

Morgan Dressage association

Dedicated to promoting and supporting Morgan Horses in Dressage.



GRAND PRIX MORGANS— DAVID MACMILLAN AND WEST MT. WINSTON

By Karin Weight

David Macmillan grew up in Durban, South Africa, and started riding as a very young boy. As a teenager, he showed jumpers before switching to dressage. Eventually, his parents bought David a thoroughbred Grand Prix schoolmaster, and the pair became a force to be reckoned with in the young riders division.

After graduating from high school, David spent six months as a working student with Ann Gribbons in New York, returned to South Africa for a short time, spent two years on a church mission in Montreal, finally moving to Utah to attend Brigham Young University.

As it happened, David had seen nothing but western riding in Utah so he thought that he would wait until after graduation before he started riding again. He had not ridden a horse for about four years when he wandered into a tack store just to look around and was surprised to see dressage saddles. The manager gave him a phone number for the Utah Dressage Society, and David was invited to come to a board meeting. As it turned out, I was the only one there who lived closer than 30 miles from the university, David was desperate to ride, and I had a young horse that needed to be ridden.

David admitted that he had never trained a dressage horse, but he had ridden Grand Prix, so he couldn't be too horrible a rider, could he? Larry (my husband) and I figured that he couldn't ruin our horse in one ride, so the following Saturday David came to our little farm and we let him get on West Mt Winston. We needn't have worried; David was a beautiful rider who seemed to have a natural ability to communicate with my horse. After he dismounted,



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David Macmillan and West Mt Winston at the 2008 Grand Nationals (photo by Howard Schotzberg)

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News and Reminders:

- Check out Page 13 for **new Classified** listings—they are growing!
- Find us on Facebook! 
- **AMHA Open Competition Awards** deadline is November 1, 2011. Check the AMHA website for more details.
- Did you know you can “like” your favorite Morgan in the USDF Awards standings? Try it! 
- It is time to **renew your MDA Membership** for 2012—be sure and fill out the application on page 15 and mail it in **today!**

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Grand Prix Morgans—(continued from Page 1)

it was decided that David would ride whenever he had the time. We all agreed that Winston had the ability to be a pretty decent Second Level or Third Level horse...

And that was the beginning of a journey that would end with David becoming a professional trainer with USDF bronze, silver and gold medals and with West Mt Winston becoming a Grand Prix dressage horse.

West Mt Winston is a fourth generation Morgan for Larry and me. His great-grandmother was my first Morgan, and she was only five weeks old when I brought her home--bringing her mother along until little Adonna Carter (Black Bart X Prima Donna C) was old enough to wean. Adonna was pretty, typy and my best friend. When I bred her to Bar-T Invader, a fancy Orcland Leader son, Adonna gave me Santana Breeze, who I showed to many wins in halter, English pleasure and pleasure driving. Santana was best known as a wonderful broodmare, producing numerous champions, but the one I loved best was West Mt Santana (Little San), sired by the magnificent HVK Santana. Little San became a superb eventer who eagerly jumped everything that I could get up the nerve to go over, saved my neck on many occasions, and always placed well despite our mediocre dressage scores. She was truly a wonderful horse and when I had major back surgery I decided to breed her. By that time I had resigned myself to focusing on dressage, and Larry and I picked Far Well's Brooks as the best match for her. Mona Sansoucy Gaudet had shown Brooks success-

fully at 4th level; the horse had a beautiful long stride and was over 16 hands to boot. In 1995 West Mt Winston was born, a foal that would change our lives.

Disaster struck when Winston was only 4 weeks old. An upstream neighbor discarded chemicals into the irrigation ditch, and Little San suffered a very horrible death. Sixteen years later I am wiping away tears as I write this, and at the time I was absolutely devastated. Little Winston did well physically, but he became listless

*Want to see Winston and David in action?
check them out at:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRvg2plWw5U>

and very dependent on Larry and me. He was a sad little thing for about three months, but eventually came out of it and had more energy and spunk than any other foal we have ever raised.

We gelded him as a two-year-old, gave him basic saddle training that winter, and in 1998 I had a very successful season showing three-year-old West Mt Winston in training level. I then put him to pasture for a year to grow and develop. I meant to start working him seriously late in the summer of '99, but I had to have surgery on my wrist and shoulder, so I determined that I would start riding him again that winter. Had I remained healthy and sound, I would have continued showing him and he would have been lost to history.

Winston was a gawky youngster with long legs, a long neck, and a

teeny little body. When he cantered, his legs went all over the place and Robin Sundeen used to laugh when she gave me lessons, saying that he looked like a spider.

When David started riding Winston, he took twice-weekly lessons with Robin for three years; he was already an excellent rider, but he needed someone who could help him develop the horse to higher levels. Over the years, David has received clinic lessons on Winston from Elizabeth Searle, Melissa Cresswick, Cathy Connelly and Gary Rockwell. All have helped him, and Rockwell has been instrumental in getting David and Winston to Grand Prix. However, David always says that he has learned more from Winston than from all the clinicians combined. When his young rider became impatient, Winston became stubborn. When David hit him too hard with the whip, David ended up on the ground with a broken wrist and learned a valuable lesson about fairness.

David's early lessons in South Africa were from Germans who taught him to always be the boss and never let the horse get away with anything, but Winston taught David otherwise. If you watch David now, you will see that he is never demanding. He holds a polite conversation with his mount, asking nicely for "just a little more".

We think that many Morgans could reach the FEI levels if they had the benefit of years of good riding and

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Grand Prix Morgans—*(continued from Page 9)*

training, but it takes a special horse to be able to perform a nice Grand Prix test. Winston has the natural advantage of being smart and athletic with excellent legs and feet. He was not born with particularly good gaits, but over the years has developed very nice extensions and a lovely passage and piaffe. He's also developed an unfortunate swing to his hind-quarters at the one-tempi changes, which delights audiences but does NOT please judges. David tried a few flying changes early on just to see if the horse could do them. Winston caught on immediately and thought that they were so much fun that he started switching leads on his own. In his first time showing at Second Level, he did several flying changes as he went down the long side of the arena, and David spent the next few months having to correct the enthusiastic gelding for this. And of course that presented new problems further along in training when the flying changes were required; as Winston knew that lead-switching was a no-no.

Although he has a stall available to use on occasion, Winston lives in a roomy pasture where he can get plenty of exercise and terrorize his pasture-mates (did I mention that he is positive he is the Emperor of the Universe?). The pasture has a shelter which he uses for shade in the summer and to get out of driving rain, but in the winter he often has three or four inches of snow on his back. David only rides him in the arena, but I love to trail ride him, and Winston is excellent in Utah's rugged mountains.

Here is a funny Winston story: Larry was leading him when a 17-2 hand warmblood stallion passed close by. The stallion snorted at Winston, who took offense. Winston pinned his ears and whirled. Larry immediately stopped him, but it was obvious that there no question in Winston's mind that he could take on that stallion.

These are the three things we like best about Winston: attitude, attitude, attitude. Winston always gives everything that he is capable of giving--always tries his very best. Gary Rockwell, who judged dressage at the last Olympics, said that every international rider is looking for a horse that has three incredible gaits and Winston's work ethic.

Although I am in my late 60s, I still work full-time. Owning a Grand Prix horse is not cheap, but it has been worth every penny. Although David rides and shows him, Larry does most of the at-home grooming and feeding and every winter he hauls David and Winston to a local indoor arena three times a week. The shows are a team effort: I plan and organize, Larry drives, we all work

together getting the horse ready for David to ride. We hope to continue to show Winston next year, but probably only in the Grand Prix musical freestyle which the horse really enjoys and is a great crowd pleaser. Maybe someday we will allow a talented young rider to use him as a schoolmaster, but we will insist that he remain on our farm.

People sometimes ask if we would be willing to sell Winston, but Larry and I will never do that. His mother died at age twelve, but his great-grandmother lived to 27, his grandmother to 32, and they all lived happily at our little farm to the very end. Winston will do the same.

Here are the highlights of Winston's career:

- USDF Performance Certificate at Grand Prix (the only Morgan in history to have earned this)
- Five-time Morgan World Champion in dressage—including three times for FEI level
- USDF All-Breeds Champion at various Levels, including Grand Prix and Grand Prix Musical Freestyle
- Utah Dressage Society Year-End Awards at various Levels, including Grand Prix
- HorseWorld.com/Saddle Horse Report -- People's Choice Dressage Horse of the Decade

More than 60 Championships, Reserve Championships and Year-End High Point Awards 🐾



David Macmillan and West Mt Winston with Karin and Larry Weight's grandson, Catcher on his first (and hopefully not last!) Grand Prix Morgan.