

Setting Background

01/29/03

MESQUITE GROVE**MESQUITE GROVE**

Mesquite Grove, a small ranching community, southwest of Dallas, Texas, struggles to maintain its cowboy identity while risking assimilation into the cosmopolitan lifestyle of Big D. The skyscrapers and bright lights looming on the horizon compete with ranch houses and open skies. The inhabitants of this satirical animation live amid the conflict of longhorns and thoroughbreds, longnecks and limos.

MESQUITE GROVE STABLES

Mesquite Grove Stables is the artistic result of Bebe Norris's design talents. Flagstone walkways pass under ivy covered archways leading to a European-inspired stable. The Old World appearance of the barn hides the state of the art fixtures and equipment. Perfectly groomed horses sleepily munch hay in large box stalls until their dozing is interrupted by grooms preparing them for their daily ride and exercise.

The sound of the horses shod hooves on the cobblestone paths announces their pilgrimage to the riding arena as they are led, wearing tiny leather saddles, by riders in velvet-covered helmets, English riding pants and tall black boots. The schooling arena is a quilt of vertical pole jumps, large faux stone walls and fake water jumps known as "liverpools." This is where the Earl holds court. Or, as he is sometimes accused, conducts re-enactments of Napoleon chastising his troops.

The townspeople of Mesquite Grove are both proud and mystified by the stables. They sometimes refer to it as "the Taj Ma Stalls." The cowboy crowd is disdainful of what they consider a useless pursuit and waste of horseflesh but has some grudging admiration for the Earl's riding talent and respect for Bebe's genteel graciousness.

Character Descriptions

01/29/03

MESQUITE GROVE**(THE) EARL NORRIS**

A satirical animation explores the conflicts and challenges of this reluctantly aging, forty-something former U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team member, as he rules his tiny fiefdom of Mesquite Grove Stables, deep in the heart of Texas.

Earl Norris failed to realize his good fortune during the time he was a world-class show jumping rider and U.S. Olympic Equestrian team member. While on the show circuit back East, he met and married another famous rider, Bebe Tattersal Norris, and followed her home to her Texas roots. He assumed the rest of the horse world would beat a trail to his stable door in Mesquite Grove, but it didn't. As his original vision fades, he constructs a new kingdom drawing on local minions and Texas money.

He fights off the oppressive heat and stifling lifestyle with the aid of anti-ageing concoctions, fine Venezuelan chocolates and Krispy Kreme donuts, though knowing that the latter will make him retain water like a toad and prompt someone to ask if he's had his wisdom teeth removed that day. To deal with the "weight" of his daily stress, he sneaks a cigarette from time to time, while making a pretext of hiding his dependence. He is the common man in his struggle against declining vitality and pleasurable addictions.

In his efforts to make time stand still, he continues to ride rank horses in dangerous situations, often resulting in nearly as frequent rides on a hospital gurney. He longs for the perfect successor to take over his riding responsibilities, leaving him to reign as dictator emeritus.

His boundless self-absorption enables him to condescend to his underlings (everybody) while making, at best, an apathetic effort to even call people by their correct name. He occasionally vents his angry frustrations at various offenders by secretly urinating on their car door handles or personal items. He fears only one person on the planet and that person resides in the demonic frame of Billy Cartwright, precious child of his best (wealthiest) client, Mimi Cartwright.

The public Earl is an egotist of the highest order but the inner Earl has a soft heart which is usually expressed surreptitiously, either as treats delivered to his mounts or Bebe's dogs, or in other occasional acts of clandestine kindness.

BEBE TATTERSAL NORRIS

Bebe, wife to Earl, was a well-known rider in her youth. She received her initial training from her father, Col. Tattersal, but as her talent developed, the Col. took her back East to school with higher profile equestrians. While living on the East coast she met the dashing young Earl whom she married and brought back to her family's stable in Texas.

Bebe has now mentally retired from the horse show world yet it is incumbent on her to be physically present at most equestrian related events. She is creatively gifted and her artistic eye gives her an uncanny ability to visualize the talents of young horseflesh but she prefers to focus her talent on interior design and other artistic pursuits. Bebe finds her passions continually interrupted by the need to manage the facility's finances and to rescue the public relations, both of which are frequently "complicated" by Earl.

The embodiment of the quintessential patient Southern woman, Bebe has nevertheless been known to brandish a bullwhip on Earl or a recalcitrant horse when either exceeds her limits of tolerance. Her love of a frosty, crushed-ice Coca Cola and Earl are legendary; however, her greatest show of affection is reserved for Rafe, the mutt, and her herd of miniature dachshunds, which swirl like a cloud around her feet.

GUY PATRICK

A Mesquite Grove native and gay cowboy turned equestrian, Guy is the Xanax to the dysfunctional anxiety that is Mesquite Grove Stables. As the barn manager by default, Guy utilizes his diplomatic skills to serve as an intermediary between his employers and their clientele. His fluency in Spanish makes him the interpreter of Earl's demands of his grooms, but often with Guy's own amusing twist as to what Earl has really said.

As the backup rider for Earl and under Earl's caustic tutelage, Guy dreams of becoming nationally recognized for his talent. He also fantasizes about a relationship someday with Shane, the farrier, an attraction obvious to nearly everyone except Winnie Bray. Winnie secretly believes that Guy is just confused and will someday admit his true love for her.

Guy's rock steady demeanor and dry wit help to disguise his occasional passive aggressive retaliations on Earl's abuse. Although he has frequent conflicts with Earl, he is a loyal advocate of the talent and experience of both Norris' and they, in turn, have a great admiration for Guy's calming manner with the horses and his developing talent as a rider. They view Guy as a son, although to the casual observer, an abused one.

MIMI CARTWRIGHT

Mimi is the large bottomed daughter of former Texas governor, Mamie Pritchards, wife to Texas oil, cattle and high-tech entrepreneur, Big Jake Cartwright, and mother to twins, William Robert and Robert Joseph (Billy Bob and Bobby Joe). She is effusive with her affection for her family and in return, is dearly loved by her mother, husband and twin boys. Mimi's delight in her sons leaves her with no concerns about Billy's obsession with firearms or Bobby's attraction to electricity although the school counselor suggested therapy for both children.

Mimi is full of life or at least life's surface and easily finds topics with which to dominate conversations with friends and even total strangers. In her world, she has never seen an ugly horse or an untalented rider. She is positive to a fault.

With life so full of distractions, Mimi finds it hard to focus seriously on riding as a discipline. She finds the most intriguing aspects of the equestrian sport to be the socializing at horse shows and the additional shopping venue provided by these events. Her unawareness to Earl's frustrations with her lack of commitment makes her all the more endearing. When she has exceeded Earl's tolerance, she attempts to make up with him by offering to buy him a new horse. It is an offer Earl always accepts.

BILLY (BOB) CARTWRIGHT

Billy, twin brother to Bobby, is the only thing on earth that Earl fears. There is a demonic aura about Billy that is suggested by his resemblance to Billy Idol and confirmed by his Billy the Kid attire.

Billy has a possessive, protective attachment to his mother that his therapist mistakenly once tried to suggest as unhealthy. Subsequently, the therapist surprised everyone by leaving a note saying that he was moving to Ecuador and disappearing without a trace. Billy resents Earl's demanding attitude with his mother but his greater concern is Mimi's harmless attentions to Earl. His life has become a quest to defend his mother's honor and perhaps send Earl, maimed, to an early grave.

SHANE

Shane, the good-natured farrier (horseshoer) is a confidante to all. He is able to blend easily with the Western crowd as well as the English. Everyone feels comfortable baring their souls to him and appreciates his attentiveness to their stories while ignoring the fact that since he's shoeing a horse, he cannot possibly escape them.

His status is enhanced almost to the level of “spiritual advisor” by his propensity to dress in black jeans and black shirts with a white T-shirt peeking out at the neck. As people enter or leave his presence they frequently believe they might have heard a Gregorian chant but they aren’t quite certain. His dark, smoldering goods looks make him attractive to many, especially Sister Peg, Winnie and Guy.

COLONEL TATTERSAL

The Col is the father of Bebe Norris and was her childhood riding instructor. He achieved personal fame as a rider in the military and competitor in the Pentathlon. He has not surrendered control of MGS or Bebe to Earl yet, at least not in his mind, while missing the fact that neither he nor Earl is really in charge anyway.

WINONA (WINNIE) BRAY

Winnie’s always angry attitude makes her nearly unapproachable yet her talents as a professional braider make her in great demand at the horseshows. She started riding at MGS at a very young age and rumor has it that she was quite good with a natural talent. No one has seen her ride in a very long time but her sour demeanor makes it difficult for anyone to ask her why.

Winnie’s annoyance with Earl’s habit of calling her “Whiney” instead of Winnie is compounded by having been picked up by some of the wags at MGS. The mystery of Winnie is further exacerbated by her outrageous Gothic attire.

She is now an employee of MGS and harbors a secret crush on Guy.

IVY GABBINGER

Ivy Gabbinger is a suck up to the Earl and to whomever she perceives as members of the “inner circle.” She expresses her shallow compliments to the “inners” or denigrating remarks about the “outers” in an Orwellian manner, according to her frequently incorrect perceptions of the current political landscape. When not around Earl, she quickly adapts by backstabbing him, with the help of those that she had previously trashed to Earl and his entourage. She is “affectionately” known as Poison Ivy, behind her back.

LORETTA

Loretta believes that if you look good, your riding will follow. She prides herself in wearing cutting edge equestrian fashions, owning the most recent European-fad saddle and making sure that her choice of pet is currently in vogue. Most people cannot recall the

last time they actually saw her on a horse. Loretta is breezily pleasant to everyone, not because she likes them but rather because it's the PC thing to do.

Loretta is somewhat "Junior League" in her sense of propriety and relies on her Cotillion training for correct table etiquette; nonetheless, she has earned the nick name "Point and Shoot" due to her habit of hovering over public toilets and leaving the outcome to the next unsuspecting occupant.

BOLA

Bola is a Venezuelan stable hand who is more than what he seems. A stoutly-built, Rico Suave-type character, whose large, silver dollar-sized nipples peer hypnotically through his sweat-drenched work shirts, Bola pretends to understand very little English, though in reality speaks five languages. Bola also claims to return to Venezuela to visit family from time to time, yet a passport hidden in his apartment bears several stamps from both Germany and Switzerland, alluding to a mysterious past and covert present.

Bola is occasionally the object of Tinka's seduction, in the misguided hope that he will provide her secret information about MGS. Bola willingly plays to this misconception but fails to deliver any meaningful intelligence to her.

He is also the mysterious secret source for the Venezuelan chocolates that Earl craves. Bola uses Earl's addiction as a means to control him.

Bola has been at Mesquite Grove Stables for over twenty years, observing all.

CHICO

Chico is a new groom who recently "emigrated" from Mexico. He does not speak English and relies on Bola to interpret what the two of them overhear, which Bola does to his own satisfaction. He is often baffled by the seemingly outrageous behavior of the Mesquite Grove elite but he is a hard-working hand who also works hard not to be terrified.

BIG JAKE CARTWRIGHT

Big Jake is the 5'4" nerdy husband to Mimi. Although his family came from cattle and oil, he increased the family fortunes by starting a successful high-tech company. He likes to dress in classic formal cowboy attire (western suits, Stetson hats and Lucchese boots)

but his large, Buddy Holly-like bifocals detract from any true cowboy image. His large ears and manner of speaking make him somewhat reminiscent of H. Ross Perot.

He adores his big-boned gal and assumes that all is well with his strange twin boys, Billy and Bobby.

BOBBY (JOE) CARTWRIGHT

Bobby is the silent-from-birth twin to Billy. Mimi says he is a late bloomer. He has a strange attraction to the hot wire surrounding the paddocks at MGS. He seems to satisfy this attraction by either touching the wire and smiling dreamily or encouraging children new to the stable to touch the wire. He once blistered his lip while spitting a loogie onto the wire. He has, so far, resisted peeing on the wire.

MAMIE PRITCHARDS

Mamie is a former governor of the great state of Texas and adoring mother to Mimi Cartwright. She is glad Mimi married well, even if a bit “small.” Mamie has never found a reason to change from her huge beehive hairdo and refuses to be seen in public without her silver foot lapel pin.

Mamie schedules an occasional riding lesson at MGS in an effort to have some “mother-daughter” quality time with Mimi. She has a custom made “beehive” helmet to accommodate her big hair and favors a tight-fitting white leather jumpsuit over more traditional riding attire.

KENT MANN

Kent Mann is a sport reporter who agrees to interview a former equestrian star for the “Where Are They Now?” series, airing on the American Horse Show Network. He finds that he has been duped into an interview with Earl Norris at a horse show in Paris, Texas, not Paris, France. From the moment he arrives to the heat and dust of the show grounds, he is frantically trying to complete his assignment so he can return to civilization and a hot shower.

TINKA VARYEUR OF IRON OAKS STABLES

Tinka has the fair-skinned beauty of a Bavarian princess with the voice of a chain-smoking truck stop waitress. She originally came to MGS answering Earl’s ad for an experienced trainer. Knowing that the Mesquite Grove facility was patterned after a European-style stable may have influenced Tinka’s Germanic affectations. While her accent is sup-

posed to lend credibility to her claim of being a successful German equestrian, the inconsistency of her intonation makes this suspect. Later an acrimonious split with Earl and MGS prompt Tinka to open her own facility, becoming Earl's nemesis at local horse shows.

Eva Braun-like in her demeanor, Tinka is fond of carrying a riding crop which she whacks from time to time for emphasis. She also has a grotesque habit of grunting gutturally in an attempt to urge one of her students over a jump that they have met poorly.

Tinka seduces a willing Bola, attempting to obtain "inside information" on the goings-on at MGS. Bola allows himself to be beguiled but only gives Tinka a confusing litany of disinformation that sounds important but is delivered in a mish-mash of Spanish-sounding phonetics which Tinka frantically tries to interpret.

SISTER PEG PIERRNA – ONE-LEGGED NUN

Sister Peg lost one of her legs in a freak accident. Prior to her vows, she had a career in Las Vegas as an exotic animal trainer. A drunken handler changed her life forever when he forgot to feed the tigers prior to her act and one of the big cats mistook her shapely calf for dinner. During her period of unconsciousness, she had a vision of God telling her she should change her focus to horses and the Catholic Church so she discarded her professional name of Maya Moochatatas, took her vows as a nun in the Boston archdiocese and headed for Texas.

Sister Peg develops a real love of riding but finds it difficult to fit her riding time in around her duties as a nun. She manages a few rides per week by omitting some of her Meals on Wheels deliveries. The aroma of the fetid dinners emanating from the trunk of her car arouses some curiosity from passersby and a great deal of interest from the dogs at the stable.

Due to the self-involved nature of the community at MGS, no one has made the connection to a holy order and Sister Peg's large "hat", although Loretta fears that she has been scooped on the latest in helmet attire. No one notices her prosthetic leg either until it comes off during a spill from a horse and the Dachshunds run off with it, with Billy in hot pursuit.

Sister Peg's biggest personal confliction is not her handicap but rather her attraction to the farrier, Shane, who somehow reminds her of a priest she once knew.

VETERINARIAN – WAYNE JOHNSON

The veterinarian's wavy blonde hair, gleaming smile, 6'4" height, big chest and tiny hips snugged into tight Wranglers make one think of Dudley Dooright. His traditional cowboy manners and frequent tips of his cowboy hat to the ladies add to his stereo-type.

HORSE TRADER – WILLIE TAKEW

Willie is a lover of Latin or at least "caveat emptor." He is a legend in the horse-trading world for both colorful and infamous reasons. Sometimes he outsmarts his buyer, sometimes his buyer outsmarts him. This gives rise to his second favorite saying, "sometimes you're the windshield, sometimes you're the bug."

He relishes imparting his wisdom about "los caballos" as well as his life experiences to anyone who didn't see him coming first. He multi-tasks showing a horse, spinning a tale and spitting tobacco, some of which finds its way onto his trademark sweat-stained T-shirt. His favorite stop is Mesquite Grove Stables where he thinks the people have more money than sense and where he can sell his horses at premium prices.

ZOLA ST. JOHN – HOLISTIC HORSE PERSON

Zola St. John's holistic education was obtained from reading about natural remedies in the tabloids while standing in line at the grocery store. She is currently studying for an advanced degree in herbal medicines and aromatherapy while standing in line at the health food store.

A tree hugger originally, she once threw her body between Loretta and a tree that Loretta was attempting to whip in Loretta's attempts to release her anger, per therapist instructions. Zola's mare once tried to telepathically tell Zola that she would love some cotton ear plugs to help her deal with the new age music that Zola played for her but Zola mis-took the message as a request for chiropractic treatments. After her holistic applications, Guy and the veterinarian spend the following day applying the appropriate counter drug to her natural remedy.

DALAI, THE PONY

Dalai is Bebe's retired show pony from childhood. Various estimates of her age range from 30 years old to arriving with the Pilgrim's. Her rotundness and wise nature make her seem the reincarnation of a Tibetan monk, especially when she expounds Confucius-like wisdom for the other horses.

THE DACHSHUNDS AND RAFE

Maximus IX is the patriarch of the dachshund herd. Bebe fondly refers to him as “Maxi” and the special cushion she keeps for him on the golf cart as “Maxi’s pad.” He is Bebe’s ego mirror.

The main herd consists of 6 litter mates that move like a flock of birds, running and turning in unison. When they feel Bebe is being threatened in any way, their group mind becomes a conglomerate Rin Tin Tin in their heroic defense of her.

Rafe is a seemingly hapless mutt that Bebe found abandoned at a horse show. The Dachshunds look down their long noses at his lack of blue blood but Rafe ignores the slight. When people ask, “Hey, Rafe, whatcha doin’?”, Rafe silently replies, “Pretty much whatever I want.”

THE LESSON KIDS

Bailey is an old soul living in a youngster’s body. She is a fearless tomboy who takes everything in stride and is willing to learn from each horse that she’s assigned to, including the ones that buck her off occasionally. She is frugal with her speech and has a deep, monosyllabic way of talking using a lot of “yeps and sures” to suffice for more lengthy communication. Her parents are not wealthy but are supportive of her dreams of becoming a great rider.

Connor Elliot always dresses in proper English attire, whether it’s just for schooling or the show ring. His fastidiousness about his dress makes it quite frustrating for him when he is either thrown from a pony or steps in horse do-do. He is obsessed with rules and orderliness yet he is drawn to Bailey’s carefree nature and harbors a secret crush on her. Connor’s life goal is to be the first black equestrian on the U.S. Olympic team.

Emma is the antithesis of Bailey. She complains throughout the lesson, starting with her horse assignment (which is never the one she wanted) and ending with having to clean up after her horse in the wash rack. Her petulance is made more irritating by the whistling sound her whining makes as it passes through her braces. Emma refuses to put any effort into her riding and would probably be just as happy playing dress up with toy horses as riding real ones. She comes from a moneyed family who has always ridden and is pushing Emma to follow the tradition.

Rozlyn Hashanah is a most timid rider who none-the-less insists upon pursuing the sport because of her “love for horses”. Her timidity is a constant source of frustration for her instructors because the majority of her lessons are spent sitting on the horses in the middle of the ring, rebuffing all attempts to convince her to participate in exercises with her classmates. Rozlyn appears to be from a well-to-do family as she always arrives at MGS in the latest E-Class Mercedes prompting Earl and his staff to cater to her every whim. Rozlyn, along with Emma, are the most likely candidates for future horse purchases and the resulting A-level competitions, and must be handled with kid gloves.

ASSORTED CHARACTERS – FUTURE EPISODES

STEWART BUFALLOW (BUFFALO STEW)

Stew is the even more diminutive best friend and business partner of Big Jake Cartwright, completing the other half of their “Mutt and Mutt” duo. Earl, of course, mispronounces his name, calling him Mr. Buffalo. Big Jake finds this quite funny and adds “Buffalo Stew” as another possible variation on Stewart’s name.

Stew has an attraction for Tinka and tries to impress her with his fluency in the German language. Tinka rebuffs his advances as well as his attempts to engage her in a German conversation.

ROY AND SLIM

Roy and Slim are brothers who own the ranch next to Mesquite Grove Stables. They have a birds-eye-view of much of the action at the Stables as well as a distinctly cowboy interpretation and opinion of what they see. They function as the Greek chorus for the comedy and tragedy that surrounds Earl and his entourage. They are also thinking of taking up emu ranching.

Pilot Treatment

01/29/03

MESQUITE GROVE

A satirical animation explores the conflicts and challenges of a forty-something, reluctantly aging, former U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team member as he rules his tiny fiefdom of Mesquite Grove Stables, deep in the heart of Texas.

Earl Norris' past glory as a highly successful international equestrian and Olympian make it all the more difficult for him to survive the oppressive heat and stifling lifestyle of a small Texas community near Dallas. The fact that he continues to age despite his experiments with countless age-retarding products is another source of frustration. Being surrounded by people who, in Earl's opinion, lack the proper appreciation for being in the presence of his greatness further compounds his annoyance.

Kent Mann, sports reporter, is reluctantly on assignment in Paris, Texas, attempting to interview former Olympian, Earl Norris, for the "Where are They Now?" series that will be airing soon on the American Horse Show Network. He exits the air-conditioned comfort of his rental van, inappropriately dressed for the dust and confusion of a horse show, Texas-style. The show grounds are an incongruous maze of western barrel racing, English hunter classes, calf roping, and show jumping, including the final round of the Grand Prix Classic. (Music like Lyle Lovett's, "That's Right, You're Not from Texas.")

Earl Norris exits the Grand Prix arena, accompanied by raucous cheering and applause, after winning the jump-off round. As he hops off his large, excited horse, he flings the reins to a groom and summons for someone to bring him water. A bored Earl does a clothes check while Guy Patrick, the barn manager, automatically exchanges Earl's saddle from his Grand Prix horse to his working hunter, directs the hired hands, Bola and Chico, in other last minute details, while simultaneously attending to Earl's comforts. When Guy looks away, Bola quickly passes Earl a small brick of the Venezuelan chocolate that Earl's body craves but his riding breeches abhor. Guy gives Earl a leg-up onto his next horse, which is owned by Mimi Cartwright, the daughter of the former governor of Texas, Mamie Pritchards, and wife to rich Texas cattle, oil and high-tech entrepreneur, Big Jake Cartwright. Earl barely acknowledges the congratulations he receives from a passing competitor, to which the fellow trainer responds with "jerk" under his breath. As a mounted Earl and his entourage start moving towards the next competition, Earl alternately bellows for Mimi Cartwright while barking for Guy to look

for her among “those cowboys”. He squawks for Chico (who he calls “Cha-cha”) to wipe the dust from his boots, to which Guy declares, “It’s ‘Chico’, Earl.” Bola rolls his eyes toward Chico and exclaims, “La flaca mala.” Earl is oblivious.

Mimi Cartwright dressed in classic English attire and mounted on one of her many horses, chats merrily away with a group of blue-jeaned, Stetson-wearing cowboys and cowgirls. Her large derriere drapes over a tiny English saddle, rendering it nearly invisible. Two cowboys, Roy and Slim, observe her from a distance.

“Isn’t that Mimi Cartwright? I thought she showed Western Pleasure. What’s she doing dressed like that?”, Slim asks.

“She switched to English after her best friend told her the Western saddles made her butt look big. Looks to me like she’s showin’ bareback now!” replies Roy.

Mimi hears the announcement that Earl has just won the working hunter class on her horse. She giggles to her Western friends that “the Earl is gonna be mad at little Mimi for missing his round” and starts to ride toward the show ring, past Guy who has been madly searching for her.

Kent Mann walks up to the cowboys that were admiring Mimi’s large behind and asks them if they can direct him to the Mesquite Grove stabling area. They point him towards a group of identically dressed English riders, suggesting that they might know where to find it. Kent approaches the group who are clad in tan riding pants, tall black boots and white, high-collared long-sleeve shirts and asks if they know where Earl Norris and the Mesquite Grove contingent might be. Tinka Varyeur, a beautiful woman with honey-blond hair, reminiscent of Faith Hill, responds in the voice of a chain-smoking truck stop waitress with an odd German accent, “You mean ‘the Earl,’ don’t you?” The group giggles in unison until Tinka, their trainer and ringleader abruptly motions the laughter to stop. Kent asks why they call him ‘the Earl’ to which Tinka replies, “Because his mother could not spell ‘Despot.’ The unit again titters with laughter, although one subunit looks slightly confused. Tinka points her crop towards the immaculately accoutered Mesquite Grove stabling area and asserts, “The ‘Taj Ma Stalls’ are over there.”

Mimi arrives at the working hunter ring just as Earl makes his exit with the blue ribbon fastened to the mount’s bridle. Earl peevishly asks Mimi what she thought of his round. Mimi coyly says that the horse is always good for Earl, but maybe he’d be better for

Mimi if they tried this pretty bit she just purchased at one of the Western booths. Earl is fuming at the thought of a Western bit in the mouth of his fancy hunter, and whispers to Guy, "Maybe the horse would go around better if she dropped a hundred pounds instead of a hundred bucks!" Guy shoots Earl a look of caution. As the jumps in the ring are lowered to under two feet, Guy reminds Mimi that her adult hunter class is next. Earl attempts to focus Mimi with last minute instructions before she enters the ring. Mimi interrupts Earl to ask if he thinks her tiny new English saddle makes her butt look big. Earl is apoplectic, prompting Guy to whisper a reminder that if Earl plans to ask Mimi to buy him a new show horse, that he might not want to make her mad. Earl hisses to Guy, "You're not my mother!" then swallows hard, smiles and says, "No saddle could do justice to that behind, Mimi." Mimi trots happily into the ring. Earl exhales in exasperation, sighing, "I feel so dirty." (Music like, "Baby Got Back.")

Earl can hardly contain himself as Mimi gallivants around the ring, missing the appropriate take-off point for each jump, annoying her horse by constantly yanking on the reins and causing the animal to stop in front of two fences. Mimi completes her round and ensures disqualification by sliding, slow motion, off her horse over the final jump and plopping onto the ground. Earl thinks he is out of earshot of anyone besides Guy as he thoroughly trashes Mimi. He suddenly spies the only thing on the planet that can strike fear in his heart. It is Mimi's demonic son, Billy (Billy Bob), twin to Mimi's silent-from-birth son, Bobby (Bobby Joe). Billy, dressed in a cowboy outfit and sporting Colt 45-replica water pistols, approaches Earl and asks if he is "talkin' 'bout my momma." Earl denies it but an unconvinced Billy kicks dirt onto Earl's immaculate riding boots, then squirts him in the crotch with his water pistol. Earl quickly looks around for Mimi and yells to Billy's retreating back that he is going to rip his arm off and beat him with it. Earl howls for Bola, his long-time Hispanic stable hand, whom Earl calls 'Boca' in his usual fashion of addressing people by the wrong name. Instead, Chico comes running to help and Earl yells for Guy to translate, "Not that one! I want Boca!" Chico looks confused. Guy shrugs to Chico and tells him in Spanish, "don't worry, Earl's hemorrhoids are bothering him again, and he wants Bola." Chico is still confused but very grateful that Bola will be the one attending to the Earl's hemorrhoids in his stead.

Kent Mann finally locates the Mesquite Grove stalls but Earl is not there. He is met by Colonel Tattersal, a white haired, 70ish-looking man dressed in old fashioned military riding clothes. Kent asks the Colonel if he can offer some background information on Earl. Colonel Tattersal indicates that Kent has come to the right man, then launches into a rambling dissertation of how he is in charge at MGS. Yet as Kent is shown around he

notices the inhabitants of this small slice of life seem to largely ignore the old man. Refocusing on Kent's original question, Colonel tells Kent about Earl's famous equestrian past including his time with the Olympic team and his other international achievements.

He further explains that he was integral to Earl's success as a rider, at least as he sees it, and in fact, to the efficient functioning of the present day Mesquite Grove Stables. To prove his point, he snaps an order to one of the Hispanic grooms, who smiles indulgently at Colonel and continues on with the task at hand.

Col. Tattersal introduces Kent to the good-natured farrier, Shane, whose black jeans, black shirt and white T-shirt peeking out at the neck seem quizzically reminiscent of a priest, as does the faint sound of a Gregorian chant which Kent is not sure he really heard. As the pair walks on, an attractively dressed woman named Loretta reengages Shane in a personal crisis, keeping him from shoeing the horse he is holding. They pass a scowling braider, Winona Bray, who glances up from her work with a look that discourages Kent from asking her any questions, and continue on to meet Bebe Norris, Earl's wife.

Bebe is surrounded by a herd of miniature dachshunds, from which she occasionally scoops one up to kiss directly on the mouth. She is sitting comfortably in her personal golf cart, sharing a Coke with Maximus IX, the regal patriarch of the dachshund clan, as she reads a copy of *Architectural Digest*. Before they can speak to Bebe, Ivy Gabbinger, known as 'Poison Ivy' behind her back, rushes up to ask Kent if he would like to interview her on Earl's history, as she knows him better than anyone. At that moment, one of Kent's crew informs him that Earl is near the hunter ring, and Kent excuses himself. He asks the colonel if he is coming to watch, to which Colonel replies that he and Earl sort of have an understanding that things function more smoothly if the Colonel stays away from the show ring when Earl is competing.

After Billy squirts Earl, and Bola refuses to dab Earl's crotch with a rag, Earl jumps on the golf cart and blasts back to the MG stabling area for a dry pair of riding breeches. Ivy sees Earl approaching and rushes over to compliment him on how nice he looks. When Earl scowls at her remark, she quickly adds, "well, except for that little urine stain on your pants." This elicits an even bigger scowl from Earl and leaves Ivy searching for the right obsequious comment.

Earl starts snarling orders, asking for a clean pair of riding pants and excoriating anyone who happens to fall into his line of sight. Guy, who Earl left to walk back from ringside, comes trotting up and takes control of the situation. As he enters the tackroom to deliver the clean breeches to Earl, he tries to pretend not to notice Bola handing Earl more chocolate while Earl quickly puffs on a cigarette. Noticing Guy's disapproval, Earl proclaims, "I only do it at horse shows!" (Music like Steppenwolf's, "Pusher Man") Guy frowns at Earl and tells Bola and Chico (in Spanish) to saddle Earl's horse for his final appearance of the day—the puissance wall. This will be a demonstration event as no one else in the vicinity has the ability to compete at this level of danger and difficulty.

There is an electrical buzz in the air as the audience anticipates Earl's ride. Tinka grudgingly admits to her unit that this event is actually a bit dangerous and requires 'some skill.' Mimi talks to her mother, Big Jake and Bobby about the cutest saddle pad she just bought. She asks if anyone has seen Billy. Shane listens to Ivy complain about how rude the Earl is to her and how some day she's going to tell him off. Winnie looks intently, almost dreamily, at the jumps in the ring. Roy and Slim wonder 'what kind of idgit' would want to jump a six-foot wall? Kent Mann expresses frustration that he missed Earl again and will have to wait until after this ride for the interview. He tells his crew to make sure they get a good film of Earl. Outside the arena, cowboys on horseback ride back and forth, swinging their lariats in anticipation of the calf-roping contest which will follow Earl's ride. A pen of mooing calves stands adjacent to the arena, ready for use in the next competition. Billy, holding a cattle prod, lurks unnoticed at the gate to the calf pen.

Earl rides into the ring on a huge dark Thoroughbred. They gracefully canter a large circle and ride to the first of several smaller, warm-up fences. A hush falls, broken only by the sound of the horse's hooves, as the pair thunders toward the enormous puissance wall. (Music like Pink Floyd's, "The Wall") The wall looms like a mountain from the perspective of the horse and rider. Suddenly, the quiet is broken by the bawling of a frightened calf as it races across the arena, right into the path of Earl and his horse. The horse squeals and rears in fright, bucks, and sends Earl crashing first into the wall, and then to the ground, seemingly unconscious. The audience screams as Guy rushes to the Earl. Kent yells to his crew to ask if they got that on tape. Roy tells Slim that Earl "just needs to cowboy-up". The jumper continues galloping frantically around the ring with Bola, Chico, and lariat tossing cowboys in hot pursuit. Mimi, who has not missed a conversational beat, asks what happened. Ivy cries that her best friend may be dead.

Winnie continues to stare into the ring as a single tear runs down her cheek. Bebe and the dachshunds race into the ring while Billy laughs, closes the gate to the calf pen and tosses the cattle prod to the ground.

A dazed Earl lies frighteningly still. Guy notices with relief the reflexive movement of Earl's hand. As he peers more closely, he realizes Earl is actually attempting to grasp something lying slightly out of reach. Bebe arrives at Earl's side, stepping on the tiny, foil-covered object, one of several scattered nearby. Guy hears Earl's faint attempt to communicate. Unable to understand what Earl is saying, Guy places his ear near Earl's mouth to better hear the raspy response of, "Choc-o-late" (Music like Joe Ely's, "Me & Billy the Kid Never Got Along")

One-Page Pilot Treatment

01/29/03

MESQUITE GROVE

A satirical animation explores the conflicts and challenges of a forty-something, reluctantly aging, former U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team member as he rules his tiny fiefdom of Mesquite Grove Stables, deep in the heart of Texas.

Earl Norris' past glory as a highly successful international equestrian makes him the object of sports reporter, Kent Mann's, reluctant quest to complete his assignment for the American Horse Show Network's "Where are They Now?" series. Kent is ill-prepared for the stifling heat and dust of the horse show as he heard the location as "Paris" and failed to hear the "Texas" follow-on. (*Music like Lyle Lovett's, "That's Right, You're Not From Texas"*)

Arriving at the show grounds, Kent follows the sound of raucous cheering and applause and sees Earl Norris exiting the Grand Prix arena having just won the event. As he pursues Earl throughout the day, Kent always arrives a moment too late to corner Earl for an interview, but manages to get a glimpse of the dysfunctional inhabitants of this small slice of life.

Earl, annoyed that his wealthiest client, the large bottomed Mimi Cartwright, has failed to witness his successful rides on her horses, sends Guy Patrick, the barn manager, to look for her among the cowboys. Returning, Mimi frustrates Earl with her cavalier attitude, and embarrasses him professionally with a disastrous round on her "push button" horse. (*Music like, "Baby Got Back."*)

As Earl watches, muttering expletives under his breath, he realizes too late he has been overheard by Mimi's demonic twin son, Billy. The cowboy-attired 8 year old confronts Earl, who denies that he has just trashed Billy's mother. Unconvinced, Billy draws a Colt 45 replica water pistol, shoots Earl in the crotch, and runs off to plot additional revenge.

Between competitions Earl seeks out his long-time Hispanic groom, Bola, who surreptitiously provides him with one of his addictions, fine Venezuelan chocolates. Earl's cravings for the treats give Bola, his sole connection for the sweet transactions, power over him, as well as make it difficult for the vain Earl to fit into his riding breeches. (*Music like Steppenwolf's "Pusher Man"*)

Billy utilizes a pen of waiting calves to extract his retribution during Earl's demonstration ride of the dangerous puissance wall. (*Music like Pink Floyd's "The Wall"*) As Earl charges toward the jump, Billy chases a bawling calf into the arena, causing Earl's horse to rear in fright, sending him crashing to the ground. A dazed Earl stares at a tiny foil-covered object, his hand reflexively attempting to grasp the morsel as he whispers a raspy plea, "Choc-o-late . . ." (*Music like Joe Ely's "Me & Billy the Kid Never Got Along"*)

Future Episodes

01/29/03

MESQUITE GROVE

MGS Goes Bowling

In an attempt to foster camaraderie and raise team spirit at the Stable, Guy and Earl arrange for a bowling night, which meets with mixed levels of enthusiasm from the group.

Loretta and Mimi seize the opportunity to shop for new wardrobes with Loretta gravitating towards *haute courtier*, but Mimi winning the fashion contest with her classic blue-collar league attire and equestrian-themed special-order bowling ball.

Winnie and Guy vie to be on the same team as Shane in order to get the best view of Shane's behind as he skillfully hurls his bowling ball towards the quivering pins.

Billy and Bobby terrorize the patrons of the bowling alley.

Roy and Slim observe the disruption to their regular night of league bowling.

The evening is rescued from boredom by the arrival of Tinka Varyeur and her Wood Units entering the bowling alley. (Music like that from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* plays as Earl and Tinka eye each other.) Tinka challenges Earl and MGS patrons to a contest which threatens to evolve into a "Jackass-like" episode.

The Stable Hands and Cinco de Mayo

Plans for the festivities to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* are reaching climactic levels. The hands at MGS have purchased a young goat from Roy and Slim's ranch for the *cabrito* they will lovingly barbeque as part of the holiday's tradition.

Zola St. John stops by to admire the cute, young kid and is horrified to learn of its approaching demise. She makes plans for a "kid"-napping, enlisting the aid of Mimi and her over-sized SUV. The resulting standoff is reminiscent of the Alamo, complete with the musical rendition of *Deguello*.

Bola threatens to cutoff Earl's chocolate supply if the goat is not returned. A work stoppage ensues with the MGS patrons forced to perform the stable hands duties. Ivy faints

with battle fatigue from her efforts at continually switching to whichever side she sees as the winning and/or PC side of the argument. Big Jake is brought in for negotiations, with a happy ending for all, except Big Jake's checkbook.

Roy and Slim Consider Emu Ranching – Anna Nicole Smith Visits MGS

Roy and Slim watch an infomercial on emu ranching and decide that is where their fortunes lie. They are further inspired to obtain a celebrity endorsement and Roy reminds Slim that they attended grade school with Anna Nicole Smith. After contacting Anna Nicole and explaining to her what remarkable results they've had with the emu oil and their dry rancher's skin, Anna Nicole agrees to visit Mesquite Grove.

While at Mesquite Grove, Anna expresses a desire to see MG stables and is introduced to Mimi Cartwright while there. She forms an instant friendship with Mimi and instead of endorsing Roy and Slim's emu venture, decides to team up with Mimi to develop a line of riding breeches for "big boned" gals, to be called *Mimi's*. (Music like Queen's *Fat Bottomed Girls*)

Roy and Slim are discouraged that Anna has lost interest in their venture and attempt to unload their stock of emu skin products on Earl by promising him "fountain of youth" results.

Sister Peg Visits MGS

Inspired by Earl's suggestion to move to Mesquite Grove, Sister Peg leaves the hospital in Paris, Texas. She decides to pay a visit to MG Stables and while touring the facility is further inspired to take up riding and pursue Shane, at least in her heart. (*Hears Gregorian Chants when she meets Shane*)

The self-absorbed group at MGS initially fails to associate Sister Peg's large "hat" with a holy order. Loretta pouts that she may have been scooped on the latest in helmet attire. They also fail to notice her prosthetic leg.

Sister Peg is attracted to one of the MGS lesson horses, JP (John Paul) and when she brushes his forelock aside discovers a white blaze in the shape of a cross. She requests a riding lesson during which she loses her balance and falls from the horse, sending her prosthetic leg flying. After the initial gasp, the MGS crowd becomes aware that it is a prosthesis and joins Mimi in yelling to Billy and Bobby to catch the Dachshunds, as they have just run off with the leg.

Sister Peg is unhurt in the fall and vows to have a special leg made with a riding boot for her newfound sport.

The Awards Banquet

The annual awards banquet for the *Texas Equestrian Association* is being held at an Upscale hotel in Dallas. The MG entourage is decked out in their finest.

This is the function Loretta most anticipates all year—not because she is winning any riding awards but rather because she can win the silent vote for most fashionable. She also feels it is her duty to instruct their group in proper table etiquette but after her dissertation on the correct way to pass the salt and pepper and the proper direction to point a butter knife blade, she confuses the group by placing a wrapped frozen pat of butter under her butt to warm it. (“It’s OK, no one is looking.”)

Earl is the master of ceremonies for the event and uses his position to annoy Tinka at every opportunity, including mispronouncing her name as “Stinka Warrior.”

Billy sets up a potential hazard for Earl by pouring salad oil on the podium and utilizing Bobby’s love of electricity to rig the microphone to shock Earl. In the bedlam that follows, the formal event degrades into a food fight, resulting in the elite equestrians being evicted from the hotel.

Season Finale – Cell Phone Scavenger Hunt

In the main ring, Earl tries out a new horse for a jumper prospect. Bebe and the MGS entourage are standing outside the opposite end of the arena as Earl approaches a 3’6” oxer jump which his green horse finds disconcerting. As they sail over the jump, the young horse’s “landing gear” (legs) fail to deploy. The horse flips and the group sees Earl flying through the air although from their angle they are unable to determine where he lands.

As they run toward the wreckage of horse and rider, their eyes scan the ground, the nearby bushes, and the back side of jumps with no sign of Earl. The horse is thrashing around on its back like a turtle. Bebe remembers that Earl was wearing his cell phone and asks Guy to try calling it. A hush falls on the group as they listen for . . . *The William Tell Overture*, Earl’s signature ring. They hear the melody, though somewhat muffled, observe the horse rolling side to side, trying to right itself, and see an arm, sticking out from under the horse’s back.

OTHER POSSIBLE EPISODES

01/14/03

Sweet Potato Queen's Big Ass Cookbook

Mimi sees a segment of *Good Morning America* with Charles Gibson and Diane Sawyer, hosting the Sweet Potato Queens from Jackson, Mississippi, and promoting the publication of their new book, *Sweet Potato Queen's Big Ass Cookbook*. A transformation begins in Mimi which allows her to slowly begin to accept, and finally to embrace, her big bootie.

Anna Nicole Smith, who is originally from Mexia, Texas becomes Mimi's hero. Eventually, Mimi gets up the courage to contact Anna Nicole. They become friends and eventually create a line of designer riding clothes for the big-bottomed gal.

Eye of the Earl

Mimi and Loretta go on a shopping spree in Big D. Billy and Bobby are forced to go along against their wishes. The twins begin to play Cowboys & Indians in the department store using the huge circular display racks as their hideouts. While in hiding from his mute brother, Billy overhears a riding discussion between Loretta and Mimi in which Mimi proclaims, "I wish I had Earl's eye." Misinterpreting the meaning of the phrase in his own little, demented brain, Billy vows to "capture" Earl's eye for his momma.

Beer Theft

Lush trainer stealing beer which is intended for use in helping horses sweat.

Fear of Carney

Related to Stoner's Winnebago fiasco. Character walks with an odd limp and has a strong fear of carnivals and the people who work them. When Anna Nicole visits the stable with her entourage, they arrive in a Winnebago sending Stoner (Stoney Burke? – Birch) over the edge because they look so much like carnival people.

01/27/03

Bat Humbug Mitzvah

To distract her instructor, and herself from her fear of having to canter her mount, eight-year-old Rozlyn Hashanah pleads her case for not cantering by informing Guy of all the stress in her life, most notably her "impending" bat mitzvah! Guy replies, "Roz, you're only eight," to which Roz responds, "Yeah, but I have to read the whole *Torah!*"