

Clockwise from top left:  
*Just Fine Fortune and Kathy  
Theissen; Big Bend Doc Davis  
and Mona Sancoucy-Gaudet*  
(Photo © Bob Moseder); *West Mt  
Winston & David Macmillan*  
(Photo © Kimberly Dobin)

# THE ASCENDANTS

Ten Morgans have ascended to the ranks of Grand Prix Dressage in the history of our breed. Their stories may provide inspiration for a younger generation.

By Karin Weight

Very few dressage horses ever go beyond the first or second level, and the horses that reach the FEI (Federation Equestrian Internationale) levels of Prix St Georges and above are held in very high respect. But there are three huge steps up from PSG to reach Grand Prix, the pinnacle of all dressage competition. Performing Grand Prix is a huge accomplishment that requires a horse to have the athletic ability, soundness, and mental attitude to endure years of vigorous training. The current test requires the horse to perform various movements including the piaffe (a super-collected trot in place), passage (a slow, collected trot with suspension that gives the impression of slow motion), and canter pirouettes. Also, any of you who have struggled with flying changes will know, a test which requires 31 flying changes, including 15 performed at every stride, is difficult indeed.

There are those who think that only European Warmbloods have the ability to be successful upper-level dressage mounts, but there have been more than 40 registered Morgans who have shown at the FEI levels in recognized competitions, and ten of these fabulous Morgans have had the ability and the training to ascend to the very top: the Grand Prix. These are the stories of those ten horses.



### W-A-W BEAUX HEIR

The very first Morgan to show at Grand Prix was W-A-W Beaux Heir (Beckridge Beaufield x My Donna Gal C), a Canadian owned and bred stallion with the old-time California bloodlines that are so valued by Western working trainers today. G. W. Northcott of Will-O-Way Morgans combined the bloodlines of Leo Beckley, W.

### JUST FINE FORTUNE

At 16.2, the big-boned Just Fine Fortune (IL Supreme x Sunflower Countess) was as big and powerful as a moose, so Kathy Theissen affectionately called him Bullwinkle. She bought the six-year-old gelding in 1979 even though he was hot, rowdy, and spooky. Although Kathy was an experienced professional, she had never been on a horse that showed such incredible elasticity and power; she figured that he would make a terrific jumper. Kathy's first problem was that the owner wanted \$2,000 and she didn't have it, but she made the decision to sell her truck and the big gelding was hers. "I just fell in love with him—he felt so powerful, I just had to have him," Kathy said.

Bullwinkle's former training was for saddle seat, but his previous owners had never had any success with him, so Kathy decided to start him from the beginning using dressage basics. After two years of her training, the horse was still a disaster. She said that he was incredibly talented, but was terrified of

T. Carter and Roland Hill to produce a bright chestnut colt with a big blaze and one high sock behind. Foaled in March of 1969, the horse was kept a stallion and sired 19 foals, most with their sire's flashy chestnut coat and excellent disposition.

G.W. Northcott's teenage daughter, Trudie, was a saddle-seat rider who started dressage lessons in order to improve her riding. In 1972 she sold the horse she had been riding in lessons and, as her interest in the discipline grew, she realized that she only had one horse available, the three-year-old stallion that her father had bred. She was impressed with his correct gaits and abilities, so she decided to take him on as a project and see what she could do with him. Beaux was a gentle young stallion who had been raised properly and always displayed proper manners around other horses. Trudie had no difficulty handling him.

Soon dressage became a passion and, with careful work, she and her horse moved through the levels. By the early 1980's she was competing in the FEI classes and her horse was making waves in the Canadian dressage world. Beaux was the first Morgan to receive a Canadian National Top Ten Dressage Award. In 1982 he was ranked fifth in the nation at Intermediare I, tenth nationally at Prix St Georges, and took the reserve championship at Intermediare 1 at the Pacific Division of the Canadian National Championships. All this was accomplished in competition against all horse breeds.

Trudie took a break from showing in 1983 when her first child was born, but she continued working with him and kept him in fit condition. It was in 1986 that Trudie Northcott-Steele reached her final goal with W-A-W Beaux Heir and competed at Grand Prix. It was icing on the cake when she discovered that her horse was the first registered Morgan in the world to reach this level.

Trudie remembers Beaux with fondness and is impressed with the ability of the Morgan breed for dressage. She says that Morgans are people horses who are willing to please, intelligent, and usually stay very sound.

June of 1988 was a momentous month in the world of Morgan dressage, as two horses attained Grand Prix status during those thirty days: Just Fine Fortune and Big Bend Doc Davis.



everything, was horrible in the trailer, and went completely wild if she lost a stirrup. She was ready to throw in the towel, but, at a clinic, Olympian Hilda Gurney convinced her that the horse had real talent, saying “Don’t you dare quit!” You can’t disregard that opinion, so Kathy determined to do everything she could to let Bullwinkle reach his potential.

She turned him out to pasture 24/7 in the hope that the heat and bugs would make him appreciate and depend on her. It worked. Bullwinkle gradually responded and showed her that he really wanted to please, always trying to guess what she wanted. Kathy decided to ignore conventional wisdom and practice the tests over and over again. Yes, he did memorize them and anticipate, but it seemed to make him appreciate that the tests really weren’t such a big deal and that he could manage them.

Kathy and her Morgan received national attention when they were selected to ride at the 1983 AHSA (now USEF) International Judging Forum in front of 200 dressage judges. Jaap Pott, of the Netherlands, was impressed with Bullwinkle and especially remarked on the correctness of the Morgan’s extravagant extended trot.

It was the spring of 1988 when Kathy realized that Bullwinkle

was finally ready for the big day. It would also be Kathy’s first Grand Prix ride, and she found herself full of excitement as she sat down to memorize the test. On June 25, she and Bullwinkle entered at “A” in Rochester, Minnesota, and her dream of training a horse through the levels and showing at Grand Prix came true.

At the same time, she also felt a little sad. Bullwinkle was 15 years old and was beginning to suffer some minor back problems. The ride was still connected and round, but his stride wasn’t as free as it had been in the past.

Kathy says that Bullwinkle could be a difficult horse to work with, but he was unusually athletic and eventually completely trusted her. He was also entertaining—if he wanted to go out to pasture, he would pick his halter off the hook and throw it at anyone who passed by his stall. And her efforts did pay off; she says that getting so close to a horse and being able to understand him, overcome difficulties, and train him up to the Grand Prix level made the effort very worthwhile. The musical freestyle was his real forte, and until it was retired, the Brightonwood Farm Show included a freestyle perpetual trophy in his honor which reads “For Bullwinkle, Who Taught Us How to Dance.”



### BIG BEND DOC DAVIS

How to describe Big Bend Doc Davis? His owner and rider, Mona Sansoucy-Gaudet calls him “the horse of a lifetime.” The rest of us know him as a Morgan legend, one of the great ones.

Sired by Green Mt. Doc Bird out of Big Bend Connie F, the colt could have been sold to someone who would make him a star in English pleasure or pleasure driving, as he certainly had the lofty gaits and a disposition that would take him anywhere. Instead, as he floated across Big Bend’s pasture in perfect balance, Davey caught the eye of Mona when he was still a weanling and she was in high school. Indeed, young Mona showed him very successfully in harness, winning the two-year-old pleasure driving at the

Connecticut Morgan Show and both the two-year-old pleasure driving and the two-year-old futurity pleasure driving at the big New England Regional in Northampton. Talented as he was in pleasure driving Mona had caught the dressage bug and, when he was old enough for the saddle, his young rider headed him toward the dressage arena.

Most of Davey’s training was done by Mona on her own, but she was able to take a few lessons each year with the renowned Dr. H.L.M. Van Schaik, who assured her that she would never be lucky enough to own a comparable horse. He said that she needed to make a commitment to give him the chance to develop to the best of his ability. Mona also took lessons from Michael Poulin, Volker Brommann, and Lee Ferguson. Lee arranged for Mona to accompany her to Germany, where she spent three hours a day developing her seat on the lunge line without stirrups or reins.

Davey progressed rapidly through the levels, with very few bumps along the way. The problems he did have were with canter, especially the flying lead changes, which he found a bit difficult. At 15.2, he was considered small for dressage, but his size didn’t seem to affect his placings, “There’s nothing better to me than to go in there and beat all those fancy European horses,” Mona stated after winning the third level regional reserve championships in 1982 and 1983.

Davey made a splash at open shows. He was usually the only Morgan and often the smallest horse at the open dressage shows, yet he was consistently in the high ribbons, placing ahead of imported Warmbloods. In 1986 he went to the first United States National Freestyle Championship, winning first place musical freestyle for 4<sup>th</sup> level and above and the high score of the day.

The culmination of Mona’s and Davey’s career came in June of 1988, when the two of them performed the Grand Prix test, and over the loudspeaker came the announcement that Davey was the only American-bred horse at the show. They also were

entered in the Grand Prix musical freestyle, but during the warm-up he stumbled and damaged his suspensory ligament. Mona was unaware that he was injured; the stallion simply ignored his pain and performed the difficult movements, ending up with a second place in the large class.

Throughout Davey's career, he was used as a breeding stallion, but he had impeccable manners and was entirely trustworthy.

Although Mona's interest was in open dressage, she never forgot her Morgan friends, and Davey performed exhibitions at all-Morgan shows in New England. Although he was not exhibited after 1988, his official retirement was held at the NEMHS in 1991. The noise was deafening from the standing-room-only crowd, who

watched the high school movements. This was the horse that had once had problems with flying changes? Not a soul would have guessed that as he exhibited perfect changes at every stride while on a 20-meter circle, a feat that most Olympic horses would find extraordinarily difficult!

On a personal note, a few years ago I was at a clinic with Gary Rockwell, an Olympic rider and two-time Olympic dressage judge. He was reminiscing about a little Morgan that used to "...clean up at the dressage shows in New England. He was a great little horse with such a superb attitude...he'd do anything for the young woman who rode him." He was talking about Big Bend Doc Davis, a Morgan he still remembered after all those years.



### TEN PENNY ACTION

Ten Penny Action (Applevale Voyager x Doverdale Bambi-Jean) was not a particularly good mover in comparison with the Warmbloods that Janet Moulding usually trained, but the 15.2 hand black Morgan had a tough attitude, intelligence and love of work and he was the one who gave her the Grand Prix rides!

Action was a three-year-old when he was sent to Janet for his initial saddle work and then he was sold and out of Janet's life for a few years. In the interim he had been re-sold twice, but he had learned the fine art of removing riders by bucking, and none of his owners could get along with him. When he was six years old his owner asked Janet if she would take him back into training and sell him for her.

In 1985 Janet found herself the reluctant owner of a naughty seven-year-old who was completely unsuitable for any potential buyer, especially since he managed to unseat them! She realized that he was simply bored and frustrated with his work, so she started showing him at second level in order to keep his mind occupied.

Janet said that her "good" horses were all European Warmbloods who kept hitting the end of their ability levels. They were sent to Lendon Gray for training, were shown, then sold.

Janet, a long-time student of Lendon Gray's, kept Action home and practiced what she was learning from Lendon. After a while, the horse was progressing so well that she took him to Lendon, who was impressed with the horse and gave Janet encouragement and help through all the succeeding years of training needed to climb up the levels.

Action was extremely strong with no conformation flaws that could create problems as he performed the physically demanding work required at the upper levels. He was able to really sit behind at piaffe, a stumbling block for many top-level dressage horses. However, he lacked a natural ability for suspension or elasticity in his gaits. Mentally, he was very clever and often tried to outsmart his rider and do things in his own fashion. One-tempi flying changes were a challenge because of his lack of suspension, but eventually he learned to do those consistently. He was always unflappable and a real ham who loved an audience.

On the road to Grand Prix, Janet and Action collected a multitude of year-end high point awards from the United States Dressage Federation, the New England Dressage Association and the American Morgan Horse Association. Action was awarded the AMHA Bronze, Silver and Gold Medallions, and Janet earned USDF Bronze and Silver Rider Medals.

1993 was the year that Janet and Action represented the Morgan breed in the Grand Prix level tests. Like many horses, that first year ended up with scores in the high 50's, but Janet still needed two scores above 60 in order to achieve the coveted USDF Gold Medal. Work that winter progressed and probably Janet would have achieved that high honor except for an unfortunate accident when another horse jumped into Action's paddock and kicked him just above the right hock. The flesh was punctured through to the bone, and Action's stifle suffered numerous fractures. After months of recuperation, the tough gelding was completely sound and able to do the Grand Prix movements. However, Janet felt that it was really too much to expect him to get fit enough to compete at that level again, so he became a schoolmaster for her eleven-year-old daughter, who was able to show him at third level a couple of years later. The young Kate was really more interested in eventing than in dressage, so Action was retired from competition in his early 20's, remaining the family pet and the barn prankster.

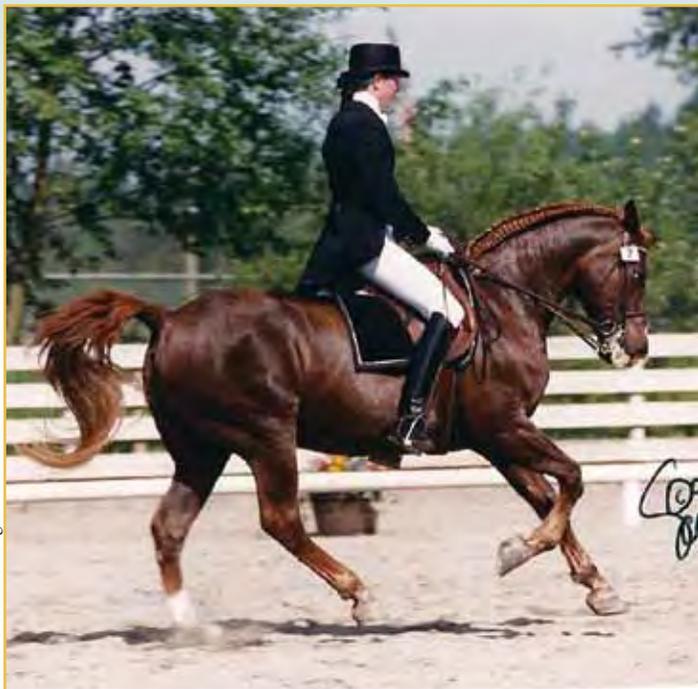


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### BECKRIDGE PATREX

When Deborah Dougherty met seven-year-old Beckridge Patrex she was a teenager with no expectations of ever doing dressage. Bred by Leo Beckridge, the Morgan's breeding (Merry Dexter out of Beckridge Patora, a Broadwall St Pat daughter) was quite respectable, but he was in poor condition and had minimal training. Nonetheless, Debbie just fell in love with the little gelding, and the feeling seemed to be mutual.

Debbie rode her chestnut gelding in 4-H where they competed in Western, saddle seat, hunt seat, trail and even side saddle. She took some dressage lessons to improve her riding and went to a few dressage schooling shows. Eventually, as she aged out of 4-H, she started getting more serious about dressage, started taking lessons on a regular basis and was soon riding second level.

### EFM DESPERADO

Laura and James Smith had big plans for their little colt. EFM Desperado (EFM Odin x Woodside Celebrity) was bred to be a driving horse, which is where their interests lay, and his early training showed that he would be good at it. When he was a three-year-old they sent him to Kathy Casey for ridden dressage work as they were of the opinion that this would improve his driven dressage and cones work.

Desi was only 14.3 and, as an immature horse, he lacked muscle and strength. He did not have lofty gaits with suspension, but he did move correctly and he possessed a big heart and a lot of determination. After he developed some muscle and maturity, he decided that running was really fun and, whenever she rode in wide open spaces, Kathy wondered how she would ever be able to stop him. Once as she was hacking Desi through a facility where a tandem of Freisians were schooling for combined driving, Desi decided it was time for a nice run. Kathy used the classical method of putting a run-away into a tight circle and literally "circled the

In 1990, when Pattie was fifteen, Debbie started riding with Michael Osinski, the first instructor who really believed the little Morgan could get to the FEI levels. Osinski's superb skills and encouragement made a huge difference and by 1992 Debbie was riding Pattie in recognized competitions at Prix St Georges and Intermediare I, qualifying for the Region 6 championships in both levels. 1993 marked the year that the USDF ranked him fifth in the nation against all breeds in Intermediare I musical freestyle.

Two years later they started Grand Prix competition, only to find out that there was a huge difference between the judges' expectations from Intermediare to Grand Prix. They were sometimes lenient with the "cute little horse" at Prix St Georges, a little less so at Intermediare and at Grand Prix, Debbie discovered, "If you're going to ride the Big Boys' test, you had better expect to be measured with the Big Boys' yardstick." Debbie's gelding was now 19 years old, but with typical Morgan sturdiness, he was still sound enough to do the extraordinarily physical movements required for Grand Prix, and she took him to numerous shows at that level for two years.

One of the things that Debbie found difficult was relaxing and just letting her horse do his best work. Like many riders, she tried too hard and found herself putting too much pressure on herself and her horse. At the end of her second season at Grand Prix, she had one score above 60 and drove 400 miles to her last show in hopes of receiving the second 60 needed for her USDF Gold Medal. She knew that if she didn't make that score, she wouldn't have another chance for many, many years. She and her husband made the long drive and she focused on just being satisfied to give the best performance she could. She came out of the ring feeling that the test was a good one and that there was a good chance she might have earned that elusive score. As it turned out, the judge gave her a 61.2, and she had just earned her Gold Medal! As an added bonus, she found that she was the first to receive this honor on a Morgan.

Debbie has ridden other good horses since, but she says, "Of all the horses in the world, there has never been, nor will there ever be, another Pattie. His best talent was always his mind. He was an extraordinary individual, the best friend a girl could ever have."



Photo © Scarlett Pflugrad

wagon” before she got her horse to slow down. The Freisians and their driver were wide-eyed indeed!

By the time he was scheduled to return to his driving career, Desi was five years old, getting good scores at second level, and showing a good deal of promise for advanced dressage. The Smiths’ decided to leave him with Kathy and see what she could accomplish with him. That was an excellent decision.

As is common with Morgans, the flying changes required at third level presented a problem, but neither Kathy nor Desi were of the type to give up easily. With determination and perseverance, they conquered the changes, and only three years later they were showing Prix St Georges.

At the young age of 12, he had mastered the one-tempi flying changes (changes at every stride) and excelled in piaffe. Desi was

entered in six Grand Prix classes. As half of their scores were above 60, Kathy was awarded her USDF Gold Medal. Because he learned to really enjoy working, he was trained for an average of eight to 10 hours a week and that dedication helped to enable him to win the Oregon State Championship and USDF All-Breeds Morgan awards at several levels. Some years after his retirement, the Morgan was honored again with an induction into the Oregon Dressage Society Hall of Fame.

After seeing that Desi could be so successful, many people have been inspired to show their own smaller horses in dressage. Laura and James Smith’s little horse never did become a star in combined driving, but it is to their credit that they were willing to keep their horse in training for so many years and give him the chance to truly excel in dressage.



Photo © Mary Phelps

### WHIPPOORWILL EBONY

Catherine Echternach is a professional who trains and shows horses of many breeds and enjoys all of them. However, since her love affair with Black Tie (Whippoorwill Ebony) every horse she has owned has been a Morgan.

Bred by Mary Jean Vasiloff, who is known for breeding sound and good-tempered, versatile Morgans for sport and pleasure, Black Tie (Blackwood Correll x Whippoorwill Locket) was an eight-year-old driving horse when Catherine purchased him. A good looking gelding, he was pleasant to ride, and she thought that she could give him some more training and sell him for a little profit.

Catherine took him to Florida to work with Pam Goodrich for the winter. She says that when Pam saw the 14.3 gelding, it was apparent that she thought Catherine had lost her marbles. But Pam soon became a big supporter of the little horse and even asked to ride him herself in a pas de deux.

At his first show in the competitive Florida winter season, Catherine showed him at third level and did well enough that she moved him up to fourth level when she returned home later that year. It was obvious that this horse was a keeper; Catherine had

absolutely no interest in selling her talented Morgan!

At his first show at Prix St Georges, the fancy little Morgan blew the Warmbloods out of the water, taking the blue ribbon over 24 other horses, all of whom had more experience than Black Tie.

Catherine’s Morgan had three good gaits, though he tended to be a bit flat at the canter and he learned every new movement very fast. Of course, as soon as he had something down pat he would work just as hard to make it easier for him, which could sometimes be a little frustrating. Without any glitches he advanced through PSG, Intermediare I, and Int II, and after he figured out the one-tempi flying changes he was at Grand Prix only five years after Cathy bought him. He was a joy to ride, always willing to work, and he held his own against top competition, attaining seven scores above 60 at Grand Prix. He received numerous year-end high point awards and Catherine earned her USDF Gold Medal for her rides on him. The handsome and gifted gelding had a large following of adoring fans who watched as Echternach competed him at prestigious open shows, gave numerous exhibitions at large Morgan shows and rode him in training demonstrations.

Anyone would think that success at Grand Prix would be enough for any horse, but Black Tie has another accomplishment that demonstrates his incredible attitude and soundness. After Catherine stopped campaigning him at Grand Prix, he became a schoolmaster for her students, three of whom have ridden him at USDF/USEF dressage shows. He took Lela Stone up through Intermediare I, Christina Weber showed him at Prix St Georges in 2010, and Katie Hubbell had the honor of riding the old horse two years later, taking a 61.571 at fourth level in 2012 when Black Tie was 26! Now coming 28, he is still being ridden regularly and can do credible fourth-level work, though Catherine limits him to schooling shows where there is less pressure involved.

Catherine uses “fabulous” and “lovable” to describe Black Tie and says that he is at his best when he is in front of an appreciative audience. She tells a story about the time she was asked to be a last minute substitute in a flag ceremony at the Old Dominion Morgan Show. Neither horse nor rider had ever done anything like this before, but he circled the arena at a big trot with the huge flag streaming behind, then stood perfectly immobile during the national anthem. At an exhibition at the Mid-Atlantic

Morgan Show, she rode him to patriotic music as a nearby storm approached. Amidst loud thunder, bright flashes of lightning, and the roar of an enthusiastic crowd, the little gelding came into his own, showing off as though he was the biggest stud in town.

This dependable Morgan gelding gave Catherine Echternach credibility as a professional trainer in both the Morgan and

dressage worlds, and she considers it a great privilege to have been able to ride, train and own him. Catherine has been able to take six more horses, including three Morgans, to the FEI levels. She is presently showing Whippoorwill Dorado at Intermediare II, so there is a good chance that she may have the ride on the next Morgan to achieve Grand Prix status.



### MEHR'S ELOQUINCE

Sally Radtke-Anderson holds the distinction of being the only rider to compete at Grand Prix on two different Morgans.

Sally grew up on a working ranch and her parents raised and used Morgans. When she was 12, her parents decided it was time for her to have a horse of her very own and they purchased Mehr's Eloquence (Scoocum Canfield x Marty Field), an 11-year-old chestnut gelding with strong government bloodlines. He had gone through several owners, but he was trained to ride, and was considered to be a good project for a girl who had spent her young life on ranch horses.

Quincy was a soured ex-show horse who displayed his displeasure by rearing up on his hind legs in the line-up and he had no desire to jump. He didn't like to work cattle and, when faced with this task, he faked lameness. But Sally found a local trainer who introduced her to dressage and spent the winter taking lessons and Quincy finally found something he liked to do. The following summer she went to her first dressage show and had some success, though she soon realized that a loose mane and a tail that dragged on the ground were not entirely appropriate. By year's end they had won the Region 6 training level championship; young Sally and her horse were on their way!

Quincy had straight hind legs and was a little old to just be starting in dressage, but with his quick mind, learned all the tricks easily. He progressed rapidly, moving up a level each year, and by 1999 the 18-year-old gelding started FEI classes, showing both Prix St Georges and Intermediare I. With the guidance of Michael Osinski, Sally was able to earn a spot on the Region 6 Young Riders Team, where she received expert instruction and gained invaluable experience competing against teams from all over the United States and Canada.

The pair moved up to I-2, and when he was 20 Quincy became the eighth Morgan to show Grand Prix. Sally was thrilled to be able to show at that level, but she was not able to get the good scores from Grand Prix judges. Sally says that the Morgan could do one-tempi flying changes "all day" but that his passage was only mediocre and he was unable to collect himself up to the very high standard needed for 60s at this level.

The next year Sally had her first baby and the venerable gelding became a school master, teaching other young girls how to ride and giving Sally's daughter her very first experience on horseback. Sally fondly remembers Quincy as spunky yet sweet, with a great personality.

### IRON FORGE STARMAN

While Sally was getting her first experiences in the dressage arena on Quincy, it became time to start training her second Grand Prix horse, the illustrious Iron Forge Starman.

Bred by Sheri and Pruet Helm, Starman was sired by the renowned Something Blue out of Cambridge Suzy QT. He had the conformation, beauty and bloodlines to be a star.

Starman was spending his time with a band of broodmares on a section of range land. (Note to you city folks: a section is 640 acres or one square mile). He had been handled and "mannered," but what he knew best was negotiating the hills and living with mares. But now he was five and time for work, and the young stallion immediately exhibited a willing attitude and a good deal of talent.

In 1998 Starman entered the dressage ring for the first time showing both training and first levels, and he received very



Photo © M. Bowman

respectable scores from the very start, ending the first two years of showing with a median score of 68 per cent at training level, 64.245 at first level, and 64.77 at second level. The judges liked him, the spectators liked him, and Sally felt a real partnership with the horse, appreciating that he was so willing to work hard at every task she gave him. Because of his big gaits and beautiful extensions, people often mistook him for a Warmblood with an unusually pretty head.

For years Sally was putting miles on her truck and trailer to take lessons with Debbie Riehl-Rodriguez, who gave her excellent instruction. Sally and Starman moved up a level each year, with median scores above 60 at third and fourth levels and racking up high point year-end awards from the USDF and in the AMHA Open Competition program.

The Radtke's had been putting Starman out in the range for a month's vacation every year after the final show season, but by this time they decided that those days were over. Now he was "confined" to a large, but less wild pasture for his vacations.

In 2002 Sally again got out her shadbelly as she readied Starman for his first time at Prix St Georges. That year they received several scores above 60 including a very commendable 68.25.

For the next few years Sally kept her talented horse at Intermediare I while she schooled him at home in hopes of getting him ready for Grand Prix. In the meantime, he was trained for about five hours a week and also was busy breeding mares and moving cattle on the ranch. Sally's horses are kept in beautiful condition and always impeccably turned out for the shows, but she knows that regular turnout and work on the ranch helps to keep them sound in body and mind.

The stallion received a break from showing (but not from

training) for two years as Sally cared for her new baby and her toddler. As Starman turned 18, he was performing breathtaking extensions and beautiful passage with loft and suspension, but Sally was still struggling with his one-tempi flying changes. Nonetheless, she felt that the horse was ready for Grand Prix. That year they received two scores above 60, but because they were earned at the same show, only one would count toward her Gold. The next year they kept going and received two more of those needed 60's, including a 62.292% at their final show, a fitting end to an outstanding career.

Sally says that Starman has many exceptional qualities that have allowed him to exceed, especially his natural balanced uphill movement, his gait quality and his excellent temperament. He was so well-mannered around other horses that competitors were often surprised that he was a breeding stallion. Sally's family is particularly pleased with his success in the breeding shed. He has 58 registered offspring and has consistently passed along his correct conformation and good mind.

Starman and Quincy often went to clinics and shows together. Starman was always a good boy, but Quincy was a little monster who did his best to annoy the young stallion. Starman would load first into the trailer, and when Quincy followed behind him, he always took the opportunity to put his nose on Starman's butt, just as a reminder that he could give a nip if he wanted to.

Horses and dressage helped Sally to sail through adolescence avoiding the typical teenage angst. When she felt troubled, Quincy was always available as her silent counselor. The two wonderful boys taught her many lessons, most importantly that if you want to pursue your dreams, you must be stubborn enough to never waver as you work toward your goals.



## WEST MT WINSTON

West Mt Winston is a diamond wrapped in plain brown paper. When he is out in pasture or ridden on a loose rein, he seems to be just an ordinary horse, rather plain to look at. But when his rider gives him a small leg aid and picks up the reins, the 15.2 dark chestnut suddenly epitomizes beauty.

Karin started showing him at training level dressage when he was only a three-year-old and the gangly colt showed obvious talent at least for lower level dressage. When fall came, he was put out to pasture to grow and develop, but a year later when it was time to saddle him up again, Karin was recuperating from some injuries. At that time, David Macmillan came into the picture.

David had ridden extensively as a youngster and teenager, had competed on the South African young riders dressage team and was a very talented rider. At this time David was in his mid-20s and nearing completion of his university studies and found that he really missed riding, so he happily accepted when Karin offered to let him ride her young gelding. The goal was to develop him into a nice second or third level horse. He was athletic with good legs and generally correct conformation, but he had three quite unremarkable gaits and gave no indication that he had any ability to reach the upper levels.

As David's experience was on upper level schoolmasters and

he had never actually trained a dressage horse, the Weight's made twice-weekly trips to a local trainer to help him with the horse and also took David and Winston to some clinics. However, as the horse and rider developed a close rapport, David found that Winston taught him his most important lesson: tact. Whenever David demanded anything of the young Morgan, the horse emphatically resisted, setting his jaw against him and on a few occasions even racing off. David soon learned to always ask nicely, finding that Winston would try his very best to do anything asked as long as the request came with a "please."

After training through the winter, David and Winston went to a schooling show, entering second level because the horse was obviously bored at anything less. Winston performed about ten flying changes during a test that called for none at all, but otherwise was extremely accurate and showed some flair. A few weeks later they started showing at USDF shows and by the end of the following year they ended up with some very nice scores and the second level championship at Morgan Nationals.

Winston and David had no real setbacks as they progressed through the levels, and they earned numerous high scores with year-end awards and championships at every level. Though Winston found the one-tempi flying changes very difficult to perform properly, by the time he reached the Grand Prix level at in 2009, he was able to do them reliably. The next year he very seldom missed a beat, but surgery to remove a benign tumor a few years earlier had left a scar, and he learned to compensate by swinging his hindquarters. He continued swinging even after the scar completely disappeared. Crowds loved it, as he seemed to really skip along, but unfortunately the judges knew better and consistently penalized the swing. Nonetheless, he was extremely successful at Grand Prix, receiving numerous scores above the 60 mark.

Winston was best known for his musical freestyle, and when the announcer at Morgan Grand Nationals announced that his performance was about to begin, the bleachers in the sports arena

filled to capacity. He didn't disappoint: the crowd was enthusiastic as he displayed extensions, piaffe and passage, tempi flying changes and double pirouettes at the canter to his trademark Neil Diamond music; the two judges gave him a score of 68.688%.

Over his career, the plain-brown-wrapper gelding has received more than 70 year-end high point awards, championships and reserve championships, including five Morgan World Championships, and David earned his bronze, silver and gold USDF medals from rides on Winston. He has been designated "Dressage Horse of the Decade" by *Horse World*, but his greatest achievement was winning the USDF Certificate of Performance at Grand Prix, awarded to horses who receive ten or more 60+ scores. He is the only Morgan to ever earn this award—to date.

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There are now several Morgans doing well at fourth level and above, and these ten horses and their riders have given inspiration to those who are following in their hoofprints. Their riders and trainers are all convinced that Morgans are extremely well-suited for dressage. The typical Morgan has the willingness and soundness that are easily as important as extreme gaits common to Warmbloods. Their smaller size makes it easier for them to negotiate corners and eight-meter canter circles and gives them extra strides in order to set up properly for the 15 one-tempi flying changes that the Grand Prix horse must perform across the diagonal.

Most importantly, Morgans are known for the strong work ethic and willing attitude that is so important for success in any difficult endeavor. However, the most talented horse in the world will never succeed in the dressage arena without an owner and rider who are willing to invest the years of time and effort to guide their horse to the heights of which he is capable. The riders and owners of these ten Morgans have shown extreme dedication in pushing through all obstacles and their horses have rewarded them with trust, effort, and loads of downright fun. ■



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