



Living the DREAM

by Diane McLaughlin

areas where we like to go. The peace and quiet is unbelievable and the wildlife abounds. Visitors include elk, deer, birds, squirrels, and yes, we have had a couple encounters with bears ... fortunately with great outcomes for us.

My husband Lorne and I were born and raised in rural Alberta. Lorne started riding at four years of age. His parents would saddle up the family horse, pack him a lunch, and away he would go, riding in the Blackfoot Hills. I was raised on a family farm. My first horse entered my life when I was 10 years old, and I rode every chance I got.

Lorne and I bought our first Arabian 29 years ago — a purebred mare. Our daughter fell in love with her, as any 10-year-old girl would. Twenty-nine years later we moved here to Fort Saskatchewan, and started lessons with Pamela Zimmerman, who trained and bred Arabian horses at that time. Her lesson horses were, of course, Arabians. That's where it all started. Watching the kids and these majestic animals was magical to me. For years our daughter, Candy, showed our Half-Arabian mare,

TA Spitfire in hunter, until she sold her when she went off to college. TA Spitfire became the mount for another young girl, and was finally retired from the hunter-jumper ring last year at the age of 26. She is now a lesson horse for the little ones. More Arabians were added to our growing herd: FF Spinner for my husband, and the purebred gelding Billy Bob (SM Bahia x Madori), for me. I had never shown until I got him, and together, Billy and I showed for 15 years. We have done everything from cattle penning, cattle drives, turnback for cutting horses, and mountain vacations.

Today, my husband's wagon team horses are also saddle horses and packhorses. On these rides our horses must be able to safely pick their way across rock slides and through deadfall. At times they are required to be part of our security systems in camp,



Diane's husband Lorne drives a team of Half-Arabians 15 to 30 miles to the camp in a wilderness area that doesn't allow motor vehicles. Here they set up a base camp from which to ride out on day rides. The team crosses rivers about 15 times and the water can go from knee-deep to chest-deep in a few steps.

How do we use our Arabian horses in the mountains? Everything we need is hauled 15-30 miles in the wagon pulled by our Half-Arabians or on pack horses. Yes, some of our Arabian horses have also been packed, and we ride our saddle horses to the camp. River crossings can be most exciting — on a trek like this we will cross rivers about 15 times, through water that goes from knee-deep to chest-deep in a few steps. We follow a valley up into the mountains with steep up-and-down grades that must be carefully navigated. Motorized vehicles are not allowed in the

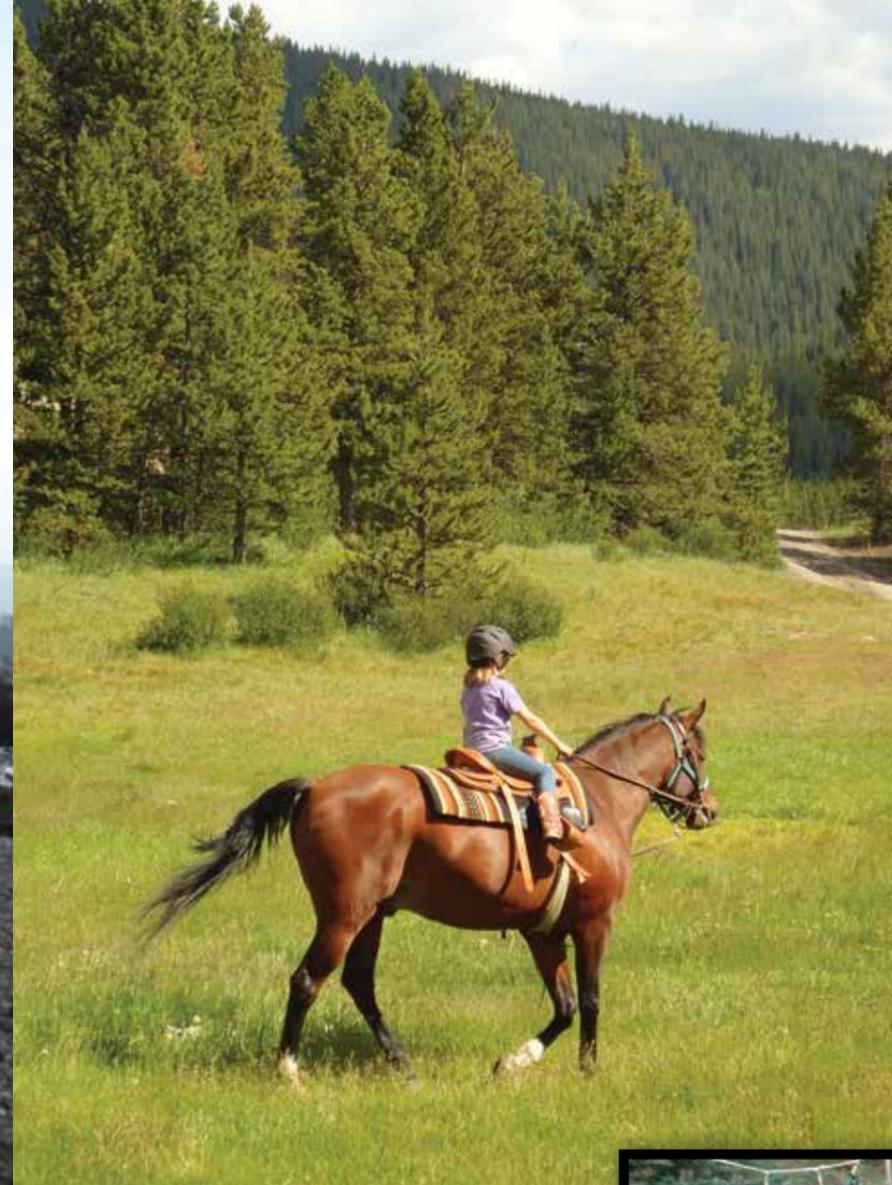


Heading out on a day ride.

nickering at incoming riders (coffee is always on) to excited snorts for other four-legged visitors. They must accept deer and elk venturing into camp.

Several of our horses have the special job of carrying our grandkids on these trips. Our Half-Arabian gelding Canadian Champagne and my purebred gelding Billy Bob are the two that excel at this job. When asked why I would ride my show horses on these rides, my answer is “Why not?” I enjoy riding them anywhere, and no, I’m not afraid that they’ll get hurt — they could get hurt in an arena or turnout, too!

What makes a good mountain horse? Tough question. They must be level-headed and calm, and able to stop and look at what is ahead of them and safely pick their way across. Our horses must be willing to work and have a “no quit” attitude — they cannot decide to stop or turn around halfway up a steep climb. They must have patience and stand quietly. They will spend downtime and nighttime on a high line. Every horse has a fight or flight response in them but a good mountain horse is less dramatic. These horses work hard on a daily basis unless it rains ... then we have “camp time.”



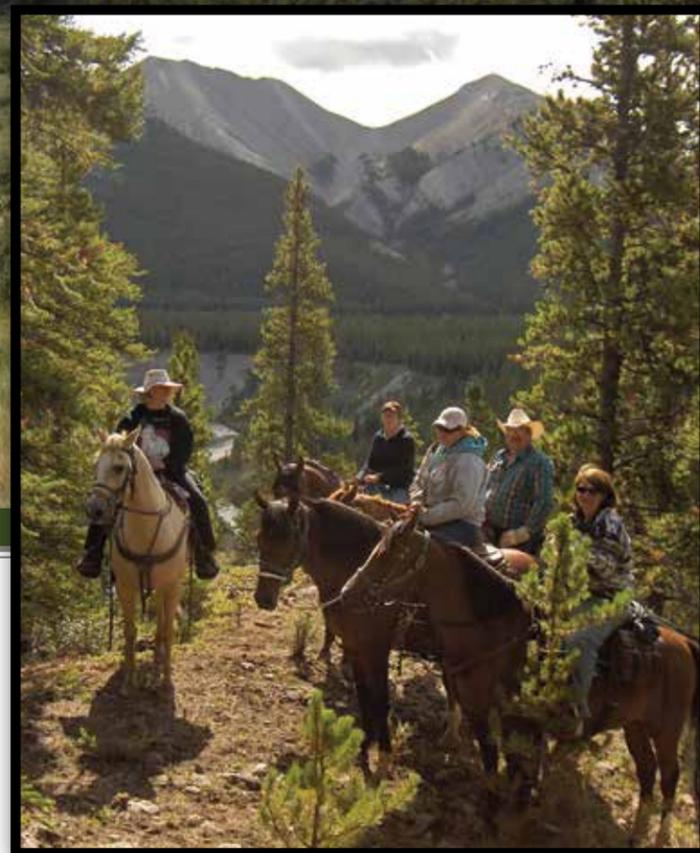
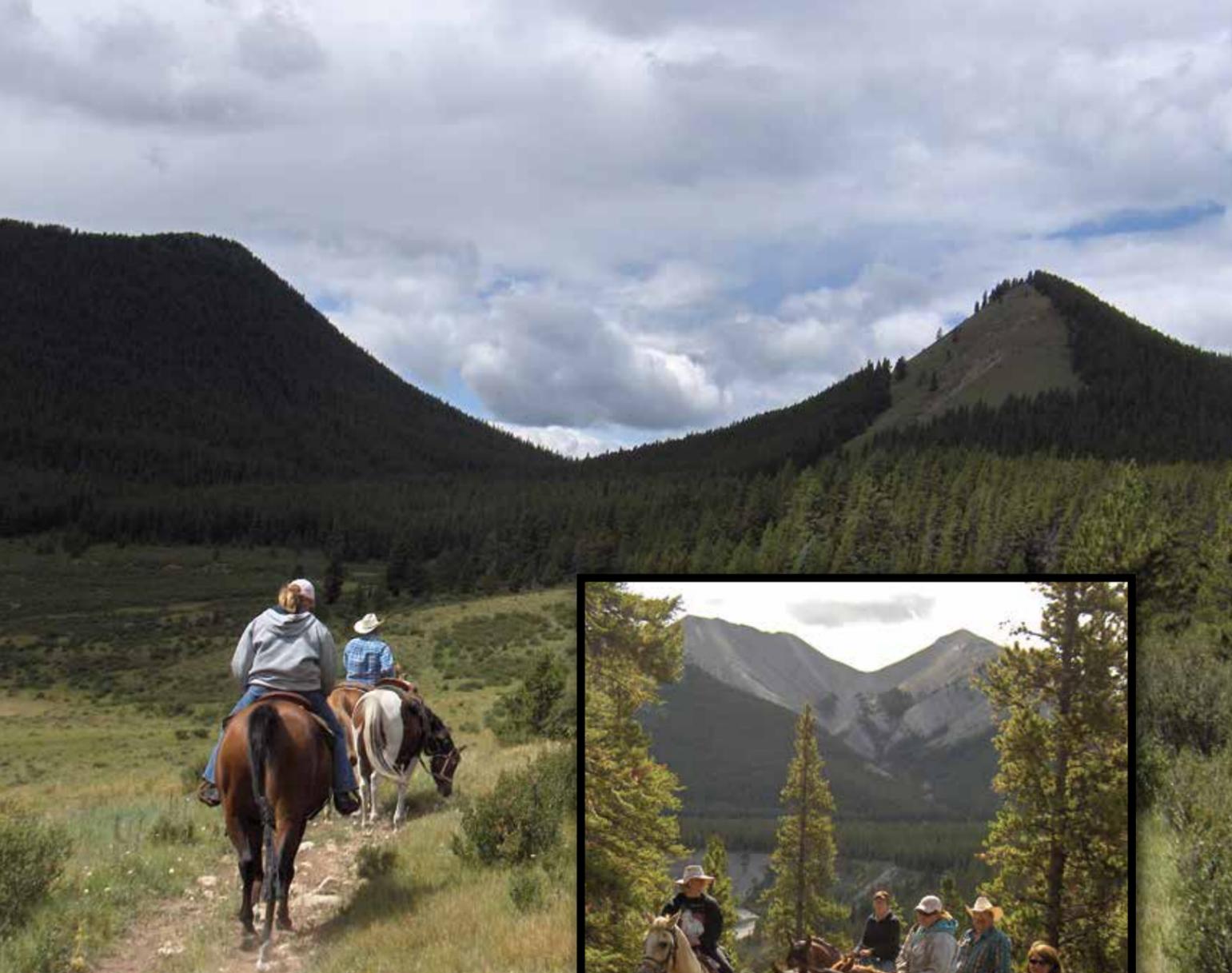
Making a good mountain horse is just like making a good show horse: lots of time in the saddle or between the driving lines. As my husband says, “Common sense, consistency, and patience. No tricks or shortcuts.” We love to expose our horses to new and different things. The more exposure, the less reactive they are. If anything happens around them they learn to just deal with it. Positive reinforcement builds their confidence. Not every horse can do this type of work but with the right kind of disposition and physical strength the results are fantastic.

Yes, Arabian horses can do it all. Here is an awesome example of how



Top photos: Diane’s grandchildren enjoying the Half-Arabian gelding Canadian Champagne (by Oh Canada).

Above: In camp, the horses are high-lined and have to be accustomed to wildlife coming into camp. The horses are shoulder branded (visible on Lorne’s gelding in the back), which, if lost, would help make sure they are returned to their owner.



A group of us riding our Arabians up a steep climb to a high mountain lake. Pictured from right to left is: myself on Billy Bob, Candy on Canadian Champagne, Lorne on FF Spinner, Jeanne on RX Dreamworx, and Hedi on Lady Bey Ember. We climbed past a number of Quarter Horse riders who were amazed at how these horses powered up the trail. We started at the valley floor and ended up above the tree line.

Facing page, bottom: The spoils — Lorne poses by the mountain lake the group rode to this day — a 13 hour round trip ride from camp.

I have lived the dream. In July 2008, my son got married up in the beautiful mountain country. My two geldings were with us up there for the three days of the wedding. On Monday my daughter and I left the mountains to go to Region 17 in Red Deer, Alberta. Billy Bob was Champion Western Pleasure AAOTR 40 and over, AAOTR 18-39, AATR 18-39, and AATR 40 and over, Arabian Western Pleasure Open and Ladies Sidesaddle Open. Canadian Champagne (by Oh Canada) was Champion Half-Arabian Western Pleasure AAOTR and Top Five in Half-Arabian Western Pleasure AATR and Sport Horse under Saddle ATR.

I love to ride these horses anytime and anywhere ... living the dream with our Arabian horses. I love and cherish them.

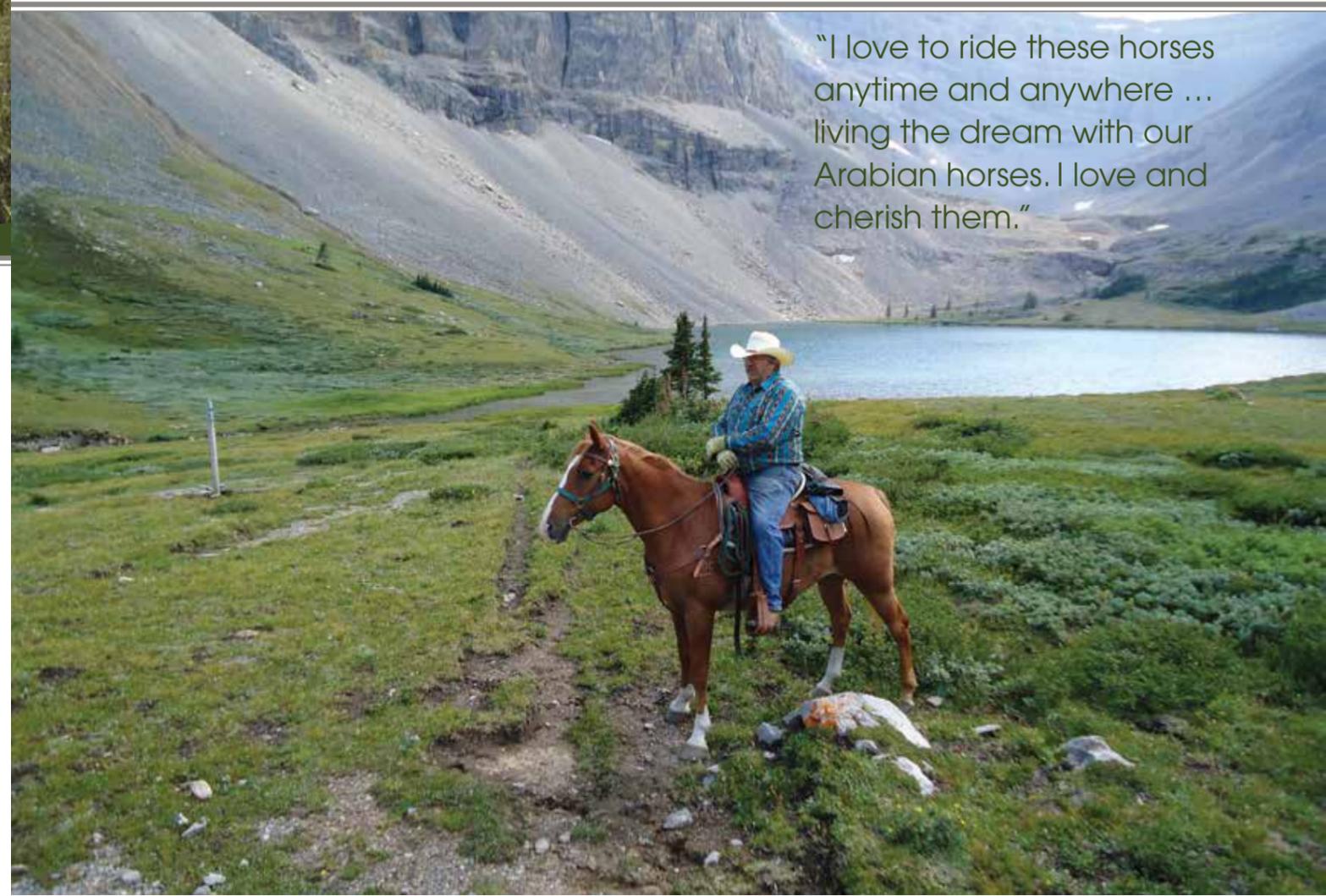


From the mountains to the show pen ...

Billy Bob (SH Bahia x Madori) is a two-time Canadian Top Ten and winner of 20 Regional Championships, and dozens of Reserves and Top Fives in western pleasure and sidesaddle.



The Half-Arabian Canadian Champagne (by Oh Canada) is a multi-champion Regional winner in western pleasure and sport horse under saddle.



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