

# Morgan Dressage association

*Dedicated to promoting and supporting Morgan Horses in Dressage.*



## GRAND PRIX MORGANS—

### “PATTIE’S STORY”

By Debbie Dougherty

Volume 1 Number 2  
(April, 2011)

When Sally contacted me about sharing Pattie and my story in the MDA News-letter, I thought back to our career and realized it was very fitting to do so. Our journey didn't begin or end in Montana, neither did we spend any large part of it there but it was the scene of the realization of a dream which we dared not dream.

Beckridge Patrex was 7 years old when I saw him for the first time. He was bred by Leo and Louise Beckley of Beckridge Morgans in Mount Vernon, Washington. His past is a bit sketchy, but from what I have gathered through the years, he came along rather late the years, he came along rather late in the Beckley's equine career. He was not gelded until he was 3 ½ years old and at some point had been with a trainer in Western Washington. He apparently didn't bond with just anybody and took off bucking with one rider, dumping him in front of his porch. My farrier recalled Pattie from his days on the West Side and said he was considered to be somewhat of an out-law! When I met him, he was standing tied to a hitching post with a small, ill-fitting western saddle and solid-sided curb bit on. He was shaggy, covered in some crumbly skin condition and shaking like a leaf. I didn't know anything about his past at that point; I thought he looked scared and forlorn.



I had just lost my 8-year-old Morgan gelding “Monty” to a broken leg and was still trying to deal with the grief when I met Pattie. It had only been two weeks since I had lost Monty and I had tried a couple of other horses for a day or two, but they weren't right for me. Mom had offered me her half-Arab mare Kharana but it just wasn't the same, so she dragged me out looking at horses to keep me thinking about the future, not dwelling on the past.

I remember looking at the other horses and then crying all the way home. Not only was it a difficult time for me, losing my best friend, but my folks were struggling to make ends meet and the last thing they needed to do was spend money on another horse for me—especially when we already had a pasture full!

I don't know what it was about Pattie that drew me to him other than we were both hurting. Both in need of someone to share our sorrows and cry on, someone to heal us. After trying him out (walk and trot only) I turned him out in his pasture. While Mom talked to the woman who was selling him for the Beckleys, I wandered out and leaned against Pattie; putting my arms over his hindquarters and resting my head on him. When I went back to see what Mom and the woman were talking about, the woman said she had never seen anyone be able to approach Pattie that way. Mom and I drove home. Later that night I laid on my bed, looking up at Monty's ribbons, crying, and decided I would buy Pattie. Soooo, \$1,000 later, I had my first ever Grand Prix Dressage horse! Uh...some assembly required!

Pattie and I had a modest start in the Dressage world. We did some schooling shows and he most always won because he was just so darn cute! I even got a comment "horse cuter than rider" from one judge! Of course we were riding First Level but only because it was "cool" to do leg yields and lengthened trot, not because we really

knew what we were doing! I wanted to ride Dressage to improve our performance in the 4-H shows where we rode Saddle Seat, Western, Hunt Seat, Trail and Side Saddle. However, after getting to the age where I had to move on from 4-H, I started to get more serious about riding Dressage. I rode in our club's clinics with various clinicians, but most of them probably just rolled their eyes at the idea of me and my "little" horse going



very far. I finally started getting help from my friend Debbie McDermott on a regular basis. She helped me to understand what collection truly was and helped me move up to making a fair effort at Second level. I also flirted with the idea of Third Level but was nowhere near ready to do it well! Debbie encouraged me to qualify for and enter the Region 6 Championships in 1990. I didn't have a trailer so I hitched rides to shows with my friend, Karen Lindhorst.

We qualified for the Second Level Open Championship that year. Mary Baechler loaned me her truck and trailer so we could go. My husband, James, went with me.

We woke up at 4:00 a.m. Saturday morning the day of our test, set the irrigation sprinklers on the hay field, loaded Pattie up in the trailer and drove from Selah, Washington to Donida Farms so that I could ride in my class. I was so excited to be able to go to such an awesome competition! We went out and rode our test, gawked at all the other wonderful horses and riders and finished seventh in the class. It doesn't sound really impressive, but for me it was a dream come true! I drove home that day listening to "Wind Beneath My Wings" with my hubby sleeping in the passenger seat and my little Morgan in the trailer and felt so much joy and gratitude!

Late in 1990 Pattie and I began riding with Michael Osinski. He lit a fire in me to pursue Dressage for the sport and was the first instructor who really, truly believed in me and Pattie. He never said we couldn't do the work or we weren't good enough to move up. I remember in the Spring of 1991 he asked me what my goals were for the year. I said "to ride Prix St. Georges in the fall". He said "OK". That was it. Then he proceeded, over the next 6 months, to challenge Pattie and me with new skills and expectations every time we saw him. We rode our first Prix St. Georges test at a schooling show in October of that year. It wasn't perfect but we had the necessary skills to do it! In the spring of 1992 we competed in recognized competitions in Prix St. Georges and Intermediaire I, qualifying for Region 6 Championships in both levels as well as

Intermediaire Freestyle. Pattie and I had a great show season, winning most of our classes at the shows and earning all but one Prix St. Georges score for our Silver Medal. At Regionals, we won the Northwest Cup Freestyle Championship! It was especially wonderful because James had driven over to the show just to watch that ride. My Mom and Dad had also come down from Bellingham to cheer us on!

Pattie and I competed in PSG and I-1 again in 1993, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in the USDF Freestyle Awards at Intermediaire with a 68%. The next year, we came out at Grand Prix. By this time, Pattie was 19. I realized if I was going to try for my USDF Gold Medal, I couldn't waste any time with "unnecessary" rides so I only rode I-2 a couple of times when I was competing at shows that didn't offer "FEI test of choice" both days. Grand Prix was A LOT of work for a horse who was not necessarily built for it. I discovered I had really moved into a different world when we started competing at Grand Prix. When we rode Prix St. Georges, judges would be very receptive to the "cute little horse" out there doing his job...wasn't he just precious? But at Grand Prix, it was like I was vying for the Olympic team or something. Suddenly I got these stern faces and the scores were much tougher. Passage was a bit more challenging for us; Pattie gave it all he had but it just didn't have the lift of the "big guys" and being 19 and 20 when we rode GP, he was just slightly past his prime. But nonetheless, we gave it our best effort.

I knew we had an uphill battle to

get 60's at Grand Prix and I already knew I was blessed just to be able to ride my wonderful horse at that level and even be able to compete. It was a thrill every time we rode down the center line. I knew I was living a dream and I didn't take a single moment of it for granted. I was so incredibly proud of Pattie, he had done it all for me and I knew he would go as far and as long as I asked him to. In 1995, our second year at Grand Prix, I went to watch the World Cup in Los Angeles. I came home with a passion for improving my piaffe...the proceeded to ruin it...two weeks before the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Classic. We went to the show without much in the way of piaffe; it was more like a really bad soft shoe. Somehow, Pattie managed to undo all the damage I had spent two weeks concentrating on and we scored our first 60 at Grand Prix! It was something I had not even dared to dream of doing, yet we had done it! That year, the USDF Annual meeting was being held in the Bahamas. When I saw the announcement, I jokingly told James, "hey, if I get my Gold Medal scores I'll have to fly there and pick it up in person... hahahahaha! After Walla Walla, I started to think it might actually be possible but I didn't want to set my expectations too high. So we kept working, and kept showing.

We had a really close call at the Yakima Dressage Summer Classic scoring one raw score point shy of a 60%. Anyone who has chased a medal score knows you would much rather get a 56% than a 59.640%! It's agonizing to realize all you needed to do was just square up that halt, or make the pirouette tighter...some little tiny

thing for ONE MORE POINT! I didn't have any more shows planned for the year at that point but learned that the Powderhouse Dressage Explosion was having the same judge for their show in August. I asked Mike if it was crazy to drive 400 miles to ride one 8 minute test just because I liked the judge. He said "try waiting 10 years for another chance at it". Point taken.

Pattie and I entered the Powderhouse show. In my usual fashion, two weeks before the show I decided to ruin my left canter pirouette and change saddles on my horse. I was trying too hard and putting too much pressure on Pattie and myself. I finally broke down during one particularly difficult workout and decided if I was going to drive all the way there for one ride, I could only do it if I kept myself focused on giving the best performance we could on that particular day and be satisfied with our efforts. The weekend finally arrived and we drove to Spokane Sport Horse Farm where we met up and continued on with Christel Carlson. We arrived late and did not get a chance to work the night before. Pattie and I had a good warm up, avoided more than one or two modest attempts at left canter pirouette, and rode our test. I came out of it feeling satisfied that we had done a good job. I even went so far as to think it might possibly have been that "one point" better than the previous show. It wasn't. It was 4 points better! We had scored a 61.2%. The drive home from that show was long, but I never felt tired. Pattie and I had



done something I had never even dreamed of doing. Later I discovered that we had done something that no other rider had done with a Morgan horse before. As far as I was concerned, I had won an Olympic Gold Medal. I could not have been prouder of my little Pattie if we had! James and I both agreed that I should go to the convention and accept my medal in person so off I went with my Mom, my best friend Karen Lindhorst and her Mom as well! Girls gone wild!

Pattie and I were blessed with so many wonderful friends, our awesome instructor, the support of my family and most notably, my husband who often felt I spent more time at the barn than in the house. We had an opportunity to learn, to work hard, to compete and to follow a dream at just the right time in our lives. I feel fortunate to have such a great teacher in Mike Osinski; 20 years later I am still a devoted student. When asked to share the challenges we faced, I have a difficult time seeing them as challenges simply because I refused to allow anything to stand in our way. Perhaps the most difficult thing we had to deal with was what I had already mentioned, and that is the change in attitude from the judges when we moved from “cute FEI competitor” to “serious

Grand Prix competitor”. If you’re going to ride the “big boy’s test” you had better expect to be measured with the “big boy’s yard stick”. I can imagine that challenge would face competitors with “other” breeds even more now than it did in our day. In response to that I can only say, do your best for yourself, stand proud and know that you have achieved a great thing just getting that far. It takes an extraordinary talent to make a Grand Prix horse, it takes just a bit more to do it with a “regular guy”!

After Pattie retired from Grand Prix in 1995 he went to work with Mary Neal at Third Level and together, they worked their way through Fourth Level and rode a Prix St. Georges test as well. Mary earned her Third Level scores for her Bronze Medal aboard Pattie. Of course I still rode Pattie and we enjoyed sharing our love of Dres-

sage with spectators by performing demonstrations at the Pacific Northwest Morgan Horse Championships, the C-Fair Charity Horse Show, Eastern Washington Youth Horse Show, Central Washington State Fair and the American Morgan Horse Association Annual Convention in Portland, March of 1996. In addition to the many championship and year end awards that Pattie and I won over the years, we were also honored by AMHA with a Certificate of Merit in recognition of our ambassadorship for the Morgan Horse breed. That particular award is very special to me.

Of all the horses in all the world there has never been, nor will there ever be another Pattie. He was an extraordinary individual...giant hearted, gentle, always willing, overachiever, best friend a girl could ever have, once in a lifetime,

beautiful soul. His greatest talent was always his mind. No matter how hard the work was, no matter how many times I messed up and had to retrain something, no matter how tough the judges were, it did not change the fact that Pattie would always give me more than the best he had to offer. I have and will have other wonderful horses in my life but there will always be a very special place in my heart for my little Morgan gelding, Beckridge Patrex. Beckridge Patrex models the piaffe.



*Beckridge Patrex models the piaffe*