



~ ENGLISH PLEASURE ~

THE DISCIPLINE THEN AND NOW

From the 1960s to today, a look at a division that is central to the Morgan show ring and how it has evolved over the decades.

In another age, specifically circa 1969, I was in my early teens. With my family's support, I had a sort of fancy Arabian gelding to show. Kabarra (a.k.a. Cubby) had four matching white socks and the floating kind of trot equine scholar Gladys Brown Edwards would disparagingly refer to as "dwelling." Given that Cubby had that exotic action, and given the way he was built and given the way I was being raised to ride, I rode him "on the bit." As a result, I had trouble winning the first place prize in an English pleasure class in that age at the local Pine and Spurs horse shows, where we showed in a ring in the woods of Northern Maine.

By Stephen Kinney

I remember one time when Anna Ela, doyenne of Townshend Farm of Morgan breeding fame, came to judge at Pine and Spurs. During the class in which I was competing she took the opportunity to grab the announcer's microphone and hold a mini-clinic on the dos and don'ts of English pleasure. And it felt like she had me in her cross hairs. She talked, not favorably, about the young man working so hard to keep his horse on the bit. And she was equally unfavorable in where she placed me and Cubby. I will share a confession here (and hope Nancy Caisse doesn't hold this against me), but I was—umm—timid around Anna Ela after that throughout her considerable long life!

ABOVE: Two pleasure horses that have been iconic in their own time. Lady Roxanna in the 1960s with Jane Elliott and Multi-world champion Bada Bing with Peggy Alderman from the 2000s (photos © Warren Patriquin, Howard Schatzberg).

There is no doubt Anna Ela preferred my friend, Heather Smith. She rode Cubby's half-brother Gulrife. Gulrife could be ridden "on the buckle," which meant the reins were very long, there was no collection to his frame. And, he could canter "in a tea cup" meaning he cantered at a speed that someone could walk next to him and easily keep up. Gulrife and Heather were frequent winners.

If you are new to this sport, and by new I mean you grew up and came to the horse show world since 1980ish, then you'll want to pay attention. The 1960s were indeed "another age" for the show ring discipline of English pleasure. You wouldn't recognize it if all you know is the way that division rolls these days.

Peggy Alderman, the trainer who today holds the record for winning the Morgan English Pleasure World Championship more than any other trainer (six times) was around to witness that olden day way of riding. She says, "The term pleasure was taken literally. Something anyone could ride around the farm. The horse was quiet and respectful at all times. You didn't need a lot of bridle. Also, the pleasure division was completely an amateur division."

Bonnie Sogoloff is the trainer commonly thought to have changed the division when she showed the epoch defining Long View Sundance (English Pleasure World Champion three times in a row, in 1980, '81 and '82—more about them later). She recalls, "In those days everyone rode on the buckle. That was the goal. To see if horses would go through their paces without any contact."

New England stalwart Jane Elliott owned, trained, and showed Lady Roxanna in the 1960s. Lady Roxanna is a horse many remember as being an icon of her generation. When Jane talks about back then, she says, "Pleasure horses meant they could go out on the road and on the trail. I think they were ground covers. Their object was to go out on a pleasure ride and cover the ground. Now, it is more performance."

Mike Goebig claims 46 years of experience training for the Morgan show ring, so he also recalls those days. In his typically analytic way of seeing things, Mike recalls, "They didn't ask for a lot of collection or headset. I wouldn't use the term 'light.' They wanted them loose in the bridle and uncollected. There were a lot of people where those reins just hung down, where there was zero contact. You'd have to gather your reins to make contact. Judges would put their fingers under the curb chain in the line-up. Looser was good."

"Those horses really weren't what you would ride on the trail. They were too extreme. You certainly wanted the organization of their brain to be quiet, but that was so extreme."

"Horses cantered painfully slow. And they had to walk—we walked a long time. It was really judged almost like a trail horse in English tack."

Jane Blue has been judging both Morgans and open shows since the 1950s. She had success riding both English and Western world champions in the early days of Morgan Grand National (she won the English Pleasure Championship at the first Grand National in Detroit in 1973 aboard Whitmorr Serenade). And she's known as an astute analyst of most things equine. Jane's comment about horses walking will be of interest to those studying horsemanship today:



Mike Goebig commented for this article. Shown here are one of his notable horses from the 1960s, Spring Glo, and 1986 English Pleasure World Champion Equinox Damsel (bottom photo © Howard Schatzberg).



Two horses of Peggy Alderman's: A horse that defines the change in the English pleasure frame, Broadwall Spartan from the early 1970s and the glorious trotting Equinox Tempo, English Pleasure World Champion in 1989 (photos © Bob Moseder, Howard Schatzberg).

“One way you could show off back then was ride on the snaffle if you could do that. Or, two, in the walk, you could take a long ride across the arena with a looser rein and just show off the fact your horse was not anxious for a canter the moment you went down to the walk.” Yes, that’s right, she’s suggesting taking a long ambling walk as a way of showing off! Who would think of that today?

Jane Blue also has a unique point of view of the “on the buckle thing.” She resided in the areas of Ohio and Kentucky. In the 1950s and ’60s, keep in mind, the Morgan show world was anchored in New England. If you saw Morgans outside of the heartland, chances are they were showing at the state fair level, often among Saddlebreds and with a heavy influence from that breed (you will recall seeing old pictures of Morgans with the Saddlebred ribbons braided into their manes and forelocks).

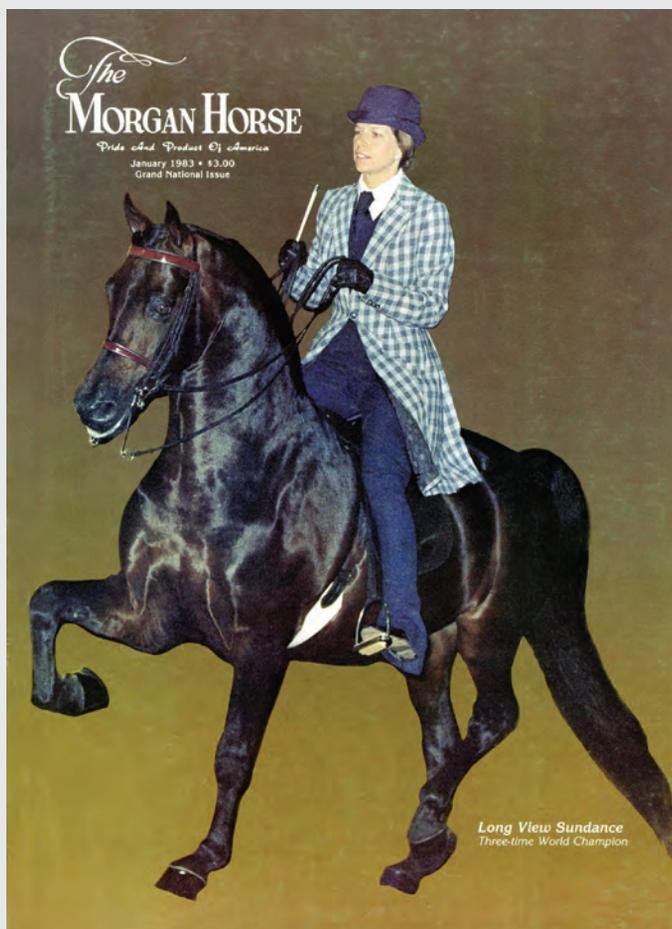
Jane sees the English pleasure movement described above as being a Northeastern custom, even specifically a Northampton phenomenon. In our recent conversation, she even described it, coincidentally, as an “Anna Ela thing.” Jane Blue says, “When I went to New England in 1965, I took care of my horse and then I went and watched classes. That’s when I discovered this English pleasure division was more of what I called Road Hack. I only saw that when I went to Northampton. Mike [Goebig] didn’t do that either. Only some people, like Anna [Ela], and Johnny [Lydon], maybe the Orcutts were making that their standard for pleasure horses.”

There was another issue distinguishing English pleasure then from its counterpart today and it goes right along with Mike Goebig’s comment that it was more like a trail class. Every rider had to execute three obstacles in the pleasure division.

Mike says, “In the 1960s they had to do obstacles. Every pleasure championship, whether at a Morgan show or an all breed show, had to do three obstacles at the discretion of the show committee. At Northampton they had bridges, a kind of tunnel, jumps. It took a really quiet horse to be able to manage all that.”

As a student at the University of Vermont, Bonnie Sogoloff rode and trained at the Morgan farm under the tutelage of the famous Bob Baker (she is often referred to as one of “The Baker Boys,” a distinction that included other apprentices such as Luman Wadhams, Steve Davis, Tom Caisse, Ben Qua and Peter Palmer). Bonnie recalls training the three-year-old UVM Helmsman under Baker’s guidance (which apparently, in this case, meant, among other things, Baker stood behind Helmsman with a lunge whip). “He had the men at the farm build a jump. They built me a solid chicken coop made out of planks. If I ever hit that, you can imagine! That was our first jump. No preparation, no cavalettis, I just got him over the jump and did it.”

Before English Pleasure met Morgan Grand National, the obstacle test in the division had gone away. Mike Goebig thinks it became “inconvenient” for shows to continue that tradition. And Peggy Alderman agrees. “It was right around that era, ’71 or ’72, they eliminated the obstacles. I was a kid then. I wasn’t involved with rule changes. I couldn’t tell you for certain, but I think it was a time factor. It was extremely time consuming. They were great big classes and by the time you put everyone over the obstacles it would take all day.”



A pair of Bonnie Sogoloff's most influential horses: UVM Helmsman, going over an obstacle at Northampton. Bonnie credits him with being her role model for the division. And many claim Longview Sundance forever changed English pleasure with his three wins of the world championship in the 1980s (photos © Vermont Development Department, Jack Schatzberg).

The advent of no obstacles and the lifting of the rule that only amateurs could show pleasure horses would soon signal a shift toward a new age. But before we explore that, let's make a case study of one horse who, in many people's minds, defined an era.

"Lady Roxanna was my first crush," says Peggy Alderman, recalling the glory days of the horse for which Jane Elliott will always be best known. "I just loved her. I thought she was the most beautiful pleasure horse ever. She had a little bit of the old fashioned looseness, but was an athletic, head up, go forward type of horse. Even then I liked the ambitious ones. And everyone else did. That mare just won and won."

Jane Elliott says that she was not an advocate of the extreme gesture of throwing away the reins. "Back in that day some did the hand gallop with no contact," she recalls. "It's not safe to ride on the buckle out on the trail. It was not good pleasure riding.

"I had a full bridle and I had contact with the mouth," she says. Jane talks about working with coach George Nichols at Holyoke College where she taught. "He would not let me go out long and loose. I tried to, but he said she was looking like a hack horse. So I learned to bridle her up. We didn't have a hard hold. If you did, you didn't get pinned."

Many think of the showing of today's fancy, high trotting, highly collected pleasure horses as a fine art. But, as Jane Elliott describes it, riding a horse that is less collected was also an art of its own. Of Lady Roxanna she says, "She was a good horse and she did react to your hands. She had reactions like a cat. I only had to think about going to the rail. It was automatic. I just thought about it and that mare did it. She was like my own skin. We didn't have to show any aids at all. It was all imperceptible."

"Roxie was just part of me," Elliott continues. "If I had to move left I just thought move left and back to the rail she went. A pleasure horse was one you didn't have to sweat over. She was broke for it. She won in about everything I showed her in. She was in a class of 42 in the pleasure championship at New England. They took half and judged them and the other half and judged them and brought back a bunch. From there you'd hope you'd be champion of the show. It took me quite a while to do that. I finally made it to the top as the New England Grand Champion. Barry Caisse said, 'It's about time.' I still have that ribbon.

"She was all Morgan. She did everything. She did open jumping, trail. There wasn't anything I didn't do with her. It was very pleasurable. When I got bored I put her in another division. You only have one of those in a lifetime."

Jane's point of view nicely defines what it was to be a "pleasure" those decades ago. Let's look at what came to define the division as it evolved.

When you read the coverage of Northampton in magazines from the old days you will read captions that state a horse won in the "pleasure saddle mares" for instance and other captions that stated the horse won the "saddle" division. The latter tended to describe a horse more collected in the bridle and taking a more square trot with both knee and hock action. There is a picture accompanying this article of the inimitable

Pat Tataronis, one of our sport's first female professionals, riding Command Performance. That picture shows a horse that could come forward and compete in today's more animated fashion.

The point here is that soon "saddle" horses would be defined as park horses. English pleasure horses, removed from the necessity of performing over obstacles, took on a more animated trot and a more vertical frame in the bridle as well.

And Grand National has helped define that. Jane Blue refers to the early Grand Nationals as a "mixing of the regions." Northampton might remain the heartland, but at Detroit, and eventually Oklahoma, horsemen came in contact with customs from the Mid-West and California.

Blue acknowledges another phenomenon, one that is true of almost every breed, and that is "specialization."

"We were also moving into an era when park was becoming, for good or for bad, a specialty. We also were moving into specialized breeding programs. We moved away from 'one horse can do it all.' When horse shows started to heat up, post-World War II, Morgans made a go of it because a whole family could take (one horse) and do everything. That made him a popular critter. Along came the Quarter Horses with Western pleasure and Saddlebred high steppers and they were specialized. Then the Morgans picked up on it when they had their first truly national show. People were moving around, getting away from their regions, and seeing what was happening. People began to breed for the discipline. I don't think that's a bad thing. The horses that did specialize in the '70s began to rise up. They were what you needed to have when it came to the stake on Saturday night."

Blue was a part of this movement forward. She had judged "Fudgie" (Whitmorr Serenade) as a park horse. After the show she told the family he was darling and in the winter of 1972 she got a call saying he was for sale and she bought him. "In '73 we won everywhere. We went to New England and won 11 out of 12 classes. Went to Jubilee and won there. We went to Grand National in Detroit and won both of our classes. He looked like Mr. Morgan and he wasn't even 14.1. He had a fabulous walk and went into another gear at the extended trot. He had normal shoes on front and no shoes behind. Fabulous rocking chair canter. I remember crossing the arena at the walk knowing they were going to ask for the canter and, boom, he just went into his dressage-like canter out in the middle of the ring."

A new day was upon us. But it seems, in the days leading up to Grand National and World Championship competition, there was a lot going on behind the scenes.

When people credit Bonnie Sogoloff with forever changing English pleasure the horse they are thinking of is Longview Sundance. However, when you talk to Bonnie she has a different version of cause and effect.

She recalls, back somewhere around 1963 at the University Of Vermont Morgan Horse Farm, "When I first went there they gave me a three-year-old gelding, UVM Helmsman by Stanfield. I was training him to go on the buckle, which was the style those days. Bob Baker was driving by in the truck and stopped, rolled down his window, and hollered out at me that I better shorten my reins if I



Here are three examples of English pleasure horses navigating obstacles at Northampton in the 1960s: Green Meads Phyllis with Ouisa Fohrhaltz, Orland Graceful, and Whippoorwill Melody (photos © Warren Patriquin, Freudy).



Three examples of horses from the 1960s showing in the relaxed frame popular in those days: Waseeka Leading Man with Maxine Wiley, Ran-Bunctious, and Emerald's Cochise with Agnes Wyant.

wanted to show with him.”

“He told me how to make that horse do any obstacle. And I followed his advice and even with his [Helmsman's] head set he went over the obstacles and won at what was then the ‘National’ and he was only three years old.”

She adds, “I was hired at UVM to be a tour guide, not a horse trainer, and that’s how I got by in an amateur class.”

What she says next is important as it also relates to what happened when Longview Sundance came along. “I did it with Bob Baker yelling out of his window that I better shorten my reins. I kind of understood that a lot of horses in the pleasure classes in those days were in there because there was a prejudice. And that prejudice was that a pleasure horse wasn’t as good as an open horse. After all my lessons with Bob I felt differently. I just stuck with that [the idea that a pleasure horse could go up in the bridle].”

Bonnie went on to see her husband Hayes through medical school and raise two daughters. It was the late ’70s before she was called upon to show some horses for others and hung out her professional shingle. Of the total change in the English pleasure discipline, she says, “I think it happened in the ’70s somewhere. When I became a horse trainer in the late ’70s it was already in effect. I was missing in action for a little while. I think trainers like Bob and Judy Whitney also contributed to that change.”

And, she says, “By the time I came back to training it was already a done deal. It is something that happened as horse showing progressed. All these divisions have changed, not just the English pleasure division. It would have evolved no matter what.”

But others give more credit to Bonnie. Says Mike Goebig, “Probably Longview Sundance, that Bonnie Sogoloff showed, was the turning point of pleasure horses being required to shape their head and neck and go a little more of a collected trot.

“One of the reasons people liked him so much and he was never controversial was that he slipped through the radar. He was very typey and pretty. He fit all the standards that are required in addition to being a little more horse than we were used to.”

“It only takes one to move that stone and I think he was the one. It took a little bit for everyone to catch up to that.”

But, in Bonnie’s mind, she was putting old lessons to use on a brand new horse. “When Sundance came along, at that point, I already had an idea how I wanted a pleasure horse to go and how I wanted him to move and he did it. And my lessons with Bob Baker stood out.”

Lest anyone think that the evolution was as simple as a change of shoeing practices or some sort of artifice, Bonnie’s theories strike a note for the horsemanship involved in the newly coined saddle seat discipline. “Sundance could have been a park horse with heavy shoes and heavy footed. But he would have been an unhappy park horse. As a pleasure horse he only wore 11 ounces. With his shoe he couldn’t get a very long foot. He was a horse that went higher with no weight as did most of his get.

“I wouldn’t say that every other pleasure horse I trained was as sensitive to weight as he was, but it stuck in my mind that I preferred the way horses traveled—all my horses—if they were more lightly shod. I have not changed my position on that in what I like for all my horses. It takes a little bit of horsemanship to see



LEFT TO RIGHT: Orcland Donlendon is remembered as epitomizing the look of horses shown on a long, loose rein. Here he is seen jumping as part of the tests of an English pleasure horse in the 1960s; The animated Command Performance with one of the industry's first female professional trainers, Pat Tataronis, exemplifies a horse from yesteryears that might well be competitive today (photos © A. C. Drowne).

that. When they are heavy in front they won't get self-carriage, they just can't. You have to shoe to what their wants dictate."

When horses come along and things get changed forever, they usually attract naysayers along with their fans. But this was not the case with Longview Sundance. "He was a horse that kind of transcended all the breeds," Bonnie remembers. "All the horsemen from other breeds loved him. I think for his headset and how he showed. Morgan people loved him because he was a traditional Morgan horse. No one said, 'I don't like Sundance'—I never heard that ever."

It is interesting that Bonnie adds, "I do have to say that I don't think he's the horse that transformed my way of thinking. Helmsman did that. I used what I learned from him—and there was a gap there—to train the way I did."

Her point of view is one with which she and her daughters persist to this day. "I'd just like to say, in my view, I've not changed how I've trained my pleasure horses from those days. I have one in the barn, Clayhill Affirmative, who is shod the same way. Will he be the one the judge's choose? That's up to the judges. It's up to them to make that distinction. But I won't change the way I train a pleasure horse."

A number of trainers and horses have won the English Pleasure World Championship twice. However, the record of three consecutive wins of the title by Bonnie Sogoloff and Longview Sundance stood for many years, even decades. Then along came another lady trainer from Vermont riding a homebred horse and that all changed.

"When I look at the horses today, I bring Bada Bing up," Jane Blue confesses. "Watching Peggy and Bada Bing was such a joy. I love the look of today's pleasure horse, as long as people doing it can carry it off. You have to have the ability to go down the rail in a group of horses and carry it off until you line up. Peggy is a master. I think Bonnie was too. And I love the look."

Peggy Alderman now holds the record of having won the English Pleasure World Championship five times (2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011) on her homebred Bada Bing. It is quite possibly a record that will stand indefinitely. What is heartening is what she has to say about the horse's specific talent and her stewardship of it. Some of her words will tell truth to Bonnie's observations about natural athletic ability and to Jane Elliott's feelings about the fine art of showing a pleasure horse.

Like Bonnie, Peggy's great horse had a great predecessor. In this case it was Broadwall Spartan. "In 1973 he won the 50 horse pleasure stake at Northampton," Peggy recalls. This was before she was a professional trainer.

"In 1974 he was World Champion Ladies English Pleasure and reserve open. He had a lot of trot and he was one of the first in that era to really raise up and use his bridle. I had him collected and on the bit and that was very different from how Morgans were shown. I would call him one of the first modern pleasure horses. I remember him beating Orcland Donlendon and that didn't happen—he [Donlendon] was the epitome of the old style. I would say Spartan would be the beginning of the new style."

A PARADE OF WORLD CHAMPIONS

Winning the English Pleasure World Championship is career defining for horsemen in our breed. But it can be an elusive goal. Here are the stories of some riders who've made that victory pass twice.

LESLIE PARKER & UC RINGMASTER 1991 & 1993



(Editor's Note: We spoke with Bill Parker, brother of the late Leslie Parker) "You have no idea how unbelievably it changed my brother's personality. He always had been the one in the background. He had never had a big champion of his own. It was the ultimate gift that God could have given him being a horseman. Did you

see the picture of him riding with the reins in his mouth? That goes to show you how holy that was. Just think of this young man who had never had a special horse, always rode rough horses that he made look good. Leslie turned out to be one of the finest horsemen. His seat on a horse and his hands were more like my father than anybody else. All this came from Ringmaster and those two championships. When you saw Leslie show this horse—well, people would challenge him and he'd trot rings around them. He'd ride him with one hand. That was the ultimate gift for Leslie. It was something he yearned for and, when he finally got it, he rarely talked about it. It was all in a day's work for him."

LUMAN WADHAMS & MTN LAUREL MAXIMILIAN, 1996 SARDES MANISTIQUE, 2007



"I have a distinct memory of the world championship classes for both Mtn Laurel Maximilian [pictured left] and Sarde's Manistique. The classes couldn't have been more different.

"Max had come up through the ranks as a junior horse virtually undefeated in the pleasure division. He had been world champion as both a three-year-old and a four-year-old in that

division, if I remember correctly. As a five-year-old he finished reserve to the very formidable UVM Nappi in the English Pleasure World Championship class. As a six-year-old, he had a great show season and had been brilliantly promoted by his owners, Trebles Morgan Manor, as both a top show horse and an up and coming breeding stallion. I think he went into Oklahoma as the betting favorite to win the pleasure saddle world championship. He didn't disappoint me or his legion of fans. He was one of the most popular horses I've ever shown. He won with style.

"Sarde's Manistique had a quite different story. He had been a successful junior horse. I think I won the Four-Year-Old English Pleasure World Championship with him. As an open horse he had a successful career, but had not established himself as a super star. I don't remember how he did in the pleasure gelding qualifier that year in Oklahoma but I don't think we won it. We certainly weren't the betting favorite going into the championship class that night. There was one wild card, however. That was the year show manager Fred Nava had hired a jazz band to perform in the seats at the end of the coliseum. Now, I know the boys in the band destroyed many a class for our hunter and Western friends, but Sarde's Manistique loved it! The orchestra played the Benny Goodman standard "Sing, Sing, Sing," which has a long, high-energy drum solo. "Ricky" totally got into it and made the show of his career. He was a total blast to show. That night and the memory of it still bring a smile to my face."

STEPHEN KINNEY & ASPENGLAW GENESIS 1999 & 2000



"In the interest of full disclosure I am the editorial director of this magazine and the author of this article. But I was once a horse trainer too. Back in 1999 the farm where I worked in Bucksport, Maine took an ad. It read "For many years we've traveled to Oklahoma. This year we arrived." Winning the English Pleasure World

Championship in 1999 and then successfully defending the title in 2000 was a dream come true on a dream horse, Brenda Varney's Aspenglow Genesis. One thing that was unforgettable about riding him was he got competitive with the horses around him at the trot and road trot. His trademark was that he was physically capable of out trotting most of his competition. He carried a light shoe and

Photo © Howard Schindberg

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Anna Ela in a victory pass on Townshend Vigilass, showing with the long reined look of the 1960s. In this article Jane Blue credits Ela as being a progenitor of the look; Judge and longtime Morgan horsewoman Jane Blue won the English Pleasure World Championship riding Whitmorr Serenade at the first Morgan Grand National in 1973 (right photo © Gloria Axt).

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Peggy is also known for another horse that could bring the house down when he was shown, 1989 English Pleasure World Champion Equinox Tempo. “He just had an attitude that was very, very special. He was a go-getter. One of the first times I showed him he went through the ingate at something between a canter and a gallop. I got last. But I worked him a little harder for the championship and won it. He was totally enthusiastic. He took a lot of work. If he was showing on Saturday night, he’d have a 40 minute workout on Saturday morning. He had a lot of charisma.

“I think he was very lofty. He had a lot of hind end motion. He put his knee up. He always was a horse that exceeded his pictures. Somehow it never got captured. But I thought he had tremendous presence in person.”

It is going to be interesting to compare Peggy’s comments about Bada Bing with Bonnie Sogoloff’s sentiments about pleasure horses.

Says Peggy, “You talk about a horse who loved his job. He never went in the ring when he didn’t bring his enthusiasm. He had one of the prettiest natural trots I’ve ever seen. He was stunning trotting turned loose with no shoes on.

“I had to give up my idea he was going to be a great park horse, because he was prettiest doing a pleasure trot. When you tried to keep him back in his trot, where a true park horse needs to be slow and animated, he would do that, but he lost his enthusiasm. He was doing a job, but he didn’t have the break loose type of trot. That’s when he lit up. We put him in a 12-ounce shoe and a little

over a 4½ inches. The less foot and shoe the higher he went. We tried to stay as close to bare foot as we could and that beautiful trot came out. I think he was a good park horse, I think he was a great pleasure horse.”

Another thing about Bada Bing that has to be appreciated is that he was good in all gates. Peggy accurately observes about him, “I also love [that he has] a fabulous canter. He lifts into it. Not rushing, just rolling. I think it’s really important. That old adage, ‘it’s not going to win you the class, but it could lose you the class.’ I’d make a point to canter off the rail, just to impress someone. You want to sit there and say, wow, there’s a finished horse. I used to drag it out when I needed to. They should not look frantic in the canter.”

We started this article with definitions, explanations of what was expected in an important show ring division something like five decades ago. Let’s conclude by asking a contemporary master for her definition of how the discipline has evolved.

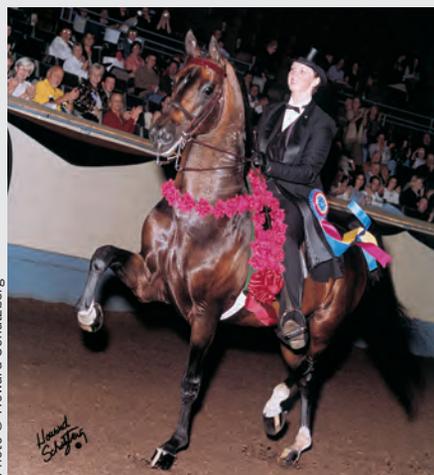
Says Peggy Alderman, “Today? I think the genre of pleasure horses is one of the most exciting divisions there is. It has animation and brilliance, but it has go forward. A horse that can sustain a frame in a road trot is a great athlete. I’m still a bugger that they have to come down and walk. They have to relax. We should penalize a horse that is agitated. They have to harness all that ability, but still be able to relax in their frame. It is one of my favorite divisions.” ■

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short toe. Indeed, he won these titles being shod legal for classic pleasure [except that he had a full pad, not a rim pad which is the standard in classic]. I do want to say that while having a horse like Genesis to show is very special, one learns lessons training many horses of varying degrees of talent [and cooperativeness] and then you apply the lessons learned when you get the opportunity of training a big time horse. The great ones make you look good, but all the others teach you! So thank you to all the horses along the way—each of them is special!”

STACY HENNESSY & CCR'S OUTRAJUS CORAJUS 2002 & 2004



“Winning on ‘OC’ was certainly a career changing experience. But, the coolest part of it was showing OC. He had such a following. Showing him at Oklahoma was so fun. Particularly the second time we won. We knew each other so well and he had so many fans. We came in the ring and the crowd went wild. And he knew it

was for him! He was so fun because he ‘got it.’ He loved everything about being special and he worked harder and harder the more they cheered. You could feel him swell up and he never, ever thought of it as work. Winning is always fun, but, I wish everyone could have the experience of showing a horse with such a fan club. You feel like you are just lucky to be there. And I was! And it makes me happy every day when I go out to the barn and say ‘Hi OC’ and he nickers at me! We took that journey together and he’ll be here for the rest of his life with me. He was so special and so natural at what he did that the only tough part is wondering if you could get two that special in a lifetime. I sure hope so. I’m always looking.”

DAWN FIRE & GRAYCLIFF TONY 2013 & 2014



“Did it feel intimidating being an amateur in the open world championship? There’s always a bit of ‘I hope I don’t look like an idiot.’ There are a lot of good trainers and riders and you wonder if you’re of their caliber. But he’s a fabulous horse and I just always want to have a good ride. I go in with the mindset of

having the best ride I can have and let the chips fall. The best I can do is all I’ve got. Also, I’m always grateful that Phil [trainer Phil Fountain] trusted me to go in the ring and do a good job. You know if you go into an open class, then your trainer is giving up the option of taking that ride themselves. I appreciate that he’s encouraged me. Whether it would set a record wasn’t something I thought about before the class. Afterwards, people mentioned it to me and I thought ‘that’s neat.’ When I think about riding ‘Tony,’ when he is in the mood, there is nothing like him. When he catches a buzz there is no horse I’ve ridden that is anything like him. It’s an electrifying experience. He’s a horse that has that ‘it’ factor. He’s very egotistical. He thinks he’s cool. He has that going for him. For me, the correctness in how he moves sets him apart. His gait is always correct, he’s sound and it’s an overall pleasing effect on the eye. He’s continuing to leave a mark with his offspring. They are beautiful whether they are Western or park saddle. I think he’s a very special horse.”

DAVID RAND & MERRIEHILL HOOLIGAN, 2001 VL ZAIA, 2015



“Obviously it’s one of the big open stakes at Oklahoma. Having horses capable of winning at that level has been awesome. It was pivotal to be able to step up as a professional and be able to win one of those stakes. It has been career defining. The first time I won it was with ‘Hoolie’ [pictured left] who came off the junior exhibitor win that year and

stepped up to do that. To go back in, I remember that particular moment. There had to have been 20 in the class. It was back in the day when everybody went back to try to win those stakes. I remember looking up at this huge sea of horses and then as we came through the gate it opened up and I had this perfect trip through the gate and down the first rail. Hoolie gave it his all every time he went through the gate. He was totally exciting to show. VL Zaia is another extraordinary animal. Going into the open championship with a four-year-old was never really the thought process all along. All season she had been getting better. At OKC, she had this wonderful qualifier and we thought ‘wouldn’t that be great to try.’ Another horse like Hooligan that gives her all, but to be on one I had trained and raised, it was pretty special. It was bonus and a cool thing. She came to the party. She and Hooligan are both pleasure horses by today’s standards. They are happy to do their work, they are ground covering, they are right there, and they are a pleasure to ride. It’s an honor to have these wins and even more of an honor to be associated with such great horses.” ■