

# The Heart of a Legend

*Bar Mesa's legendary impact shines through generations.*

**By Kaycie Timm**



COURTESY OF PCQHA

SIRING 265 FOALS THAT EARNED 2,823.5 AQHA POINTS, 13 AQHA Superiors, three world championships and \$11,970 from AQHA world shows alone is impressive, especially for a stallion who never spent any time in the show pen.

But in the case of one legendary sire, the show records – however remarkable – fail to tell the heart of the story.

Offspring of Bar Mesa, a 1966 roan stallion by Buzz Bar and out of Robin's Mame by Robin Reed, performed exceptionally in the AQHA arena. However, some of his most successful progeny made their mark in open shows and on the trails,

teaching children to ride and caring for humans of all ages.

"They were the epitome of the American Quarter Horse – pretty, sound and trainable, and kind," says AQHA Professional Horsewoman and AQHA Past President Sandy Arledge, owner of Bar Mesa from 1975 until his death.

According to Sandy, Bar Mesa's get always surpassed their dams in conformation, performance and, most importantly, in demeanor. Not only did they place well in the show pen, his offspring became known as dependable, safe mounts for everyone from young to elderly riders.

"They were the calmest, most reliable horses I've had," says Ann Bersi of Las Vegas, who owned three horses by Bar Mesa.

For many riders in their formative years as equestrians, Bar Mesa's offspring offered a perfect place to start in addition to the level of performance necessary to move up in the ranks. Many such horses retired from successful show careers to a life of leisure as faithful companions in open shows, rodeos, lesson barns and 4-H programs. Whatever the task, Bar Mesa babies faced their jobs with a willing conduct, making them a joy to ride and watch.

"You've got to have the good-minded, good, kind soldiers who will go out there and just do their work with a smile on their muzzle," Sandy says.

Bar Mesa also demonstrated those same qualities that won him favor as a sire every day on Sandy's ranch in Del Mar, California. Unlike stallions that display disruptive or even dangerous behavior, Bar Mesa graciously accepted the affection of his admirers and caretakers throughout his life.

"He was all business in the breeding shed," Sandy recalls. "But he was a gentleman everywhere else."

In 1968, breeder Carol Heir sent Bar Mesa to Los Alamitos Race Course to run, where Jerry Vawter first caught a glimpse of the horse's potential. Jerry called Elmo Dunn, who was in the market for a breeding stallion, and by 1970, Bar Mesa had a new owner. The following year, Sandy stumbled upon a business card advertising him at stud.

"I went up to look at him and was quite taken with him," Sandy recalls.

When Elmo suffered a brain hemorrhage several years later, he offered Sandy, who had expressed her interest in the stallion, the first right to purchase Bar Mesa. Without a second thought, Sandy, then a second-year student at the University of San Diego School of Law, pooled her finances, took out a loan and brought Bar Mesa home.

At the time, Bar Mesa had sired 17 Quarter Horses, none of which had competed on the AQHA circuit. Within her first year owning the stallion, Sandy bred him to 40 mares, all with only the minimal advertising her limited budget allowed.

"I was a rookie at this whole breeding stuff," Sandy says. "If anybody else had owned him, he would be a lot bigger name than he is."

But Bar Mesa quickly took Sandy from inexperienced novice to California's leading breeder of performance horses, launching her into a lifelong relationship with AQHA.

"He absolutely changed my life," Sandy says. "If I hadn't bought him and gone on and made some degree of success with him, I probably would be stuck in a law firm somewhere."

Patty Ambrose, AQHA member and a longtime friend of Sandy, also credits Bar Mesa for spurring Sandy to success in the industry.

"Sandy was going to be an attorney, and the horse said, 'Oh no, I'm going to make you into a very successful horse breeder instead,'" Patty says with a laugh.

Not only did Bar Mesa aid in developing Sandy's success as a horsewoman, he brought her personal pleasure as well. Although she never showed him on the AQHA circuit, Sandy rode her stallion across the hills around her ranch. His gentle demeanor allowed Sandy to share him with her visitors – and Bar Mesa soaked up all the praise he received.

"I remember seeing him at the ranch," Patty recalls. "He was magnificent."

Although Bar Mesa died in 1994, his legendary presence is sustained through his offspring to this day.

"You tell by his progeny what kind of stallion he was, and what he was responsible for over all those years," Ann says.

Mesa Keepsake, a 1978 chestnut mare by Bar Mesa, won two AQHA world championships for owner Jean Carnes. In 1982, Jean found 4-year-old "Cookie" while searching for a horse to take her from competing as a youth to the amateur division.

"I fell in love with her the moment I saw her," Jean recalls.

The pair went on to compete in various classes, including horsemanship and hunt seat equitation, which they won at the AQHA World show in 1984.

"She was amazing," Jean says. "I could do anything with her. She was just the sweetest, kindest thing."

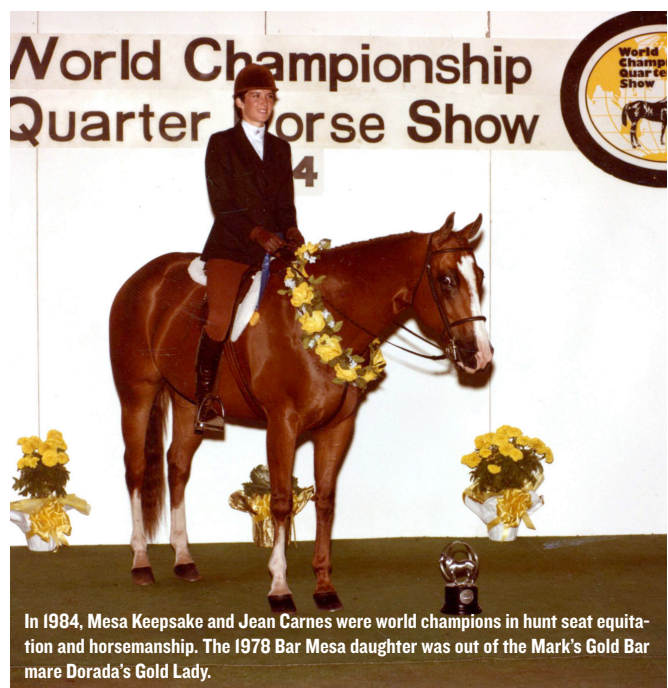
Bar Mesa's admirable qualities sustained through more than one generation of his offspring, too. Linda Gluckman, who owned Rockin Out In Style, a 2006 sorrel gelding by Going Out In Style, a son of Bar Mesa, can attest to the strong bloodlines that gave "Rocky" his willing demeanor. Rocky has lived up to his heritage, qualifying with Linda for the 2015 World Show in hunt seat equitation and Level 2/3 trail.

"He just really epitomized the versatility of the Quarter Horse breed," Linda describes. "He was kind of a linebacker that was willing to go ballet dance with me."

And the list goes on and on. Bar Mesa's offspring maintain his legacy in disciplines ranging from western to hunt seat to leisure trail riding and everything in between. While his progeny's impressive show record more than qualifies Bar Mesa as an outstanding sire, his ability to produce horses with big hearts and a kind demeanor makes him truly legendary.

"That's where he made his mark," Sandy says. "Those are the ones that make the American Quarter Horse great. That's what it's all about." ■

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In 1984, Mesa Keepsake and Jean Carnes were world champions in hunt seat equitation and horsemanship. The 1978 Bar Mesa daughter was out of the Mark's Gold Bar mare Dorada's Gold Lady.