



~ COLORFUL MORGANS ~

WEATHERING THE STORM— RAFTER BAR D MORGANS

Sue and Derrick Olson's Rafter Bar D Morgans is a fairytale story of triumph over tragedy.

Sue Olson had always been drawn to storms. They seemed to have a sort of dark beauty, beginning with the tumultuous clouds that mark the arrival of one of Mother Nature's most impressive displays. One summer afternoon in 2005, with husband Derrick away on a hunting trip, Sue watched from the deck of their Sarona, Wisconsin, ranch home as a storm approached. From her vantage point overlooking the pastures, she observed several of the family's Quarter Horses and mules taking refuge in their shelters. Another group of six huddled together under a large tree out in the pasture.

By Laura Hornick Behning

Suddenly a gigantic lightning bolt hit the tree, splitting it and instantly electrocuting all six equines that had been standing underneath. Sue's horrified cries were overcome by the noise of the storm. In shock and unconcerned for her own safety, she raced to the pasture.

"As the lightning flashed around in the sky and the thunder boomed in the pouring rain, I ran my hands over their lifeless bodies," Sue remembers. "The burning smell that filled the air and the sight of them lined up where they stood is ingrained to the very depths of my soul." Of those lost, two were their young

ABOVE: Sue and Derrick with their 2009 black mare AEM Tru Victoria (JMF True North x Derawnda Santana) and her 2017 black colt RBD Legacy's True Victory (by RBD Immortal Legacy).



ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): RBD Immortal Legacy (Immortal Command x RBD Wild Irish Rose) is the junior stallion at Rafter Bar D (photo by Sue Olson); Derrick Olson on the 2000 black stallion JMF True North (Irish Entertainment x JMF Beam Along) and Sue Olson on the 2003 black mare JMF Wild Side (Irish Entertainment x JMF Wild at Heart).

daughters' riding horses; another was Sue's childhood heart horse, a part Morgan gelding named Cinnamon. The family was simply devastated.

When Derrick returned home, he cut the big tree down—and most of the other trees as well. “The burial and prayers for that many at once was a lot to accept,” Sue says. “My heart was heavy for a long time, and to this day I am uneasy when we have storms and the memories come back clear as the day it happened. In the midst of every tragedy, though, a tiny ray of light shines if our eyes are open to see it. The tiny ray of light was my heart looking for something special after such a devastating loss.”

Serendipity intervened the following year when Sue took a ride with a friend who was looking for a Morgan horse. At the time, Sue thought Morgans were some sort of small draft horse. She was a bit surprised to learn that wasn't the case; what she saw impressed her enough to learn more. Here was this wonderful breed of horse she did not even know existed, whose history was intertwined with that of America itself. “I began to research on the Internet and visit a few Morgan farms. In talking with Morgan owners, one after another were sharing stories of this Morgan horse that had so much heart, love for people and work, along with smooth gaits and good feet. One story led to another, and we were so intrigued we wanted one of our own to experience this for ourselves.”

BIG, BLACK, AND BEAMINGTON

Sue and Derrick began their search for a black Morgan (“so classic looking,” Sue says), and it had to be a mare, to start their breeding program. “Our ideal was at least 15H with a beautiful head and eye, a calm temperament and classic Morgan looks,” Sue says. “Early on we discovered we like the look of the Beamington bloodlines and Brunk style horses, as well as their tractability and Morgan type. We were also taken by the Flyhawk lines for that incredible ‘Flyhawk

trot.” In their search they came across Sandy Berge's Sable Morgans in Saskatchewan, Canada, whose breeding program was based on Beamington bloodlines. “Sandy was very friendly and informative. We loved the stories of her people-loving Morgans that are easy to train, even by a novice, and in the photos we could see they had the look we were interested in. In no time, we were purchasing a black Morgan mare named Sable Rockin Blue Angel (Sable Rock N Roll x HDD Imperial Blue Velvet) from Sandy. Angel was four years old, in foal, and not started to saddle, so she would be perfect for us to experience how easy Morgans are to train. Within two weeks of her arrival, I was riding her and was amazed at her trainability, beauty, and gaits. I am not a professional trainer, but she made me look like I really knew what I was doing.”

The Olsons were convinced. They wanted to raise Morgan horses and share them with others. But fate seemed poised to deal them another cruel blow. On December 11, 2006 Derrick had an aortic aneurysm and aortic dissection. He was air lifted to Abbot Northwest and underwent seven hours of surgery to install an artificial heart valve and an artificial aortic arch. “It is a miracle he survived [the docs say a medical anomaly, really],” Sue says. “Two weeks later he had a stroke and was air lifted again. We are blessed that he recovered from that. Just three months later, Derrick started hemorrhaging and went by ambulance to St. Mary's in Duluth where the doctors discovered he had colon cancer. He had to have a resection of his colon and was very high risk.” While Derrick was in the hospital, Angel produced the first foal to wear the new RBD prefix, a black filly named RBD A Beam Of Faith (by Sable Knight Krusier).

“It took everything we had then to not give up on the dream of raising Morgans,” Sue says. “Rafter Bar D is truly my passion, but Derrick has encouraged me and supported me every step of the way. Even when I thought we should stop, he was the driving

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ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): RBD Goddess Epona, 2017 black filly, and her dam JMF Licorice Schnapps. Epona was conceived via 22 year old frozen semen from the legendary Windhover Regency (photo by Sue Olson); The first colorful mare to join the herd at Rafter Bar D was Truwest Adobe Rose (Robbi-Sue's Success Story x Pure D Powder), a 2003 bay dun.

force to push on. He has told me many times to never give up on my dream, and to live each day as if it were the last." This belief underscores everything at Rafter Bar D—time truly is the most precious commodity of all.

On the hunt for a stallion to breed to Angel, Sue and Derrick spotted an ad for JMF Royal Irish Duke (Irish Entertainment x JMF Royal Whisper), owned by Roger and Trudy Hagen of Melrog Morgans in nearby Hixton, Wisconsin, who also owned the black stallion Remington Royal (Buster Boy x Wicked Wanda). "In 2007 and 2008 we took our mares for breeding at Melrog Morgans. The Hagens are such wonderful people and so welcoming," Sue says. "Both of them have been wonderful mentors and great friends for many years now."

It was through researching Angel's bloodlines that Sue and Derrick discovered Janzen Morgan Farm. "Our relationship developed with the Janzens, and we purchased several Morgans from them over time. We admired what they were doing, and wanted to base our breeding program on these old bloodlines. It was our thought that bringing Morgans to Rafter Bar D from such an already successful established breeding program would lead to a prosperous future for us. When we purchased JMF Basic Black (Rum Brook Immortal Image by Immortal Command x JMF Wild Mayflower) in 2008, Will and Dorothy delivered him and shared so much knowledge with us about what they did to successfully breed Morgans."

JMF Basic Black introduced the blood of Immortal Command to the fledgling breeding program at Rafter Bar D. He sired 14 foals for Sue and Derrick, twelve of which carried the RBD prefix. The Olsons like to bring old bloodlines up close in the pedigree, so they decided to breed directly to Immortal Command. In 2013, shortly before Immortal Command passed, they bred RBD Wild Irish Rose to him. The result was a big, homozygous black colt named RBD

Immortal Legacy. In 2015, with Legacy up and coming, the Olsons sold JMF Basic Black to Monica and Alex Smyl of Country Rose Morgans in Alberta, Canada, but retained three of his daughters—RBD Wild Irish Rose, RBD Lady Fraya, and RBD Black Chenille. Legacy had his first foal—a black colt—this year, and the Olsons have three mares in foal to him for next year.

In the spring of 2010, Sue attended the Buckeye Morgan Sale in Ohio and bought the yearling filly AEM Tru Victoria (JMF True North x Derawnda's Santana). In the sale's stallion presentation was Victoria's sire, JMF True North (Irish Entertainment x JMF Beam Along) whose type, presence, and style was exactly what the Olsons were looking for. Even more impressive was "North's" calm demeanor amongst the hubbub of the sale—resting with one foot cocked while other horses were banging on the stalls, pacing and calling. Sue met North's then-owner, Alvin Beachy, and told him how excited she was to be bringing home a daughter of North. "After getting to know each other, Alvin offered North to us," Sue says. "I was so surprised! He said North had bred so many mares in their community and needed to go to a new place where he could continue breeding. He had stood stud there for eight years, and the people were using other stallions now. He said when the Janzens delivered him as a two-year-old, he bred 20 mares that spring. He was quite popular in his community for years." Derrick and Sue drove out to Ohio to meet the Beachy family and see North in his home. After witnessing ten children climbing all over the stallion, grooming and preparing him, then going for a ride and a drive with North, the Olsons were sold. "Alvin and his family are such wonderful folks with great hospitality. We are so grateful to them for offering North to us," Sue says.

Derrick and Sue have a goal to preserve the bloodlines that Will and Dorothy Janzen spent a lifetime bringing together in their breeding program. To that end, they have utilized modern



ABOVE: Amberfields Blaze N Dun (Amberfields Embossedngold x Amberfields Lonesome Dove), 2012 bay dun stallion (left photo by Sue Olson).



technology to bring forward the blood of long-deceased stallions. “Last spring of 2016, I spent hours and several phone conversations talking with Will Janzen about our future and our goals,” Sue says. “North is getting up there in age and we want to preserve and promote these old bloodlines. We also wanted to add the traditional Windhover Regency lines up close. The stories Will Janzen shared about Windhover Regency and Irish Entertainment I will cherish forever. Windhover Regency (Beamington x The Black Rose, by Flyhawk) was a big athletic stallion that produced more than 265 foals, siring mostly blacks and a producer of proud truly versatile offspring exemplifying Brunk breeding at its finest. Irish Entertainment (The Entertainer x Justa Joy, by Beamington) produced some exceptionally beautiful foals in his time. Some of our favorite mares have been Irish daughters. I asked Will if he would sell some frozen Irish Entertainment and Windhover Regency semen for our future. A tear welled up in my eyes as Will said yes, he would be honored to have us carry on these bloodlines.”

“Windhover Regency died November 3, 1997, and at that time he had only 16 registered Morgans in the United States. Regency’s semen was collected in 1994, and stored. It is truly amazing that with our technology, we can use 22-year-old semen to inseminate a mare and get a beautiful foal.” This spring, the Olsons did exactly that—their mare JMF Licorice Schnapps (JMF Irish Coffee x M & M Blackberry Wine) delivered a homozygous black filly, RBD Goddess Epona, using that 22-year-old frozen semen. Epona is named after the ancient goddess of horses. “When Epona was born, it was like holding on to a small piece of history, imagining how magnificent her sire must have been,” Sue says.

Epona’s dam, JMF Licorice Schnapps, had been purchased in the fall of 2015 from Will Janzen’s son and daughter-in-law, Bruce and Kari Janzen. Will and Bruce delivered her to the border, where

Derrick met up with them to pick her up. Sadly, that would be the last handshake from the man who had so generously mentored the Olsons, sharing his many years of knowledge of Morgan bloodlines and breeding strategies. Will Janzen passed away on July 13, 2016.

RBD Goddess Epona is a living tribute to the breeding program of Will and Dorothy Janzen. It’s no surprise she’s a keeper at Rafter Bar D. In the next few years, Sue and Derrick hope to add more foals from their supply of stored semen and to continue the legacy of the JMF breeding program.

BRANCHING OUT INTO COLORFUL MORGANS

“Although our focus was blacks in the beginning, we also wanted to broaden our horizons into Western working lines and colorful Morgans,” Sue says. “We both love buckskins, duns, and Derrick, specifically, is drawn to the grulla. We knew we wanted our colorful Morgans to have all the wonderful Morgan traits, so the search began late in 2010 to broaden our horizons in our breeding program and bring in quality color.” After many hours of searching and contacting people, Sue found Amberfields Luminescence (Amberfields Desperado x C J Buttercup) a cremello Morgan stallion, via the Internet. ‘Lumi’ was a product of the long-time colorful Morgan breeding program of Judy Hinman’s Amberfields Morgans in New York. “Lumi was such a joy to have at our farm,” Sue says. “I trained him to saddle and found him so easy to work with. Lumi was like having a gelding, and his foals are just as wonderful.”

Adding the dun gene to the growing herd at Rafter Bar D was met, in part, through the couple’s purchase of the bay dun mare, Truwest Adobe Rose (Robbi-Sue’s Success Story x Pure D Powder), bred by Bobbi Blankenship. “Bobbi and I have shared several great conversations about her breeding program and she is such a joy

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ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): Sue Olson with her 2017 grulla filly RBD Sue's Lonesome Dove (Amberfields Blaze N Dun x Truwest Adobe Rose); Anna Velkey-Solvberg of Hungary and Amberfields Luminescence (Amberfields Desperado x CJ Buttercup), a 2007 cremello stallion purchased from Rafter Bar D Morgans in 2015.

to 'talk Morgan' with," Sue says. "When the dun gene hit Rafter Bar D, we were hooked, and we began researching more about colorful Morgans. Laura Behning's *Morgan Colors* website has been a wonderful tool and a great source of information for learning about the bloodlines and colors of Morgans."

In 2014, Sue was browsing through Judy Hinman's website at Amberfields Morgans. She liked the mind, size, and type Judy produces and was wondering how she could breed or buy a dun through Judy's breeding program. She was especially drawn to Judy's grulla mare, Amberfields Lonesome Dove. "I came across a page with photos of a dun colt who was homozygous for the dun gene, Amberfields Blaze N Dun (Amberfields Embossedngold x Amberfields Lonesome Dove)," Sue says. "I first thought of breeding to him, and or possibly buying a mare bred to him, but after several sleepless nights, I sent Judy a message asking her if I could purchase him. She had to give it some thought, and what seemed like months was only a week or two before she got back to me. She said yes. I could hardly believe what I was hearing on the other end of the line!"

This past spring Truwest Adobe Rose produced a homozygous grulla filly by Blaze. Sue says "I asked Judy if we could name our filly after her beautiful grulla grandmother, and Judy thought it was a great idea, so with Judy's blessing we named our filly RBD Sue's Lonesome Dove. It was Derrick who wanted to add Sue's, as she is especially my girl and it also ties in a drop of the Robbi Sue lines to her name. In the future when our Dove is mature, we can breed her to our black stallions for 100 percent grulla foals."

Blaze's handsome good looks shine through in his photos, and it was not long before other breeders were asking if shipped semen might be available from him. "We tried for two years to ship semen on Blaze without success, only to find out this year he cannot ship," Sue explains. "We sent his semen away to Texas A&M and

discovered that on a molecular level the denaturation numbers for his semen were too high for successful shipping overnight or freezing. We were devastated, to be honest, as we had plans to help the colorful Morgan grow on a global level. Jacque White [White Gold Morgans] and Peggy Malone [Takilma Gold Morgans] in California both want Blaze offspring in the worst way and those two women tried diligently for two years to get their mares bred, none of us knowing that it wasn't going to happen. Jacque approached me about bringing Blaze out there to live cover their mares. Although it is hard for me to let him go and place him in the hands of another, we have stayed with Jacque several times and I trust her to care for him as I would. So, he is going to California to stand stud and Jacque has offered to stand him to the public for us for the short time he is out there. When we announced it, within the first hour my Facebook was exploding from mare owners and people who want to meet Blaze. He will cover a limited number of mares this fall and in the spring before we go back out to pick him up and bring him home."

Jacque and Sue are planning an open barn welcoming Blaze to California on October 21, 2017, so people can meet the big dun stallion. The veterinarian that will service the mare owner's mares will be there to talk and answer any questions, and mare owners can see the facility and where their mare will stay for breeding. From modern science assistance in breeding via frozen semen, to the good old "traveling man" stallion, RBD is certainly making use of every method available to spread the Morgan love!

Though Blaze will always produce duns and grullas with the black mares of RBD, Derrick and Sue have also added two cream dilute mares to their program. With these mares they can produce "dunskins" (a buckskin that is also dun) and smoky grullas (a smoky black with at least one dun gene) as well as the dun-only dilutes. "Our dun mare, Truwest Adobe Rose, has a son, Truwest



ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): The colorful mare lineup at Rafter Bar D includes Bar Non Suede's Princess (Truwest Silver Suede x Bar Non Do Something), a 2014 dunalino mare (photo by Sue Olson); RBD Midnight Lace (JMF Basic Black x JMF Midnight Expose), pictured as a suckling in 2011. "Lacey" was the first Morgan to be exported to Hungary (photo by Sue Olson).

Silver Suede, who is a smoky grulla and stands stud out in Wyoming with Harvey and Lois Seidel of Bar None Morgans," Sue explains. "We purchased a Suede daughter who is a "dunalino" (palomino plus dun), Bar Non Suede's Princess. Princess is the beginning of my vision to produce a future RBD homozygous smoky grulla son of Blaze."

While on a trip to California delivering a mare to Betsy Bonyng of Melena Morgans last fall, Sue and Derrick spotted a big buckskin mare out in the pasture. They asked who she was, and Betsy told them it was Bar Non Buckskin Beauty (Azkachina Bandit x Bar Non Crosswind), bred by Harvey Seidel at Bar None Morgans. Betsy offered them the mare, but they declined, as they were not planning on buying any horses at that time. "After a nice visit with Betsy, we were on our way," Sue says. "But neither of us could stop thinking about that Buckskin Beauty. We were a few hours away and it was Derrick who decided we needed to go back for her the next day. Funny how that happens to the best of us! So, that's how we ended up with two beautiful golden girls from a long time breeder of colorful Morgans."

The Rafter Bar D ideal is Morgans that look and act like Morgans, whatever their bloodlines or color. "We want visitors to say 'Wow, I love that Morgan horse, and it could be any color!' Then, when I give a whistle and they all come running to greet you with kisses and hugs, their temperament steals your heart," Sue says. "The Morgan horse is such a diverse breed of horse with so many exceptional bloodlines. Honestly, in my opinion, there is no bloodline that prevails over another. It is all about what people like and personal preference. I can see beauty and appreciate different Morgan families whether they are Brunk, Government, Lippitt, or Western working lines. There are shorter stockier, short backed Morgans, there are taller more refined, stretchy Morgans, and a variety in between. There are people who focus on 'Foundation' Morgans and people who love the 'modern' Morgan. The Morgan exists today because people loved them enough to keep them alive and going. Truly, what matters is that you are happy with your Morgan and the style of Morgan fits for your passion in life."

MARKETING MORGANS TO THE WORLD

The Olsons do not show, but have used their Morgans to perform 1800s style train robbery reenactments, as well as mounted cowboy action shooting. They also enjoy trail riding and camping with their horses. Because their breeding program does not have show ring exposure, Sue knew early on that she would need excellent photos and an effective website in order to successfully market their stock. "Our good friend and artist, Rachel Murphy, took beautiful photographs for her paintings and dabbled in photography, so I asked her if she would photograph our horses for us," Sue explains. "She accepted, and I just loved the photos she was taking for us. I would prepare the horses ahead of time and was the bag girl to help move them at liberty, and Rachel would take the photos. Afterwards, she would then give me a disc of photos to go through—and I was thrilled! It wasn't long before Rachel's schedule became busier, and she said to me one day, 'Why don't you just borrow my camera and take the photos?' She said she trusted me to treat her camera like it was a baby. In other words, if I accidentally dropped it or broke it I would need to sell a horse to replace it," she says, with a grin.

Sue had learned a lot from Rachel, and quickly put that education to good use. "Listening to her talk about the time of day, the lighting, the angle, the background, the humidity and the dust—it all can affect the photo. I also learned that she may take 400 photos and from those we would find 20 we liked a lot." From that very first photo shoot using Rachel's camera, Sue discovered another passion that she did not know she had within her. "It wasn't long before I purchased my own camera, a Canon 60D, and signed up for a few photography classes to enhance what I was learning," she says.

It wasn't long before Facebook feeds everywhere began to light up with entire albums filled with Sue's beautiful pictures of the Rafter Bar D Morgans. Indeed, if you spend any time on Facebook at all, especially on any of the Morgan-related groups, you will spot regularly updated photo albums of the RBD Morgans. This kind of promotion is actually somewhat rare in the Morgan world; many of the breed's most popular stallions go through their breeding

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ABOVE: Left to right: RBD Morgans in Austria! Elke Mattevi-Müller with the 2008 buckskin mare Mulberry Sahalie (Medomak Sea Splendor x Nashboro Sabrina) and her 2017 grulla filly EMMH Pocahontas N Dun (by Amberfields Blaze N Dun) and Claus Payr with RBD Adonis N Dun (Amberfields Blaze N Dun x Truwest Adobe Rose), 2016 bay dun colt, and RBD Truly A Satinka (JMF True North x EBL Spades Awesome Babe), 2015 black filly.

careers being advertised with the same one or two photos. Having a wide variety of pictures of a horse a prospective client might be interested in purchasing or breeding to gives them quite a bit more welcome information. This is especially appreciated by people who cannot make a trip to actually see the horse in person.

Sue also designed and built the Rafter Bar D website, another crucial element in their business success. As a showcase for the beautiful photos of the RBD herd, the website serves as a brilliant illustration of the qualities that Sue observes in her Morgans everyday. “Designing and keeping our website updated is a big job and does require time and creativity, but I do enjoy it,” she says. There is a bit of seasonal variance in the frequency of updates, she admits. “I find wintertime easier to work on the website—in the summer I’m so busy with the horses, I find it a challenge to keep photos and information updated!”

This formula of using Facebook, a great website, and regularly updated photos to market their Morgans has served Sue and Derrick’s program quite well. In a day and age when many breeders struggle to place their youngsters before they reach riding age, the Rafter Bar D foals are often sold in utero—sometimes years in advance! “We started a foal reservation program about five years ago,” Sue explains. “\$500 and a Foal Reservation Contract puts buyers in line to choose a foal. It’s a two-year contract and buyers get to choose a foal in the order according to the date we receive their deposit and contract. If after two years we cannot fulfill what the buyer considers their ‘dream foal,’ we will refund the deposit. Our contract does state

that we do reserve the right to retain foals, as we need to be able to do that for our future in breeding. If anyone is in a hurry, I am up front to share that this is not the program for you. This works well for people who are planning ahead. Interestingly enough, we can have six deposits for foals and still have a foal available for sale because of gender, color, or preference of sire and dam. For us, it’s not about the sale; it’s about making dreams come true.”

OVERSEAS SALES

Due to the international reach of Facebook and the RBD website, Sue and Derrick have sold an incredible 13 Morgans overseas to date. Their clients have become friends, united in their shared love of the Morgan breed. There are now Rafter Bar D Morgans living in France, Hungary, Germany, Puerto Rico, Australia, Switzerland, Austria, and Canada—in addition to the Olsons’ multitude of US sales.

“Our very first international sale was in 2009 to Nicolas Guittonneau and Danielle Vautier from France,” Sue says. “They purchased Sable Rockin Blue Angel and RBD Victoria’s Secret. They have come to visit us several times now and they are such great friends. We had several international sales in 2011; RBD Midnight Lace was the first Morgan in history to travel to Hungary to Bellandor to live with Aniko Halmai and her family. Alina Danielewski from Germany purchased RBD Immortal Cyrus and JMF Midnight Expose. Aniko and Alina are both doing amazing things with their Morgans. I am so grateful that I had the

opportunity to meet them both. I was able to travel with Lace, Cyrus, and Expose on the plane as their personal groom, to help deliver them to Europe. What an adventure that was! I met so many wonderful people who were so welcoming and interested in the Morgan horse during my ten days in Europe. It was truly the trip of a lifetime!”

2013 saw RBD Amber Essence traveling to Australia to her new home with Helen McLennen, and in 2014, RBD Lumine Dante was sold to Switzerland with Nicole Basler. In 2015, Anna and Jan Frode Velkey-Solvberg from Hungary visited Rafter Bar D in search of their first Morgans. “After spending months searching the internet for Morgan horses for sale in Europe, I finally came across a beautiful American website and a stunning black mare I immediately fell in love with,” Anna says. “My initial email inquiry was promptly answered by Sue Olson, and before long I found myself engaged in the most open and in-depth conversation with her about our shared dream of owning and breeding Morgan horses. I decided that despite the long distance and cost of importing from overseas, I wanted to buy horses from RBD. In the spring of 2015, we were privileged to be invited to their farm where my husband and I spent three fantastic days with Sue and Derrick.” Sue adds “We had a great visit and made such wonderful friends. I felt as though I had known Anna all my life. They purchased JMF Twist Of Fate in foal to Amberfields Luminescence. Later that year, they purchased Amberfields Luminescence to be their herd sire at Shannonvale Morgans.”

The most recent exports from Rafter Bar D happened in 2016 when Elke Mattevi-Muller of Emperor Mountains Morgans in Austria purchased RBD Adonis N Dun, RBD Thor Dun N Gold, RBD Truly A Satinka, and Mulberry Sahalie, who was in foal to Amberfields Blaze N Dun. “I first met Elke back in 2011 when Alina took me to her beautiful place in Austria,” Sue says. “She is an amazing woman and has a wonderful breeding program.”

Sue and Derrick are grateful to all of their customers who are the driving force behind the success of their breeding program. “Special people with the desire to have a Morgan partner is what keeps breeders going,” Sue says. “Derrick and I

have made friends with so many wonderful people from diverse walks of life along the way. We love raising foals, promoting the breed, and have acquired what we feel are the very best Morgans for the foundation of our breeding program, but without those special people with a desire to have a Morgan, we could not survive.”

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

The Rafter Bar D ranch name originated in a brand Derrick had designed years before he and Sue acquired their first Morgans. D is for Derrick, and the rafter bar symbolizes their ranch. After purchasing Sable Rockin Blue Angel, they needed a prefix for her foal. “To find a name that was unique with meaning, and not already used, was difficult,” Sue recalls. “The name was right here hanging on a hook in our home, it just needed to be discovered—and it was. Rafter Bar D was born and RBD would be the prefix for our foals born here at our little ranch. We registered the prefix with the American Morgan Horse Association in 2007. It wasn’t too long before the headgate to our farm

was graced with a Rafter Bar D brand, too. Today, we do not brand our Morgans with it; the brand is just a conversation piece, the symbol for our ranch and to me, in honor of the man behind living a dream. Special thanks to him for encouraging me to dream as if we will live forever, and live as if this is the last day.”

That belief runs as a constant in Sue’s life, and she is adamant that none of their success would have been possible without Derrick’s encouragement and support. Together, they continue to enjoy planning new breeding crosses, working with the stallions and young stock, and, especially, sharing the magic of a new birth. “During foaling season a ‘Friday night dinner out and a movie’ consists of a cooler with snacks and a thermos of coffee, relaxing in camping chairs, quietly watching a real life motion picture that does not end with credits and waiting to leave the theater, but with a new beginning,” She says “I am truly fortunate to be living this life with a front row seat in our own outdoor theater, watching a five star rated feature.” ■

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