

*George Hoffman drives Morgan Woods Yankee in Prince Phillip's single Bennington during Harrods International Grand Prix. Buckingham Palace graces the skyline. Gail Martin is the groom. (Photo by Ronnie Nienstedt)*



# American Morgans

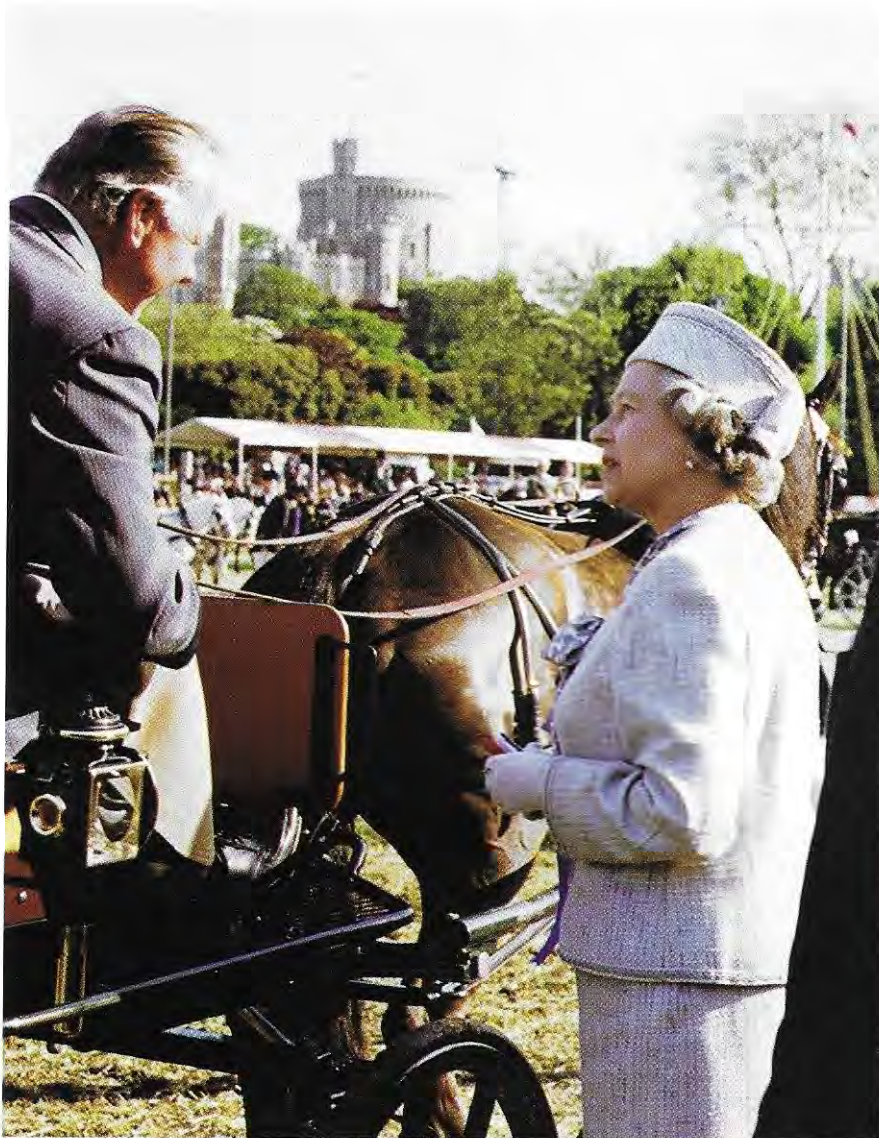
*win at*

## Windsor

*by Joy G. Platz*

“**Y**ou don’t need one of those big European breeds to win in the sport of combined driving,” said individual and team winner Bill Orth of Stockton, New Jersey, after two American Morgans claimed international victories at the Royal Windsor Horse Show in Windsor, England on May 17.

“All you need is a Morgan.”



ABOVE: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, an accomplished equestrienne herself, listens raptly as Bill Orth extols the many virtues of the Morgan breed. OPPOSITE: In a familiar spot—Bill Orth negotiates a water hazard during Harrods International Driving Grand Prix. Bill and his gelding, New-Ran's Hawk, went on to win first place in the Single Horse division. Katie Whaley was his groom during the marathon. (Photos by Ronnie Nienstedt)

Two Morgan horses topped breeds from nine different countries as their owners/whips Bill Orth and George Hoffman placed first and second, respectively, in the Single Horse division of the Harrods International Driving Grand Prix competition.

In the three days of combined driving held at the Royal Windsor Horse Show, Orth and his 13-year-old gelding, New-Ran's Hawk (Funquest Aries x Dyberry Nancy Ann), scored third in dressage, were quickest through the hazards, and went clean through the cones to become the winning Single Horse. Orth was also part of the American team that turned in a combined score of 269.6, bringing the United States the coveted Master's Trophy.

The Master's Trophy is a challenge trophy presented by Harrods (one of the most prestigious department stores in England) to commemorate the Tenth Duke of Beaufort's

presidency of the Royal Windsor Horse Show (1944–1984). It is awarded to a group of three, representing a single nation, which consists of one four-in-hand, one pair, and one single horse with the least total of combined penalty points. (The group is nominated by its nation's equestrian federation.) Orth was joined in the United States' victory by Tucker Johnson, driving his pair of Dutch warmbloods, and Sem Groenewoud, driving Johnson's four-in-hand of mixed breeds. The German team was second and the Swiss team was third in Sunday's line of honor before Her Majesty The Queen.

Second behind Orth in the Singles competition was Hoffman driving Morgan Woods Yankee (Harvest Challenger x Firelight's April), his 11-year-old gelding, who placed second in dressage but didn't score as high in the marathon. He was also clean in the cones.

A record 78 vehicles filled the Queen's Home Park ring on Sunday afternoon after all the competitors in the Harrods driving competition filed by the stands to receive their awards from the Queen. As Her Majesty The Queen was handing Orth the handsome cut-glass vase that was first prize in the Singles competition, Orth asked politely, "Please don't drop that, ma'am." Her Majesty, in return, smiled and said, "Oh, I won't." And she didn't.

Orth has racked up impressive wins in the sport of combined driving although he has been competing with New-Ran's Hawk (better known as 'Bently') for only six years (see *THE MORGAN HORSE*, November 1991, page 34). Known for his speed in the hazards, rarely does another single ever beat Orth. He admits that he as a reputation for being a wild and daring driver who has tipped his cart over more than once while training. "You've got to know the maximum you can go before you're going to wreck," Orth says. "Hold that edge and don't go over it." He credits many of his early wins to his good times in the marathons. "Even if I'd be 20 points behind in dressage, I could make up the difference in the hazards." Now that he is concentrating on dressage, he has made it even harder for competitors to catch him.

Hoffman, a neighbor of Orth's who has been competing against him for a number of years with horses of different breeds, decided, like a number of other combined drivers in the Singles division, that the only way to beat Orth was to get another Morgan. Hoffman first drove Morgan Woods Yankee ('Jessie') when he was stabled with trainer George Millar. Hoffman liked the horse so well that he bought him.

Both Orth and Hoffman had competed at the United

States selection trials at the Gladstone Driving Event and received the invitation to drive at Windsor. Their expenses were defrayed, in part, by the newly formed International Sport Horse Association, The American Morgan Horse Institute, the United States Equestrian Team, and Beneficial Corporation.

The American horses were shipped to England a week prior to the competition to allow them to rest and become acclimated to the new area. "Wherever and however [plane, van, or horsebox] they went, the Morgans loaded willingly and rode quietly," says Hoffman. "They never gave us a moment's trouble. Driving them through the crowded cobblestone streets of Windsor on our way to and from the Royal Mews where we were stabled, or trotting through herds of deer in the Great Park, they took it all in stride."

Both Orth and Hoffman opted not to ship their own competition vehicles, but rather ordered them right from the Bennington factory in England. The vehicles, however, had not arrived by the time the horses did. "I eyed Prince Phillip's single Bennington in the carriage house at the Royal Mews," says Orth, chuckling, "and I suggested that perhaps we could use that vehicle for the time being." The Prince immediately took the hint and offered the vehicle

to the Americans to use until their's arrived.

"Both Prince Phillip and the Queen were warm and pleasant to us," says Orth. "As the Queen was shaking my hand during the presentation, she asked if our accommodations at the Royal Mews were satisfactory. She asked Marilyn [Orth's wife who headed Bentley in the line-up] what breed he was. When Marilyn told her that he was a Morgan horse, the Queen paused, looked him over from head to tail, and nodded in approval before she walked on."

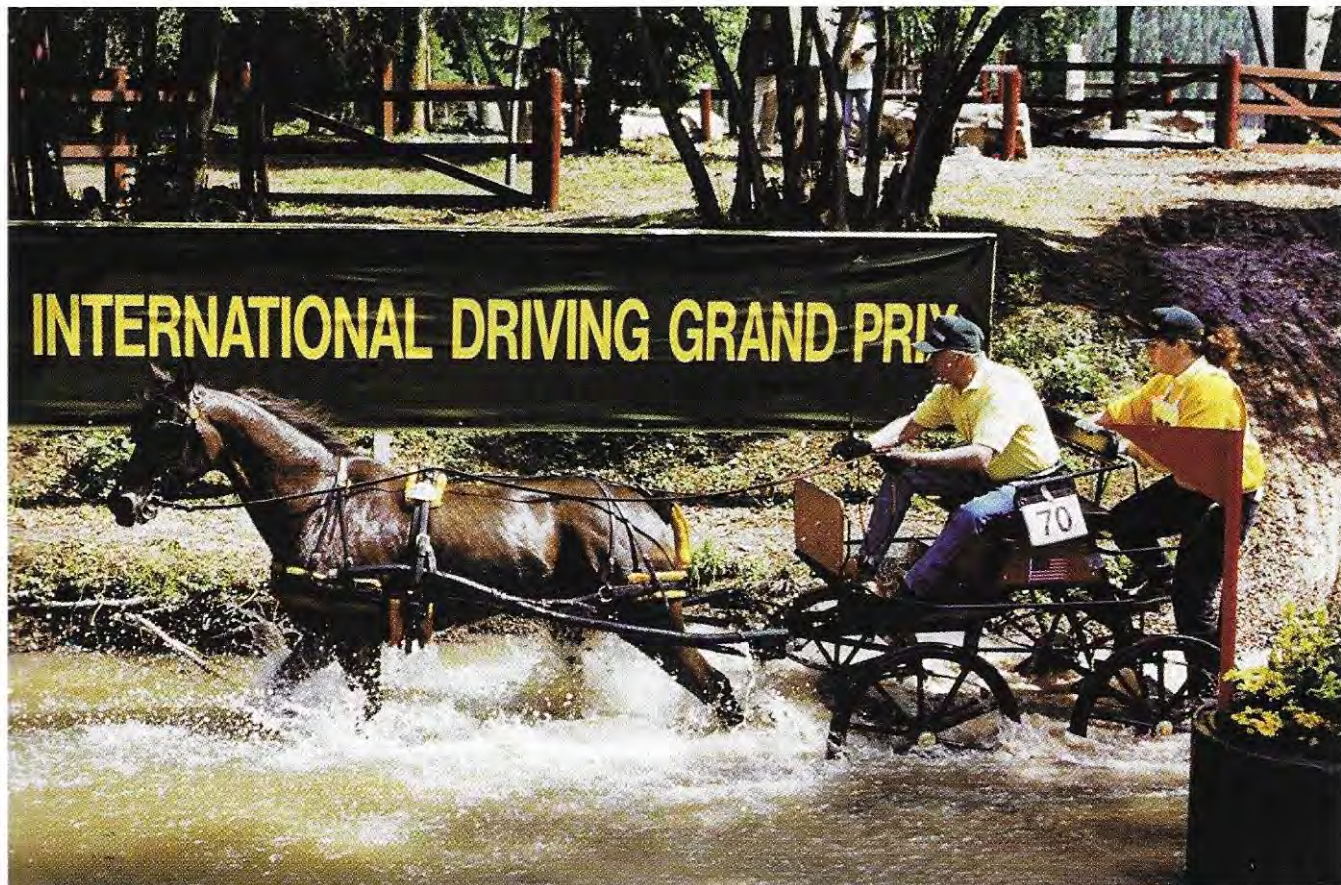
#### ON TO SCOTLAND

All the American whips went on to Saint Fort, Scotland, to compete at the Driving Trials the week following Windsor. Saint Fort is located near Denude above the Firth of Forth on the rugged eastern coast. The biggest shock for all the competitors was the temperature drop—it went from unseasonably warm high-80s at Windsor

to the low-40s in Scotland.

"Our dressage tests were all extremely good," remembered Orth about the Scottish competition. "Colin Allen of Great Britain had a 29, I had a 31, and George had a 34, setting us all up for a very competitive marathon. George was on course, and I was about to start section E, which are the hazards, when someone came rushing up to warn me that

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Morgan Woods Yankee (better known as 'Jessie'), enjoys a good scrubbing from owner George Hoffman after a hard workout. (Photo by Ronnie Nienstedt)

we were operating under British, not FEI, rules. FEI rules allow a five-second intentional canter before entering each hazard. The British rules penalize the driver for any cantering prior to going into the hazard. Neither George nor I were aware of this. George had gone before me and had, as I would have done, gotten a head start on each hazard with the five-second canter. So of course I didn't canter, although I did accumulate ten penalty points on the marathon."

At the conclusion of the second day, Orth was in second place behind Colin Allen who was driving a Welsh Cob. The cones would be the deciding factor, and the pressure was on. "In America, we do the cones at 220 meters a minute," Orth says. "In Europe, the time is shorter at 250 meters. Here all 110 horses were competing for just one win. I watched the others go and get time faults again and again. I didn't think it was possible to have a clean round and yet stay within the time restrictions," says Orth. "How fast could I go and stay clean? Since I was in second place, I was next-to-last to go. When my

turn came, Bentley certainly proved that Morgans can trot. I didn't dare breathe as we crossed the finish—we had done a double clear round within the time."

Now the pressure was on leader Colin Allen, who had to match Orth's performance. "Sometimes we have a good go, and sometimes we don't," Orth said. "Allen didn't, he knocked down several balls, and Bentley was the winner.

"I must say this for the sportsmanship of the other competitors," continued Orth. "The moment Allen crossed the finish line, he jumped from his carriage and rushed over to congratulate me."

In the closing ceremonies of the Scottish competition, Orth was presented with the Strutt and Parker Challenge Trophy for the Open Single Horse Champion and the Maxwell Perpetual Trophy for the Best Driver Over 60. "The sting of the 'over 60' was

removed when I looked at the trophy and read the name of the first recipient in 1983," Orth remembers with a laugh, "—His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh."

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