



≈ BREEDER PROFILE ≈

# HERCULES ON HORSEBACK

*Steve Reeves: Mr. Universe. Movie Star. Fitness Guru. Morgan Breeder.*

By Laura Hornick Behning

**A** legend in the world of bodybuilding, Steve Reeves became one of the few athletes to cross over into movie stardom. His bulging muscles suited him to portray Goliath, Sandokan, and, most famously, Hercules on the silver screen. By 1960 he was the number one ranked movie star in 25 countries. He was such an icon he was commemorated in the cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* when Dr. Frank N. Furter sings, “or if you want something visual that’s not too abysmal, we could take in an old Steve Reeves movie.”

When Hercules mounted up, it was on the back of a Morgan horse. From his ranch in California, he was a breeder, exhibitor, and promoter of America’s first breed.

Steve was born in 1926, a native of Glasgow, Montana, a tiny town just a few miles from the Canadian border. Sadly, his father, Lester Dell Reeves, died in a farming accident when Steve was just six months old. Horses were a part of Steve’s life very early on. At age two, his mother, Goldie Reeves, would put him on a horse bareback and bridleless and let it go out in the pasture and eat with the rest of the horses. At lunchtime she’d ring a bell and Steve’s mount would come gently trotting in. Steve and his mother moved to Oakland, California, in 1936, where Goldie met and eventually married Steve’s stepfather, Earl Maylone. At age 16, Steve joined a

gym and became interested in bodybuilding.

After serving his country in World War II Steve returned to win several major bodybuilding contests, including Mr. America in 1947, Mr. World in 1948, and Mr. Universe in 1950. His striking good looks naturally attracted much attention, including that of film directors. Edward Wood cast Steve in his first big screen role, playing a cop in the 1954 release *Jail Bait*. Steve’s next film was the 1954 MGM musical *Athena*. The daughter of Italian film director Pietro Francisci saw *Athena* and suggested to her father that Steve might be a good choice for the title role in his Franco-Italian production of *Hercules*. Francisci had been looking for the right actor to play this part for almost five years. Steve’s beautifully proportioned physique and classically handsome features made him perfectly suited for the title role. Released in Italy in 1958 and in the United States the following year, *Hercules* became a major box office hit.

Following the success of *Hercules*, Steve was speedily cast into other European-made “sword and sandal” epics, including *Hercules Unchained* (1959), *Goliath and the Barbarians* (1959), *Last Days of Pompeii* (1959), *Morgan the Pirate* (1960), and *Thief of Baghdad* (1961). By 1967, Steve and Sophia Loren were said to be the highest paid actors in Europe.

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**ABOVE:** Steve Reeves as Hercules during the scene where he pulls down the pillars of the palace, showing his incredible physique; Steve with some of the ribbons won by his horses. circa mid '70s (courtesy of George Helmer).

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**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Steve on his foundation stallion Dickie's Pride (Flying Jubilee x Dawn Mist), 1952 palomino. Taken in Oregon at Steve's Suncrest Stock Ranch in the mid 1960s; Steve in 1993 with High Pass Traveling Man. (Courtesy of George Helmer)

For years Steve suffered pain from a damaged shoulder due to an injury sustained when his chariot had crashed into a tree while filming *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Steve talked about the injury in a 1994 interview for *The Perfect Vision* magazine. “The film was two days from being over and there was a scene where a chariot was running away with the hero and heroine in it, and I was supposed to ride up, grab her off the chariot, and throw her on the back of my horse. An Italian stunt man was driving it, but the hood of the chariot blocked his view. They hit a bump and he was thrown off, and it really became a runaway. I had a fast horse, and I actually swung onto the chariot like in the movies and was able to pull the horses to a stop. But the chariot skidded, and my shoulder hit a tree. Boom! My index finger was bent the opposite way, up towards my wrist. So, I pulled it down, straightening it out. And my shoulder was jammed, so I put my fist between my knees and pulled up, and it sounded like a cannon going off when my shoulder went back in. The next day I woke up sore, but it wasn’t really bad. It was the last day of filming, and there was a scene where Pompeii is burning. People are fleeing for cover. I’m in the harbor after getting all the people out of the town, and the sea is on fire. They had put diesel fuel across the water, and the scene called for me to jump off the wharf, dive under the flaming sea, and swim underwater and out to the waiting boat. I dove in, and when I did my first breaststroke, my shoulder ripped. And every stroke was rip, rip, rip. I would have been burned if I’d come to the surface, so I just kept swimming until I got there. After the shoot, I went into physical therapy, and it never did get right. On each picture it would get a little worse.”

The injury, stress, homesickness for the States, and the decline in popularity of the mythological epics for which he had been known prompted Steve’s retirement from films in 1969. This meant that he could now spend more time with the horses he had grown

to love.

### INTRODUCTION TO MORGANS

Steve became involved with Morgans shortly after finishing the filming of *Hercules* in 1958. The 1965–66 Pacific Northwest Morgan Horse Association Directory included an article about Steve in which he relates how he came to discover the breed. “It was during work on a film in Rome, Italy, that it first occurred to me that I would finally make enough money to buy and keep a horse. I had no particular breed in mind but just wanted to own a good horse. Mario Lanza was also in Rome working in the same studio at the same time, and he was always reading livestock magazines that he had sent from the States. One day at lunch in the studio commissary the conversation came around to horses and he was pleased to discover my interest in them. The next day, Mario brought a whole stack of horse magazines for me to read. In the evenings when I returned from the studio, I looked through these interesting magazines in search of my horse, and every time I saw one I liked, it turned out to be a Morgan. When I finished filming, I stopped in New York on my way to California and paid a visit to The Morgan Horse Club and obtained a list of breeders in the West. Among several breeders whom I visited were the Mosher Brothers of Salt Lake City from whom I bought my first Morgan horse, Dickie’s Pride, who is considered by many to be one of the outstanding palomino Morgan stallions in America.

“Having acquired my horse, I needed a home for him and so I bought a small ranch in Valley Center, near San Diego, California. The ranch seemed too big for just one horse, and I thought Dickie might like some company, so I purchased three Morgan mares: Princess Sonfield, Linn’s Lu, and Gay Jipsey. After two foal crops, the ranch was too small for the horses. Luckily, I was making more films and could afford another ranch, so we purchased one in a nice green valley nestled in pine-covered trees with the

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**THE LADY SUNGOLD FAMILY (clockwise from top left):** The 1960 palomino mare Lady Sungold (Dickie's Pride x Linn's Lu) with Cathy Richards up, winning the Hunt Seat Equitation 13 and under class at the 1972 Golden West Nationals (© Fallaw); Desert Sands (Merry Warlock x Lady Sungold), 1965 palomino stallion, in full parade gear (courtesy of Nancy Lake); Bryan Blatt's Westwind Otto (Sweet's Baybarry x Westwind Eyelash, by Golden Sondanz) 2016 palomino stallion, Zane Davis up; Shatona's Vindicator (Desert Sands x Iodette), with owner Debbie Uecker-Keough, added park saddle championships to the family resume (© Howard Schatzberg); Golden Sonfield (Desert Sands x Shawalla Stormy), 1985 palomino stallion bred and owned by Jeannine Smith; The palomino stallion Mocomo Gold-N-Diamond (Golden Sondanz x Sweet's Dutchess) was not started under saddle when Sara Jane Light purchased him late last year at age 17. Here he is with Sara's 15-year-old daughter Matilda, trail riding through the Arizona desert, August 2020 (courtesy of Sara Jane Light); Indiana Aztec (Desert Sands x Viking Masterpiece), 1987 chestnut gelding, with owner Karen Sandler in a dressage class, 2004 (© Primo Ponies & Sporthorses).

Applegate River running through the valley, located 35 miles southwest of Medford, Oregon. I called it Suncrest Stock Ranch.”

Dickie's Pride (Flying Jubilee x Dawn Mist) was a proven breeding stallion, having already sired several successful show and breeding horses before Steve purchased him, including Mary Woolverton's versatile palomino stallion Prince Of Pride. His first foals for Steve arrived in 1960, both palomino fillies: Lady Sungold (x Linns Lu) and Honey Gold (x Princess Sonfield). The following year all three of Steve's mares had foals by Dickie's Pride. Gay Jipsej foaled Kings Ransome, a chestnut stallion who became the ranch's junior sire. In 1964, Princess Sonfield produced SR's Dutchess (by Dickie's Pride). These four individuals—Lady Sungold, Honey Gold, Kings Ransome, and SR's Dutchess—would have a significant

impact on other California breeding programs.

Later, Steve owned the stallions Long Hill Justin, Equinox Reginald, and JMF Zee Beam, bringing the blood of Upwey Ben Don, Ulendon, and Beamington, respectively, to his original Western Working bloodlines. Over the years Steve showed his horses under various trainers on the California show circuit and was active in the local Morgan clubs, even serving a term as president of the San Diego Morgan Horse Society. Steve kept Dickie's Pride for the remainder of the horse's life. He told the story that one of his greatest joys in life was riding his palomino stallion through the hills surrounding his ranch.

“My profession as an actor gives me the opportunity to visit many countries, to meet many interesting people, and to see many

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**THE HONEY GOLD FAMILY (clockwise from top left):** The elegant 2002 palomino ATMF Against The Wind (ATMF Superstition x ATMF Gold Charm, by Higuera Sondarling) is Patricia Carlson's current senior stallion (courtesy of Patricia Carlson); ATMF Katmandu (ATMF Against the Wind x ATMF Illusion), 2017 cremello stallion owned by Patricia Carlson (courtesy of Patricia Carlson); ATMF What Dreams May Come (ATMF Superstition x ATMF Gold Charm, by Higuera Sondarling), 2004 chestnut gelding, with owner Miriam Orschel up (courtesy Miriam Orschel); The palomino stallion Higuera Sondarling (High Pass Duke x Honey Gold) foaled in 1976, was really a "Steve Reeves horse"; both of his parents were bred by Steve. Owned by Patricia Carlson (courtesy of Patricia Carlson); Moonlight Sonata (Higuera Sondarling x Futurity's Provacative) and her 2018 filly by Astronomicallee, Monnrune Tempest Sonata (courtesy of the pair's owner Sierra Breckinridge).

ways of life," he wrote in the 1965–66 Pacific Northwest Morgan Horse Association Directory. "There are many satisfactions, but the one for which I am most grateful is the opportunity to own land and animals. In the glamorous life of a movie star I find that I am the happiest when in the saddle riding Dickie's Pride through the hills and looking down on my Red Angus cattle like red dots, in my little green valley, with my beautiful Morgan horses frolicking in the fields; and it is then that I know that Lady Luck has been very good to me."

### THE LADY SUNGOLD FAMILY

Lady Sungold produced five foals for Steve before being sold to M. C. Andry in 1971. Her last three foals bore the Higuera prefix. Lady Sungold also won multiple championships in various pleasure divisions. The most notable of her offspring was the incomparable palomino stallion, Desert Sands (f. 1965 by Merry Warlock), bred by Steve Reeves.

In 1984 I purchased my first Morgan, Reminiscing (Applevale Commander x Oklahoma Glory by Desert Sands), a four-year-old bay mare. Immediately I was consumed by pedigree fever, a condition I'm sure many of my fellow Morgan addicts will attest is highly contagious! In researching the dam's side of my new mare's pedigree (which I knew nothing about at the time), I became fascinated by her palomino grandsire, Desert Sands. Morgan historian Laura Stillwell, who has always been a great help to me,

told me he had been a Rose Bowl parade horse. A few years later I lucked into a collection of old issues of *The Morgan Horse* magazine; there, in a California show report, I saw a photo of Desert Sands for the first time. The lovely head, the rounded form, the crested neck, and as icing on the cake, the color, all in one animal was, for me, the complete embodiment of what a Morgan should be.

In a breed that strongly favored bay, black, and brown, colorful Morgans were not accepted in the 1960s and '70s the way they are today. Into that era, however, was born a 15.2 hand golden stallion who would overcome prejudice to make a name for himself, not only in his home state of California, but in the hearts of those who were privileged to know him and his offspring. "Sandy," as he was known to his friends, was owned for most of his life by Lou and Nancy Lake of Shatona Morgans in Valley Center, California.

As a five-year-old, Desert Sands won the Senior Champion and Grand Champion Stallion title at the Los Angeles County Fair. This was just one of many championships Sandy would win over the years in halter, as well as performance events as diverse as park, Western pleasure, English pleasure, and driving. His forte, though, and perhaps the division he would become most noted for, was as a parade horse. Desert Sands was invited to appear in the annual Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade an unprecedented seven years straight. Clearly, he left an impression on all who saw him.

Sandy's disposition mirrored his stunning good looks. It is felt that this single attribute of the sire sold more Morgans for

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**THE SR's DUTCHESS FAMILY (clockwise from top left):** High Pass Duke (Long Hill Justin x SR's Dutchess), 1971 chestnut stallion, sire of Higuera Sondarling (© Foucher); SR's Dutchess (Dickie's Pride x Princess Sonfield) as a foal in 1964 on Steve's Oregon ranch (courtesy of George Helmer); Jingling Spurs LR (ML Meadowlark Jazzspur x Wyodak Hi Meadow Model) 2002 chestnut stallion, whose paternal great grandsire is Triton Dallas. Owned and photographed by Kim Viker; GR Yellowstone (Jingling Spurs LR x M River Sparky), 2015 chestnut stallion, who survived a horrific accident involving hi tensile wire. Owned and photographed by Kim Viker; Triton Dallas (Lippitt Pecos x SR's Dutchess), 1981 chestnut stallion, herd sire at Anita Fillmore's Apple Pi Morgans in Wyoming (courtesy of Lisa Horning).

the Lakes than anything else they could have said or done. The stallion was even used as a lesson horse. Jeannine Smith of Golden Morgan Farms, Woodland Park, Colorado, lived in California until the early '90s. For a year and a half Sandy was her lesson mount at the Lake's farm, and he always greeted her with a whinny as she entered the barn. On one occasion she had shipped a mare in to be bred to Sandy and watched as the mare was covered; after a brief rest, Sandy was ready for Jeannine's riding lesson that day. No muss, no fuss, all business, whatever the task at hand—that was Sandy.

Jeannine bred her two Shawalla mares to Sandy seven times, getting palominos five times and chestnuts twice. One of them, the palomino stallion Golden Sonfield (f. 1985 out of Shawalla Stormy), has carried the sireline to Desert Sands into the present. Though Golden Sonfield sired just four offspring, two of them have bred on: the full siblings Golden Sondanz (stallion f. 1988) and Golden Wintermist (mare f. 1994), both palominos out of Shawalla Gerri.

Golden Sondanz is the sire of the palomino Mocomo Gold-

N-Diamond, who stood for quite a few years for Thom and Nancy Harris of Foxton Morgans in Colorado. His dunskin son, Foxton Goldun Cloud (out of Amberfields Dun Lovin') currently carries on for his sire at Foxton. Sara Jane Light of Apache Junction, Arizona, purchased Mocomo Gold-N-Diamond late in 2019 and started the then 17-year-old stallion under saddle. "My first Morgans were his aunt and uncle," she explains. "I had no right to expect him to be so lovely. But like everyone else in his family he just was. From day one. It's like he knew he had something to do his whole life, so when we started him he was like 'hey, yeah, this is the thing I had to do.' He was on the trails a week in, with the mares, under complete control. Down the road, through town, out to the restaurant, a week later. Since the first ride out he's consistently the one at the gate, talking to you and ready for wherever you'll take him. I started with the Desert Sands horses 25 years ago. When I had to temporarily get out of horses (we trained for others and worked on ranches, but didn't have our own program), we worked with several breeds and we couldn't stop comparing them to the trainability, tractability, temperament, personality, and general fun

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**KING'S RANSOME DESCENDANTS (clockwise from top left):** Steve with King's Ransome (Dickie's Pride x Gay Jipsej) in Oregon at the Suncrest Stock Ranch (courtesy of George Helmer); Higuera Bandido (Celebration x Countess of Copper, by King's Ransome) 1974 chestnut stallion, pictured here at age 2 (courtesy of Pam McDermott); OGO Far West Justin AEG (Higuera Bandido x Far West Justina) 2003 chestnut stallion with 13-year-old Remy Light up, trail riding through the Arizona desert, August 2020 (courtesy of Sara Jane Light); The 1987 World Champion Mare EVF Mahogany Miss (Mikks Shadrack x Full Moon Hel A Lena) is a great granddaughter of King's Ransome on her sire's side (© Avis).

of the Morgan breed and the Desert Sands/Higuera/Shawalla lines. We kept the mantra of 'when we start for ourselves again we are going to dig up those Morgans.'" And that's exactly what happened. In addition to Diamond, Sara Jane also has another stallion tracing to Steve Reeves' breeding, OGO Far West Justin AEG, on lease from Wendy LeGate of Old Growth Oak Morgans. Justin comes through a different branch of the family tree and will be covered later in this article.

Two other offspring of Golden Sondanz have bred on. The palomino mare Westwind Eyelash (f. 2004 out of Sweet's Duchess) brought the Reeves bloodlines into Bryan Blatt's program of concentrated old Midwest breeding. One of her sons, Westwind Otto (palomino f. 2016 by Sweet's Baybarry), is currently in training for reined cowhorse events with Zane Davis Performance Horses in Idaho. Producing for Sharon Jayne in Colorado was Mocomo Gold N Moonbeam (Golden Sondanz x Eden Rose), a cremello stallion foaled in 2003, who sired five foals before his untimely passing at age 13.

The chestnut gelding Indiana Aztec (Desert Sands x Viking Masterpiece) was successful in many disciplines, just like his sire. He started out as an endurance horse, completing five 50-milers, then transitioned to Western pleasure. Later he took a junior rider to the dressage championships in Northern California, where he did well at Training Level. "When I bought him in 2002 as a 15-year-old," his last owner Karen Sandler says, "he'd been lightly used for a few years, but within six months or so he was back in dressage form. I rode him Training and First Level dressage and he was a solid, trustworthy show horse. He could get a little spicy on the trail if he wasn't in the lead but put him in front and he was

perfect. The most bombproof and lovable horse I ever owned. I miss him dearly."

The Desert Sands daughter Shatona's Empress (f. 1986 out of Eco Debonaire) was an excellent producer for owners Jean and Roxanne Riggs of Sunshine Farm in Michigan. Of her five foals for their farm, the most well known is her 2001 cremello son SFG Infinity and Beyond (by MEMC Tinseltown), who sired 45 foals for owner Patty Clark before he was gelded. One of his most well-known offspring is the palomino gelding Guha's Gold N Romeo (out of FP Critic's Choice) owned by Sharon and Subhajt Guha, whose decade long show career includes many regional and National wins in Western pleasure and Western dressage.

One of the most famous Desert Sands offspring is the many-time park champion, Shatona's Vindicator, owned by Debbie Uecker-Keough of El Cajon, California. Foaled in 1981, this bay gelding's long show career spanned 17 years (1983–2000), highlighted by winning the Grand National Junior Exhibitor Park Saddle 16-17 in 1996 and 1997.

Most of the other offspring of Lady Sungold did not breed on, but a daughter, Higuera Duquesa (by High Pass Duke) is the dam of the 1989 stallion Super Don Dakota (by Triton Fremont), who has 27 offspring to his credit. A son of Lady Sungold, High Pass Jango (f. 1971 by Long Hill Justin) sired six. Two of his daughters bred by Steve, High Pass Jangalyn (f. 1977 out of Prieta Lynn) and High Pass Marbaya (f. 1978 out of Gypsy Morgana), produced foals for Angela Ong of Mineral Valley Morgans. Their offspring have in turn brought a bit of the Reeves bloodlines to other programs across the country, including Windfield Morgans in Connecticut and Wildcard Morgans in Arizona.

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**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Reeves added the stallions Long Hill Justin (Kingston x Long Hill Leedarling) & Equinox Reginald (Orland Dondarling x Bar-T Regina) to his program in 1968. (Courtesy of George Helmer)

### THE HONEY GOLD FAMILY

Honey Gold is best known as the dam of Higuera Sondarling, the palomino stallion who really started it all for Patricia Carlson's Autumn Twilight Morgan Farm in Valley Center, California. Sondarling, a typey palomino foaled in 1976, was bred by the Richards family of Higuera Morgans in Saratoga, California. His sire was another Steve Reeves-bred horse, High Pass Duke (Long Hill Justin x SR's Dutchess). After seeing Desert Sands, Patricia wanted some of that color and quality for herself. When she learned that Higuera Farms owned his dam Lady Sungold and her half sister Honey Gold, she went for a shopping visit. "Honey Gold had an exceptionally pretty, long-necked colt by High Pass Duke at her side that I named Higuera Sondarling," Patricia says. "I bought them all and a lovely chestnut mare, Mary Mels Candice (Omar Sheriff x Mocha by Stetson). I left Lady Sungold to be bred to Devan Robbie (Devan Comet x Devan Flake) but she wasn't settling, so Mrs. Richards offered to keep her. I sure would have liked to see that cross."

Honey Gold, who was 16 when Patricia purchased her, produced two foals for ATMF. The first was the 1979 palomino mare ATMF Bit O Honey (by Mehlwood McKylo), who was the dam of ten foals, most notably the 1991 palomino dressage gelding ATMF Flashdance (by the Sondarling son, ATMF Jason Lee) and the 1997 palomino mare, ATMF Illusion (by ATMF Superstition). Illusion has seven foals to her credit, including the exotic 2017 cremello stallion, ATMF Katmandu, who has Honey Gold on both sides of his pedigree. In 1980, at age 20, Honey Gold produced her last foal, the chestnut gelding ATMF Missing Link (by San De Glenn R).

Patricia met Steve and his wife Aline in 1977 when they came to her farm to see Honey Gold and Sondarling. "We discussed who I might breed with Honey Gold," she remembers, "and they advised me to hang onto her colt and implored me to raise him right as

he could turn out to be a breeding quality stallion. They were right." Higuera Sondarling has founded his own dynasty, siring 47 registered Morgans who have excelled as athletes and by winning world championships. Patricia currently stands the Sondarling grandson, ATMF Against The Wind (ATMF Superstition x ATMF Gold Charm, by Higuera Sondarling), an elegant palomino who stands an impressive 16 hands barefoot.

The ATMF Morgans have succeeded in many disciplines beyond the breeding shed. Miriam Orschel of Portland, Oregon, bought her dressage gelding ATMF What Dreams May Come, a full brother to ATMF Against The Wind, a little over three years ago. The chestnut gelding was 13 years old and was intended as a training project for resale. "I knew him as a colt and knew what magnificent bloodlines he stemmed from," Miriam says. "I practically grew up at Autumn Twilight Morgan Farm and had the privilege of knowing his grandsire, Higuera Sondarling, as well as his sire and dam, ATMF Superstition and ATMF Gold Charm, respectively. I knew that he had untapped potential but had not seen him in almost ten years at that point. He had passed through a few hands, and this sweet boy needed a soft place to land. The plan was to train him and then find his forever home, but little did I know that his forever home would end up being with me. I think it is safe to say that he indeed chose me. He is an overall barn favorite, capturing the hearts of every individual he meets. He is honest, sensitive, communicative, and affectionate. I am proud to call him my partner, and I am forever grateful for everything he has taught and continues to teach me."

Sierra Breckinridge of Salem, Oregon, owns two ATMF mares by Higuera Sondarling. ATMF Exclamation (out of ATMF Temptation) and ATMF Moonlight Sonata GCH (out of Futurity's Provocative) were both foaled in 2005. ATMF Exclamation, a palomino, competes with Sierra's father, James, in trail and ranch

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**LEFT TO RIGHT:** The 1942 chestnut mare Princess Sonfield (Sonfield x Princess Sabab) with one of her chestnut colts (either Duke Sonfield or Prince Royal) at Suncrest Stock Ranch in Oregon; Steve's wife Aline on Gay Jipse (Gay Mac x Jipse Allen), 1945 bay mare, accompanied by the couple's dog Tippey. (Courtesy of George Helmer)

pleasure, and Sierra has started showing her in reining. ATMF Moonlight Sonata is shown in third level dressage, road hack, and Western pleasure. Both of these mares have long show records since beginning their careers in 2008, with numerous wins at class A shows including Grand National. Sonata is also a mother; in 2018 she produced the chestnut filly Moonrune Tempest Sonata (by Astronomicallee), who will surely follow in her dam's hoof prints in the show ring.

### THE SR'S DUTCHESS FAMILY

The chestnut mare SR's Dutchess (Dickie's Pride x Princess Sonfield) produced nine foals for three great California breeding programs: first for her breeder Steve Reeves, then for Higuera Morgans, and finally for W. Robert Morgan's Red Fox Morgans. Her son High Pass Duke (by Long Hill Justin), foaled in 1971, is the sire of Higuera Sondarling, previously discussed.

The palomino mare Higuera Cara De Oro (Tio Lalo x SR's Dutchess) foaled in 1973, produced six foals; two have descendants at present. Cara's palomino daughter, Triton Shelley Star, had 11 offspring, seven of which were palomino, including the mare FTR Vanilla Star and gelding FTR Golden Victory, both by Triton Samson. FTR Golden Victory sired nine foals, six of them colorfults, before being gelded. Higuera Cara De Oro is also the dam of the smoky black stallion AFA Garanon (f. 1986 by Don Dandy's Diamond), who has 13 foals to his credit.

The SR's Dutchess son Triton Dallas (f. 1981 by Lippitt Pecos) was purchased by Anita Fillmore of Apple Pi Morgans as a weanling from breeder Robert Morgan. This line from Steve's breeding, along with the ATMF Morgans, are probably the most prolific in terms of sheer number of present-day descendants. Dallas sired 43 offspring including Pure D Powder (f. 1988 x Flee

Powderwing), broodmare for Truwest Morgans (see *TMH March 2020*) and Apple Pi Jolee Blanc (f. 1988 out of Squirt). Pure D Powder is the dam of Truwest's current senior stallion, Truwest Pure Prairiesmoke, and Truwest Adobe Rose, who produced the smoky grulla stallion Truwest Silver Suede, standing for Harvey Seidel's Bar None Morgans in Wyoming (see *TMH August 2019*). Apple Pi Jolee Blanc is the dam of ML Meadowlark Jazzspur, bred and owned by Linnea Sidi of Meadowlark Morgans in Colorado. Jazzspur, foaled in 1997, sired 37 offspring including the chestnut Jingling Spurs LR who is owned by Steve and Kim Viker's Genetic Resources in Minnesota.

Jingling Spurs LR was purchased to cross with daughters of the Viker's foundation stallion, AOM Sunday's Magic. The Spur daughter, GR Madison (f. 2014 out of GR Cimarron) owned by Karla and Gary Moyer in Texas, is campaigning in combined driving, driven dressage, and carriage. Another daughter, GR Against All Odds (f. 2017 out of SFFM Escada), owned by Kirsty Wojnarowski of Minnesota, is headed for the dressage ring. Genetic Resources currently has two producing mares sired by Spur, GR Whiskey Girl (f. 2008 out of Thunder Dark Ruby), and GR Who's Your Daddy (f. 2007 out of GR Cinnamon Swirl). Expecting his first foals in 2021 is the heir apparent to Jingling Spurs LR, GR Yellowstone (f. 2015 out of M River Sparky), who survived a harrowing accident involving high tensile fencing.

"It was the end of February in Minnesota, a cold, wet, and somewhat damp day with a sharp northwest wind and a bit of frozen mud on the ground," Kim remembers. "It was feeding time and as I rounded the corner to Yellowstone's run, I noticed a broken wire, but no Yellowstone. He was not in the next pen and at first, I did not see him in the third pen. What I did notice was our broodmares clustered next to the line fence that separated them from the third



pen. Then I spotted Yellowstone. The electric current that had run through the smooth high tensile wire had shorted out, giving him the opportunity to cross all the paddocks to the mare group. It was at this point that he had somehow twisted his back legs in the wire so that they were bound tightly together. In doing so, he had lost the ability to stand and was lying flat on his side shivering in the ice-cold mud, but he was otherwise motionless. My brain froze in a sort of stillness and panic. It was one of those moments where I could not trust what my eyes were telling me. I ran to where we keep the fencing tool, grabbed it, went to Yellowstone and started cutting him out of the smooth wire.”

They loaded the stallion up and rushed to their vet, where they discovered minor cuts to both of Yellowstone’s back legs and around the bulb of each hind hoof. But the bigger concern was the side of the right hind hoof, which bore an indentation where the wire had tightened down most severely. After some stitches and with antibiotics on board, Yellowstone was moved to Kim’s friend Deb Thompson’s stable for recovery. “His swollen back left hoof and leg returned to a normal size relatively quickly,” Kim says. “But the back-right hoof had been more badly damaged and started to loosen at three months into his rehabilitation. Little did any of us know, but there was a new hoof growing out from the coronet band that was pushing the injured hoof off. One morning, it just fell off. The pressure from the wire had caused the blood flow to decrease to the point where some of the tissue had died.” In true Morgan fashion, Yellowstone continued to bear weight on the foot and recovered with no lasting aftereffects. It took about eight months from the time of the injury until his new hoof grew out completely.

### **DESCENDANTS OF KINGS RANSOME**

Kings Ransome (Dickie’s Pride x Gay Gipsej) sired just eight offspring, but it is interesting to follow the trail to where it leads today. His 1969 daughter Full Moon’s Bay (out of Impala Blossom) is the dam of Mikks Shadrack, who sired the 1987 World Champion Mare EVF Mahogany Miss, owned by Butch and Sue Gilliam of Norco, California. “Missy” did not impress much as a newly purchased two-year-old, but with careful conditioning and TLC by trainers Rock Walker and Bob Hughes, she grew into herself to take the world title a year later in 1987. She became only the third three-year-old mare to win that top honor, along with Heart To Heart (1984) and Fletcher Music Lee (1986).

The King’s Ransome daughter Countess Of Copper (f. 1965 out of Princess Sonfield), bred by Steve, produced seven foals. Her son Higuera Bandido (f. 1974 by Celebration) was purchased as a weanling by Sid (Mary) Spencer of Arroyo Grande, California, at one of the last Red Fox Morgan Sales. Sid had a working cattle ranch in the rugged Central California Coastal Range. She needed sound, sensible, working horses, and Bandido fit the bill as a herd sire to produce them. Sid’s niece, Pam McDermott of Dawnwind Morgans, owned two full sisters by Bandido out of Funquest Pachita, Lucia Hollyhawk (f. 1979) and Lolita HB (f. 1977). “Lucia Hollyhawk was gifted to us by Sid with the statement that she had just returned from training,” Pam explains. “I saddled her up and off we went. She didn’t seem to know how to respond to the snaffle, which seemed odd. A while later the trainer voiced surprise that I

was gathering cattle on her as she had returned her to my aunt with no training done because she’d not had time! Proof of that line’s trainability!”

Bandido was sold to Ken Craig, who had a rental stable, in 1982. There he was bred to mares of all different breeds, and most of his colts were gelded. When Wendy LeGate of Old Growth Oak Morgans met Bandido, who was by then quite aged, she was determined to bring his lines into the future. She bred her mares to him eight times and purchased several of his daughters for her broodmare band. One of these was the 1991 chestnut mare Ursula’s Higuera Bandida, who had already produced Jo Johnson’s palomino herd sire JAF Sunrise Surfer Dude (by Can Don Joshua Danny) in 2004 and then produced the smoky black stallion (now gelded) OGO Sellman Hill And Co in 2009 for Wendy. Both boys have bred on. Last year, Wendy rescued from obscurity a previously unregistered entire son of Bandido she named OGO Far West Justin AEG (out of Far West Justina). The AEG stands for Arlene Elaine Guzzie, a tribute to Wendy’s dear friend who passed away in August 2019. Justin is currently on a long-term lease with Sara Jane Light in Arizona, and his first foals will arrive in 2021.

### **THE MANY LEGACIES OF STEVE REEVES**

Steve Reeves continued to follow a fitness regimen for the rest of his life. He was a champion of drug-free bodybuilding and was an outspoken critic of the use of drugs in the sport. He authored several books, including a workout guidebook titled *Building the Classic Physique: The Natural Way*. Because of his shoulder injury he could no longer work out with heavy weights, so he devised other methods of exercising. One of these was what he called power walking—his term for strenuous walking while swinging small weights in both hands. “I developed it almost accidentally,” Steve wrote in a 1995 issue of the *Steve Reeves International Society Newsletter*. “I was training my Morgan horses to walk out real fast and had a couple of them trained really well. That’s when some friends of mine said ‘you know the country; why don’t you lead us on a trail ride from Anza to Borrego Springs?’ (which is about 30 miles through the mountains and desert). So, I thought OK, I was in good shape and my horse was in good shape, but these other riders and their horses were not. They only came out on weekends to ride. Now to make it easier on them I conducted the ride cavalry-style, where you ride for fifty minutes and get off and walk beside your horse for ten minutes. When I got off my horse to walk, he started walking out real fast. I had to lengthen my stride to keep up and was doing pretty well. But I felt a little off balance. I started swinging my free arm the best I could. I was doing OK except then I was getting breathless. So, I thought, well I’ll do rhythmic breathing. After 10 minutes I stopped and looked around. The rest of the riders were about a mile behind me.” Steve’s discovery became the subject of another book he titled simply *Powerwalking*, which might well be the only exercise technique developed with the aid of Morgan horses.

Despite his fame, Steve never met a stranger and was always happy to talk about Morgans. People who had the pleasure of his acquaintance had only good things to say about him. Richard Trower of RTF Morgans in Phelan, California, recalls sitting in

## BREEDER PROFILE HERCULES ON HORSEBACK

his living room one night when he got a phone call. “The voice on the other end introduced himself as Steve Reeves and asked if he could visit us and look at our horses,” he says. “I thought wow, Hercules wants to look at our horses. How cool is that? So, we made arrangements for the following weekend. Steve showed up in a pickup that had been down its share of dirt roads, wearing a straw hat that had endured its fair share of abuse, and a pair of boots that had made many trips around the barn. We spent several hours looking at the horses, with Steve sharing his pros and cons on each, when he focused on a young broodmare that we had. He asked me what I wanted for the mare. She had already produced some nice foals for us, and I did not want to sell her. He made a generous offer, but I turned it down. He seemed disappointed that I wouldn’t sell him the mare and said, ‘If you ever change your mind just give me a call.’ Over the years he would call from time to time and ask, ‘You going to sell me that mare yet?’ ‘Not yet,’ I would reply and then we would spend some time discussing the state of the Morgan breed. I learned quickly not to ask him what he thought about a given horse unless you wanted to hear every fault and good point that he saw, but he did it in such a way that you would thank him for his opinion. I found Steve Reeves to be a very kind, likable, and sincere man, as well as a very knowledgeable horseman.”

Holly Riding Davis echoes Richard Trower’s sentiments. “He was a very nice man,” she says. “I will never forget when he and his wife camped out with the Morgan Horse Club at Los Vaqueros

Group Camp in the Cuyamaca Mountains. He rode horses on the trail during the day, and he and his wife sat around the campfire with everybody in the evenings.”

Steve did not use a prefix on his earliest horses. Those foaled at his Suncrest Ranch in Oregon during the mid to late 1960s generally had the SR or SR’s prefix. The later Morgans bred at his Valley Center Ranch in California wore the High Pass prefix. There is a total of 46 registered Morgans bred by Steve from 1960 to his last foal crop in 1999, a year before he passed away at the relatively young age of 74 due to a blood clot that formed after exploratory surgery for lymphoma.

We all hope to leave behind something of meaning for those that come after us. It is a rare individual indeed whose legacy touches on so many aspects of their life. Steve Reeves will be remembered not only for his success on the silver screen and in bodybuilding and fitness circles, but also through the many Morgan horses of today who trace their heritage to his dedicated breeding program. ■

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# #MorganStrongerCampaign

**Without a doubt, 2020 is going to be a year EVERYONE remembers! Tough and challenging times for sure, but our hope is when we look back on 2020 what we remember FIRST is the STRENGTH and commitment of all our Morgan Friends and Family. With that in mind, AMHA has launched a campaign to ensure AMHA’s viability through the current crisis.**

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