

Dave & Kim Utke's

SHELDAK RANCH

by Terry Neuman

There is a small town in North Dakota not found on many maps, but becoming very well known in Appaloosadom. That town is Sheldon. Five miles east is found the reason for Sheldon's growing reputation — the Sheldak Ranch — birthplace of two 1975 National Champions.



Can Appaloosas from an obscure town on the plains of Dakota achieve stardom?

'Yes', say the judges.

The ranch is owned, managed, and operated by Dave and Kim Utke. They have come a long way since their marriage in 1963, and it shows in the pride they have in their horses.

Dave and Kim used to ride and show horses. Dave was from Fargo, N.D., and Kim was from Detroit Lakes, Minn. Both were very active in 4-H. When they got married, they decided to fulfill a life-long dream and raise horses. Starting out with one mare, precious little finances, and everything to buy represented quite a challenge for a young couple.

In 1964 they purchased only what they could afford, a sadly neglected farm. They spent years cleaning it up, tearing down and rebuilding fences, tearing out trees and replanting, until it was finally worthy of the name they chose — Sheldak Ranch — with their town (SHEldon), state (DAK), and their names (Dave And Kim, or DAK) all represented.

Dave and Kim started with Quarter Horses, but in 1968 fell in love with the Appaloosa when they saw a red leopard stallion win the most colorful class at a large area show. The stallion was Rebel Red Hawk, and the Utkes bought him the next day.

Rebel Red Hawk gave the Utkes a good start in the Appaloosa business. He provided income from stud fees, while siring good foals. Since that year, the Appaloosas have supported Sheldak Ranch completely, providing income for buying land, building a house and a barn, paying all expenses, and financing additions and improvements.

Kim and Dave Utke and their children, Lori and Shannon, take pride in their horses, including these, Prince David and Mighty Tim.

Rebel was sold when Go Meyer Jim was purchased. This black and white blanketed son of Spotted Jim was out of an own daughter of Mr. Meyers AAAT-AQHA Champion, by Go Man Go. From his one crop of foals at Sheldak Ranch, he sired several champions.

Well known are the stallions the Utkes have now. Mighty Tim, a 1967 Appaloosa stallion bred by Lane Hudson, was one of the top ten halter and performance stallions in the U.S. in 1971 and 1972. He is sired by Mighty Bright, and is out of Cherry Cordial AQHA by Cherry Bounce by Leo. Every single horse in his pedigree is a National Champion or producer of same. Tim stands 15.2 hands and weighs 1,350 lbs., and is a powerful producer.

He went permanent with his first small crop of foals in 1974, and sired 1975 Canadian National Jr. Grand Champion, Tim's Mighty Bar.

More blue ribbon and high point winners include Service Master, high point yearling stallion in Louisiana with 10 grands; Majestic Warrior, futurity winner and high point 1974 stallion in Iowa and reserve in Minnesota; Tim's Impression, with many wins across Iowa and Missouri; Mighty Tim's Tee Gee, Mighty Magic, Mighty Tim's Trinket, Mighty Leo, Joker's Mighty Paul, and Apache King Tim.

Equal in prominence is Prince's Jim, 1969 few spot leopard son of Prince Plaudit and Joker's Mindy Fe by Joker B. Bred and raised by Carl Miles, Jim is a ¾ brother to many National and World Champions.

From his first crop of foals at Sheldak Ranch, he sired Prince Shannon, 1975 National Reserve Champion Jr. Stallion.

This chestnut leopard colt was the only foal born at Sheldak Ranch in 1974 that was an example of the breeding program the Utkes were heading for.

He surely let them know they were on the right track!

Another superstar by Prince's Jim is the 1974 chestnut leopard filly, Prince's Tiffany, 1975 high point 1974 filly for RRVIHC and NDAHC, 1975 high point overall mare for NDAHC, and Mid-Con Register of Merit in halter.

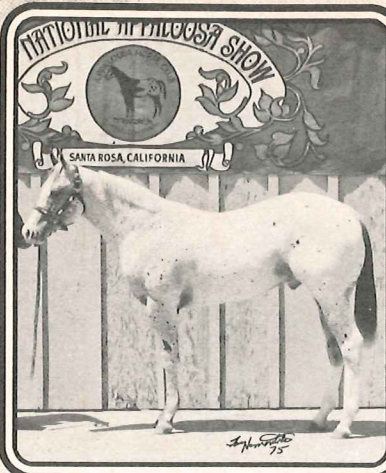
She was recently nominated to the "Hall of Fame" at the Red River Valley Winter Shows, in Crookston, Minn., for her outstanding accomplishments, and started out 1976 with her same winning ways: second and reserve grand champion mare, Sioux Empire Farm Show, Sioux Falls, S.D.; first and grand champion mare, Red River Valley Winter Shows, Crookston, Minn.; and first and grand champion mare, North Dakota Winter Shows, Valley City, N.D.

Prince's Lori, a filly by Jim, was first and jr. grand champion at a recent Louisiana show.

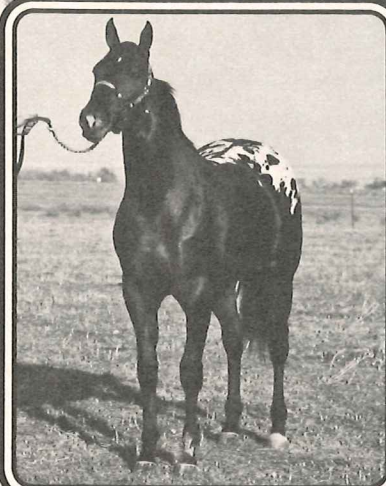
Prince's Jim won his first get of sire class at the North Dakota Winter Shows in March.

More winners across the U.S. by Prince's Jim include Prince Regent, Prince Nomad, Prince's Tom Cat, Justa-Gem, Cinnamon Plaudit, plus many more expected when the 1975 foals start showing.

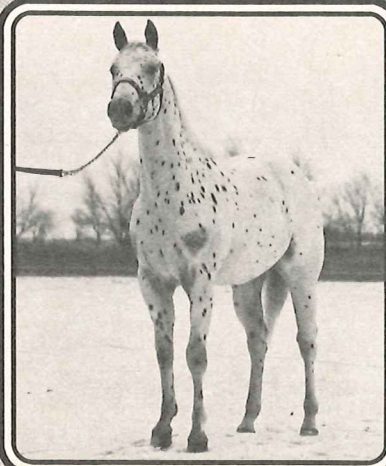
Their third outstanding stallion is Prince David, a 1972 sorrel leopard son of Prince Plaudit and String Mount AQHA by Bar Mount. This 100% Wiescamp-bred full brother to Prince Hank was purchased by Carl Miles as a replacement sire, should anything happen to Prince Plaudit or Prince Charles. He never would have been for sale except for the forced dispersal of the MV Ranch. Prince David won his share of halter and jr. pleasure classes on the national show circuit in 1974 and 1975, including the big ones: Nebraska, Florida, San Antonio, Ft. Worth (reserve champion of champions in his second pleasure class), etc.



Prince Shannon, by Prince's Jim.



Tim's Mighty Bar, by Mighty Tim.



Prince's Tiffany, by Prince's Jim.

Test bred as a 2-year-old, Prince David sired some top foals for Carl Miles, Doug Stone and Dickie Turner, including the show filly, Prince's Skip Away. She was third at the big Heart of Texas Fair at Waco, and has many recent wins in Missouri. David ran with some of the top mares at Sheldak Ranch in 1975, and the Utkes are expecting a good crop of foals by him in 1976.

It is no accident that Sheldak Ranch has some of the top Appaloosa stock in the U.S. To build their brood mare band, the Utkes closely followed the advice of Carl Miles, who said, "Go out and buy the best mares you can find, even if you have to finance for five years to do it. A sure way to lose is to buy a few cheap horses and pray for a miracle." The biggest boost to the Utkes' business came in 1971 when their bank began financing their operation.

There is much evidence that Dave and Kim started out with the best and made better. Their very first Appaloosa foal won his class at the Minnesota State Fair (largest in the U.S. at the time), and went on to many more wins in halter and performance. A filly from their first crop has won at least a dozen high point performance awards.

Winners from their mares, other than those mentioned by their stallions, include Prince's Jo Miles, with wins at Heart of Texas Fair 1974 and 1975, El Paso, Austin Livestock Show, Sweetwater, Ocala, Fla. shows (five firsts and two grands), Tulsa Oil Capital, Ft. Worth, Dixie National, etc. Prince's Jo Miles is a daughter of Miss Jo Miles AA.

Prince Vallant, a son of Miss Jo Miles, compiled an impressive show record his 2-year-old year in 1974 with So. California ApHC high point 2-year-old stallion, California reserve state champion, So. California area champion, Register of Merit in halter for Cal-Western, Award of Excellence from the Appaloosa Horse Club, and winning 10 grands, 7 reserves and over 30 first place wins at halter.

Prince's Fred, out of Top Bambi, with dozens of wins in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts,

Opportunity '72 in Columbus, Ohio, etc., recently sold for a reported \$100,000.

Wiggy Queen, out of Buzzie Queen, was high point 1975 filly in Colorado. Go Bar Jim, out of Bar Money Bailey, was high point stallion in Florida. Sonny Boy Leo, out of Bouncing Hawk, was many times high point halter stallion for West River ApHC. The list goes on and on.

The record is surely no accident, considering the Sheldak mares consist of own Appaloosa daughters of Dash of Vitrol, Mighty Bright, Navajo Britches, Spotted Jim, Go Meyer Jim, Three Bars TB, Peavy Bimbo, Kelley's Sonny Boy, High Hand, Top Hat H, War Reed, etc.

AQHA daughters of Sugar Band AAAT, Bar Money AAAT, Cherry Bounce, Band Bar (AAA sire), Bar Temis AAAT stakes winner, Fly Chick Fly AAAT, Bar Caro (AAA sire), McJoe by Leo, Old Tom Cat AAA AQHA Champion, Beau Bonanza, Bar Mount, Skip Alloy, Skip's Command, Skipity Skip, and Skip's Brick are also producing Sheldak foals.

One of Sheldak Ranch's most popular mares has to be Three Bars Queen, the only red leopard daughter of Three Bars TB in the world. Her dam is the outstanding red leopard Ding Bob-Peavy mare, Black Pepper Queen — 1967 international grand champion mare.

"Queen" faithfully reproduces her leopard pattern when crossed with Thoroughbred stallions, and has a red leopard colt due to race in California this year. He is sired by See Forever TB by Kentucky Derby winner, Swaps. Queen had a few spot leopard colt, now in Kentucky, by Mighty Tim in 1975. This foal, Tim's Three Bars, won his class and was jr. grand champion at his first show.

With all the work involved in raising feed for their horses, improvements, etc., there is no time for riding (which Dave and Kim mistakenly thought raising horses was all about). But their greatest satisfaction in a moment of spare time, is to drive over to one of the pastures and watch their horses.

The brood mare bands are moved to their summer pastures several miles from

the ranch, where they graze from May to December. Each stallion runs with his band of foaling mares from May 1 to July 15. With the amount of money the Utkes have invested in them, the stallions are much too valuable for the risks of hand breeding.

With pasture breeding, everything is peaceful and tranquil, according to the Utkes. Regardless of how long a mare stays in heat, the stallion won't cover her until the end of her cycle. Dave and Kim have pasture bred with every stallion they have had, and not one stallion carries a blemish as a result.

Often an evening check on a pasture will give a clue to which mare will foal that night, as she will be off alone with the stallion like she is trying to receive some comfort. The following morning there will be a happy threesome. Mighty Tim, Prince David and Prince's Jim all seem to love the foals.

When the stallions are brought home in July, the Utke children, daughter Lori, age 5, and son Shannon, age 12, take care of feeding the stallions.

When the mares are brought home in December, they are turned out on 80 acres of corn planted exclusively for them. Pure, choice alfalfa hay is fed by team and sled once a day to supplement the corn. Minerals are fed free choice.

It makes Dave and Kim chuckle to read articles that say horses can winter on corn stocks (picked corn) only after livestock have cleaned up any spilled corn. What would be left then?

The Utkes have found it saves a lot of time, money, and work to have the mares pick, husk, and shell their own corn, rather than hire it combined or picked in the fall, and then turn around and spend all winter taking it right back out in the field to the mares. And to this day, the Utkes have never had a single mare founder on free choice corn.

The Utkes have never combined their grain, either. It is bundled, shocked, and brought to the threshing machine with teams of draft horses. So, in addition to the corn and alfalfa, the mares can bury themselves deep in the strawpile, hunting the small oats that went through the machine. And when the thermometer dips to 30° below zero and the windchill registers a minus 90°, the strawpiles get a lot of company.

The stallions, mares, and any fillies retained stay outdoors year round. The retained fillies run together with access to a heavily bedded open shed, and are on free choice corn, oats, and alfalfa their first winter. The colder it gets, the harder they play, the more they eat, and the more they grow.

No shots are given, and that, coupled with the fact none of the horses are ever inside, is no doubt a good reason why the Utkes have never had a sickness at their ranch. A good worming program is employed all year round.

All the bred mares foal in the pastures, which eliminates the foaling problems found in the barn. And since the pastures are several miles from home, the foals are often a few days old before they see people for the first

time. It is probably because the foals don't see people very often that their curiosity turns them into a very tame group of foals. By the end of the summer, there are very few foals that can't be haltered for the first time right out in the pasture.

Dave and Kim have no other income but from selling their foals, so except for any retained fillies, all the foals are sold every fall in hopes that they will be shown and promoted by their new owners.

Their operation allows them no time for showing horses themselves, but Dave and Kim are most content as active breeders of fine Appaloosas. And breeders of fine Appaloosas they really are. The highest compliments they have received on their breeding program have come from men like Carl Miles and Lane Hudson.

Any people who can start out with one mare, \$1,000, everything to buy, and with as much love for horses and determination as the Utkes have, deserve a lot of credit for getting where they are today. Nearly every dime of income is put right back into their operation in one form or another. No money is spent on entertainment or the likes — something a lot of people wouldn't be satisfied with.

Sheldon may not exactly be located "along the beaten path" for most people, but for those who can make a special trip there during the summer, it can be a rewarding experience. And who knows, the visitor might just find himself a champion.



Sheldak Ranch doesn't have to boast about the dispositions of its horses. Shannon, Lori, and the mares and foals are all the advertising Sheldak needs.