

*Character Descriptions*

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**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.