

# Life *on the* Effus





**A band of “misfits” keeps  
this Arizona outfit afloat  
in the desert.**

**By Tom Moates**

**Photos by Harry Whitney**

**L**IKE MANY CATTLE RANCHES, THE EFFUS RANCH depends on American Quarter Horses for its general operation. It's a working cattle ranch, but owner Rosie Lloyd, 68, diversified years ago. She offers boarding, riding lessons and year-round guided trail rides for the public on the 19,000-acre spread a few miles outside of the popular tourist town of Wickenburg, Arizona.

Rosie's horses, however, didn't come to the ranch via the channels one might expect for working ranch, lesson or trail horses. To qualify for her herd, a horse usually was seen as a bit of an outlaw, rescued from a bad situation or retired from a life working elsewhere. She provides such cast-outs an opportunity to continue a productive life working cattle and toting folks around when otherwise their careers were over.

She chuckles when describing how she often sees other people's "trash" as a treasure. It's just part of what she does on the Effus.

"As one of my boarders said the other day, 'Rosie, why is it that you have horses nobody else wants?' I said, 'Well, I guess because they don't want them!'"

"I see something special there. So that's pretty much what we've got here. They're horses that have been abused or people just don't want them; they'd have trouble with them. So now, they are somebody special because everybody comes and rides most all of them. They are wonderful!"

"For the most part, that's the story of everything I have here, including the ranch – nobody wanted the ranch, nobody wanted the dogs I have, that's what I do! I often think we are the misfits."

Misfits or not, things at the Effus come together as a good fit. To see the horses work, you'd never know they had previously been labeled as problems.

"They are such a blessing to people who come out here," Rosie says. "I just run these cattle and take all kinds of people out on the rides. I've been here on the Effus about 14 years, and we've never



had any problems at all with them.”

Life on the Effus is generally better for many of these horses than where they came from, according to Rosie, which she believes is one factor contributing to why they improve so quickly. Also, she picked up many horse-working skills from her father, who came from a long line of horsemen.

“I’ve never gone to a clinic,” she says, “but I used to rodeo and show horses, so that just kind of went along with what we did.”

Rosie has been an AQHA member for about 40 years. Her lifelong ranching experiences have made American Quarter Horses her favorite breed for everything she does. There are 19 horses and a mule on the Effus; the mule and 11 of the horses are Rosie’s, and all but a couple are Quarter Horses.

“I just can’t tell you how much I love Quarter Horses,” Rosie says. “A good horse is something you can ride and do something with. Quarter Horses, to me, have a super mind. I have one horse that’s named Just Enough Music, and he’s a big gray horse. I have a Doc Bar horse, his name is Doc Tom Sugar. And then I have a Dash For Cash, I just call him ‘Jack.’”

“As an all-in-all, Quarter Horses are the best temperament-wise, and I’ve had a lot of good horses. This Dash For Cash horse, I’m pretty crazy about him. I punch cows on him. He came out of Texas. He walks long, and I like those big long-walking horses. You can do anything in the world with him, too. I’m just a Quarter Horse person. I like the looks of them.”

Rosie grew up on a ranch in Arizona, where her father was in the horse and mule business. She says she saw many abused horses in her early life and, even as a kid, wanted to help better their situations.

“That’s how I was raised,” she says. “I don’t like to see



people afraid of horses, and I don't like to see horses afraid of people. That was clear back when I was a kid. That has just kind of been my story.

"So I take these horses – I've got one horse out here, he's my best cow-punching horse, he's still a little afraid of people – I take them and ride them. We just visit. There's just something I see in them, and they do what I ask them to do. It is so neat, and I just really have to praise the Lord because he brings us these horses along when we need them."

Aside from the horses, Rosie's own story has a few twists in it. She was married for 40 years, and early in her marriage, she and her husband bought a very productive cattle ranch near Grand Junction, Colorado.

"It ended up to where we needed to sell it," Rosie says, "so we sold our ranch up in Colorado in '98 and decided to go ahead and invest in (the Effus). The place where we call the Headquarters had a real nice set of pens, but it was old. Everything was very old here. We ended up taking what we had to work with and fixing it."

At first, the couple raised Professional Bull Riders bucking bulls on the Effus. But Rosie's husband decided he didn't want to continue with the business or the ranch.

"It caused a great big upheaval and a divorce," Rosie says. "I said, 'I feel like we left a pretty nice ranch up in Colorado, and I'm not going to waste this.' He ended up selling all the bulls, and I ended up getting a set of cows, and I went to raising pairs, beef cattle. They keep it going. They're just desert cows, but boy, they pay the bills. It's just one step at a time, and I keep saying we are blessed to be able to get this to share it with people who want to see what Arizona really looks like. My theme is, 'We're not fancy but we're real.'"

One of the current challenges Rosie faces is a prolonged drought. She runs 80 mother cows, although in better climate conditions, she could run considerably more. The horses are used for branding calves, gathering and sorting cattle, checking fences – everything related to running the ranch except for hauling feed. Most of the working ranch horses double as trail-riding horses. Rosie has one full-time employee, and the two of them do most of the work on the place.

"We've got some good dogs, we've got some good horses," Rosie says when asked how she manages the ranch. "This is all I've ever done, so this is just a natural thing for me. On normal days, we feed horses, do normal chores around here, check cattle, haul hay. We don't have to haul water, we pump it. We've got five drinkers and 23 miles of pipe here; we pump water from Headquarters over west."

Tourism plays into the mix, too. Somewhere along the way, Wickenburg was coined the "dude ranch capital of the world," and today that business remains a part of the area's tourist attraction. Rosie benefits from both out-of-town riders and local riders who want to explore the Arizona desert.

"I have a ride coming up from the city saddle club," Rosie says. "There are about 10 riders going out with these horses for a two-hour ride. We have 19,000 acres; I just don't turn people loose out here. Most people who come out here would rather stay on the trail. Now, I have had people come who have their own horses – for example the posse from the Mesa-Chandler area. They wanted to come out and just bring their tents and stay here and ride. So, they did that. They had their own catering service and a place to stay, so we just hosted that for them. That's always welcomed. The guest ranches here never have trail rides for outsiders, because you have to stay there to ride their horses. So they will call me and send people



here. It's kind of word of mouth and that sort of thing. I don't have a computer."

The Effus has no computer, sees most of its ranch work conducted with Quarter Horse-power, and has a serviceable but rather antiquated Headquarters and infrastructure – like Rosie says, "not fancy but real!" It's a real authentic place to visit and go for a ride.

"I guess I'm just a ranch woman," Rosie sums it up. "I gave my first riding lesson at 12 years old to my school teacher because she was so afraid of horses."

And that set her on a path of helping people – and troubled horses.

"It's the time that you put in on (the horses that are troubled)," she says, "and they'll do anything in the world for you. More than likely, the problems people have with the horses are the people."

And, in turn, as she has helped these horses, they've stepped up and helped her make a go of things at the Effus.

"It has just absolutely turned out to be something really special," Rosie says. "These horses do their job and do it well. That's kind of the little success story we have with the misfits. There's just a little story behind every one of them." ■

*To contact the Effus Ranch, call (928) 277-7703.*