

Blue and White Morgans and Foxcradle Farm

By Joanna Kelly

I got started breeding Morgans in 1997 when I met my first Morgan and fell in love. The Morgan had all the majesty of the Arab I loved, but had the wonderful sane mind. I met many Sport Morgan breeders in the Mid-Atlantic area who were very supportive and helpful. I studied pedigrees and gradually put together in my mind the Morgan I wanted to breed for. I connected with trainers and owners soaking up whatever I could about the Morgan and how the bloodlines affected the way the Morgan moves. I gradually honed in on the bloodlines I liked and was very fortunate to meet Gary and Linda Hopson of Homeward Morgans who owned B-L Independence, a black stallion, often described as a great sport horse before his time. He was born in 1964 and not shown as a sport horse, but his movement and conformation would certainly make him a leading sport horse sire today. It is his bloodlines that are behind my mares, wonderful old government lines going back to Ulysses, Tutor, Senator Graham, Mentor and a favorite, Mansfield. One of my broodmares, now retired, had Mansfield on the last line of her pedigree. The Hopsons helped me get started by leasing me two of their great black mares. From there I bred and bought other mares gradually incorporating other bloodlines in in to my program. I added Brunk lines, Beamington, Mr Breezy Cobra, and Flyhawk, and most importantly the Western Working bloodline of the great stallion Red Correll. This stallion produced an excellent canter, and his bloodlines can be found behind many top Morgan sport horses today.

I connected with Cathy Echternach and Lori Shoemake, both Morgan dressage trainers, and also Lucy Tidd who at the time was competing with her B-L Independence-bred mare. At Morgan Horse shows I found one of my most helpful insights—scribing for judges. Here, during a long slow morning of scribing Training Level tests, there would be plenty of down time and I had many delightful conversations with judges about the breed. Everyone I worked with was eager “to talk shop” and I learned important lessons that I value, like looking for a great walk as the canter follows and lightness. Most judges had the



same critique about the breed: “too earth bound”. With this in mind, I stumbled on my herd sire while helping a friend look for a Morgan mare.

In 2002 I bought my herd sire, GKB Coal Magic, as a three-month-old suckling after seeing some photos and video of him and his dam. He had an amazing presence and most importantly, he had “lightness”—literally

floating off the ground when he moved. His bloodlines went back to the great Government-lines on his sire line, and his dam's line had Brunk lines and Red Correll breeding. Coal Magic grew up on our farm showing his amazing temperament as a very trainable and willing youngster while still covering mares. With his first foal crop it became very apparent that he stamped his get with his brave, confident temperament and willingness to work. My broodmares all vary in temperament, but each foal consistently gets the sire's wonderful brain.

From birth, I raise my youngsters to become sport horse prospects. They are handled daily and taught life lessons for the first two years, so they can safely and confidently move in to a training environment. Little things, like teaching a yearling to stand quietly in cross ties, load in to a trailer, or have a leg wrapped, makes a huge difference when it comes time to starting their training. They are confident and ready for work. It is very important to me that I lay the groundwork for my horses so they can leave here and reach their greatest potential. Over the years I have been very fortunate to have sold youngsters to five professional Dressage trainers, who have given my horses great opportunities. Blue and White Raven, one of the first Morgans I bred, just competed at the Grand Prix level scoring a 63%, and most recently qualified and competed at the 2015 US Dressage Nationals in Kentucky at Grand Prix. Blue and White Freedom has been an USDF All breeds winner, and others are competing successfully at all levels. Others compete in Carriage, Endurance and Competitive trail; Blue and White Justice has completed 1000 Eastern Competitive Trail ride miles and 600 Endurance miles.

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My goal in breeding Morgans is to produce home grown athletes that are capable of successfully competing against European imported warmbloods.

In breeding, I want a youngster who has natural lightness and suppleness, with the ability to get his hind legs under himself. One of the problems I see in many Morgans is “trailing hocks” and that is why I like Morgans that have some Western breeding behind them. Those horses can get under themselves and produce Morgans with good canters. I want a youngster to be balanced front and back with an uphill build, laid back and free shoulder. I don’t mind a little Morgan knee action as that can add expression to a big trot. I love a black Morgan in the Dressage ring as there is nothing more elegant. GKB Coal Magic is homozygous black and almost all my horses are black. One of the greatest compliments I have received was from a veterinarian doing a pre purchase exam on a youngster. She looked at my Morgans and said “oh my, they all look exactly the same!”



Blue and White Brando and Mom



Blue and White Raven

GKB Coal Magic and Lucy Tidd, his owner and rider, placed fifth at Intermediate-B at the US National Dressage Finals in Kentucky in 2014. I am finding that many riders who have struggled with the big warmblood are coming back to the Morgan, because of the Morgan’s size, trainability and work ethic. Many riders who have had the big 17 hand horse now realize that a 15.2 hand Morgan is much more enjoyable to train and is just as competitive in Open Competition.