

~ FOCUS ON STALLIONS ~

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

*Looking at the stallions of the past to determine our future.*

By Abbie Trexler

**S**everal years back, when the idea of cloning animals was on every newsstand, Cristina DiGioia (Morgan breeder and frequent contributor to *TMH*) and I had a conversation one evening in Syracuse's theater district about our fantasy of extracting his DNA and cloning the great progenitor, Justin Morgan. We'd go back to the future, firing up the flux capacitor, breeding the clone to our daughters of Century Free Spirit and Carlyle Command, and viola, we imagined the foals frolicking in the green meadows, little Justin and Justina just waiting to succeed as the next generation of the family Morgan.

And though it piqued our interest over dinner and cocktails, it was an implausible conversation, and we of course glossed over the details of exactly how we were going to locate said DNA, not to mention the costs of cloning.

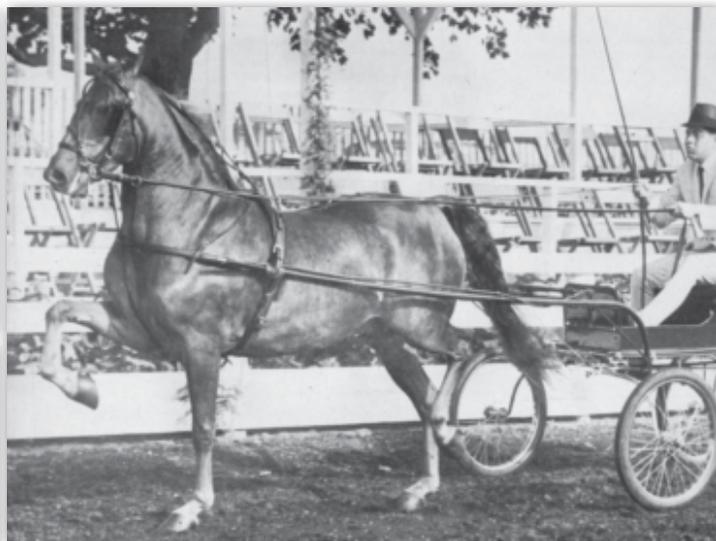
So when Stephen (Editorial Director Stephen Kinney) and I sat down to brainstorm the winter and spring (traditionally the

"breeding" months) issues of the magazine, I was reminded of that conversation with Cristina, of the sweaty palmed excitement that we had over such a fantastic thought.

Stephen and I talked about what it would be like, to be able to go back in time and select a dose of semen from a stallion of the past to breed on today's contemporary mares. Stephen is a horseman, not a breeder, and my knowledge of the old breeding and show stock is mostly from word of mouth and what I've read, so we couldn't really form an educated opinion on which stallions would most benefit the breed as it is today. But our friends in the business of breeding Morgans could.

The question that we posed to breeders was: Select one Morgan stallion from history to bring back and breed on today's contemporary mares. Why would you pick him?

I asked a handful of Morgan breeders to answer my fantasy question—to delve into their memory banks of the great stallions of the past—and each delivered a thoughtful, interesting answer.



Clockwise from top left: Nancy Caisse's top pick: Sealect; Jay Kleiber's choice: Trophy's Emerald; Mark Staehnke's winner: Fleetwing; Laura Behning's selection: Topside Jolly Roger.

**▶▶ NANCY CAISSE, TOWNSEND FARM:**

What a difficult question with so many possible answers!

I would like to answer your fantasy question by suggesting Sealect (Sir Ethan Allen x Bell Marea). Sealect, because my vivid mental image of him through the eyes of a very young girl was one of strength, fire, proud carriage, with presence and also kind enough for me to give him a daily pat. His get had the same proudness and ambition, many of whom my family owned, I really knew and rode. This included registered Morgans and half Morgans. I learned to post a horse trot on one of my all-time favorites, his son Cornwallis (mostly because of his "bouncy" trot and his neck in front of me that served as a "bumper"). A Sealect cross to the mares of today would add Morgan type but would not erase the show horse attitude and look. His cross to sport horses would likewise be beneficial because of his clean structure, athletic ability, ambition, and mindset to do many jobs.

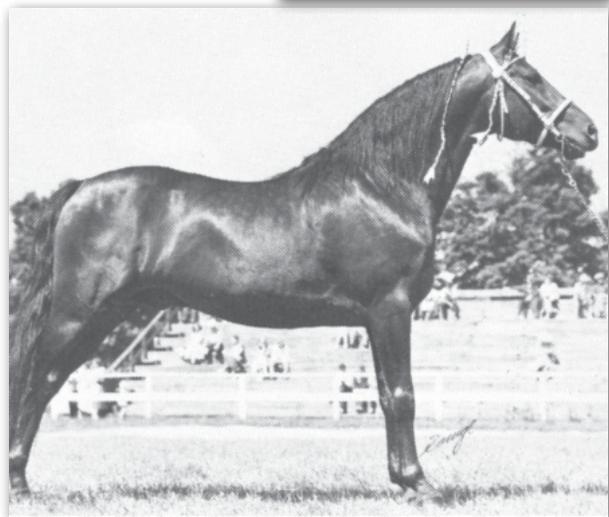
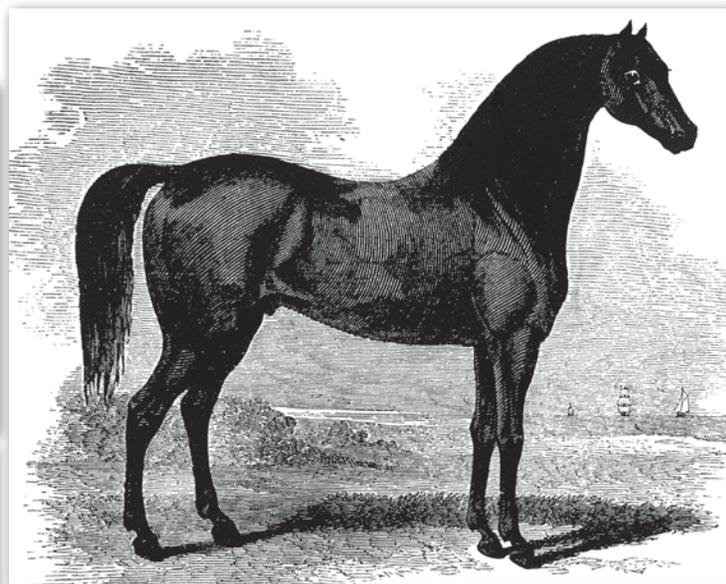
Also I have an unusual response to the question—I would like to see Son Of Vayu given a chance today. He never had the opportunity to breed but a few (He produced six foals, only two of them mares. The best known was Saddleback Spangles [x Trophys Bracelet]). His pedigree was made to breed on—by the well-respected Upwey Ben Don and out of Abby Gail, a Fillmore daughter and maternal granddaughter to Abbott. Son Of Vayu was extremely pretty by any standard, a good mover, fun to ride and had a show horse outline with refinement.

**▶▶ JAY KLEIBER, RIDGEWOOD FARM:**

Not long ago, Peggy Alderman was quoted as having said, "We need Trophy's Emerald to come back and save us all." Given the opportunity, I would bring Trophy back to further influence the more contemporary breeding stock.

The Trophy descendants are prominent in the pedigrees of some of the top breeders in recent history. Mares like Southerly Maria, Southerly Capella, Trophy's Emerald, Trophy's Becky Date and Trophy's Corrigan come to mind quickly. When bred to In Command, Trophy's Corrigan alone gave us Ladybird Command, Wham Bam Command and I Will Command, three full siblings contributing significantly to the modern-day show Morgan. Notable sons of Trophy include the likes of Trophy's Jade, Montebelle Trophy, DSF Trophy's Patriot and K-Lyn Gambit. The opportunity to linebreed the granddaughters and great granddaughters of Trophy back to himself would be astounding. As we've moved closer and closer to hinged, beautiful and refined horses through In Command and Masterpiece stock, we sacrificed hocks, rear ends and shoulders in many of the resulting offspring. I would be first in line to use heavy doses of Trophy blood to bring back balance, strong fluid motion off both ends and great shoulders. We need some of the good ol' chestnut trotting genes brought back into the mix.

# BACK TO THE FUTURE



Clockwise from top left: Rick Lane's time travel target: Waseeka's In Command; Jeff Morse's champion: Blackhawk; Peggy Alderman's victor: Trophy (photo by H. R. Hoover); Ann Taylor's preference: Upwey Ben Don.

## LAURABEHNING, BROOKRIDGE MORGANS:

My first thought was Justin Morgan—it would be wonderful to go back to the beginning, and have Morgans that are direct offspring of the breed progenitor, bringing those ancient genes forward. The color breeder in me has a different thought, though! At this point there is only one silver Morgan that is 100 percent foundation-bred, the chestnut (carrying silver) mare, Amanda's Suzie Q. It would be advantageous for bloodline diversity as well as from a preservationist aspect to have more foundation-bred representatives of this unique and rare color in our breed. So I would choose Topside Jolly Roger (Kings-Haven Senator, by Senator Graham x Yampa Sue, by Triumph), a chestnut foaled in 1966 who was later proven (via his offspring) to be carrying the silver gene. Jolly Roger's bay silver (registered chestnut) son, Pegasus Persuader, is the source of the majority of today's silver Morgans. Topside Jolly Roger was a curvy, typy, well-built Morgan and was 100 percent foundation bloodlines. What a dream to cross him with several of my good foundation mares in the hopes of producing typy, correct, good minded foundation silver Morgans to carry this incredible color into the future.

## MARK STAEHNKE, MERRIEHILL FARM:

My answer would be Fleetwing. While Fleetwing sons and

daughters may not have been the "prettiest," they had power, propulsion and attitude. They drove off their hocks and wore the bridle. We've lost a lot of the real Fleetwing characteristic and his Government blood in today's Morgans.

## ANN TAYLOR, WOODLAND STALLION STATION:

I would pick Upwey Ben Don. He was influential on so many types of mares and they produced such great progeny.

## JEFF MORSE, GREENMEADS:

Blackhawk, He was the most prolific Morgan in history for a reason. We could use more of that in our breed.

## RICK LANE, CABOT:

Waseeka's In Command...I remember breeding to him for Immortal Command—it was the only time I saw him, and I just thought he was awesome!

## PEGGY ALDERMAN, SALEM FARM:

The stud I would bring back would unquestionably be Trophy. Trophy had beautiful conformation. He had great hindquarter angulation, a short back, an extreme laid-back shoulder and a



Clockwise from top left: Susan Carlino's top two: Century Free Spirit and Tedwin Topic; Steve Davis' winner: General Gates.

long shapely upright neck. Solid feet and straight legs added to the package. But above all, Trophy had a fabulous way of going. He had his hocks solidly underneath him, providing great impulsion and drive while exhibiting high action. His level shoulder enabled a high, open and wonderfully correct front end. His cadence and timing were impeccable and he had the perfect arc to his motion—beautifully round.

Trophy daughters were the foundation for many of the modern day park Morgans. Many of his offspring exhibited extravagant motion off both ends, both slowly and going forward. His solid government line breeding made him quite prepotent in passing on his characteristics. He lacked the typey Ben Don/Nocturne head that was desirable, but he possessed quality.

I have listed some decedents in no particular order: Wham Bam Command, Pomp And Pazazz, Mizrahi, I Will Command, Trophy's Jade, Continental Vision, Century Free Spirit, Stonecroft Trilogy, Saddleback Supreme, Liberation Starbright, On Center Stage, Minion Millinium, Dee Cee Mr. Trophy, Liberation First Star, Schiaparelli, Astronomicallee and many, many more.

Our modern Morgans are long on beauty and presence, but could use a good dose of athleticism. The average Morgan could use a shorter back and a longer leg. Did I mention that Trophy sired foals into his thirties? A good dose of fertility wouldn't hurt either.

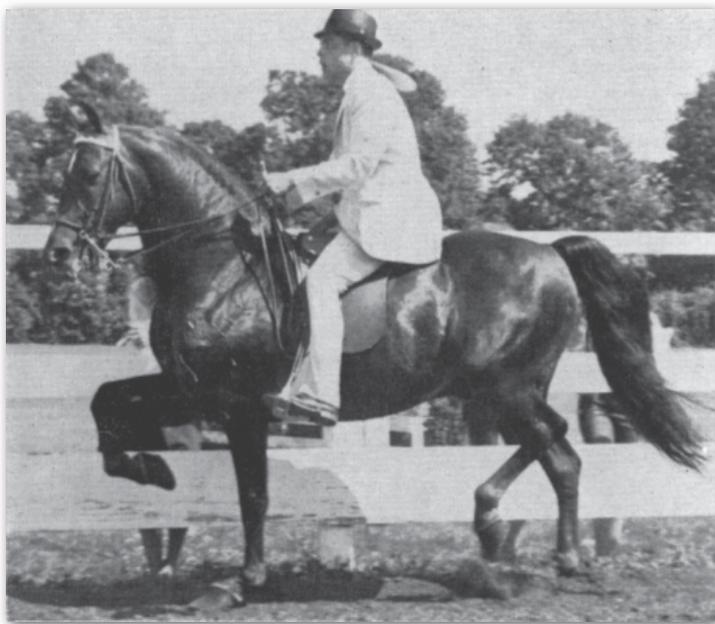
**▶ SUSAN CARLINO, SILVER CREEK:**

All the “old and gone” stallions contributed greatly to the Morgan breed and the great show horses today—what a tremendous and invaluable contribution to this breed that we love so much. Here at Silver Creek Stables we breed for a good minded and well rounded Morgan horse that remains true to the Morgan type and style that will go on to be exceptional individuals in whatever they do.

To choose any one stallion from the pages of Morgan history would be difficult. Like a fine grape that is sweet and refreshing, take it and add a few things and it eventually becomes a fine bottle of wine. Just like the grape and the wine, the combination of all the old stallions have brought us to the wonderful Morgan we have today.

Having said that, one of the Morgan stallions from not so long ago that we would have liked to have had an opportunity to breed to would be Century Free Spirit. I think, even in today's competitive show ring, he would give everyone a run for their money—and his greatest contribution is that his offspring and their offspring continue to do so. Looks, size, talent, charisma and heart—you can spot one from a mile away; his influence is so strong and consistent.

Another would be Tedwin Topic. The same goes for him—I think he'd be very competitive in the show ring today and his



Clockwise from top left: Cheri Barber's choice, Trophy, had many offspring, including Trophy's Award; Anne Wyland's close second: Waseeka's Nocturne.

offspring are stamped with his great back end, stellar front ends and, of course, beautiful heads—talented and extremely competitive in every division—they continue his legacy of what a Morgan should be.

**► STEVE DAVIS,  
UVM MORGAN HORSE FARM:**

I'm going to harken way back in the history of the Battell/Government/UVM Farm where I am today to answer this question. If I had to pick on stallion, I would like to see General Gates back again, he was the foundation sire here. From the literature that I've read, he had the physical attributes that would fit right in: he was 15 hands, perfect conformation, he had the nice, traditional dark color. From the photographs, I can tell that he would fit right in to the show ring today with his beauty and quality. Most importantly, Joseph Battell was a very astute breeder, and he had all sorts of resources, and he selected this horse. I'd take advantage of his work and his vision. He convinced a committee of government workers to buy General Gates as a herd sire. A lot of dedicated people had faith in this horse.

**► CHERI BARBER, CHERI BARBER STABLES:**

My involvement with the Morgan horse began with Treble's

Morgan Manor. Carol Hudson's foundation sire was Quaker Acre Treble sired by Trophy's Award. My continued involvement with the breeding of Morgans relies heavily on Stonecroft Farm stallions, Stonecroft Masquerade and Stonecroft Trilogy. Both Stonecroft stallions have crosses to I Will Command who is out of Trophy's Corrigan.

The powerful high stepping chestnut Morgan stallion Trophy would enhance today's popular In Command bloodlines just as he influenced pedigrees in the past.

**► ANNE WYLAND, ANCAN MORGANS:**

This was harder to answer than I thought it would be. There were several great stallions who came to mind—each famous for their own special strengths. I love what Waseeka's Nocturne did for the breed and have based my program around his sons and daughters. However, I've decided to choose his grandsire, Upwey Ben Don.

Upwey Ben Don practically shaped the breed as we know it today. Frankly, the things I most admired about Nocturne may well have come from Ben Don. Why did I choose Ben Don? I love the classic Morgan beauty Ben Don gave us, the willingness to work and be trained, and the correct step forward and upward in the rear legs. These are all traits I would like to see improved in many of today's show horses. ■