

High White Rising

A look at pinto characteristics in the Morgan breed: Where they come from and where it's all headed.

By Laura Hornick Behning

THE MORGAN HORSE CLUB, INC.

The following resolutions have been passed by the Directors:
Effective with the postmark of April 7, 1962, no horse shall be eligible to registration in the American Morgan Horse Register which has a wall eye (lack of pigmentation on the iris) or natural white markings above the knee or hock except on the face.

By Order of the Board of Directors
THE MORGAN HORSE CLUB, INC.

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REGISTRY NEWS

CHANGES TO THE REGISTRY

by TYLER J. ATWOOD

Most recently, the high white (Rule 1-B) and blue eye (Rule 1-C) rules were rescinded. All cosmetic requirements have now been removed from registration. Certain individuals who did not previously qualify for registration may now be registered. However, new terms are being added to the list of descriptive terms the Registry uses to describe markings, terms such as "body spot" and "stockings extending above the knee." A new color also has been added. The color "creme" will be used to describe horses with ivory-colored coats and a mane and tail that is the same color or slightly darker. Cremes have light-colored eyes which are usually blue. This category will serve as an umbrella for cremellos and perlinos, but should separate the very light chestnut or palomino due to the light eye requirement.

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MEMC On Target



War Paint

The long awaited moment has arrived and your prized Morgan mare is finally giving birth. The torn sack reveals a pair of stark white forelegs. Tucked in between them is a tiny dished head with a broad white blaze face. Soon the rest of the new arrival enters the world, belly splashed with the same white paint. Finally the other pair of dazzling white legs emerges. A chestnut filly with loud sabino markings!

In disbelief, you gaze at your mare, whose only white marking is a narrow, roaned blaze. How in the world did you get a pinto foal? Back in the house, you revisit photos of your new filly's sire, looking for clues. He has a handsome blaze and one short conservative rear sock; certainly no hint that he would sire such a wildly marked foal. Nothing out of the ordinary, you think. Or was there?

How the Pinto Genes Work

Sometimes, as with our hypothetical filly, a loudly marked foal is born to ordinary looking parents. It's not so surprising that these "crop outs" appear once we understand how the pinto genes work.

There are actually *four different* pinto patterns—**tobiano** (a pattern characterized by pinto markings that cross the back, and white on all four legs; we do not have tobiano in our Morgan gene pool) and the three **overo** patterns—**frame**, **splashed white** and **sabino** (all of which are present in Morgans). To further complicate identification, horses can inherit more than one pattern. The best way to start building an understanding of how the four pinto patterns work is to look at them in terms of *where the white markings are located on the horse*.

All pinto patterns have what are known as *points of origin*, which are places on the horse where white will first start appearing in the most minimally marked individuals. This helps in identifying which pattern or patterns might be present in a particular horse, especially in cases where there is no test yet for that pattern. For example, minimally marked sabinos will have irregular blazes that may continue on past their lower lip up under the jaw, and the hind stockings will extend up the stifle in a point; sometimes there will be belly white. These areas, for a sabino, are the points of origin. It is from these areas that the pattern spreads, so some sabinos will have very little white while others may be completely white—and everything in between! This "pattern progression" occurs in each pinto pattern, and as a result the *degree of expression* (the amount of white) will vary from individual to individual. Other, as yet unknown genes are theorized to control the amount of white a given horse displays.

There are also characteristic traits that seem to consistently show up in horses with the particular pattern, no matter how much (or how little) white they have. Once you understand the points of origin and the basic characteristics of each pattern, you can more easily identify which type of pinto genes the horse has.

Before the "High White Rule" was rescinded in 1996, an unknown number of Morgan foals were born who, because of misplaced white or a blue eye, could not be registered. With rapidly advancing scientific knowledge of color genetics, as well as DNA parentage testing, there are no longer any questions about the purity of Morgans of the more unusual colors. However, the High White Rule had a very lasting impact on the breed, and many pinto lines were lost as a result. Those lines that survived did so solely because pintos do not always look pinto, and horses carrying the genes forward to the present day did it quietly.



Regal Charade

War Paint and Frame Overo Morgans

Frame overos are characterized by blaze faces, often with blue eyes, and white markings that spread out along the sides rather than over the topline of the horse, "framed" by the body color. Leg white is not a hallmark of frame; if a frame overo has leg white, it is likely another pattern is present in addition to frame. Frame is the only color gene that can produce a Lethal White foal, but this is easily avoided by simply never breeding two horses carrying frame together. Only homozygous frame individuals inherit the problem, which is basically caused by an incomplete intestinal tract. A test for Lethal White Overo (LWO) is available through UC Davis and other color testing facilities. It identifies horses that are carrying the frame overo gene, so that two frame overos (who may not look

(**Opposite page**) **MEMC On Target** (MEMC Crown Royal x W-B Her Royal Highness), 2007 buckskin splash and sabino colt, was a pleasant surprise to his breeder Jennifer Monroe. Both his parents were once thought to be sabino-only. There is no test for splash presently, so the only way to be sure a horse without a lot of white or blue eyes is carrying the gene is when it produces an obvious, body spotted homozygous splash like "Tiger." Photo courtesy of Jennifer Monroe. (**Opposite page, inset**) When people think of pinto Morgans, **War Paint** is the horse who springs immediately to mind. Foaled in 1959 on the Cross Ranch in DuBois, Wyoming, War Paint's frame overo gene came from his dam, Painted Girl (Warhawk x Black Girl). The High White Rule, enacted in 1962, resulted in a 1965 motion preventing additional foals by the stallion from being registered. War Paint does have descendants in the Registry today, although none are known to carry his frame gene. Photo courtesy of Lowell Rott. (**This page, above**) **Regal Charade** (War and Peace x RRG Flashdance), a 2003 chestnut stallion owned by Beth Lynne Hoskins, shows a typical example of sabino markings. The detached, raggedy edge marking on his jaw as well as the white that travels up the front of his legs are sabino characteristics, but sabinos can be more or less expressed—showing more or less white—than this. "Riley" has a number of individuals in his pedigree known for plentiful white markings including Cedar Creek Harlequin, Century Free Spirit and Chasley Superman. Photo courtesy of Beth Lynne Hoskins.

Pinto Characteristics

“pinto” at all) are not inadvertently bred together (which results in a lethal white foal in 25 percent of such matings). In this way, horses which appear “solid” can be “unmasked” and their true genetic makeup revealed. It is hoped that owners of Morgans who might potentially be carrying frame will get them tested.

So, who might want to test their horses for LWO in an effort to discover where the frame overo gene might be hiding in our breed? We can start with any descendants of War Paint. War Paint was foaled in 1959 on the Cross Ranch in Dubois, WY. A classically marked frame overo, War Paint’s frame coloring came from his dam, Painted Girl (Warhawk x Black Girl), who was marked with two spots on her right side and one on the left, a star, strip left front and left hind stockings. War Paint was among the catalysts inspiring the “High White Rule” of the 1960s, which disallowed horses having blue eyes or white over the knee or hock.

Another potential source for frame could be found in various lines from the Cross Ranch related to War Paint. One example would be descendants of the mare Tia, who is the likely color source behind the only currently living registered frame overo Morgan, Sky Walker AB (Moreeda Andrew x Q Tawny, out of Tia), a palomino frame overo mare foaled in 1982. Sky Walker, owned by Fred and Karen Beck of Angola, IN, was one of a handful of “almost lost” pinto Morgans who were registered in 1996 when the White Rule was repealed. Sky’s dam, Tia, was foaled in 1965 on the Cross Ranch. Her descendants figure prominently in Loretta Brown’s Goldtree Morgans breeding program. Tia’s markings are given as “Connected Large Star, Strip” and no leg white, which is consistent with her possibly being a minimally marked frame overo. For further evidence of Tia being a source of frame, consider that her daughter Q Tawny (by Merry Madison) was marked with a “Connected Star, Strip, Snip Extending To Both Nostrils And Upper Lip. Right Hind Ankle White”—in other words, a large blaze face and minimal leg white, a classic expression of a minimally marked frame overo. Q Tawny produced at least one other offspring besides Sky Walker AB who had suspiciously frame-like markings, the palomino mare LAS Future De Oro (by Heathermoor Dynaquiz). I understand from people who have seen this mare that she is definitely a pinto; her markings are given by the Registry as “Connected Star, Wide Strip, Snip. Snip On Lower Lip. Left Fore Pastern. Both Hind Socks. Small Irregular Scar Right Side Lower Abdomen.” I am told the “scar” is a white marking, not merely a white spot left by an injury.

Is it possible that the frame gene might be found elsewhere in our breed? Absent an obvious frame overo being born seemingly out of nowhere, as happened with Sky Walker AB, the best thing to do would be to have horses of War Paint, Painted Girl and Cross Ranch descent tested for the frame overo gene. We might well be in for some very exciting discoveries!

Sabinos—They’re Everywhere!

The genes that produce sabino markings are present in nearly every breed in the world. Go to any gathering of Morgans (or just look in your own barn!) and you will see an abundance of markings that indicate that sabino is at work. Sabino is thought by some experts to be responsible for most of the so called “normal” white markings found in horses, with other modifiers limiting the

amount of white to just the face and head in most horses.

Sabino has many different types of expression because there is more than one gene controlling what we collectively call “sabino.” Some horses may have just one type of sabino; others may have some combination—or even all—of the possible sabino genes. The effects are thought to be quantitative, meaning that when horses who exhibit sabino-type markings are bred together, with each passing generation the number of different types of sabino genes may increase—and the expression of sabino may become louder. So even when the parents don’t display excessive white themselves, sabino has been there all along.

What are some indicators that a horse may have one or more of the sabino genes present? Look for white facial markings, especially blazes with irregular shapes, ragged or roaned edges, sometimes with spots of body color showing through the white. White on the lower lip, even to the extent of wrapping up under the jaw, is also common. Blue eyes are not considered a trait of sabino, and if they occur on an individual in conjunction with sabino, it is usually due to splash (another pinto pattern), being present as well. Ticking or roan patches on the body or legs, that may appear or spread with age (bewildering their owners who may have registered them as “solids”!), are another feature of sabino. Sabinos with roaning on the body often have white hairs in their mane where roaning crosses over the neck. Some sabinos have nearly white manes and/or tails depending on how strongly the pattern is expressed. White socks or stockings that may come to a point (are higher in the front of the leg than the back) are another tell tale sign of sabino.

Some Morgans will have additional markings that are characteristic of sabinos that are showing more expression of the pattern—what we would refer to as “moderately expressed” sabinos. These include belly spots and detached white splashes on the upper part of a leg.

While in their minimum expression, sabinos can show as little white as a couple of low stockings and a star, in the maximum expression, sabinos can be nearly pure white, usually with minimal color in the form of roaned or speckled areas on the ears, tail base, chest and flanks. These are thought to be individuals who are homozygous for the recently discovered Sabino1 gene. Sabino1 can now be tested for. It is not present in all sabino-patterned horses, so just because your Morgan tests negative for Sabino1 this does not mean it is not a sabino. So far, we haven’t seen sabino whites in the Morgan breed, but they are not unusual in Tennessee Walkers and are getting more common in the Paint breed, and there are a rare few in the Arabian.

Bloodlines which seem to produce a lot of sabino Morgans include old government lines such as Orland Leader and Devan-prefixed horses, some Lippitt lines, and Jubilee King breeding. However sabino is so common it is probably present in most Morgan bloodlines.

Splash White—Aptly Named

One of the most striking of the pinto patterns is the splash white. Splash white occurs in Arabian horses, Saddlebreds and Thoroughbreds, but is more common in Miniatures, Icelandics,

Paints, Quarter Horses, and Foxtrotters. In 2005, splash was discovered in the Morgan breed when the mare Shahaylee (Marvelous Intrigue x Marvelous Pophecy), now owned by Karen Burrige of Upson Downs Morgans, was registered. Splash is a very old pattern; horses of splash patterning are depicted in ancient art.

Splash white horses tend to look as though they were dipped feet-first into a bucket of paint, and the markings have crisp, clean edges to them. On the splash white horse's body, the pattern starts underneath and works its way upwards; on the head it starts from the nose and goes up the face.

Splash white is probably the rarest of the pinto patterns, but this may be only because breeders have had a difficult time identifying it. The reason for this is that splash, like Sabino1, is one of the few color genes that is thought to be incompletely dominant. This means that a heterozygous splash (a horse with just one splash gene) *looks different* than a homozygous splash. A heterozygous splash will appear to be a "solid" colored horse with "normal" white markings that generally include at least a snip and some leg white and often (but not always) one or two blue eyes. A homozygous splash will have body white to some degree as well as white on the legs, a bald face, and one or both eyes will be blue or partially blue. In this way splash can "hide" in a gene pool—occasionally showing up as horses with "bottom heavy" face markings (including a lop-sided snip which covers one or both nostrils, or veers strongly toward one nostril), socks and/or stockings, and possibly one or two blue eyes. They then pass as "solids" until a breeder somewhere down the line unknowingly matches up two of them—and comes up with a spotted surprise.

Presently there is no test for splash, but researchers are working on it.

Some of the bloodlines which are producing splash white Morgans include Midwestern lines tracing to the blue-eyed mare Lady In Lace (often found in horses with the Sweet's prefix), Cedar Creek Harlequin, Ancan True Colors, descendants of the mare Royal-Glo (found in some of the Marvelous Morgans), Farceur Morgan, and the cross of Windover Enchantmint on Icestone Whitewing. If breeders cross Morgans with liberal white markings—especially those who have one or both blue eyes—to each other, we may begin to see more splash whites appearing in the breed.

Rolling the Genetic Dice—The Gamble of Breeding Pinto Morgans

Deliberately trying to produce pinto Morgans is a project that will take years—and is still in its infancy. Since the repeal of the White Rule, a handful of breeders have become fascinated with the prospect of breeding the elusive pinto patterned Morgan. This author spoke to several to get their perspective on the present state of the pinto Morgan, as well as their thoughts for its future.

Jennifer Monroe of MEMC Morgans in Melissa, Texas admired a colorful horse with "chrome" even before becoming involved with Morgans. In 2007 Jennifer was surprised by the birth



Skyloft Dream Catcher

of a buckskin splash colt, MEMC Target, from parents thought to be sabino-only. Her goal is to breed a high quality cream dilute pinto Morgan in addition to those of the more traditional colors.

Beth Lynne Hoskins of Eden Farm in East Aurora, New York in just a few years has amassed a remarkable herd of broodmares. She stands Stony Hollow Ice Man and the flamboyantly marked chestnut sabino, Regal Charade. Color, however, is not Beth Lynne's focus; a great Morgan is.

Jennifer Hartwell of Skyloft Morgans in Gorham, Maine is continuing a breeding program began in 1962 by her mother Carole Thoms. In 2006 Jennifer purchased the bay splash colt Skyloft Dream Catcher and his first foal crop will arrive this year.

Stephen and Annette Smith of Ultra Morgans in Delta, Ohio and their home-bred Ultras Special Agent are well known in the Morgan world. In 2003 they added the flashy sabino stallion Menomin Flash Dancer to their stallion lineup, and his pinto offspring have been making a splash in the show ring.

Karen Burrige of Upson Downs Morgans in Gainesville, Florida is a long time breeder of colorfults that have been successful in and out of the show ring, including her former senior stallion UDM Gold Mine. Karen is now hoping for more chrome with her homozygous splash mare Shahaylee.

(Above) Jennifer Hartwell's 2006 bay stallion Skyloft Dream Catcher (Medicine Wheel Jubilee x Rosewind Summer's Dream) shows the interesting facial markings that often accompany a splash carrier—as well as the tell-tale blue eyes! A blaze that zig zags down the face, veering towards one nostril, is typical of more minimally marked heterozygous splash carriers. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Hartwell.

Pinto Characteristics

LB: What drew you to pintos and trying to produce them?

Jenn Hartwell: I suppose it was per chance as all things that I fell into owning a few pinto Morgans. While I grew up with the philosophy that a solid bay with no white was ideal, I always thought the white markings looked so pretty on a dark horse. I really like the fact that a horse that carries unusual white just grabs my attention, and when it's on a correct horse it's just a 'wow' factor. I can't say that we've been looking to produce pinto Morgans as long as we've been breeding, but in the last couple years I thought it would be nice addition to our traditional colors as long as I could maintain the same quality that we've bred for over the years.

Jennifer Monroe: I began breeding Morgans with my cremello stallion MEMC Tequila Cuervo and also the cremello stallion Nashboro Sir Galahad whom I owned at the time. I appreciate a golden horse with lots of white, so my initial step toward a pinto Morgan was adding a Morgan who was double registered as a full papered Pinto, the stallion High White Revolution. Revolution was shown In-Hand as well as Pleasure driving as a two-year-old, and it was my hope he would sire some stock to cross well with my offspring of the other two stallions and add some of his pinto markings to create that flashy high stepping parade type Morgan I most desire. I bought Revolution in 1999, and his first foals were born here in 2000. I also purchased some very good mares who had both high white in their lines and, more importantly, had a family history of producing it. The one thing I wanted to do was stay with the

older lines, both foundation and old show breeding. I think I could have established a faster course to the pinto golden parade type horse by using more modern lines, but I still wanted the more curvy classical phenotype. Revolution added some chrome on his first foal crop as have my mares and even Tequila Cuervo, so I have generally had some extra white and high white ever since.

Beth Lynne Hoskins: I wouldn't say I was drawn to pintos any more than I have been drawn to black horses, bays, palominos or chestnuts. OK, well, maybe not exactly palominos. That's a story for another time. When I was little, my trainer, Harry Embree, used to put it this way, "Bethy's like God; she loves them all." The way that I was led to Riley (Regal Charade; War & Peace x RRG Flash Dance) was a very natural, organic progression and outgrowth of the path that started long ago for me, actually when I first fell in love with Morgans in the late 1970's.

I am fortunate enough to still have Ransomvale Minuet here with me over thirty years after her birth. I contend that she is a sabino, and is an excellent representative of a certain type her family is famous for producing. Based on my own informal study, I have found that certain branches of the Old Government family typically will produce what I call "big reds" or "beautiful bays." As an individual, Minuet is a "big red," a chestnut with a large blaze and other white markings, like Century Free Spirit, like Stonecroft Masquerade (Cedar CreekHarlequin x Carillon Command). As a producer, Minuet only produced big reds or beautiful bays. I have



Brownstone Sierra's Muse
2001 palomino mare
(Northernly Heart O Honey x
Cougar Ridge B-Marie)



Trust-T Honey-D
2007 dunskin (registered as
buckskin) filly
(Ragtime Dun D x
Brownstone Sierra's Muse)

We are in Idaho raising family friendly Morgans to help us raise our kids. We have colorful foals for sale, including this dunskin filly. Check our website: trust-tmorganhorse.com • Or contact Forrest Barnes at: (208) 589-7153

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naturally been drawn to both types since I was a little girl. I fell in love with other big reds like Stonecroft Chantilly (Stonecroft Masquerade x Fiddler's Chantilly), Weatherwell Eclipse (Corisham x Fanfare Miss Lendon), Ardun's Opralee (Gallant Lee x Trophy's Madonna), Raintree Celine (Stonecroft Byzantine x FCF Dearest Illusion) long before I even knew what a sabino was.

Steve and Annette Smith: Our decision to breed pintos was based on the idea of marketing—something for everyone!. We've never been opposed to the high white and the fact that the genes are there within the Morgan breed. Rather than trying to ignore it or hide it, embrace it. Pinto is not a new color in the Morgan breed. It is simply a marking pattern.

Karen Burrige: I remember seeing an ad in the *Saddle Horse Report* of a gorgeous black and white pinto. It literally took my breath away. In time I would admire many more of Michelle McFarland's elegant Pintos.

Her horses inspired me to do research on them as they really were head turners. Turns out her mother, Ellen Scripps Davis, was the granddaughter of *The New York Times* publisher Edward Scripps. She was an avid breeder and a bit of a free spirit. It was bold for those times to show her spotted horses and they may not have been embraced quite as much if it weren't for her perfect turn out with her "Aren't they grand!?" attitude that was contagious. They surely were. I loved her love of life and sense of adventure, and her daughter Michelle was cut from the same cloth. So quite honestly, these women were my inspiration. I knew if we had Morgans with that same elegant coat expression it could be all the more beautiful.

I looked around in the Morgan breed and really didn't see near the expression of white or the pinto gene back then. This was around 10-12 years ago. We were closer to coming off the rescinding of the high white rule which stated that high white above the knee was not registerable... so, understandable. I began to notice Morgans that had white markings that caught my eye: Windhover Enchantment (and relatives), PKF Classic Spats, a few of the Serenity and Nobility bred horses, and of course the Marvelous horses. There were others that I thought could potentially carry the genes to produce more white.

I realized that what I truly wanted to produce was not out there yet. This feeling was not new to me—it was also the case when I bred for our former palomino stallion, UDM Gold Mine. Similarly I was looking to produce something that had enough bone to hold up, a good laid back shoulder with enough neck and refinement at the poll, with good size to balance a long legged rider. I also think good balance transcends a division. If they travel correctly and in good balance, they will rise to the top of whichever division or endeavor they are in.

I knew I'd have to start with a good horse with white expression and mostly look at the horse in front of me—not just the coat



Ultra's Brite Lights



Ultra's T Party

(Above) The chestnut sabino stallion *Menomin Flash Dancer*, owned by Steve and Annette Smith of Ultra Morgans, is siring sabino offspring who are beginning to make themselves known in the show ring. Two of the first to hit the ring are owned and shown by Mary Brannon of Willowick Morgans in McDonough, Georgia. Pictured are **Ultra's Brite Lites** (out of AFF Matilda), being shown western at the 2008 Dixie Cup, and **Ultra's T Party** (out of AMHF Absolute Miss T) winning the Pleasure Driving two-year-old class at the same show. Photos by Casey McBride.



(Left) At the time Shahaylee (Marvelous Intrigue x Marvelous Phophecy) was foaled in 1994, she was unregistrable due to the White Rule. Her appearance caused quite a stir in the colorful Morgan community and has greatly increased awareness of the splash gene's presence in our breed. Shahaylee, owned by Karen Burridge of Upson Downs Morgans, is expecting her second foal in 2009.

Photo by Karen Burridge.

color. How could I improve the shoulder, the hip, the poll, the balance, and what cross would enhance these traits and catalyze the white expression.

LB: Tell us a little about your pinto breeding stock.

Jenn Hartwell: Skyloft Dream Catcher (aka Kaleb) is an interesting story. I had seen him for sale on Mirabella Morgans as a weanling. What really had me interested in this young colt was his dam, Rosewind Summer's Dream (Rosevale Leggo x Up Hyre Summertime). She boasts an impressive background of Immortal Command, Bourbon Street, Saddleback Swingtime, and I really liked her depth of body and look. I wasn't as familiar with his sire, Medicine Wheel Jubilee (Old Ways Bimbeau x Amador Firelight). In looking into the background of his sire, I found I liked the athleticism and what this blood could contribute to a program. Upon my first request for information, he was pending sale, so while OK with it, I was a bit disappointed. I really had no intention of adding another stallion to my program, but for some reason had felt compelled to ask about him. Maybe a week later, I had an email back that the colt was available if I was still interested. Kaleb has a very skewed blaze, a hind sock, two front fetlocks, blue eyes, and also a sabino white lip. This was a big leap from my program of predominantly bay Morgans! So I started to dig for information on blue eyed Morgans, and that is when I learned what a Splash Pinto was. I had no idea what I had bought in regards to color, just that I liked this colt and thought he would be a nice addition here.

Our second Pinto stallion prospect has just come to Skyloft. Hi Hopes Premonition (Nonesuch Even Steven x Ti Amas Jewel) is a 2008 Chestnut Pinto/Sabino. This young boy has two over the hock stockings with several disconnected spots, a wide blaze with disconnected spots and a large belly spot. I can't thank Judy Burns and her daughter, Kellie, enough for agreeing to part with such a spectacular colt. I choose this colt after having been so impressed with him in person in addition to his lines of Chasley Superman, Trophy, and Orcland Vigildon.

Jennifer Monroe: Two of my mares are full siblings, and I think the addition of those girls have been a true gift to my life. The

mares, King Blaze Mint and W-B Her Royal Highness are full siblings to the very stunning King Royal Mint stallion that graced many magazine covers and ads in the late nineties. I fell in love with that horse, and the opportunity to have the two full sisters has been a dream come true. There are four living full siblings and they all have black chestnuts coats, four white legs and white on the face, and they pass on a consistent amount of chrome as well as beauty and a very regal and soulful essence.

It has been the cross of the buckskin sabino/splash son of King Blaze Mint, MEMC Crown Royal, with W-B Her Royal Highness that has given me my most colorful Morgan to date. That colt, MEMC On Target, is a buckskin homozygous splash whom has been, and I think is currently, the loudest splash white male in the breed, and, I believe, also has the most body white of any pinto Morgan right now. I would guess On Target to be about 50/50 buckskin and white. I call the colt Tiger around the barn, and it was a very big surprise the night he was born. At the time, I thought all my stock was sabino although I had read about the splash gene. When I saw the white feet and front legs come out, my first thoughts were that I just might be getting what I had wished for: a duplicate of the mares and hopefully a colt that would look just like King Royal Mint. Out came his nose and face, and I gasped because I then realized that bald face was a splash and those eyes were probably blue. What really was the funny part was when I tiptoed around the mare to get a look at the rest of the baby and see what sex it was and found all the rest of his white. Tiger has a full white belly, four whites, bald face, white splashing up each side of his body and the cutest all-white tail that has a tiny black fringe at the top. When I saw that tail, I was just amazed. It was later when I had him towel dried that I realized he was also a buckskin. It truly felt like Christmas in March! I could hardly wait to call my family and friends, but it was the middle of the night so I remember running around my yard saying, "Oh my God, I got a splash!" That was surely one of the most exciting nights of my life. The most wonderful part is that Tiger, who is now a coming two-year-old, is the most kindly and affectionate young stallion I have raised. I am used to his coloration now, but he still gives me joy every day because he is so sweet. Tiger lives with another two-year-

old intact male, and they are both such good boys, and it is one of my favorite things to look out my office window and watch them play. I have had many people ask if I am afraid Tiger will get hurt. I reply that he is still just a horse, and he is very content and happy and that is what is important to me.

Beth Lynne Hoskins: What originally struck me about Riley was that his three day old foal picture was literally interchangeable with a photo I had seen of his grandsire, Century Free Spirit (Wham Bam Command x Windover Antigone), taken at the same age. Everything about Riley, from the size, shape and position of his ears, to his profile, to how his neck came out of his shoulder was a replication of his grandsire. I had been fortunate enough to visit "Guy" at Kelli Ross' in the early 1990s, and had always been impressed with his obvious Morgan type. I remember when Guy debuted and the rumors that swirled around the country questioning the legitimacy of his bloodlines. I found it outrageous that certain factions or so-called "lovers" of the breed would cast such negative and damaging aspersions on this grand stallion basically because he was chestnut, and not bay.

After becoming intrigued by his phenotype, I was prompted to research Riley's genotype, or pedigree. I found it strikingly similar to my then new stallion, Stony Hollow Ice Man's. Both studs have a unique combination of four of our breed's greatest "families"; Nocturne, Ulendon, Old Government and Brunk. What most people don't know is that I found the Nocturne/Ulendon combination as one of the strongest contributors to the greatness of my beloved, late stallion, Chivas Regal (Waseeka's In Command x Ransomvale Vigilda). The similarities between Jake (Chivas Regal) and Bo (Ice Man) are what led me to Bo, and the similarities between Riley and Jake and Bo are what led me to Riley, on an almost instinctive level. Reading Riley's pedigree after I had already fallen in love with him only explained why I had such a strong, immediate response when I first saw him.

So there I was, absolutely taken with this days old colt, who, after careful study, I felt would be a tremendous potential cross for Ice Man daughters I hoped to produce through my breeding program.

And he just happened to be a pinto.

What I found intriguing too was, here was this lovely, absolutely correct, gorgeous colt, who happened to have a unique color pattern, who, in many ways would be the true heir to his grandsire, Century Free Spirit. Not only physically, but, I presumed Riley would, like Guy, face his own controversies for being such a winning individual who was the less popular color in our breed.

All of the mares that I purchase for my breeding program, The Regal Stud, are purchased for their phenotype plus genotype; to come home here, they have to have both. For my program, that means the mares' conformation AND papers must line up with Bo's and/or Riley's.

Steve and Annette Smith: We acquired Menomin Flash Dancer from Tom Caisse in 2003 as a two-year-old. We then began an undertaking of identifying mares that we thought would cross well with him and had our first foal crop in 2004!

Karen Burridge: I remember first setting eyes on a picture of

Shahaylee and being immediately attracted to her. I was struck by her pretty sweet face, but there was more. She exuded a quiet confidence with a "spark." I had seen pictures of her sire, Marvelous Ideal, and admired many of his foals. He has such a great hip, is very versatile and kind.

In the article/picture I first saw on Shay written by Laura Behning and published in the Rainbow Morgan Horse Association magazine, I noticed that her former owner, Liz Alanne, enjoyed both riding and driving. I thought about my eight-year-old twin grandsons and what fun they would have with a girl like her—but also what a genetic treasure she was. I called Liz to see if she planned to breed her. Shay had been unregistered under the high white rule, but when it was rescinded, later Liz did register her. The first time I talked with her she thought she would breed her once at least. I fully understood that she wanted to keep a foal and mentioned that if she ever wanted to do a breeding lease at some point, I would be interested.

After our wonderful conversation, I didn't hear from Liz for a while. I got a call one day, and she had thought it over and decided that with her bad back, she really didn't want to raise a youngster again and realized what a treasure she had. She offered to sell her to us. I'm sure it was less than a second to decide we would love to have her join our family. We feel blessed and thankful that Liz found it in her heart to give her up despite raising her from a youngster.

LB: What are your hopes for the future of your program? Do you have any specific goals you'd like to see met?

Jennifer Hartwell: My future goals haven't veered from the original idea. I want, first, to have a very correct and pretty horse beyond the names on the papers and the color. I want to look at our horses here and have them take my breath away. I also want to take them out and have that effect on others. That being said, my future focus is not strictly on the Splash color. I have several exceptional mares here in addition to my senior stallion, Skyloft Intimidator (Carlyle Coalition x Skyloft Cameo), that do not have a white hair on them. They stem from the foundation of our program which was started in 1962 by my mother, Carole Thoms. I have selectively chosen to add a handful of mares that may offer a Splash gene in addition to being stunning mares in their own right. Our mares really have a tough standard to measure up to, as I feel they play such an incredible part in the equation of breeding. My pinto stallions are here on their own merits, and to compliment our breeding program. If we can see some neat pintos produced under our prefix, I think that would be exciting, but I'm not making color the focus here.

Jennifer Monroe: In regards to future plans I have for breeding my colorful Morgans, those have not changed. I've sold down 1/3 of my herd and have not purchased any new mares for the two splash stallions—or any of the stallions for that matter. I am happy where I am and enjoy the horses and the extra time I am having now with less of them. There are actually a couple of mares I bred and sold as youngsters that I would like to have back, but with respect to the economy and the horse market, I am feeling less adventurous. I like having around three foals a year, but I've bred more and less. It sure



(Left) The 1982 palomino frame overo mare Sky Walker AB (Moreeda Andrew X Q Tawny), owned by Fred and Karen Beck of Angola, Indiana, is the only known frame overo Morgan currently registered with AMHA. Because frame overos can be marked with nothing more than a blaze face, it is possible that there are more in our gene pool than is presently known. Testing horses of Cross Ranch breeding—especially those related to War Paint and Sky Walker AB—for frame may uncover other Morgans with this rare pattern. Photo by Nancy Castle.

makes it hard to choose whom to breed sometimes though, when you are also cutting back. Now that my breeding program is proven to have the splash gene, and it appears there is the sabino gene responsible for the different expressions of pinto I get from those horses, I plan to continue what I started from the beginning. That goal was to produce an upheaved, curvy and pretty Morgan with correct conformation and great movement no matter what they do. Foremost, I also have to have good minds and manners, and if I get the extra white, that's the icing to me.

Beth Lynne Hoskins: Ultimately, I feel that excellent horses, whether pinto, black, bay or any other combination, are the best ambassadors we can have to reach out to new Morgan enthusiasts and draw people into the breed, as well as successfully perpetuate Morgans for future generations to love and enjoy. To that end, I am not necessarily trying to create pintos, any more than I am trying to create black horses or any particular color or pattern. I have the same opinion of color-based breeding programs (whether black, bay, or other) as I do of those anti-color folks; neither serves the best interest of the Morgan breed. Any time you take your eyes off the prize of creating excellent horses of great Morgan type, you lose. We must always have great conformation, attitude, personality, and ability at the top of our goals as breeders. Color, color patterns and other superficial attributes, while interesting and important in their own way, must always be secondary to these fundamental standards of what makes a Morgan great, and I contend, has always made the Morgan our greatest American breed since its inception over two hundred years ago.

Steve and Annette Smith: We would love to breed a splash Morgan! However, it will take just the right combination—and a stroke of luck! In the meantime, it is more important to concentrate on breeding quality Morgans. Menomin Flash Dancer is well bred, has a beautiful neck and a lot of substance. He has the gene pool to sire what we are looking for in the Morgan breed—we felt like we didn't have to sacrifice quality for markings.

Karen Burrige: I continue to be inspired by the pintos, and I have to admit to liking a pretty horse. I realize it will be, most likely, a slower journey as I'm fully aware that change takes time as well as refinement of what you hope to produce. As a conscientious breeder, you learn over time what gives you the best results/outcome—there are few short cuts. While I love the splash look, I'm not sure that I will only concentrate on splash. I'd like to try at least one splash to sabino cross and have my eye on a couple of nice stallions. The stallion that Shahaylee is bred for this year, Sharp Dressed Gentleman, is another splash with a blue eye. It will be interesting to see what we get.

LB: Where do you think pinto Morgans are headed now? What lies in store for the future?

Jennifer Hartwell: As far as the future of pinto Morgans, I think we will have both those that admire and dislike them. I can remember all the controversy when the high white rule was lifted. I read about it with much interest at the time, and have to say if it had not been lifted, we could have lost a great deal of nicely bred show, breeding and family horses due to the restrictions of that rule. I think that we will see more people breed for pinto just as many breed for dilution genes, black or any other specific color. My hope is that, as breeders, we will maintain a high quality individual, and not forego a correct horse just for the sake of a color. I feel that having our Morgan be as versatile in their colors as they are in everything else will only add to our ability to market them to people out there that may be more color specific about the kind of horse they want. If I can offer someone a great Morgan without the restriction of color, I'm ahead of the game. Overall, I think we will see more chromed out horses in our future, both by chance results and color specific breeding.

I've always found it interesting how some things seem to come full circle. The foundation Skyloft broodmare was Pandora Mildann. She was a bright chestnut mare with a big wide blaze and 3 tall socks. My mother Carole really preferred blacks and bays and

so always chose horses such as UVM Flash to cross on her chestnut mare. She always got her desired result of a dark foal, with no white. Pandora always produced wonderful foals that went on to win many titles, without that pesky white to keep clean. Now days, there are some horses at Skyloft that certainly do carry more white than Mom likes. I just think it is comical that she had that mare that could have thrown all kinds of white, and bred for solid. Now here I am wishing I could have had a shot at that really nice mare in hopes that the white might have expressed itself. I suppose if we all liked horses of the same color, it would get a little boring! Mom remembers when the red chestnut Morgans were looked upon as less desirable in the show ring, much as some people still look at maybe a buckskin, palomino, pinto or other color. I guess as the coined saying goes, "A good horse is never a bad color."

Jennifer Monroe: My thoughts on the future of the pinto Morgans are that there will be increased interest as we see more and more expression of pinto coloration on them. I don't feel that traditionalists who only like a darker colored Morgan should worry, as the pinto Morgan lovers will remain a smaller portion in respect to the breed, and there really is and should be room for everyone to enjoy a Morgan within the confines of the breed characteristic. I hope that those who decide to breed for pinto remember that it is like gambling in Vegas—it's really the luck of the draw even when you stack the deck. You still have to produce Morgans who are of breed type with marketability because you surely won't always get your color. I think having more genetic testing available for the pinto genes will help. I do think a negative effect of those breeding so specifically for pinto colored Morgans is that there will be some that might not make the breed proud, and that hurts everyone who really cares about maintaining quality. I think there won't be enough pinto geldings for a while. However, the plus is that time seems to eventually help rid the market of breeders who bought and bred for color alone, because once there are more pintos, the quality ones will continue to have a market and the inferior ones will not. That fact has played out in most of our colorful Morgans, and I believe it will for the pinto genes too. I happen to love my colorful Morgans, and as long as there are others out there to also love and appreciate them and my efforts, I will continue to try and breed a few.

Beth Lynne Hoskins: I remember stories of really grand horses being shunned or worse because they had white where "they shouldn't" or roaning or were the wrong color. I still have Ransomvale Minuet (Royal Fleetson x Moro Hill's Morita) here at Eden Farm at 33 years of age, and she has a belly spot her original breeder/owners and trainer cringed over if a judge inspected her by stooping for a look on her underside at lineup in the ring. I love the fact that someone was finally smart enough to say, "Wait a minute; if we can prove a horse is a Morgan through genetic testing, who then has the right to say this animal is not a Morgan because you don't like his or her color?" The lifting of the high white rule ultimately only helped protect the animals we are breeding and promoting. We all know that a horse with papers has more value than one without, and my worst nightmare is to think of those poor individuals who fall into bad places with desolate

futures because they are lacking proper papers. So if ensuring all DNA proven Morgans have more value, and hopefully, more protection because they're papered—who then, as a horse lover, can be against that?

I think that if a comprehensive, inclusive survey were performed on the history of the breed, we would find that the pinto gene has always been present. It actually seems incredible to me that anyone would think it wasn't, considering how varied and diverse the Morgan's origins. One remarkable stallion, on whatever mares were available to him shortly after his birth in 1789, creating a consistent type or breed that continues to this day is nothing short of miraculous. We typically focus on the prepotent part of the story, which is almost unbelievable. The other side of the story is, who were the girls Figure, and then his primary sons and grandsons, were bred to? One has to presume those founding dams would be as genetically varied as one can imagine.

To that end, the genetic variables that have always been present, coupled with significant changes in the Registry, should result in our witness of more pintos naturally populating the breed.

Steve and Annette Smith: Over the last five years we have discovered that there is quite a barrier to the idea of color within the Morgan breed, and the perception that pinto is a color! Again, it is not a color, it is simply the marking pattern! At Ultra Morgans, as I stated earlier, we offer something for everyone, as we have our homozygous stallion, Ultras Special Agent, and we've got Menomin Flash Dancer with a record of siring over 50 percent pinto foals. We also have a four-year-old Whitmorr Law And Order son, with four white stockings and a blaze, with lots of roaning and a lot going on downstairs. We are very excited about breeding back to the Flash daughters to obtain some pretty fancy flashy Morgans!

Karen Burrige: Shay has found the perfect place to "be" with kids that dote on her as well as being a genetic treasure that I predict will have an impact on the future of pintos. Bottom line: I believe conformation and balance must always come first in making breed decisions, and as Ellen Scripps once said, "You've just got to love what you breed and be inspired by beauty!" Miss Scripps was before her time.

Love 'em or hate 'em, the pinto genes are legitimately present in the breed—and for the most part, they are here to stay. With only one aged mare representing the known AMHA registered frame overo population at this time, that gene may, sadly, be lost to the breed. On a happier note, sabino and splash are flourishing. Chances are that in the Morgan, as with many other American breeds, foals with excessive white, splashes and spots will become increasingly common. Breeders interested in producing pinto Morgans would like nothing more than to see this day arrive as soon as possible! n

The author, Laura Behning, welcomes questions about color genetics. Contact her at morgans@mindspring.com. To learn more about pinto in the Morgan breed, visit the Morgan Colors website: www.morgancolors.com.