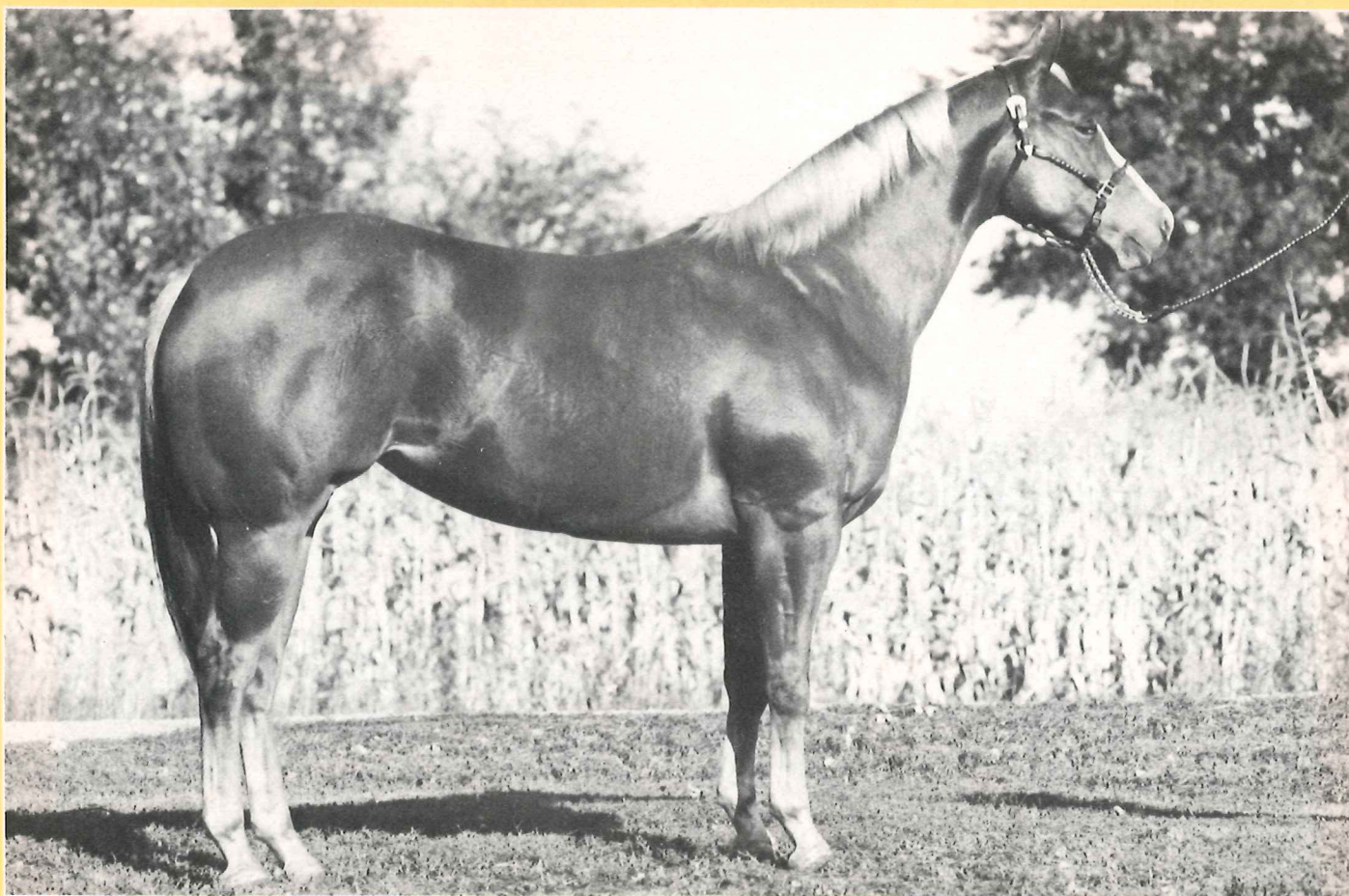
Aerial view of Sheldak Ranch.





Left: The fine head and strong well-shaped hindquarters show why this fine filly was retained as a top breeding prospect. Cherry Lark is by Mighty Tim and out of Very Popular TB.

Below: Miss Daddy Bonanza is another typical Sheldak Ranch broodmare prospect at age 2. She is by Big Daddy Bonanza and out of Sparky Bonanza.



sticklers on that. If the mare doesn't have a great show record, she must have a good record as a producer. I can go through our files and show you the pedigrees on our mares typed out to four generations, and every single horse in the pedigree will have as much typed under its name as possible. We're especially concerned about the bottom, or female, line. That can't be blank."

The registered Quarter Horse mares the Utkes selected to use in their breeding program were chosen for their superior conformation and pedigrees, qualities that will complement their Appaloosa bloodlines.

"When we pick Appaloosa mares, we pretty much try to stay with Mighty Bright and Bright Eyes daughters and with the Prince Plaudit line, of course," Kim explained. "These three are our favorites, and they have consistently produced champions."

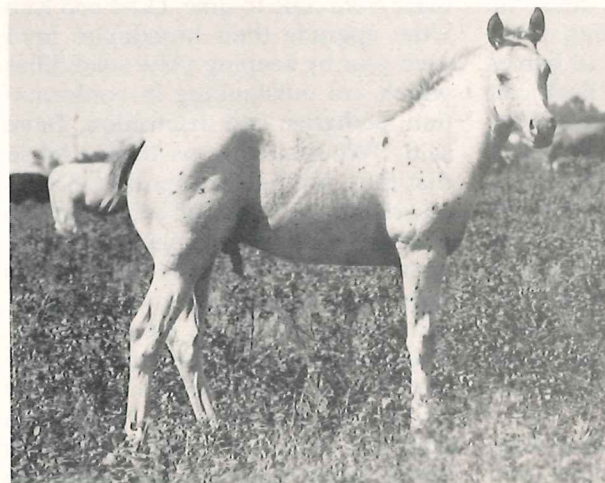
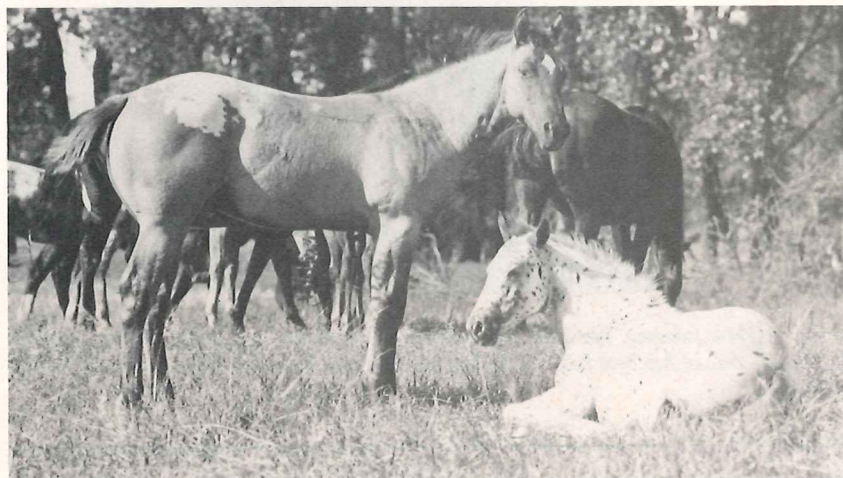
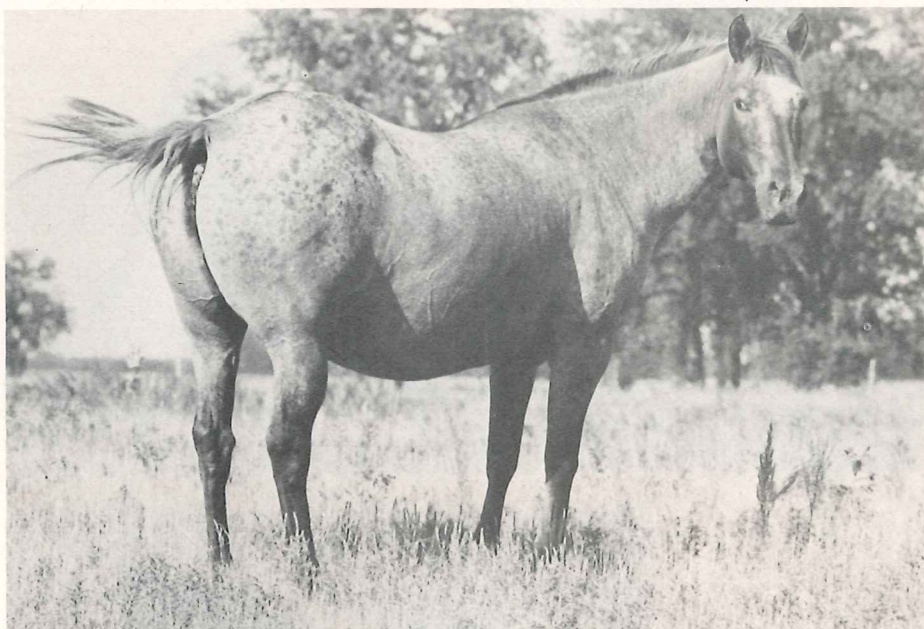
"Many of our mares go back to the Old Fred Quarter Horse line," Kim said. "If they could support Hank Wiescamp, Carl Miles, Lane Hudson, and Cecil Dobbin, they're a good choice for anybody. And, of course, these bloodlines have the keen heads, the refined necks, the heavy muscles, and the straight legs that everyone wants in a horse, plus outstanding pedigrees."

The Utkes haven't singled out any one Thoroughbred bloodline. Again what they look for is keen heads, excellent legs, and really good bodies. "We like to get muscle, but some of our Thoroughbred broodmares with the least amount have produced more muscling on their babies than have some of our heaviest muscled Quarter Horses. For example, Nardown really produces muscle for us. Besides that, she's so keen in the head that although she is almost 16 hands tall, she can still wear a yearling sized halter."

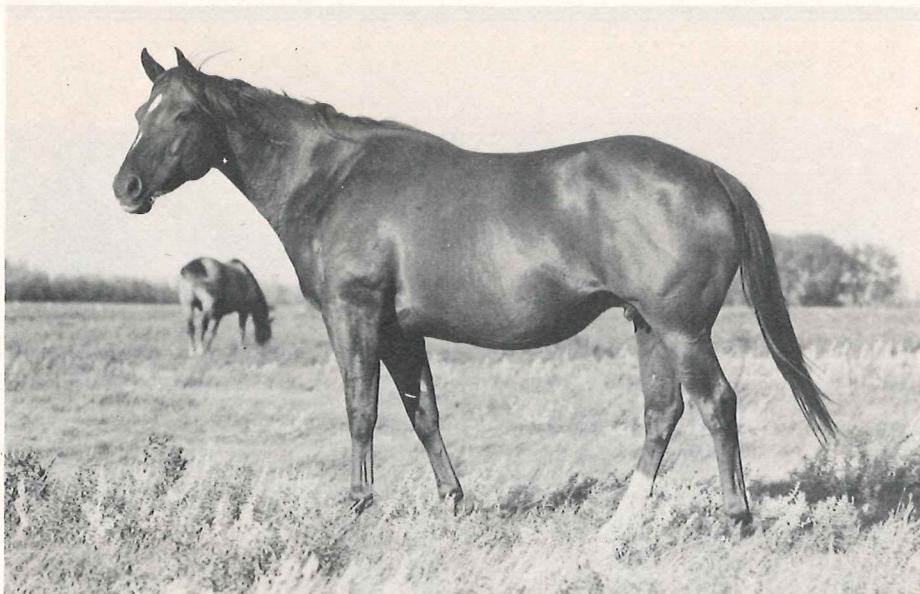
Kim said a lot of people think Thoroughbreds don't throw the muscle, but Very Popular, a broodmare they recently sold, produced some of the best muscled babies they've ever had.

The third important criterion the Utkes use in selecting broodmare prospects is disposition. Kim said, "An easygoing disposition is one of our requirements, because if you have to do any handling of the mare, it sure helps to have one that's going to let you work with her and her baby."

Dave appreciates the quiet disposi-



Baretta Bright (above), one of Sheldak Ranch's superstars. She is the only national champion producing daughter of Mighty Bright. Star Of David (center) by Prince David, and Prince Shannon (below) by Prince's Jim, are just two of her outstanding offspring.



Buzz On By, AQHA (above), has had 100 percent champions from foals shown. Mighty Ambrose (below), one of her best foals, is by Mighty Tim and has won many firsts and junior grands at halter.

tion of the broodmares and the five ranch stallions, especially since he does the initial halter breaking of the foals. He said, "I put six to 10 babies in individual runs or stalls. Each colt has on a halter with an 8-foot drag rope attached to it so the foal learns to give to the rope when he steps on it. The foals have never become tangled up in the ropes. I work with the colts until I think they are quiet enough and I can handle their feet. Then they are turned out into a lot which has a heavily bedded open shed where they have all the grain and hay they want to eat, free choice.

"Then I'll get in a new batch of foals and start the whole procedure over again. Usually I'll have 20 to 25 foals to work with altogether, so I really appreciate the gentle disposition the mares and stallions have passed on consistently to their offspring."

Besides purchasing a top outside mare from time to time, Dave and Kim Utke upgrade their broodmare herd each year by keeping a few solid fillies which are outstanding in conformation, pedigree, and disposition. Dave said, "We rotate our pastures a lot so that they don't get overgrazed. That's one reason we keep our herd numbers constant at about 80 to plan for the dry years. We have about 75 broodmares right now, and we have a number of solid fillies which we have retained. That means that we have to sell bred mares every year, which isn't very much fun, because our broodmare band has for years been at the point where there isn't any one mare we want to sell.

"We sell our top mares," Kim added. "In fact, over half of all the national and world champions sired by our stallions have been born to the

mares that we've sold through our broodmare ads."

Management

All of the mares foal out on clean summer pasture during the six weeks from the middle of April to the end of May. Kim said, "We average 50 foals a year. One year we had 75 mares foal within 30 days of each other, all a result of pasture breeding."

The foals have creep feed available to them out in the pastures from the time they are born. Toward the middle of the summer some oats are mixed with it, and by the time they are ready to wean, they have been transferred mostly to oats, top dressing it with a little creep feed. "So, when the colts are ready to come home, they go straight to oats and Calf Manna, which is fed free choice. There is no problem with them overeating, because they are out exercising all the time," Kim said.

"If they are brought into the barn, for example, when they are getting their halter lessons or having their feet trimmed, then we don't have them on free choice grain. When confined closely, they get an ice cream pail of oats morning and night plus alfalfa. Of course, they are turned out right after they are done eating in the morning."

The diet for the mares year around is just as generous. Dave said, "In the coldest part of the winter in January and February, it can get down to 30 below zero. Each mare gets up to a bale of hay a day if she wants it. We have wagon loads of hay out so the mares have free choice of alfalfa, and we feed bales of uncombined oat hay every other day."

They feed the mares in a different area of the field each day so that they always eat off of clean ground. In the spring the broodmares are moved to a different area to prepare for foaling time. By the middle of May, all of the horses are on clean summer pastures that haven't had anything on them since the fall before. So the horses are never on the same ground the whole year round.

They do feed some pellets to the broodmares the first two months they are out on the summer grasses because the protein range cube is high in phosphorus and vitamin A. Dave said they continue to feed the cubes while the mares are foaling because keeping a feeding schedule helps them gather the mares together for easier checking each morning. "Besides, the pellets are a health booster to aid nutrition after

a long winter without fresh, green vegetation," he noted.

Kim added further details about Sheldak Ranch's feeding regimen. "In the fall we bring the horses home from summer pastures and turn them out on fields that are clean every year because they are farmed. We generally plant about 60 acres of corn, and we turn the broodmares right out onto the unpicked corn. Of course, there's the third cutting of alfalfa out there, too, so they can graze on either the alfalfa or the corn. Finally, we set out big hay bales so they've got feed in front of them all the time.

"We've never had any problem with sore feet from foundering. The broodmares eat a few ears, go eat some alfalfa or some oat hay or cured alfalfa hay, and in this way vary their diet on their own. They never overeat, even though they have food free choice."

Both broodmares and foals also enjoy the finest medical attention and foot care. Kim, who handles all the bookwork, correspondence, ads, and photography for Sheldak Ranch, keeps precise records of shots and worming.

The vaccine program starts in the middle of October, when all the mares and foals receive Pneumabort K vaccine and paste worming. Although they don't have problems with abortion, Kim explained that they sell animals that travel into different areas of the country, and the vaccines ensure that the horses are protected.

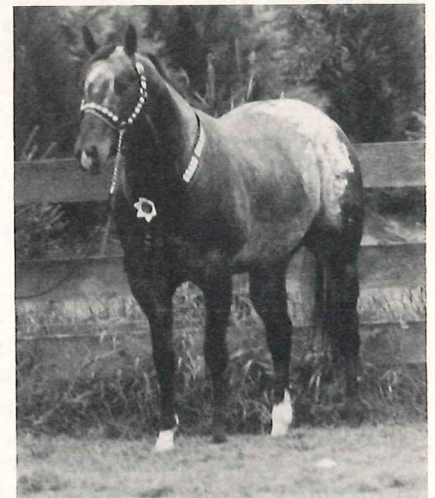
The foals are wormed again with a different kind of paste wormer in mid-November and given their second Pneumabort shot. They are wormed every 30 days, except in the heat of summer, and they get a Pneumabort K booster shot in the spring. The mares receive that shot every 60 days from October 15 through April 15, and they are wormed every 60 days.

The horses also get the four-in-one vaccine for sleeping sickness, flu, and tetanus.

Dave commented, "I trim the mares' feet in October, as well as every 60 days when we vaccinate and worm. After the foals are weaned, we give them foot care while they are being halter broken."

Kim said that a farrier trims all the foals, but when they reach age 2, Dave does them from then on.

Because the broodmares are in excellent condition from exercise, balanced diets, and complete health care, they present few problems at foaling time. The broodmares are put



Nardown, TB (above), a granddaughter of Nashua, TB, has produced three colored foals in a row, all champions. Mighty Tim TD (center left), Mighty Norsk (center right) and Cherry Bright (below), all sired by Mighty Tim, are fine examples.

into foaling pastures and all the open or young mares are sorted out and run into a different pasture. "We do all this sorting on foot and haze the horses into different corrals," Dave explained. "Generally if we went in there on horseback, the mares might get upset, whereas if we're working on foot, we can move one or two at a time and cut them out quietly."

The Utkes said they never have had to help any mare during foaling. Their mares foal out in pastures where there is protection, feed, and water. "We check on them several times during the day and again just before dark every night," Dave said. "After dark, they are on their own. And, of course, we're out there every morning at daylight."

"When the mares foal naturally outside, we've had tremendous luck. Since 1968 we've had only two mares lose foals due to foaling problems in the pastures. With the mares foaling out on clean ground, we don't have problems with infection. We do have a local vet available at Enderlin, 13 miles away, and he could be out here right away if we needed him."

Kim related two unfortunate experiences that have reinforced their desire to have their mares foal in the pasture.

"Several years ago we decided to give 'special' attention to a couple of valuable mares coming with their first foals. The first was close, so we put her into a large, well-bedded, quiet stall. We got up and checked her every half hour. At 4 a.m. she was impatient with us watching her, so we went into the house for a quick cup of hot chocolate. Dave went right back out after finishing his, and the mare was lying down against the back stall wall, contentedly eating hay. Dave got her up, and there was a pure red leopard colt squashed under her. He pulled the colt out and did makeshift CPR and mouth-to-mouth but couldn't revive him. A beautiful double-bred Prince Plaudit leopard colt—were we sick!

"The next day we worried about our North Dakota State Champion AQHA mare having her first foal. So we put her in a heavily-bedded 16- by 20-foot stall and stayed with her until 4 a.m. There were no signs of foaling, so we went into the house for a while. At 5 a.m. she was lying down against the wall, very content, her beautiful filly suffocated!

"Those were the only two mares we put inside that year, and the only two foals we lost. Had we left them out

with the herd, there would have been no barn wall to jam the foal against and suffocate it."

Kim noted that on a rare occasion when the sack doesn't break during foaling, foals born outside on the cold ground don't lie around thinking they are still in their mothers' tummies. The temperature change invigorates the newborn foal, like a human baby getting spanked in the hospital, so he gets the sack off. And that can be a lifesaver. A second advantage is that another mare may come along and make the new mother get up, and that can also be a lifesaver. In warm, quiet stalls, mares can be so content after foaling that they just lie there and sleep, and if there is a problem with the sack, the foal may suffocate, Kim explained.

"If a breeder could choose, it would be better to deal with a prematurely torn navel cord than a dead foal. The first might cost \$100, but the second can cost thousands!"

The glorious, free pasture life for a foal lasts as long as possible on Sheldak Ranch. Fillies that they are going to keep, and the ones that have not sold yet, are left on summer pasture as long as the weather permits. They are on creep feed, minerals, vitamins, mare's milk, and grass. If the weather gets bad by the end of October, that's when they are weaned. If the weather holds out into the first part of November, they stay out.

"It is a lot nicer for them out there on 160 acres to run around on than to be brought home to corrals where they can't open up like they are used to doing all summer," Kim commented. "Although our corrals are really large, when foals in the pasture can run a half-mile or a mile without even having to slow down, it's more fun for the babies out there. They really grow under those conditions."

"I think that's where we get a lot of growth on our babies. Many people have said that our May and June babies are some of the biggest in the class by the time they are yearlings. It's not because we have big studs and mares, and it isn't because the foals are born early. They will be maybe six months younger than the other foals showing, but the environment in which they are raised helps them grow up faster."

Another benefit of excellent care and natural breeding conditions is an almost perfect conception rate among Sheldak broodmares. Kim said that there have been several years when

their mares have had 100 percent conception. Four of the stallions are with their mare bands from May 15 until Aug. 1, with the mares usually allowing the stallions to breed them during their first regular heat, not on their foal heat.

"In the years when we haven't had every mare conceive, it was because two mares paired up, and one mare wouldn't let her friend get bred," Kim explained. "It seems like the motherly instinct is so strong that maiden or open mares turned into pasture with mares and foals will pick one pair of them to protect. Then that mother won't get bred, but if we take the protective mare out, then she herself won't get bred. So we have tried to outsmart the protective mares by putting all of them with one stallion. Even those maiden mares all get in foal, which really delights us. We just let the stallion do all the work on those troublesome mares."

Ingredients for Success

One could wish that more breeding establishments across the nation would follow the procedures used at Sheldak Ranch, where horses live as close to nature as domestication allows. There are no artificial lights, no pens filled with outside mares, no hired help, no live-in vets. Instead, there is an industrious family who believes in letting nature take its course as they work together day in and day out, year after year, to produce some of the finest Appaloosa breeding stock in the nation.

Besides their wisdom in selecting, breeding, and caring for their fine broodmare band, Kim and Dave Utke modestly admitted that success in the horse business today demands certain personal qualities. Kim said, "It takes integrity and straight-forwardness with our customers. We have to make them feel they are number one, even if in some ways a deal may not at the time seem to work out best for us."

Perseverance is another necessary ingredient. "It is a lot of hard work," said Kim. "We seldom get off the ranch. The only income we have is once a year when we sell our foals, and our money goes right back into the operation one way or another, like for new research books, stud books, feed, or tack."

Dave summed up the Utkes' attitude toward running a successful breeding ranch: "Our horses are the number one priority with us. We enjoy them—they are our whole lives." □