



CURLY HORSE COUNTRY

Your Curly Horse Resource

Unique Beauty, Unbeatable Trust



Introducing a few of the Legends from the Past

(ICHO has a tribute page with several other heros of the time)



Meeting Joe Mead

If you have met Joe Mead, you know he is a hard man to forget! His conviction & passion for breeding the best-possible-horse is unmistakable.



(by Denise Conroy, written in 2007) We've visited Joe several times since our first meeting back in 1997. Many of you know he will rarely let you escape with an empty trailer! If he can't convince you to buy after a thorough visit to his divided herds, he will charm you with his fascinating stories of curly history which surround many of his horses. Of course, when you mention a few colts that caught your eye, he is sure to point out that those just happened to be the ones he planned on keeping! But of course, every horse was always for sale and you always left feeling that you took with you a bit of history with each curly you purchased. I recall our many visits to Joe's fondly and with wonderful memories. We found it amazing that a man with such a large herd knew each horse like the back of his hand. Reciting pedigrees from memory is nothing for Joe. And he is so observant that at just weeks old, he has a good idea of just what kind of horse that young colt will become. Call it wisdom or experience but maybe it's just what great horse breeders do.

Joe Mead pictured with Tracy Conroy on one of our routine visits to North Dakota. (1999)

He is serious in his intent on breeding the best and his life proves that. And I'm not talking about focusing 'pretty' or 'popular color' or anything superficial. Joe's herd exemplifies strength, intelligence and endurance. Good looks always seems to go along with it though. You can't help but admire his goals.

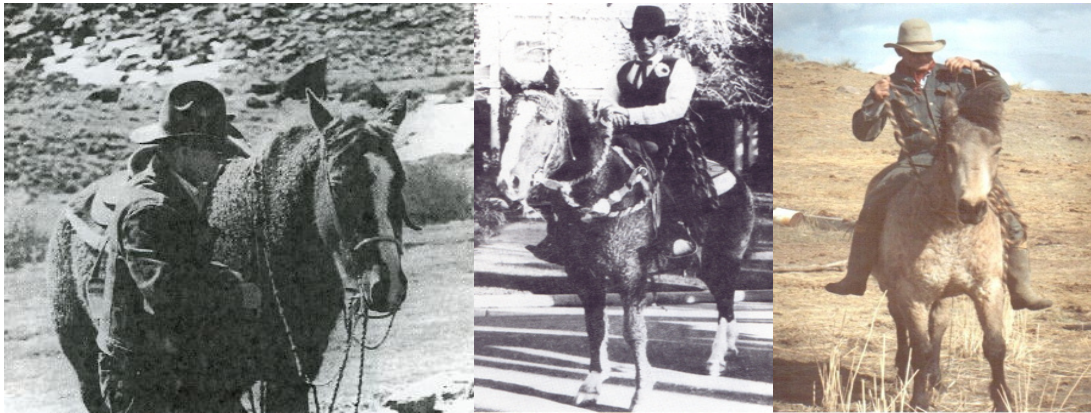
On our first visit to see Joe, our purpose was to buy a couple nice geldings. Of course, it's rare for Joe to have geldings but at the time, he was more than happy to geld one of his fine studs for you. His quietest stud was a dark bay stallion, named D&T's Rainmaker. He stood 15.2h at 3 years old and had bred more than 20 mares that season. He was 'halter broke & picket broke" Joe said. There was no denying he was gorgeous and extremely gentle. Big Bucks was there too, but Rainmaker caught my eye. We decided to buy him. But after spending time with Joe, my husband wasn't convinced that we were done buying. He thought, well, with a nice stud; why not buy a couple fillies? I was stunned. Heck, I planned on gelding Rainmaker, not keeping him intact! Well, long story short, we also brought home 3 curly fillies, Mentasta, Sunny and JC's Jubilee....and so began our Curly breeding program. To say I wasn't thrilled was an understatement. I actually cried going home. I did not want to get into breeding; I just wanted a nice quiet gelding to ride with my daughter. My husband assured me that if Rainmaker was not quiet enough for me to ride then we would geld him. So we sent Rainmaker to the trainers immediately upon coming home and he was so docile and gentle, even the trainer advised us not to geld him. Everyone that saw him had to check to be convinced he really was a stud. I rode him for 2 years as a stallion and never felt safer on a horse and I was very much a beginner rider. He was the epitome of what a curly horse is and I was proud to be sitting on his back.



*D & T's Rainmaker, left and * Joe's Zigatchees Parader - D, right - both are deceased.

Even though Joe is no longer with us, we would like to thank Joe for the many wonderful memories our family had while visiting (our kids still remember the many different kinds of animals there, like peacocks, pigs, cows, chickens and ducks) and for the many awesome curls he entrusted to us.

Remembering Benny Damele



Benny Damele with his curly, Shoshone D on the Dry Creek Ranch
Photograph from Jay Hensley's collection

BERNARD GLENN DAMELE, born April 24, 1930, the second son of Peter & Loraine Glenn Damele. "Benny" grew up in Lander County, Nevada where his folks ranched. He attended high school where he played basketball; then attended the University of Nevada, Reno where he was on the boxing team and joined the Sigma Nu Fraternity. He later served with the Nevada National Guard for a number of years and with the U.S. Army in Korea. As a member of the Pony Express club of Nevada, Benny rode on of his Curlies in the Centennial Re-Ride of the Pony Express Trail in 1960. He was invited to the Pasadena rose Parade in 1984, an honor of which he was very proud. Too, he was the first vice President of ABC when it was organized at Ely in 1971. Benny also drove his own team of horses for the White Pine Historical Society's antique stagecoach in Ely's Centennial Parade, August 1987, fulfilling a life-long dream to drive a stagecoach. Benny's hobbies included gun collecting, rope-making, leather work, rebuilding old wagons and other horse-drawn equipment, and his beloved Curly horses. Although a confirmed bachelor he loved to dance, especially the old-time dances, enjoyed cowboy get-togethers and had a dry wit that could keep folks laughing for hours. Having always lived in the country, Benny had a real love for the land and it's animals, and was one of the finest horsemen one could find. His animals all loved him too and he seemed happiest when surrounded by them, horses, mules, donkeys, calves, chickens, dogs, cats and most had the run of the ranch and the big rock house at Dry Creek. The Curly Horse world was deeply grieved over the loss of Benny on November 12, 1991, after a lengthy illness. He was the last of the Damele family, breeders of Curly horses since 1952, his folks and older brother, Peter J, having preceded him in death. We owe many thanks for the dedication of such fine Curly Breeders.

Sunny Martin's First Curly Horse Written by: Marni Malet



Sunny on Pello Cheno, ABC 18



Sunny Martin
Photo courtesy of Marni Malet

This article was written and sent in by Marni Malet and approved for printing on Curly Horse Country.

I cursed the Nevada heat that only hours before I had found so enjoyable. I was 900 miles from home and sitting along side the road in my broken down pick-up truck. McGill, Nevada-July 1997. My husband and I had come down to pick up a horse I had purchased the week before, my first curly. At that time we were raising Thoroughbreds for racing. My husband wasn't too happy when he found out a "non-Thoroughbred was moving in with us. He was even less happy when I told him he had to drive from Washington to Nevada to pick it up. Now, with the water pump fried, our relationship was getting VERY fragile.

I didn't know anyone in the area but had met a woman name Sunny Martin the previous week during the ABCR convention. I gave her a call - she was, after all, a Curly person! I only hoped that she would remember me. Well, I don't know if she remembered me or not but in no time at all she came roaring up in her old pick-up truck, assessed the situation, stuffed us into her truck and we were off to find a mechanic, no easy task on a Sunday. Once we had the truck in a garage, she took us back to her house and served up a 15-course lunch. She even offered us her guests room if we needed to stay over! Cooling off in Sunny's kitchen, I couldn't help but notice all the horse pictures on the wall. I asked about them and Sunny just lit up like the sunshine she must have been named for. It didn't take much coaxing and the stories started to flood the room. She brought out an old picture album to use as a visual aid and so began one of the most enjoyable afternoons of my life. The story that seemed to be her favorite involved the purchase of her first Curly horse. It was back in 1968. She and her husband Sarge were living in the same location where she is now but they had about 23 acres and owned 15 or 20 horses. They had gone into Ely to have dinner at the Nevada Club. As was their tradition, they stepped into the lounge first to have a drink. They ran into another rancher by the name of Gailin Manzonie who had a ranch about 50 miles away on Currant Creek. He had a lot of horses and was into roping and racing. He told Sunny that he and his friend, Stump Halstead, had finally managed to capture the bay stallion that they had been chasing for two years. They were chasing him in the old pick-up truck and managed to get close enough to get a rope around him. They choked him down, tied him up and then went back to the ranch to get a bigger truck. They hauled him home where they tied him in the barn. Gailin said the next morning he went out to check on him and the horse was standing there like he'd been Raised in the barn. He went on to tell Sunny that he was the cutest horse he'd ever seen- "had curls from his nose to his toes." "Well," Sunny told me, "A light just went off in my head and I knew I had to have that horse." Sunny bought him that very night-sight unseen. Her husband, Sarge thought she was nuts but never denied Sunny a single horse she never wanted. The next morning they got up and headed for Manzonie's ranch. Something told her that she should go back and get her saddle. When she told Sarge to go back, he was a little upset and argued that she wasn't going to be riding that wild horse. Well, they went back for the saddle.

When they arrived at Manzonie's they found the little bay stud standing in a corner of the cow pen. He had a halter on. Gailin took a rope in. The horse was just quietly watching them. The stud gingerly walked up to them and sniffed Sunny all over. Then he looked at Sunny like "wannabe my friend?" Gailin put a rope on the horse and led him all around. Sunny took the rope and the stud followed HER all around. Sunny was amazed. She told Sarge to go gather saddle out of the truck. Neither Sarge nor Gailin were happy about that idea because Sunny had already undergone three back operations. Sunny told them "Look at his eyes. They're the sweetest, softest eyes. He'd never hurt me." It was obvious that Sunny wasn't going to be talked out of this so Gailin insisted that he, at least, be allowed to saddle the horse. The horse stood there without problem. Gailin led him around with the saddle on- no problem. He stopped and cinched it up tight- no problem. Sunny mounted with nothing but a halter and lead rope for control. The horses just stood there. It took about five minutes to get him to take a step. When she pulled the rope to make him stop "he almost set his tail in the ground." Sunny was thrilled and took her little black Curly stud home. Sunny named that little horse CURLY-Q. She paid \$200 for him, which in 1968 was considered pretty high. She said he was worth every penny of it and described him as "easy riding and just as sweet as could be." Sunny used him for trail riding and bred many of her mares to him. She never bred outside mares because people at that time, weren't interested in Curlies. They all wanted cutting horse.

CURLY-Q was stabled in a private corral with a little loafing shed in one corner. When Sunny would bring a mare to him, he would anxiously trot up to the fence to meet them. All she has to do was tell him "Go get in your corner." He would turn around and retreat to the back corner until she had safely released the mare inside his corral. After the breeding she would say "Go get in your corner" and off he went. That was the end of it! CURLY-Q is registered as the number three (#3) horse in the ABCR studbooks. The first few pages are full of Curly-Q offspring. He has the distinction of being the first stud to move from temporary to permanent status within the registry. Probably the most famous of his offspring is Q-Card who, in the hands of Corine Mead, won many International Sidesaddle Championships and was placed in the International Sidesaddle Horse Hall of Fame. I asked Sunny what became of Curly-Q and the question was met with a long silence. "He was shot." She finally said. "About six years ago after I got him, someone drove by on the highway and shot him." A truly sad ending for such an amazing horse- may his lineage carry on.

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