



≈ MORGAN AMERICANA ≈

THE MODERN MILITARY MORGAN HORSE

A married couple participates in Civil War reenactments using their herd of Morgan horses.

By LTC (retired) Joyce and LTC (retired) David Stanley

Photographs by: Gene Stafford: Genestafford.com, 1SG. Joe Slifer, LTC (Retired) Joyce Stanley

Our Morgan horse adventure started early in our married life (1980) and has evolved over the past 33 years such that we, our children and our reenactment unit named "Living History and Associates" have become steadfast lovers and admirers of our Morgan horses. In our living history and reenactment events, our Morgans represent one of the often forgotten contributors to our great nation's defense of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the military quadruped. Our tribute to the military horse is accomplished through the stamina, versatility and spirit of the Morgan horse.

I, David, was a career army officer and my first duty assignment was Fort Meade, Maryland. Shortly after my wife and I arrived we began to discuss buying a horse. We researched the different breeds, but Jeanne Mellin's book, *The Morgan Horse*, tugged us in the right

direction. Both of us had a huge desire and love of horses, but neither of us had grown up around horses. Perhaps it was fate that guided us to a Morgan horse farm owned by the late John Howard in Frederick, Maryland. We went to his farm and met a cute little filly foaled on June 12, 1980 that kept peeking out from behind her mother, Showman's Sally O. My wife said, "David, I think she is flirting with us." We named her Simbad's Flirtation. This one horse began our foray into the Morgan horse world culminating at one point with 12 acquired over time from various sources, but primarily from Gerry and Carol Meunier of Taneytown, Maryland. Our horses traveled with us from Maryland to North Carolina, to Texas, back to North Carolina, to Kansas, to Virginia and back to North Carolina, courtesy of the Army. We discovered quickly the gentle, forgiving nature of the Morgan as Joyce and I learned with

ABOVE: 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Antietam, September 2012. Corporal (CPL) John Ruf is riding GCMM Ramius Search (GCMM Nite Traveller x NLJ's Wind Song) and driving Traveller's Dixie Belle (GCMM Nite Traveller x Ben Lyn Shadow) to complete the lead team. CPL Chris Moose is riding Vigilark (F C F Aubusson x CF Vigilann) and Surprise (Traveller's Rebel Cause x Vigillark) to complete the wheel horse team. Captain David Stanley is on Traveller's Rebel Cause (GCMM Nite Traveller x GMM's Just-In Case) and CPL Lindsey Stanley is riding Glick's Ethan Allen (Ice Storm x Rimlo Black Jewell). Privates Bobby Allen, Chad Kerley and Dusty Summers are riding the limber (front pole). We are moving our Model 1861 10-Pound Parrott Rifle into our firing position along with three other non-Morgan horse-drawn teams. The officer, noncommissioned officers and privates are all dressed in Civil War period wool uniforms.

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them what riding and driving were all about.

During the first year in Virginia (1992), we began to assess horse ownership and asked ourselves, "what do we want to do with them?" Always the history buff, I looked into Civil War Reenacting and we found a place to board that was close to our home and like many places in Northern Virginia, it had a rich Civil War heritage. I joined the 26th North Carolina Troops as the assistant surgeon and provided my own horse and one for the commander to ride. Our first reenactment was the 130th anniversary at Gettysburg, which was a huge event with temperatures reaching 100 degrees both days. We used our two Morgan mares to carry ice in their nosebags (bags used to feed them) to the soldiers on the battlefield. They performed wonderfully; gun fire, including the cannons didn't bother them at all. Everyone was complimentary of their performance and looks, always asking what breed they were and we proudly replied, Morgans. Within a year or two, I noticed one thing that was missing. There were horses for many of the generals and their staff officers as well as with the cavalry, but there were no horse-drawn cannons. My wife asked why there were no horse drawn guns and I told her it was too expensive, but I have always liked a challenge. Our children, Leah and Lindsey, who were now old enough to ride, wanted their own horses so we went back to our friends, the Meuniers. By the time we left Virginia in 2001 we had acquired nine Morgans!

Around 1994, we did a cost estimate on fielding a horse drawn gun and were fortunate to meet folks who made this dream come true. Charlie Tarbox ran Battlefield Bed and Breakfast at Gettysburg and provided the know-how of putting a four-up team of artillery horses in the field. Doug Kidd from Springdale, Arkansas made period correct harness. Two fellow reenactors joined me in the quest and one of them, Chris Treants, acquired two half-brother Morgan geldings who had been trained to pull a carriage, Glick's Allen Foster and Glick's Ethan Allen. Shortly after he bought the horses, Chris died of congestive heart failure and his wife Marty gave the two horses to us for the unit's use. Joyce and I, horse poor now, bought Chris's four-horse trailer and Ford dually. John Stewart, the third partner, bought the cannon. We received a \$10,000 gift from an interested estate and used it to buy a limber and enough harness for one team of four horses. I also bought a gun and limber and a second set of harness since the goal was to field not one, but two guns or a section of horse drawn artillery. As you can see, this dream to create an accurate portrayal of Civil War artillery, as it was originally fielded, took assistance from many sources to bring it to fruition.

It is important to understand what a Civil War artillery hitch

involves. A limber pole sticks out in the front and a caisson in the rear. The two "wheel horses" are hooked to the limber and provide both propulsion and braking. Their rear haunches are the only brakes there are to stop either a gun or a caisson. With a gun and limber you are looking at over a ton of equipment. The caisson, which is also pulled by a limber, has two ammunition chests, a spare wheel and a spare limber pole. A six-gun battery has 14 limbers pulling six caissons, six guns, a battery forge, and a battery wagon. Each limber is pulled by four or six horses. We have already discussed the wheel team's duties; in a six-up there is a swing team who are in the middle of the wheel and lead teams. They are the best turners in the hitch and have a duty to keep the tugs (lines attached to the limber but hooked to each team) tight so everyone is pulling. The lead team is the most sure-footed and the calmest team since they are the ones standing 14 yards behind the gun while it is firing. Each pair of horses is driven by one rider who sits on the onside horse and drives both the horse he is mounted on and the offside horse. Tugs, which pull the gun, are attached to hames that are put on the collars. Tugs must be kept taught to keep a horse from stepping into them and potentially having an accident. So drivers have more responsibility than just riding a horse; they must maintain great situational awareness to prevent a potential accident. Ammunition is carried by an artilleryman (affectionately referred to as the powder monkey) from the limber to the gun. A gun crew is made up by seven positions with each position having a critical role in firing the piece. The gun detachment includes two limbers, a gun, a caisson, eight to ten horses, and 15 men including the drivers. Two detachments make an artillery section and three sections make an artillery battery. That represents a lot of horsemen and equipment to move around the battlefield. It must all be synchronized to work properly.

We went to Appomattox Courthouse and were joined by some of Charlie's associates and used his gun to train our volunteers on how to crew the gun. Shooting wasn't going to be the challenge; pulling would be. We had a training weekend at Colfax, North Carolina, my childhood home, and it was well attended by the would be Artillerymen and their horses. It was the first time we had hooked Ethan and Allen and they made it quite clear that pulling the limber with jiggling chains was not like pulling a carriage. We pushed and pulled and finally got things rolling and they took off before we got control back. Whew what a first day; did I say I wanted two horse-drawn guns? We continued to work when we could and then took the team to the Cedar Creek battle reenactment. It was an awful weekend! It rained and then

RIGHT PAGE (TOP): CPL John Ruf is riding Ramius and driving Dixie to complete the lead team, CPL Billy Horne is riding Vigilark and Surprise to complete the wheel horse team. Private Dusty Summers and Sergeant (SGT) Kerry Hayer are riding the limber and SGT Stuart Brandt and Private Bobby Allen are riding the caisson at the rear of the limber. The caisson carries two ammunition chests, a spare wheel and a spare limber pole. **BOTTOM:** The same team of drivers with Privates Rex Kennedy, Bobby Allen and Dusty Summers following the gun on foot with SGT Kerry Hayer in the lead. CPL Chris Moose dressed as artillery bugler is riding Allen. The gun is being moved into firing position for a firing demonstration. After the gun is unhooked, the team maneuvers behind the gun with the lead team horses facing the gun six yards behind the trail of the gun. Guns are deployed 14 yards apart giving enough space to move the horses between them to hook up or unhook. These photos were taken at the Grand Opening of the Stafford County Civil War Park on May 27, 2013. **MIDDLE (LEFT TO RIGHT):** Captain David Stanley on Rebel and the gun team moving the gun into final position to fire; Captain Stanley speaking with some of the park visitors; Gun team resting: CPL Chris Moose, SGT John Ruf, Privates Dusty Summers and Bobby Allen.

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AT THE BATTLEFIELD



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it rained and it rained some more and the event was cancelled. We decided to use the team to pull the limber and put equipment on it to take it to the parking area. We hooked Ethan and Allen and realized we didn't have all the equipment needed to hook the lead horses. I rode to the horse trailer to get the missing items. When I returned I was met by an ambulance and the limber was at the bottom of the hill with a broken limber pole and Ethan and Allen were standing there with someone paying attention to Allen's leg. When I got there I found that the loading of the limber had started, but when a Civil War band came onto the field Ethan and Allen both showed they were not fans of Civil War music. They had bolted with a man on the limber and broke the pole which threw the man, Dennis Brooks, down between the limber wheels. When they were finally stopped, Allen had a cut on his leg and Dennis, who would be all right, was on his way to the hospital. When we were hooking to the limber we forgot the basic safety lesson Charlie taught us of using a man and horse as an outrider to help calm the team and be there in case of an emergency. Human error caused the accident. Growing pains continued and we realized we had to re-learn lessons that all horse-drawn artillerymen had to learn. The only help we had was Charlie because he was the only person with a team and with experience. We grew frustrated in our initial attempts the first year or so and began to wonder, what were we thinking? At this critical time my daughter, Lindsey, fell in love with Ethan and Ethan fell in love with her, and with her confidence being contagious with the men, things began to fall into place. The team's (both men and horses) coordinated efforts and continued training began to pay off. By the late 1990s we had accomplished what we had set out to do—have a horse drawn section of guns. We found that in the field it was work to maintain the level of horse care required of us. We found that many of the event commanders did not have a clue as to

how to use horse drawn guns. They had grown up with static guns that were pulled on the field with a truck and then loaded up after the battle. We could move with the infantry and protect flanks or help push holes in the enemy lines. Artillery was meant to move, not just stay in one place.

We amuse many reenactors and spectators when they ask us what side we represent. Our answer is that we "cross-dress" which always brings a smile or laugh. We represent artillerymen of both armies. Since most of us are from North Carolina we do Battery D "Reilly's Battery" of the 1st North Carolina Artillery as our Confederate impression. This battery, as many batteries did, took the

name of their commander to designate their unit. Our Federal Battery is Battery D "West Point" Battery of the 5th U.S. Artillery Regiment named after where the battery was formed. The core of the unit came from the West Point teaching staff. The batteries fired at each other at the Battle of Second Manassas in 1862 and the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. At the battle of Gettysburg, the West Point Battery with the use of both horses and manpower pulled their guns up to the top of Little Round Top.

Our reenacting and living history careers took off and we did a number of events early on to include Shiloh with two other horse drawn guns. We

had to cross a narrow wooden bridge and then go up a long hill that had to be 45 degrees or better. Infantryman lined the road as we crossed the bridge and urged our team into the canter. As we passed them they cheered us on and when we came out onto the battlefield and immediately went into battery everyone cheered, Yank and Rebel alike, for they had just seen something that they all knew had occurred in the 1860s, but they had never seen it themselves. Since then we have attended reenactments throughout the Southeast participating in as many as six to ten events per year requiring both men and horses to be ready from February to



ABOVE: Soldiers of the 10th US Cavalry Regiment's machinegun troop dressed in 1935 era uniforms. Warrant Officer John Ruf is riding a 1904 McClellan Saddle on Gemini. Privates Johnny and Patrick Williams are dressed as 10th US Cavalry Regiment soldiers of the Machine Gun Troop. Private Johnny Williams is holding Vigilark, who is saddled with a 1928 Phillips Pack saddle and a Model 1919A4 Browning air-cooled machinegun (MG), his brother Patrick Williams is standing to the rear. MG Troops would have been issued the M1919A2 (shorter, with a slotted cooling shroud), but we have been unable to find that version. With the introduction of automatic weapons to the battlefield in World War 1, the US Cavalry recognized the need to incorporate them in their Cavalry Regiments. A rider leads the pack horse who carries the MG and the rest of the detachment follows mounted on their horses. After the gun is unpacked and deployed a horse-holder takes the horses to the rear of the action and is ready to bring them forward if the gun needs to be moved. **RIGHT PAGE:** Our team in training at Eastover, North Carolina. All the artillerymen attend the training because each man needs to know how to care for the horses and equipment. Horse grooming, saddling, and harnessing all must be done correctly to avoid an accident and/or injury. CPL John Ruf is riding Ramius and driving Dixie on the lead team, CPL Billy Horne is riding Vigilark and Surprise on the wheel horse team. Private Dusty Summers is riding the limber as it pulls the model 1861 10-Pound Parrott Rifle. The wheel horse harness is different than the lead harness since the wheel horses are the brakes. The tugs must be attached properly and kept snug to insure all four horses are pulling together. We practice turns as this is an important maneuver on the battlefield and this team moves better to the right than to the left. Ramius, the horse being ridden, is dominant and he can push Dixie, the off horse, in a right hand turn, and he has to pull her in a left hand turn.



IN TRAINING



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November. Beginning with the 130th Anniversary of Gettysburg, our teams have attended most major events to include the 135th, 140th, 145th and now entering the round of 150th anniversaries of many battles familiar to most, such as those at Manassas, Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, the Wilderness, Bentonville, and Appomattox. Our current team of horses will be used for the 150th Gettysburg Event this year in July where we will join seven other horse drawn teams, only ours are Morgan horses, to remember the Civil War horses and their service.

Our horses and teams have been in several movies. Our first, but without horses, was the Hallmark Hall of Fame's *Love Letters*. We then made several movies for the National Park Service to show horse-drawn guns in action. The filming was done at the Gettysburg Battlefield National Park and was shown for a number of years at the Manassas National Battlefield Park. We were then in the making of the movie *Gods and Generals*. This experience was new to us since we got paid for what we provided. Several years after the 135th Reenactment of the Battle of Antietam friends began to tell us they had seen us in a movie, "*The Last Confederate*." I purchased the DVD and was amazed at the footage of us moving two guns with our horse teams at the reenactment, this is perhaps the best video of what we do and how it looks. In late 2011, we were approached by two graduate theater students about making a film of one version of how the music to *TAPS* was created. The final 25 minute product was amazing and essentially their thesis. Our horses and men are prominent in the film's action and the producers are showing this product at various film festivals in hopes of garnering interest in potentially making it into a full movie.

Most are familiar with the Old Guard and the Caisson Platoon at Fort Myer in Washington, DC who renders honor to America's fallen heroes at Arlington. We have had the honor to perform funeral processions also and it is deeply gratifying. We carried a Vietnam veteran to his final resting place in the Military Cemetery in Salisbury, North Carolina. When construction excavation was being done at the Citadel, one of the CSS Hunley (a Confederate Submarine that conducted the first successful submarine attack of an enemy warship) crews was found. We carried a casket in the funeral of these former Confederate sailors in March of 2000. The biggest honor came on April 17, 2004 after the CSS Hunley was found in Charleston Harbor and a ceremony was conducted to bury the remains of the sailors of this crew. We have provided the caisson and team on several other occasions to provide military honors in burial.

After all the hard work of both men and horses, we had a section (two guns) drawn by horses that could perform anywhere in any condition and be successful. Over the years both men and horses began to age out and a less stressful and much broader venue began to evolve. Although we still participate in the occasional "big" event, living history presentations at parks and schools have become more the norm. We can provide a mounted soldier from the Revolutionary War through the last cavalry engagement of the 26th U. S. Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts). One of our more recent impression is that of a 9th or 10th Cavalry Regiment soldier. These Regular Army units were raised in 1866 with all black troopers and white officers. The 1st Black graduate of West Point, Henry Ossian Flipper (1877), was assigned to the 10th Cavalry Regiment. We also wanted to include our ladies, and expanded our presentation to show how women of the era rode side-saddle. The horses love doing this and have become quite the hams. We had done a large event and were moving off the field and the spectators mingled in with our horses, guns and men. The horses didn't flinch at all when cameras flashed or people bumped into them. In the last days of mounted cavalry the machine gun had made its presence known on the battlefield. We have an original 1928 Phillips pack saddle with the equipment to put a 1919 machine gun on the saddle and have the horse pack it to the firing site. The challenges of using horses to share their contributions and sacrifices on the battlefield have been both demanding and enormously rewarding. CPL Chris and Danyel Moose along with Joe and Geanie Slifer have also bought several horses, harness and helped with their care. The unit pooled funding and purchased the stallion Traveler from Gerry and Carol Meunier. 1SG Joe Slifer owns the unit's second gun and our caisson was donated by a former member.

Over the many years of owning horses, we also have endured the illness, injury and death of quite a few of our beloved Morgans due to colic, West Nile Fever, lightning strikes and old age. This is the toughest part of owning an animal; most of us are never ready when the time to say good-bye arrives. Over two-million horses and mules died during the Civil War. I would invite you to visit our Website at www.reillysbattery.org. On the index page go to 'horses and equipment,' you will find tributes to our teams of horses and eulogies to those who have fallen. They will always be remembered. You will also find the Artillery Horse's Prayer written by a French Artillery Officer in the 1st World War. Make sure you have something to wipe away the tears. My family loves our Morgan horses and could not imagine life without them. ■

RIGHT PAGE: In addition to reenacting, we do Living Histories with our horses and can field impressions from the 1840s Mexican American War through WWII where the 26th US Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts) made the last Cavalry Charge during the defense of the Philippines on Bataan in 1942. **TOP:** Joyce is wearing the 1890s period riding habit and Ramius has the side saddle. Rebel is wearing an 1890 British Universal Pattern Saddle and LTC David Stanley is wearing a LTC's uniform of the 1st Bengal Lancer (Skinner's Horse) in the Indian Army circa 1898-1901. This unit fought alongside soldiers of the 6th United States Cavalry Regiment in China during the Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901), the first time British and American troops had fought together in over a century. **BOTTOM (LEFT):** Rebel in a 1928 McClellan Saddle and Captain Stanley is dressed in the uniform of the 26th Cavalry as a Veterinarian. Cavalry Regiments had two veterinarians assigned. CPT C.H. Mickelsen (died a POW at Fukuoka Camp #1 in Japan, February 4, 1945), was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in action at Rosario, La Union, Philippine Islands, on Dec. 22, 1941. **CENTER:** SGT Stuart Brandt dressed as a 6th Cavalry Soldier either in the Mexican American War 1898 or the Boxer Rebellion where the 6th Cavalry fought with the 1st Bengal Lancers; the 1896 McClellan saddle on Allen. **BOTTOM (RIGHT):** LTC Stanley is the Commander of the 10th US Cavalry Regiment in the 1895 undress uniform in Cuba 1898.



LIVING HISTORIANS

