

# Where Nature Meets Imagination

## *The Passion of Heidi Osgood-Metcalf*

**T**hese photos came to us, at *The Morgan Horse*, like a flash of light.

Their style was fresh; their subject classic.

It turns out the photos' author, Heidi Osgood-Metcalf, is herself both fresh and a classic. Her art is innovative, contemporary, highly technical, yet she is the protégé and niece of the late Jeanne Mellin Herrick, perhaps the best-known painter of Morgan horse portraits. Heidi's photos are also portraits—of Morgan horses and Morgan people.

For some time Heidi lived in Bozeman, Montana, which, as fate would have it, is also home to Bill Jackson and his Montana Morgans. While she has photographed elsewhere, the illustrations featured here form a singular collection, all from the Jackson Ranch.

Florida Morgan horsewoman Allyson Hughes brought us together with Heidi and agreed to conduct the interview that follows.

While the photos stand on their own, peeking into the mind of their creator makes them all the more interesting.

**Allyson: I've read up on you, but I'm going to pretend I don't know anything for our readers. Let's talk about your horses, photography, and art.**

Heidi: Okay, starting with the horses, we've always had horses. When I grew up, my mom was involved with Morgan horses because of my aunt and uncle.

**A: And who is your mom, your aunt, and uncle?**

H: My mom is Joan Osgood. My aunt and uncle are Jeanne and Fred Herrick.

My mom and dad had a summer horse camp. So we've always had horses. I started out with Pony Club, 4-H, and eventing.

Then I took a trip with my mom and my Aunt Jeanne to John and Angela Bulmer's Monnington Farm in Hereford, England. My mom and my aunt used to go over twice a year to promote the Morgan horse, give clinics, and judge. That time spent in England was a deciding factor for me to get involved with Morgans.

My mom had a two-year-old Morgan mare named Mel O Cantata in the barn that I started training. Her dad was Saddleback Select. And her mom was a beautiful mare, named Dearlee's Judith Ann, with Lippitt breeding. She became my once in a lifetime Morgan. I had her until the day she died at 26. She did absolutely everything—she was a blast to drive, although I started showing her English pleasure, and some Western, before switching over to dressage and combined training. But our best times were trail riding bareback with a halter and lead rope.



**A: My understanding is that you started doing artwork with Prisma color pencil drawings.**

H: As soon as I was able to pick up a pencil, I started drawing. When I was about 15, I sold my first portrait. And it just went from there.

**A: Was your aunt a big influence?**

H: She was my artistic idol and mentor. She always had wonderful tips, and was always encouraging me to try other mediums. Luckily I've spent a lot of time with her and I made her a priority. I would call her frequently and talk about art, Morgans, and life in general.

**A: What is it like to have Bill Jackson's Morgans to photograph?**

H: Having Bill Jackson's horses, his ranch, and the surrounding mountains is pure heaven for me. Anything I can do with my photography to help promote what Bill and the Jackson family have accomplished with their exceptional Morgan breeding program, I am more than happy to do. I believe everybody needs to know about Bill's wonderful Morgans.

**A: How did you get introduced to Mr. Jackson and his Morgans?**

H: I met Bill in 1991 thanks to another amazing Morgan person, Mary Woolverton. I was living in Denver when Mary asked if I wanted to go along with her and Eva, a visitor from Switzerland, while she transported a horse up to a home in Big Sky, Montana. After dropping the horse off in Big Sky we headed out to the ranch for a few days. It has been an amazing friendship with Bill and the Jackson family ever since.

**A: It looks just stunning in the photographs.**

H: It is incredible. The ranch has been in the Jackson family since 1873, encompassing many thousands of acres of breathtaking landscape. There are approximately 80 Morgans, I think. These are not just regular or average horses. They are beautiful old type, solid working ranch horses, with wonderful bloodlines. They have it all, and I can't speak highly enough about Bill's breeding program.

**A: In the last five years, how often have you been over to Mr. Jackson's place?**

H: I lived in Bozeman in 2006 and 2007 and reconnected with him then. My husband and I try to get back to the Bozeman area at least once a year. I haven't made it back every year, but pretty consistently.

The cool thing about Bill is that he is so quiet and so laid back but speaks his mind. I love that. It is an amazing treat when we get to go out to the mare pasture that encompasses many, many

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acres, with approximately 40 or so mares. Because the pasture is so large we have to drive in and, once we have stopped, Bill will take off his hat and swoop it around a couple times while calling to his mares. The mares will look up, recognize him and his truck and walk right up to him. They're free to do whatever they want. They love him, they gravitate to him and he just stands there, they mill around him and he's got his hand on their foreheads. It's just the most peaceful experience, the interaction he has with his horses. It's magical—I've been around horses all my life, but watching Bill with his horses is inspiring.

**A: Mr. Jackson has a working cattle ranch. Have you ever gone on a cattle drive at the ranch?**

H: I did the spring cattle drive in 2014. That was an experience of a lifetime.

**A: How often do they do the cattle drive?**

H: Bill's been moving cows every spring and fall for almost every year since he was seven, and he's 91 this year. Every spring they move however many cows they have at the time up to summer pasture. The distance is somewhere in the range of 20-plus miles, and it's a long, slow walk. They're up there for three months—July, August, and September. And they bring them back in October.

**A: How long are the days?**

H: The year I went we started at 5:00 a.m. and finished up in the mountains around 8:30 p.m. after handing off the cows to the herdsman for the summer. Bill was 89 at the time and he was one of the only ones that didn't get off his horse. He led the whole way. Most of us got off and walked at least some of the way, and even took a lunch break. Not Bill, he kept right on going. A true cowboy!

**A: Are they riding Morgans when they're herding?**

H: There are a few people that bring their own horses, but everyone else uses Bill's Morgans. The year I did the drive there was a wonderful young girl named Willow who had a Norwegian Fjord. There was another woman with an Arab, but mostly if they are Bill's horses, they're Morgans. The good thing with Bill's horses is they are so smart, they are so cow savvy. With the mare I was on, I just dropped the reins and took pictures while she did all the work. When there was a cow out of line, she put her ears back, and she'd go after the cow to herd it back into formation.

**A: Wow, that is amazing. It just figures that Morgans are so smart. I saw that you took a few shots on the drive. So when you're out like that, for the camera geeks, what kind of camera are you using? And what kind of camera lens are you using?**

H: On that drive in particular I was using a Canon EOS 70D, but I have three different lenses. I have an 18-135mm, 70-300mm, and a 100-400mm.

**A: When you're shooting your photos do you have something in mind that you're trying to capture? What do you use for inspiration?**

H: Light. My biggest inspiration comes from creative light. Subject is second. If the light is good, I'll take a picture of anything. If the

light is good *and* the subject is good, then that's a no-brainer. But as far as subject inspiration, it's animals and mountains.

**A: I've seen some of your beautiful horse portraits that you do. Is there a crossover between the images you work on or see in your head and that you put to paper and then you get flashes of these when you're out shooting, and say to yourself: "I've got to capture this," "that's a great angle," "that's cool." Does that ever happen to you?**

H: If we go out to the mare pasture with Bill, there's nothing staged. They're doing what they're doing. I let Bill do whatever he's doing, and I just capture the moment. That's what I love—to capture the moment. It's as if Bill doesn't even know I'm there, that way I can capture that uninhibited look between him and his horses. I can't get enough pictures of Bill because just by being himself it allows me to take the best pictures. He's usually so focused on his horses that he is unaware that I am getting amazing, genuine images. It's him. It's perfect. I don't have to say "stand here," "do this,"—it's all natural. I don't like to stage a picture. I like to see it happen on its own.

**A: What do you think the connection is between art and horses?**

H: I think horses are artistic. The way they're built, the way they interact. As we are talking now I am looking at several paintings created by my aunt Jeanne, one of which is of my mare's sire, Saddleback Sealect. Saddleback Sealect is a perfect example—he was an artistic horse. He was a piece of art.

**A: He's a renaissance horse.**

H: Yes he was.

**A: Have you seen your desire in photography change at all, you describe it as a passion and it seems like you've kept that separate from the business side of portrait work. Do you see that changing at all with the photography?**

H: The purpose for my artwork is to quench my soul. Because you are also an artist and photographer you would know what I'm talking about. But I also photograph for my art, so it's always been a tool for my artwork. I'm so happy doing the photography that I'm not really thinking about selling it. It's just another avenue of creative release. I know how personal photos can be to someone. Both of my wonderful Morgans have passed away now, and I treasure every photo I have of them. And for me to be able to take halfway decent pictures to give to Bill, or anyone that has beloved animals, I know that it means the world to them. I know what that feels like for me and I just want to be able to give that gift to somebody else.

I wouldn't have these amazing opportunities to get these incredible pictures if it weren't for Bill Jackson's generosity and his magnificent Morgans. He's so proud of his horses and I just want the whole world to know it.

**A: Your photos and Mr. Jackson's horses are certainly stunning—the horses with their gorgeous jowls, large eyes, tippy ears, the fine little throttles, the kink in their necks, and beautiful full bodies, and the man who loves them.**

**If it weren't for you Heidi, I don't know if a lot of people would even get to see how lovely they are.**



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All photos on this and ensuing pages were taken by Heidi Osgood-Metcalf in Montana. They feature Bill Jackson and family members with the Morgans of Jackson Ranch.











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