

SENRAB, THE JUMPING FOOL

© Kat D. Walden



Senrab and Jane Arrington collecting a trophy. This is the only standing photo found to date by the author.

April 1953, marked the birth of a red chestnut colt with a blaze, white socks on the near side and a belly spot. He was very well bred, sired by an early Northwest champion and out of a daughter of his breeder's foundation stallion. C. Harold Palmer registered the colt as Senrab, and the Arabian Horse Registry of America gave him the number 8787.

The colt's pedigree promised performance ability. It represented a Who's Who of early American breeders who trained the majority of their stock to ride/drive because they saw the Arab as a working breed. Accordingly, even horses that were not famous in the show ring were likely to have been proven in endurance, polo, harness, jumping, stock work or other saddle training. It was reasonable to expect that Senrab would be a good riding horse as well.

Inexplicably, by the time he was four years old, Senrab seemed destined only for dog food. Although no one could figure out why, he showed a violent antipathy towards any suggestion of training, other horses, people and stalls. He had become so notorious around Coos Bay, Oregon, that his frustrated owners could not even give him away.

Fortunately for Senrab, veteran trainer Roy Traylor, then head riding instructor at the Parnell Preparatory Girls School in Whittier, California, came to Oregon in search of horses for the school. Traylor was persuaded to take Senrab as a free "bonus" in order to get another horse he wanted. How Senrab was loaded into the trailer for the trip back to California is unknown.

Initially tires were hung all around the walls of Senrab's stall at the school so that he had something yielding to hit whenever someone tried to catch him. Although no one could see much potential in the gelding, it is to Traylor's credit that he did not simply give up and send Senrab off to killer buyers. Instead Traylor persisted in his attempts to train Senrab; by his later estimate, backing him took three times longer than usual. It seemed unlikely that Senrab would develop the quiet manners needed for pleasure or hunter competition, and he was not considered pretty enough for halter, so Traylor decided to make a jumper of him.

Senrab begged to differ. At first he acted as though jumping was cruel and unusual punishment; it took months of work before he consented to hop over a one-foot high pole. He made progress at a snail's pace, but Traylor was too stubborn to give up on him. He accepted being trailered and became used to the bustle of show grounds, but when he was finally entered in some classes, another snag popped up. He would behave like a perfect gentleman until he got into the ring, then would usually refuse the very first jump and never completed a single course. Traylor came close to giving up on him then.

Finally in May of 1962 at the annual Rose Bowl Riders Show in Oak Grove Park, with the highest jump at four feet, Senrab finished a course in a class. That day the gelding learned that the better he jumped, the more people clapped, and oddly enough, a ham was born. He had a few more lessons to learn, but within a few years, people were saying that Senrab counted the crowd before he took his first jump on course, and he preferred packed houses. He always charged into the ring with his tail up over his back and his head high. His jumping form was unorthodox but effective.

During the early and mid-1960's, Senrab competed at all the major shows in the West, usually ridden by school riding instructor Jane Arrington but also by various students of the school. He won at Del Mar and Santa Barbara. He won the jumper stakes at Pomona and many children's classes at Del Mar, in which he easily handled the size limit of 5' over a 6' spread (child riders were expected to be tougher in those days!). He would and did jump nearly anything he was put to, from tractors to stacked-up wheelbarrows, and he earned the nickname "the jumping fool."

Senrab often showed successfully in FEI classes carrying 165 pounds, and he cleared 6'4" walls in competition scores of times. Traylor regularly lunged him over 6'6" walls at home and firmly believed that Senrab could have cleared 7' walls easily if he had been started under saddle a little younger and schooled more. Traylor's faith in the gelding is shown by the fact that for a number of years he offered \$1000 to any Arabian that could out-jump Senrab. No one ever answered the challenge.

From the time that Senrab began to win in shows, his temperament gradually mellowed, especially towards other horses. He was no longer a maverick, and he stopped acting like one. He eventually became a favorite at the school.

In his late teens, Senrab was retired from open competition. From then on he starred as a lesson mount for the school and did some exhibition jumping. Although he competed over big jump courses for close to a decade, Senrab remained sound and enjoyed robust health.

Earlier it was stated that Senrab's breeding gave the expectation that he would become a performance horse. He was by **Potif** #3942 out of **Mufissa** #4887. Potif's sire ***Latif** was an *en utero* Polish import, although he was by the Davenport stallion **Antez**, who was exported to Poland then imported back to the U.S. Senrab's sire line was ***Deyr** (desert-bred). Mufissa was by **Musafir** out of the Kellogg-bred ***Nasik** daughter Nafissa, whose dam line was the famous war mare ***Wadduda** (desert-bred).

Within this broad outline, several famous performance horses contributed to Senrab's genetic makeup. Two of his great-grandires, **Ronek** and ***Nasik**, were themselves athletic and also good sires. **Ronek** was 5-gaited like his sire ***Raseyn** (who had also jumped to four feet), and Ronek was also used to work cattle. He was a brilliant performer who could still wow an audience at the age of 20. ***Nasik** was well known for his free trotting action and for passing it on to his offspring. Musafir's maternal grandsire, ***Mirzam** won 3-gaited classes in open shows (all breeds) and was also known for passing on his trotting ability. Senrab had one line to **El Sabok**, the only stallion to finish first in one of the U.S. Official Endurance Rides, which covered 300 miles in five days with horses carrying full cavalry gear (although he was disqualified for a minor injury which occurred very early in the ride). Finally, Senrab had several lines to the celebrated jumper and trotting mare ***Naomi** (desert-bred), which may account for the springs in his legs.



Two views of Senrab and Jane Arrington in action over big spread jumps in open competition.



A once-misfit gelding with an uncertain future, Senrab responded to all the patient training invested in him with an outstanding show career in all-breed competition. Early on, he was also shown at Arabian breed shows, but the course heights quickly became too low to hold his attention. After all, Senrab was a star, and he thrived on the challenge at a big jumper show. His achievements as a jumper hold up well more than 30 years later. It seems safe to say that no other Arabian in North America has met the big boys (mostly Thoroughbreds in those days) in FEI and puissance high-wall jumping classes and come away the winner. Certainly no Arabian competing today is showing at this level. But since people tend to think that only big horses can handle big jumping courses, who knows how many Senrabs might be out there just waiting for a chance to prove what they can do?