

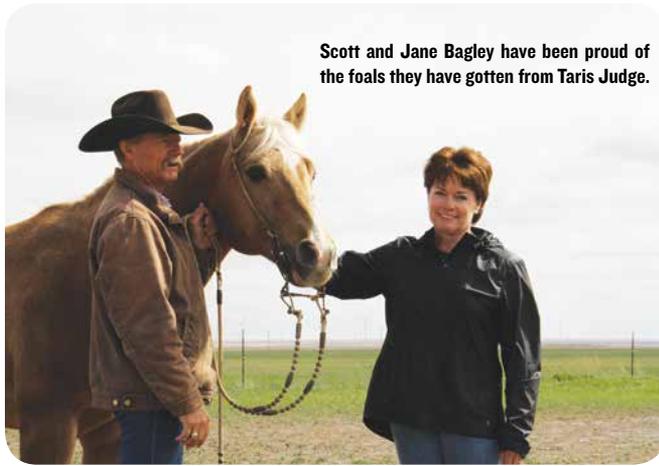
BORN *on the* CAPROCK

*From a small ranch near a small town, Jane and Scott Bagley
are raising high-quality performance horses.*

By Larri Jo Starkey

CHOOSING TO RAISE HORSES ON THE TEXAS CAPROCK MEANS choosing a life of faith – faith that it will rain, faith that the foal crop will be good and faith that even if life is hard one day, it will be better the next.

For Jane and Scott Bagley – one on the Caprock by birth and one by choice – that lifestyle is a bone-deep part of who they are. They have embraced that life of faith and are raising American Quarter Horses to fit the kind of terrain that outsiders might call bleak but that natives consider golden.



Scott and Jane Bagley have been proud of the foals they have gotten from Taris Judge.



Tell Bagley likes to help gentle the foals, many of them palomino like their sire.

The Judge

THE BAGLEYS STARTED WITH A GOLDEN STALLION, THE 1993 palomino Taris Judge.

"I traded for him with a guy from Ruidoso, (New Mexico)," Scott says. "I had an old stud, and I was needing another one, and he brought 'The Judge' and I didn't want (the horse) because he was yellow."

After three days of dickering, Scott went home with the big yellow yearling and started training him.

"I wasn't that great an exhibitor," Scott says. "About that time, Dick Pieper and I got to be good friends and Dick helped me tremendously. Dick's such a great horseman.

"So I showed The Judge, and he covered up a lot of my mistakes. If I had had a better exhibitor with deeper pockets, he'd have been seen as a great horse. But he's been a great horse for us."

The son of Doc Tari is out of Bow Cross by the Otoe stallion Tee Cross and was bred by American Quarter Horse Hall of Famer and AQHA Past President Bob Norris of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In 2001, Taris Judge was the Palomino Horse Breeders of America world champion in senior working cow horse and reserve world champion in senior reining. He won the reining futurity at the Colorado State Fair in 1997.

When AQHA began the Versatility Ranch Horse competitions, Scott and The Judge jumped into the mix, and at the end of 2002, Taris Judge was the high-point Versatility Ranch Horse stallion. He earned \$3,621 through the National Reining Horse Association, and then it was time to settle down to his real job: siring ranch colts for Scott, Jane and their son, Tell, to ride.

The Rafter 9

THE BAGLEYS' AQHA RANCHING HERITAGE BREEDER OPERATION IS a few miles north of Dimmitt, Texas, population 4,500.

When Jane married Scott, she married into a Caprock lifestyle, where the wind blows most days with nothing to stop it but a thin electric fence.

"I was living in Springfield, Missouri," she says. "Scott came out and said, 'I think we need to get married.' I said, 'You live in the middle of nowhere.' He said, 'I don't know what you're griping about. It's only 500 miles to Albuquerque.'

"I said, 'I get a headache when the wind blows.'

"He said, 'It doesn't blow that much. People exaggerate.' I remind him of that comment now and then."

Bagley Performance Horses might be hundreds of miles

from most traditional show venues, but that's OK, because most days, what the Bagleys need is not a good show horse, but a good ranch horse.

On the Caprock, a part of the Texas Panhandle where the average rainfall is 24 inches a year and wasting water is considered a misdemeanor, the ground gets harder and denser as it parches through the summer. Like most area ranchers, in the winter, the Bagleys turn yearlings out on wheat pasture, where wheat stalks and furrowed rows create stumbling points for horses that aren't sure-footed enough.

Good legs, good feet and good bone are essential to Caprock ranchers, so those are the qualities Scott and Jane breed for, along with good minds.

They don't put the Rafter 9 brand on anything without those attributes, which they think Taris Judge also exhibits.

"Tell was the last one who rode him, about five years ago," Scott says. "He's good minded and he's good boned and good legged. He's just a great horse."

Two Non-Pros and a Youth

ALTHOUGH JANE IS A JUDGE IN SEVERAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND SHE and Scott do all their own training, neither one is a professional trainer. There's not a riding arena anywhere on their property.

What they do have is miles and miles of pasture with only the occasional ring-necked pheasant flying up to startle a horse. To teach a lead change, Jane takes her colts out to a section of land where some cattle might be grazing and lopes along in a straight line, eventually asking for the change. If the change happens, that's great. If it doesn't, that's fine, too. After a mile or so, she can circle back the other direction and try again.

"It's a different philosophy than a trainer would use," Jane says. "My philosophy is that I'm going to get them to understand that cue and change leads with no pressure mentally. Then I can get them collected later on after they understand the cue."

When Jane is teaching that lead change, she's probably on a mare.

"We try to sell all of our geldings, because Jane and I think we always need to prove our broodmares," Scott says. "We try to keep (Judge daughters) back and breed them to some horses that we feel like will cross good."

The ranch is a working operation first, and that includes 10-year-old Tell, a coming fifth-grader who spends his summers working with his dad and sometimes tries to instruct his mother on best practices for driving cattle.



You can watch video of the Bagleys working cattle in the digital version of the *Journal*, free to subscribers.



Miles of wheat pasture give the Bagleys room to work their horses without mental pressure. If the fillies make a mistake, Scott and Jane can take another mile to fix it.

“That didn’t go well for him,” Jane says with a laugh.

But when it’s time to go show, the whole family climbs aboard.

They also like to put earnings on the mares’ records through the National Reined Cow Horse and National Reining Horse associations, Jane and Scott say from their sun-filled living room with its comfortable earth-toned furniture and framed western art.

“The first time Jane showed in boxing was in Castle Rock, Colorado,” Scott says, as he leans back into the cushions of his easy chair.

“She was nervous,” he continues, not even sneaking a peek at Jane as he tells this story about her. “I entered her in the class, and she didn’t know it. I said, ‘You’ll be OK in the reining and then just go box a cow.’”

“That’s the coaching I got,” Jane interjects. “Stop straight and go to the head.”

Scott continues as if she hadn’t interrupted.

“(In the boxing), Jane goes to stop and needs her horse to go the other way, so she reaches up and uses two hands to correct him,” he says.

“The trainer in me came out,” Jane says. “I just did it, I didn’t even think.”

“The judge didn’t see it,” Scott says, “and she ended up winning \$400. Then she says, ‘Are you going to enter me tomorrow?’”

They both laugh.

“I don’t mind getting beat,” Scott says, returning to the topic of showing horses he has bred. “I hate to lose, but if my horse works good, I’m OK that day. I’ve got a bigger goal than just that one show.”

When they show, they’re looking to see improvement, Jane says.

“We don’t have \$100,000 on any horses here,” Jane says. “But a horse that has won \$5,000 for us is worth \$300,000 in earnings to the normal Joe, because we did that ourselves,

\$400 at a time, and we’re proud of that.”

“And we probably bred that horse to get that \$400,” Scott adds. “We collected the stallion and bred the mare, and knew her mama and maybe her grandma. As a horseman, you take pride in that.”

Using and Competition

FROM THE FIRST, THE AQHA RANCHING HERITAGE BREEDER program fit Scott and Jane and the way they ride their horses.

“We’re in that in-between group,” Jane says. “We go show, but we use them.”

Before Jane takes a horse to a horse show, Scott might have ridden that horse in wheat fields for two days straight, working cattle and pushing the horse to learn as much as he needs to.

“Yesterday, he took a 3-year-old that is kind of behind in his training and came back home and said, ‘I heeled one on him,’” Jane says. “You never know what he might need a horse to do.”

Those challenging situations make the horse-show pen less exciting for a young horse.

“When we got married, Scott had a 2-year-old Judge filly,” Jane says. “It was the first 2-year-old crop, and I picked one out and showed her. She was awesome. She’s 16 now and out in the broodmare band. I’d say to him, ‘Would you just take her today? I need to go to a reining this weekend.’”

“He’d take her and use her for two days, and when I went to the horse show, she was ready to go. No silliness left. She wouldn’t look around, she’d just go do her job. It’s been a good fit for us. We just take them and use them. I think they enjoy it.”

When Scott rode The Judge in ranch horse competition, other competitors said the horse looked too much like a show horse. When he rode the stallion in reining competition, folks told the Bagleys that The Judge looked like a ranch horse.

“We were before our time,” Jane says.

Ranching Heritage Challenges fit them and their horses, so



Scott Bagley rides his home-bred gelding Pinon Patron in the first AQHA Ranching Heritage Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas. The 2006 gelding is now owned by Skee Burkes of Henrietta, Texas.

Scott saddled up for the first one in Fort Worth, Texas, on a promising young gelding named Pinon Patron by The Judge and out of Jane's favorite reining mare, Pines Pocita.

"I got chewed out that day," Scott remembers.

"We have different personalities," Jane says politely. "I'm a planner. I like to be focused in the warm-up pen. I had done most of the dry work on this gelding and taught him to change leads, and I told Scott, 'You need to warm him up.'

"(Later), I look across the pen, and he's over there talking to Chance O'Neal, and he's not even thinking about his pattern. I had mentioned this to him, once or twice before, nicely, I'm sure."

On that particular January day, Scott, relaxed from chatting with his friends, went into the pen and spun too many times in the dry work, earning himself a zero, which put some pressure on the marital relationship.

"We didn't even spend the night," he says with a laugh. "We ended up loading up and coming home."

"He'd have won if he hadn't had that zero on the dry work, because his fence work was awesome," Jane laments.

The experience didn't sour them on the challenges, where they like the competition and the chance to socialize with people who have similar outlooks on stewardship of their horses.

"My dad was a cow guy," Scott says. "One of the things he always told me is if you buy a horse or you raise one, you better take care of it, because you might have to own him the rest of his life. Ranching Heritage Breeders are (like us in) thinking that they might have to own a horse for a long time. (Performance futurities) don't work for us. We've had some horses there, and if you stub your toe one time, your horse is done. And then you have a pasture ornament. Well, I'm a cattle feeder, and I know the cost of rations. And it doesn't pay to have a pasture ornament."

One-Fifth

IN 2014, JANE AND SCOTT TALKED LONG AND HARD ABOUT A difficult decision: whether to donate one-fifth of their year's foal crop to the AQHA Young Horse Development Program.

"We only had five colts that year," Jane says. "We discussed it and I said, 'You know, let's give one.' He might never get shown, but he might, and he might make that kid a great horse."

Then they had to make the decision of which one to donate.

"We had two bred by outside horses and three by The Judge, and we thought we needed to give one by our horse," Jane says. "We had one out of a maiden mare, so we haven't tried her and didn't know what that was going to be like. Another one, we knew what it was going to be like, but it was a filly. Then we had a gelding that's a full brother to Pinon Patron."

It would be natural to think that the brother of that special gelding – the one Scott showed at the first AQHA Ranching Heritage Challenge, the one with NRCHA and NRHA earnings – would go on to be pretty special himself with Scott or Jane aboard.

But the Bagleys donated that weanling and haven't regretted sending one-fifth of their year's work from the Caprock to the Big Bend, where recipient Trevor Klein lives in Marfa, Texas.

"We didn't get to meet Trevor, but his mom and dad are salt-of-the-earth people who haven't shown and are kind of excited about it," Jane says. "They have absolutely no experi-

YOUTH BENEFACTORS

These AQHA Ranching Heritage Breeders participated in the 2014-15 AQHA Young Horse Development Program:

- Clint Casterline of Wolf Point, Montana
- Flat Creek Ranch (Bert Brackett) of Rogerson, Idaho
- Jim and Joni Hunt (Open Box Rafter Ranch) of Faith, South Dakota
- Jack and Lois Clark (Clark Farms) of Hustontown, Pennsylvania
- Scott and Jane Bagley (Bagley Performance Horses) of Dimmitt, Texas
- KT Ranch (Donald and Pamela Pierson, Toni Meacham and Kellie Pearson-Geddes) of Connell, Washington
- Mark Freeman (Freeman Family Ranch) of Texhoma, Oklahoma
- Paxton Ramsey (Seven L Ranch) of Dever, Texas
- Stan and Nancy Weaver (Weaver Quarter Horses) of Big Sandy, Montana
- Wagon Wheel Ranch (Elaine Gist) of Lometa, Texas
- Sunup Ranch (Greg Booth, Vickie and Barbara Kettlewell) of Brainerd, Minnesota
- Raymond Sutton Ranch (Georgia and Dr. Heather Sutton) of Gettysburg, South Dakota
- Madonna Inn Quarter Horses (Rowly and Cathie Twisselman) of Santa Margarita, California
- Yavapai Ranch of Seligman, Arizona
- Sid Miller (Sid Miller Ranch) of Stephenville, Texas

For more information on the Ranching Heritage program, including Ranching Heritage Breeders, visit www.aqha.com/ranching.

ence, but they seem like pretty good horsemen. That's where our industry needs to step up and help folks like that take the next step."

Scott and Jane say they might pass the ranch along to Tell, but he's currently interested in a robotics career, so maybe not. They're already looking forward to next year's foal crop and the challenges of making a living on the Caprock.

"We're just small breeders who are in it to make a good horse, and I think that's our legacy," Jane says. "When Scott dies, that's probably what they'll say in his eulogy: He bred good horses." 🐾

Larri Jo Starkey is an editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal. To comment, write to lstarkey@aqha.org.

RANCHING HERITAGE BREEDER SALES

August

15-16

Hetletveld Quarter Horse Production Sale
Bismarck, North Dakota
www.hqhranch.com

21

Fulton Performance Horses
Valentine, Nebraska
www.fultonranch.com

21

Lazy JS Ranch Sale
Bowman, North Dakota
www.lazyjsranch.com

29

Nebraska Quarter Horse Classic
Ogallala, Nebraska

30

Ranchers Quarter Horse Breeders Association Sale
Belle Fourche, South Dakota
www.rqhba.com

September

5

40th Annual Lopez, Meyer & Lauing Quarter
Horse Production Sale
Faith Livestock, Faith South Dakota
www.lauingmillironranch.com

11-12

Pitzer Ranch Fall Sale
Ericson, Nebraska
www.pitzerranch.net

12

Open Box Rafter Ranch
Rapid City, South Dakota
www.rafterranch.com

12

SanBar Ranch AQHA Annual Production Sale
ConToy Arena
Mount Pleasant, Utah
www.sanbarranch.net

12

Zollinger Ranch Sale
Oakley, Idaho
www.zollingerquarterhorseranch.com

12

Wagon Wheel Ranch Horse Sale
Lometa, Texas
www.wagonwheelranch.com

14

Raymond Sutton Quarter Horse 64th Annual Production Sale
Gettysburg, South Dakota
www.raymondsutton.net

19

45th Annual Froelich Legacy Quarter Horses
Selfridge, North Dakota
www.froelichranch.com

19

Weaver Quarter Horses Sale
Great Falls, Montana
www.weaverhorses.com

26

Ozark Foundation Breeders Association
15th Annual Sale
Mountain Home, Arkansas
www.ofbahorsesale.com

October

9-10

Return to the Remuda Sale
Guthrie, Texas
www.6666ranch.com

10

Center Ranch
Centerville, Texas
www.centerranch.com

10-11

Bar U Ranch foals at the Farmers & Ranchers Fall Sale
Salina, Kansas
www.farmersandrancherslivestock.com

If you're an AQHA Ranching Heritage Breeder, let us know your sale date and location so we can publicize it in the *Journal*. Send those sale dates to Larri Jo Starkey at lstarkey@aqha.org. If you're not an AQHA Ranching Heritage Breeder but you'd like to compete in AQHA Ranching Heritage Challenges, a breeder's sale is the best place to get a colt that can carry you to your share of the money that's available through the challenges.