

MAJESTIC FARMS

THE *Royal* TREATMENT

by Sara Pizzuto

Eric Antman and Austin Eversman always seemed to lead parallel lives on very similar trails. Both grew up riding at a young age, and both had a passion for becoming horse trainers. Finally, their horse sense led them to the same path at William Woods University. It was here where they met, eventually marrying. They opened Majestic Farms in 2008, where their ride together officially began.

Eric projected a passion for horses at a young age. The San Diego native began riding with Anne Speck at Rancho Del Mar.

"I think I was six or seven years old, and just got hooked and that was it," he said.

Eric continued riding under the direction of his hall-of-fame instructor throughout the entirety of his junior exhibitor career. His love of horses led him to Seamair Farm in Santa Barbara, CA to intern with trainer Greg Carstens. It was this internship that cemented his desire to become a professional horse trainer.

"It's like a puzzle," he said. "Each horse is kind of like a different puzzle. Figuring out the different combination of things to do to help that horse get to the next level, and then the challenge of putting horse and rider together and teaching them each the skill set to be able to deal with one another. It's always kind of a fun challenge."

That fun challenge of horse training continued for Eric at William Woods University in Missouri. He worked to obtain his Bachelor of Science in Equine Studies, while continuing to learn from other notable horse trainers. Eric spent his summer vacation months with AMHA Hall of Fame member Harry Sebring at Sebring Stables, and worked at the renowned Callaway Hills both during college and after his graduation.

While Eric developed his skills as a trainer, he simultaneously developed a relationship with a fellow William Woods student. Austin Eversman was the student that captured Eric's attention, and their mutual love of horses worked to unite them.

Austin grew up with her horses conveniently located in her backyard. She said that being in the company of her horses was what made her the happiest.

"All I ever wanted to do was wake up in the morning with my horse at home during high school and clean her stall and



Austin Eversman and Eric Antman opened Majestic Farms in 2008. The couple has enjoyed a growing list of clients and champion Morgans and Saddlebreds over the ensuing years.

get ready to go to high school and then come back afterwards," she said. "I did other sports, but as soon as I was done with the other sports, it was either off to lessons or off to the barn to work my horse. It has always been at the top of my priority list."

Austin's commitment to her riding career never wavered, as she made the decision to take a semester off of college at William Woods to finish her last show season as a junior exhibitor.

"I just couldn't ever imagine doing anything else," she said. "A college education is really important, and I did follow through and get my degree, but horses were just pretty much all I've ever been interested in."

"Each horse is kind of like a different puzzle. Figuring out the different combination of things to do to help that horse get to the next level. . ."



Both Austin and Eric began their riding careers earning tricolors at the Morgan Grand National as junior exhibitors.



Austin lists Arboria Arion GCH as one of her favorites as she rode the fancy bay to the 2015 Ladies English Pleasure Reserve World Championship.

Her interest in becoming a horse trainer led her to Scott and Carol Matton's Knollwood Farm. Austin said that her time there was invaluable, learning every aspect of how to run a business.

"They have a lesson program, they have a great string of show horses, and are excellent equitation instructors," she said. "They have a killer work ethic and they taught me a lot about the industry."

Her knowledge of horses furthered by working with Heather Linzmeier in Wisconsin, and during the summer in Kentucky with Chad Cole and Michelle McMahon. She then eventually joined Eric on the team at Callaway Hills. The couple worked there together for several years, before making the decision to open their own facility.

Majestic Farms began with humble beginnings in January of 2008. Eric and Austin had moved to San Marcos, CA to allow their horse training dreams to come to fruition. Five horses initially called Majestic Farms their home, with three of the five being owned by Eric and Austin. However, the barn soon began to expand with new clients and horses walking through its doors.

"We built a lesson program, and then got some show riders and some

show horses and then continued to go from there," Eric said.

New horses and new riders weren't the only additions to the barn. Eric was reunited with his first instructor Anne Speck, when her Rancho Del Mar riding program merged with Majestic Farms in 2015. Eric was thrilled when she joined the team.

"Anne is great," he said. "She is kind of the one that always brings us back down to earth and keeps us focused on what the goals are, where we are going, and how to get there. She is really instrumental in teaching the kids and adults. She kind of holds the whole thing together. She is a good one. She will tell you like it is."

Cierra Holtz had been working as Anne's assistant when Anne agreed to join Eric and Austin. She followed Anne to Majestic Farms as an assistant and riding instructor. She also oversees the daily routine of the farm, and travels to horse shows as well.

"I enjoy everyone that I interact with every day," she said. "The team we have is a dream team."

That team of Eric, Austin, Anne, and Cierra are now in charge of a string of 17 Morgan and Saddlebred show horses. Each member plays an integral part in the training and instruction of the horses and riders.



Eric grew up riding with hall of fame instructor Anne Speck at Rancho Del Mar as seen in this 2004 photo. Anne is now a valued member of the Majestic Farms team.



Ready To Jet and Eric Antman made headlines in 2010 including a Reserve World's Championship on the green shavings.

Eric and Austin begin their day in the early morning, and are typically finished working horses before noon. They additionally manage an equestrian center and full feed store, which Austin works at in the afternoons. The couple works each horse together, often swapping between horses depending on that horses' needs at that given time. It is something that Eric says is incredibly beneficial.

"All the horses have always been better when everyone works them," he said. "I think we approach the horses and riders with our own perspective and our specific set of goals and pet peeves, and I think that we can kind of put our heads together and we each have something positive and constructive to add to each horse and rider."

Anne and Cierra keep the lesson and academy programs running, teaching riders of all skill levels, and children as young as 4. Anne's Rancho Del Mar riding program brought a group of school horses to Majestic Farms that accommodate the outside lessons. Anne prefers working with older students while Cierra oversees summer and winter riding camps, birthday parties, and Girl Scout visits. It is a group effort that Cierra enjoys.

"Eric and Austin come to the barn everyday with a positive attitude and great energy that radiates on to the rest of us," she said. "They are always willing to help and to share their knowledge of the industry and horses. They are also open to our opinions, and take them into consideration. There is no one specific job for one person. We all share the everyday responsibility of running the barn together."

This team also each shares their time with their show riders. Austin teaches a Thursday

night group lesson open to all clients, as well as specialized show lessons with Eric on Saturdays and Sundays. Anne and Cierra offer show lessons at any time, so that the option is available for all students to come and ride 7 days a week. Austin feels that this method of instruction is what brings out the best in her students.

"The riders that really branch out and make the effort to come mid-week and ride with Anne and ride with Cierra and Eric get the most out of the whole program," she said. "You can just see them progress so much faster. We are all on the same page but everybody has something differ-

"We are all on the same page but everybody has something different to add to the group. It just really works out extraordinarily well."

ent to add to the group. It just really works out extraordinarily well."

The 2016 Morgan Grand National was proof of their hard work, as Majestic Farms capped off their season with an incredible horse show. Their week began with Merriehill After Hours' performance in the in-hand division. After Hours once again left the ring with the garland of roses in this division, earning the title of World Champion Stallion for the second time. His show ring success continued later in the week, scooping up another win with Eric, being crowned World Champion English Pleasure. The stunning stallion has become a favorite of Eric's.

"He is naturally athletic and loves being a show horse," he said. "He wants to be a show horse everyday. He is also really kind. He is kind to his grooms, kind to his lady, and he is nice to work around. He was built to do it, and he is beautiful. He is very much a Morgan."

After Hours' owner, Elaine Olsen, also had success in the park harness division. She was on the lines of the great SYP High Definition, and captured the Park Harness Amateur World Championship. Eric explained that it was tremendous to see High Definition showing in the Oklahoma coliseum once again.

Taylor Walters continued the show success for Majestic Farms with her Ladies Park Saddle Reserve World Championship aboard the charismatic Meet George Jetson. Taylor shared that "George" belonged to her mother, Debra. However, Debra was having health issues at the show that prevented her from riding. Taylor had one practice ride with George before going into her qualifying class. She said that her victory pass was thanks to Eric and Austin.

"The fact that they can train a horse for countless different riders to be successful on is something many trainers cannot achieve," she said.

Eric, Austin, Anne, and Cierra were also responsible for their riders' accomplishments in the equitation division. Victoria Walz and King Lehr's Friar Tuck captured the reserve title in both the AMHA Saddle Seat Gold Medal Final, and the UPHA Senior Challenge Cup. They capped their week by being crowned the Senior Saddle Seat Equitation World Champions. Shannon McTaggart was a standout from the classic equitation division riding Dragonsmeade Courante. She was named the Saddle Seat Classic



Anne Speck and Austin Eversman were delighted with the success of their equitation riders at the 2016 Morgan Grand National including world titles for Shannon McTaggart and Victoria Walz.

Equitation 14-17 World Champion after stellar performances in both the saddle seat medal finals and the UPHA senior challenge cup. It was a week to remember for the farm.

"We just all around had a great time," Eric said. "Everything came together and it may never happen again so we enjoyed it while it lasted and are working towards it again."

The Majestic Farms trainers and instructors look to have many of these top teams back in the show ring in 2017. RJMF Possessed came home from Oklahoma as the Four-Year-Old English Pleasure Reserve World Champion. He has already returned to the ring this year, making the transition to the open ranks and the park saddle division with Cierra in the saddle. However, Austin is eager to show RJMF Possessed again, as well as her all time favorite horse Arboria Arion, with whom she holds a reserve world championship title.

Eric has high hopes once again for Merriehill After Hours. His owner Elaine drove him throughout the off-season, and the team is hoping that Elaine will be on the lines of her stallion this year. However, After Hours' fans will be happy to know that Eric isn't counting out the possibility of vying for a repeat English Pleasure World Championship in October.

Many of the Majestic Farms horses have already started the 2017 show season showing on the West Coast. Though this circuit took a hit during the recession, Eric is confident that the class sizes and number of participants will improve. He appreciates that the horse shows have begun adding classes for both Morgans and Saddlebreds to the prize list to accommodate trainers that work with both of these breeds.

"It makes sense to do it all, and be able to show all the horses at the same places," he said. "I think the horse shows have gotten smarter about making them desirable for people to

come and show and it's helping. I think as the economy gets better, the horse shows will continue to improve."

Majestic Farms has continued to grow since its inception in 2008. Eric said that he attributes his barn's success to a multitude of reasons. He shared that it's important to communicate with his customers, and be upfront with their expectations. It is necessary that he know his clients' goals with their horses whether they want to be competitive and show in Oklahoma, or simply

ride for pleasure. This way, he can make adjustments accordingly.

"You shouldn't try to make a horse something that they are not," he said. "So if it's not a park horse, don't make it a park horse. They are only going to be good at what they enjoy doing. We don't try to change something and make it something it's not. That is a big part of it."

Austin agreed, and said that honesty is an important part of a successful business.

"If somebody wants to buy a horse, you can be very candid with them and say 'This is not the horse for you,'" she said. "I can very honestly say 'Yes do this' or 'No don't do that' or 'We strongly recommend this.'"

Eric also felt that a new trainer should be open to any jobs around the barn. He and Austin taught many beginner lessons when they first started, which helped increase their business.

"It wasn't exactly what I wanted to be doing, but I learned to love it because that's how I paid my bills," he said. "Don't be above any jobs. If we don't take a lot of horses to a show, we will be the ones cleaning stalls at the horse shows. We know our horses inside and out and sometimes we clean stalls. We do whatever needs to be done. We all pitch in and do our thing."

This humility, mixed with dedication and enthusiasm for the sport has been the key that has brought Eric and Austin's Majestic Farms much success. The couple is now awaiting the arrival of their first child, who will likely develop the same passion for horses that is the essence of the farm. By definition, the word "majestic" means "impressive, beautiful, or dignified in an inspiring way." It is clear that this rising barn has certainly lived up to its name.



Eric Antman and owner Elaine Olsen celebrated an unforgettable 2016 Morgan Grand National including Merriehill After Hours GCH's sensational victories as World Champion Stallion and World Champion English Pleasure.