

Acorn Trees in My Piece of Heaven

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by Sharleen Shields

My story starts out just like every other little girl that dreams of horses. I read every book on the subject that I could get my hands on - including, every single copy of The Black Stallion books. I watched every episode of every show on television that had a horse in it. If there was a horse in a movie...I saw the movie. Not surprisingly, I could tell you more about the horses in the old Western movies than I could about any of the characters or the plot.

During my entire childhood years, I would do what ever needed to be done...cleaning, grooming, stall cleaning - you name it, just to be around them. A close friend of the family, Cheryl, owned a horse and exercised horses for other people. We shared a love for horses and she encouraged my obsession daily. She gave me all her old horse figurines, horse books, magazines and invited me over to groom and ride. I was the luckiest girl ever!

During the summer break from school, my parents sent me to a church camp in the Palomar Mountains. As you may have guessed, I was always at the stables offering to help and getting to know everyone that took care of the horses. I knew each and every horse by name and enjoyed learning their individual personalities. I loved just being near them and taking in all they had to offer my life. I was often in trouble for missing camp events, but it was always worth it.

The trail rides at camp were my piece of heaven. To earn the extra money necessary to sign up for the rides, I would do extra chores at home and did odd-jobs like ironing, weeding and babysitting (kids and animals) for our neighbors. The work came easy as I dreamed of riding horses among the oak and pine trees. Of course, at the time, I really didn't know the name of the oak trees. I just knew that there were acorns everywhere, so they were acorn trees to me.

Since there were a limited number of horses and days to ride, they budgeted me only two rides per week. However, after everyone who wanted to ride that day had signed up, they would allow me to add my name for more rides! Over the years, the staff at the camp trusted me to be the 'second' person to help out with the horses and other kids during trail rides. There wasn't a horse I didn't know, or wouldn't ride - even if they spooked other people. I would gladly trade the person for the horse I was riding, so everyone would enjoy their time. I couldn't believe there was anything better than going for a trail ride among the acorn trees!

During the years that followed my wonderful childhood summers, I worked on my schooling and my career, but never lost sight of my goal to own a horse some day. I knew that horses would not come cheap and I needed a good job to support

one. The places I chose to live were close to where people owned horses - all in the Southern California area. It took me a few years to be able to afford just the horse property, but I finally moved to Norco, California.

My first house was on a very small quarter-acre, which was situated across from a large five-acre riding academy. At the time, I was pregnant with my only son, Dylan. I would sit out on the porch, for hours, just watching the horses and waiting for the birth of my son. How I dreamed of him sharing my love of horses.

Shortly after my son was born, I realized that - although it was zoned for it, a quarter-acre is not nearly enough room for one horse - let alone, for two. Consequently, within a two year period, we had moved to a much larger property in Norco that was set up to accommodate horses. We made many friends that also shared a love of horses.

Thirsty for knowledge and willing to do, learn and succeed...I hosted my friend's horses (Special thanks to Chris Stone and Tracy Stone-It really is all their fault I have Morgans! I can't thank them enough!) at my house, which started the next chapter in our lives. It was my first encounter with the wonderful world of the Morgan horse! Little did I know they had already picked me.....

I spent countless hours with friends and neighbors discussing the various breeds and why they picked their horses. Then I started researching the different breeds available, their traits, strengths, weaknesses, history and purpose. I attended shows, demonstrations and workshops. I bought a slew of books and magazines to soak up all the knowledge I could. The more I found out about Morgan's...the more they intrigued me. Not to mention, the ones in my back yard already stole my heart.

As I tried to focus ahead on making the right breed decision, my head kept being twisted around to the same spot. I had spent the time getting to know my neighbors and their horses, which were Arabian, Quarter, Standard and Paints. None of them impressed me more than these wonderful Morgan's standing right in front of me. The more time I spent with them...the more evident it was to me how truly special they are and this is a breed like no other!

One of the three Morgan's that was being hosted at my house was up for sale and I quickly bought her for my very own. Serena (SSM Mountain Song) and I developed a special bond and she will always be my first love. We have been on many trail rides since then, and of course, my favorite are the rides among the acorn trees - which I now know, are beautiful old growth oak trees.

During this time, my son Dylan was constantly outside with me. Our beloved Morgan's have a special bond with him - like I've never seen before. They are patient, kind and careful with Dylan. My own measure of how wonderful our Morgan's are concerns them and three year old Dylan. Dylan was trying to help me take the horses to the arena for some exercise, when he opened the gate to one of the stalls Bear (SSM C Jessica Ash) just stood there - without moving, and waited for me. Believe me there had been other times when the gate was slightly open just enough for her to dart out past me (which she occasionally did to get into the hay) but with Dylan it was different and still is to this day. Bear has taught Dylan how to handle and ride with the utmost of care and patience, protecting him with her every move.

Another year passed while I was taking the necessary steps to improve my horse knowledge through workshops and

training (the more I know, the more I know I don't know..). I want to be worthy of these beautiful Morgan's with whom God has entrusted to me - and, who found their way into my heart and life. I jumped at the chance to purchase Stormy (SSM Storm Singer) - a Morgan that loves to go! I had also bonded very closely with him. He is willing, loving and a great riding horse that keeps up with any of the other horse around here - even those bigger and gaited horses. My Morgan's are awesome!

By now, you may have figured out that I am addicted. Deciding that I wanted to breed Serena (the world needs more Morgan horses), I checked out several stallions that were being advertised. None quite measured up to what I had hoped for, so I knew that the time just wasn't right.

Then...'out of the blue' (this was literally the subject on the email from my friend, Laura Algranti), I get an email asking if I would be interested in breeding Serena to a wonderful stallion named, Canyon of Quietude...

A life-altering event isn't always obvious. However, this new encounter would change my life forever.

Into my life waltz's the now famous Wendy LeGate of Old Growth Oak Morgan Horses.

It was a very, very rainy and wet winter in Hollister and the first day I went to visit Wendy it had been pouring down rain for days and the ground was saturated. I found out that Canyon of Quietude had recently foundered and the vet only gave him a slight chance at best to live!!! Thankfully, Wendy did not give up on him. She saw the spark in his eye and the will to live. By the time I met Canyon, the worst was over and he was on his way to recovery--thanks to the countless hours and bandages that Wendy changed and tended to many times a day for many weeks--and yes, even in the pouring down rain she did not let this fantastic guy down. He had such an awesome disposition and love in his eye--not to mention that he was stunning even with his feet bandaged! I had finally found the stallion that would be perfect for Serena!

I spent about six hours with Wendy, looking at pictures, discussing pedigrees, conformation and everything else we could think of and I left with my head swimming and an unquenchable thirst for more Morgan knowledge.

Upon my return home I dove off the deep end into the world of Foundation Morgan Horses. The next few years were a mission with Wendy's tremendous help, to find and acquire all the beautiful and wonderful horses that I have today. Each of them special and unique, offering solid foundation Morgan lines and the temperament to match.

So there you have it, my journey to get here and this website will share my path with you from here on out. I'm honored to be a part of the world of Foundation Morgan Horses and humbly offer to share these fabulous horses with you.

Thanks for visiting, I hope to meet you soon!!

