

Frank Kuntz regularly rides a horse from a herd of some 200 Nokota horses kept on a pasture near Linton.

wealthy French nobleman, who founded the town of Medora, was a consummate horseman who favored his Indian horses.

But the Indian ponies were actually shunned by most horsemen of the time. With their plain bald-faces they were considered ugly, but the animals were hardy and agile, almost ideally suited for the conditions on the Great Plains. J. Frank Dobie, a scholar of early western horses, wrote...“it is performance that counts and Indian horses often deceived their looks...it is almost unbelievable how much the Indians can accomplish with their horses...”

The Marquis had no prejudice

against the Indian horse. He recognized their suitability for the rugged Badlands environment. Apparently the Marquis intended to begin breeding horses on a large scale, with these Sioux mares as his foundation stock. He never did however, and many of his horses subsequently drifted into the Badlands.

The Kuntz brothers first took notice of these wild horses because of their physical suitability for the Great American Horse Race circuit. To be competitive in these long distance, cross-country races, a horse must combine speed with endurance and agility.

“They are big-boned and built for the type of rough riding the cowboys and Indians did in those days,” explains Leo Kuntz.

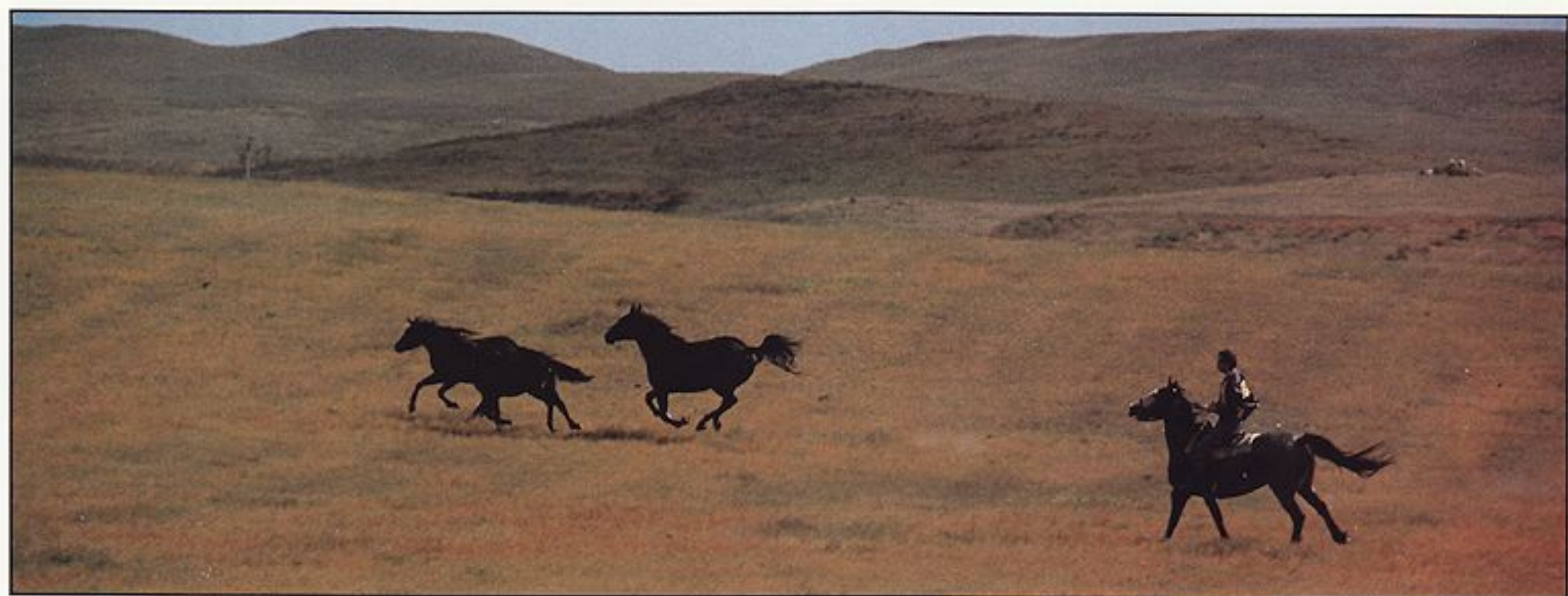
The brothers bought a few horses from a 1978 Park Service round-up near Medora, and immediately recognized that the horses were a breed unto themselves.

“There is a large number of roans and different colors like blues, red, blacks, grays and spotted ones,” says Frank. “And their two-colored eyes were a characteristic of Indian horses.”

But it takes more than a hunch to identify a new breed of horse.

Stepping into the farmhouse where Leo, Frank and ten other Kuntz siblings grew up, Frank makes a pot of coffee while Leo rummages through a stack of research they have dug up on the horses.

“Look at these old pictures,” he says, leaning over a pile of 100-year



The Nokota breed is valued for its heartiness and a combination of speed, strength and endurance.