

THE ART OF

Breeder, artist and conversationalist Hal Hoover's love of the Morgan started with an early meeting of the stallion Trophy. In his ongoing affair with the breed, as this photo gallery proves, he chronicled some its most famous individuals.

By Abbie Trexler

Spend six hours on the phone with Hal Hoover over a two-month period and the conversation never slows. His encyclopedic memory of every Morgan to whom he ever held his camera, along with every mare he ever bred, would be enviable to even the youngest of Morgan aficionados. In this article he allows us to explore the depths of those memories, from his first encounter with Trophy to the moments he captures in his gallery of Morgan photographs.

From the time Hal was a young man, he was fascinated by the Morgan breed. He carried his camera with him where he went, photographing the Morgans he saw. Although, in the early days, he couldn't afford a Morgan, it was a way for him to participate with the horses he so admired. Looking back on it he chuckles and fondly calls his photography, "an overgrown hobby."

"I started out in my own backyard," Hoover begins. "Trophy was owned by the D. F. Switzler Family, and Bill Holtz Stables was four miles from me, in Carrolltown, Pennsylvania. Bernard Holtz, Bill's father, was a famous saddle maker—especially of fancy parade saddles, and they were customers of Hoover Gas and Oil, my dad's family business. As a kid I would go up to their stable to deliver oil, and I would see them getting their horses ready for shows.

"As I got older, I delivered gas and oil to D. F. Switzler's farm, as well, for farm equipment and such, and I was very interested in horses. Switzler took me under his wing and told me about how he'd purchased Trophy at the Government Farm in 1951. I was just thrilled to death that he was giving me all this history." Unintentionally, Hal had stumbled upon his mentor, Switzler, and the men, Bernard and Bill Holtz, who he'd come to think of as, "The best of the best in Morgans."

As a young man, Hal would visit Switzler's Buick dealership in Carrolltown and catch up with on Morgans with the man who was 40 years his senior. "Switzler never tried to sell me a Morgan, he just wanted to teach me about them. I'd talk to him on his lunch break or whenever he had a free half an hour to talk. Then, I'd go out to the farm to talk to him, too. I said, 'I hope someday I have enough money to buy a Morgan.' And Switzler replied, 'Well let me tell you, Hal. A good Morgan is going to cost you two or three times that of a grade horse. After the initial cost, when you get your good Morgan, it isn't going to cost you any more to feed them, shoe them, or have the vet come look at them. It's that first initial cost. But you have to start with good quality—if you start with good quality and manage it right, that's it. There's no substitute for good quality.'"

D. F. Switzler had a large farm where he kept Trophy and the mares and foals. Remember, this is before semen transport, when the mares were brought to the stallion. "Switzler had a very nice farm, a 100-year-old big barn. Underneath the barn was this big, long shed and there were nice, big old box stalls with Dutch doors,

originally intended for draft horses. Down at the end of the shed, in the middle of the 20-foot wide dirt aisle, was an old bathtub filled with fresh water, and they used to go stall by stall and open the door to let each horse out to water, before returning to their stall.

"The first time I saw Trophy was in the spring of 1958, when I was 18 years old and Trophy was nine years old. I was standing in the aisle way of the shed, down by the bathtub of water, and Trophy emerged from his stall, he came out very boldly with a snort and a big trot. I wondered to myself, should I be standing here in this aisle way? Switzler said to me, 'Don't worry, Hal, he's just coming up for a drink and he's a very kind, pleasant stallion.' Trophy came trotting up to the bathtub and took a drink, and then stood there and looked around. He turned around to go back to his stall with his tail arched up, his head set up high, and trotted away off all four corners. Even barefoot, he had this naturally balanced action front and back. His hock action was tremendous. He spun around from that bathtub and trotted back down the aisleway to his stall. The whole time he was going away from me, I was aware of how much hock action and power he had off the back end."

Hal's first exposure to the Morgan breed came by way of Trophy and his offspring, who he witnessed as young stock—the likes of Trophy's Jade, Trophy's Emerald, Trophy's Crystal, Trophy's Award. He came to recognize those Trophy traits, the tremendous hock action, strong shoulders, natural upheadedness, tiny ears, as synonymous with the Morgan traits he valued most. He'd visit other farms, but in his mind none of the other bloodlines came close in quality to the Trophy horses that he'd seen at Switzler's and Holtz's facilities in Carrolltown.

At the age of 24, Hal married his wife, Dolores, and it was the following year that the two made the decision to purchase their first Morgan, well Morgans, a mare with a foal at her side. As with many of Hal's stories, this one started with an opportune conversation. A school bus driver happened to stop at a gas station that Hal's family owned after dropping his load of kids off at a local school for a band event. He and Hal got to talking and Hal discovered that the driver knew of a dozen Morgans down in the area where he lived, in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, that were owned by some Amish friends of his. Hal got the names and addresses of the school bus driver's friends and wrote to them about their Morgans.

HAL HOOVER



Bob Whitney and
UVM Promise



Tedwin Topic



Dr. John Stoker and
Century Free Spirit



Trophy



Elm Hill Charter Oak



Bernard & Bill Parker
and ER Hope Diamond

MORGAN AMERICANA ≈ The Art of Hal Hoover

A week later, he got an answer—Noah Yoder had written out the bloodlines of a mare for sale—Nannette’s Mabel and a filly at her side. It just so happened that Mabel’s bloodlines went back to the Ruthven horses in Michigan that were the blood of Lippitt Moro Ash, who had a history of producing well when crossed on Trophy. The sire of the filly at Mabel’s side was Award’s Citation, a young stallion by Trophy’s Award, a son of Trophy. Hal made the trip to Somerset County to see Yoder’s Morgans and came home with Nannette’s Mabel and her filly, who Hal and Dolores named H R H Juliette. They purchased the pair for the price of \$800.

Hal bred Mabel to Trophy with no success that year (at a stud fee of \$100), and decided instead to breed her back to Juliette’s sire, Award’s Citation. It was a way to capitalize on the Trophy line, and his new friend Noah Yoder, helped facilitate the breeding. Award’s Citation stood at stud for the price of \$15.

Chance conversations have had a funny way of influencing Hal’s life in Morgans. Perhaps it’s because he’s so friendly. As Juliette grew up, Hal kept her at the Holtz Stables. One day when he was lunging her a man pulled up in his car out front looking for the Switzler Farm. While Hal was giving him directions, the man’s attention was drawn to Juliette, and he asked if she was a Morgan. Hal confirmed that she was. Holtz was away at a

horse show, so Hal showed him around the stable. Through the conversation, the man divulged that he had ridden at Saddleback Farm, and was in the market for a Morgan for his teenage daughter. Hal priced Juliette, and the man returned two days later with both his wife and daughter and purchased the chestnut mare for the tidy sum of \$1,800. The man’s name was Dick Titleman and he was the president of Puritan Sportswear in Altoona, Pennsylvania. “How well this worked out for my first Morgan horse,” Hal mused. Dick left Juliette in training with Bill Holtz with the understanding that the mare should lack for nothing. Juliette stayed in training with Holtz for seven years, and came to be known as one of the most fabulous pleasure mares in the country.

Each spring Hal returned to the Yoder’s in Somerset County to see their new foals. After the sale of Juliette, he returned to Yoder’s and discovered a filly who was out of the dam of Mabel, Nannette Mar-Lo, and sired by Award’s Citation. So Hal purchased the filly, Nannette’s Valentine, and kept her at the Westrick Farm. In the meantime, Dick Titleman asked Hal if he had any other Morgans for sale. Hal showed Valentine to Dick, he remembers it in detail.

“It was a bright sunny day, and Valentine stood up next to the barn like a world champion.” Dick was so impressed that he bought Valentine on the spot and sent her to Bill Holtz immediately. Suddenly, Hal was in the breeding and selling business.

Hal came to enjoy most the breeding aspect of Morgan enterprise, and sold his stock as young horses, growing the name of HRH Morgans at his established Patton, Pennsylvania farm. He and Dolores bred an average of two foals a year, sometimes none, as they built a house and raised their children. He jokes that the horse crazy never left him. Through the years, HRH Morgans bred 85 HRH-prefixed Morgans. Hal used Trophy’s Jade frequently as a sire and he used the Trophy granddaughter Dorovan’s Victoria,

who produced 13 healthy offspring for HRH. Trophy blood is at the foundation of the HRH breeding program, which came to be revered in the breed. Famous contemporary HRH horses are numerous and include the breeding stallions HRH Image Command and HRH Legend Command, the great show horse HRH Aladdin, the broodmare HRH Sheba (who produced KDS Star Wars and KDS Wild America among others), the broodmare HRH Trophyet (who produced RRG Promises Promises, RRG Reign Man, and Hi Sage Siempra), and the broodmare HRH Tiffany who produced



Hal and Dolores Hoover at their Patton, Pennsylvania farm, with a map of the United States with pins marking each location in which they sold an HRH Morgan.

well for The Iron Forge. These well-known horses join a countless number of excellent show, family and working Morgans with the HRH prefix.

Some of Hal’s best memories come from his trips to make new friends and visit old ones at shows and at farms. A major part of his social life bloomed when he and Dolores jumped in the car and ventured out to some of the most famous Morgan farms in the East. Never without his camera, amateur photographer Hal captured many of the famous Morgans of the day, always sending prints to the owners of the farm as a parting thank you for their time. Those pictures chronicled a portion of the history of the breed and have become iconic images of famous Morgans of our past.

The relationships he made on these trips became lasting friendships with the likes of Dr. John Stoker, breeder of I Will Command, Wham Bam Command, and Ladybird Command, along with numerous others including the Herricks, the Duponts, and the Dunns. Hal has graciously allowed us to publish a selection of his favorite images from over the years. Here they are, accompanied by his fond memories.



Bill Parker and Bennfield's Ace

(Bennfield x Cathy Serenity)

“Bennfield's Ace was such an exciting horse to see in person, whether he was in harness or in-hand or under saddle. This was in the early 1980s. There just wasn't anything else out there like Bennfield's Ace, when he came in the ring he stole the show. With the way the Parker family showed him, they had a style and a way of their own, that was just the best. He was undefeated in his lifetime in-hand.”



Bery Bank Blackglama

(Windcrest Splendor
x Bery Bank Paperchase)

“That was taken in my upper pasture. I was thrilled with the picture. This mare was in foal at the time to HRH Legend Command and she was the first black Morgan I ever owned. Everything was right for a snow picture. I'd go up in the field with my camera, and my son Michael or my daughter Dana, would bring the horses up to the field. That day, they let her go and she spiked her tail over her back and did a barnyard trot right across the pasture and I caught it. You have to look pretty hard to figure out if it's a black and white or color picture.”

Fred Herrick with Centennial Command

(Waseeka's In Command
x Highmeadows Kate)

“I was very fortunate in 1965 when we went to New England—we had the opportunity to meet Fred and Jeanne Herrick. I admired them forever. In 1985 I was up in New York State going around and we stopped at Saddleback Farm. They gave us a show of all their stallions and we had a fabulous day. Fred was a gentlemen's gentleman—nicest, kindest guy you could ever meet, he was the quietest and gentlest person you've ever been around. Fred said, 'Hey I have an In Command son here, want to take a look?'”



Citation's Glenda (Award's Citation x Choice Beckie) and HRH Legend Command

(by Waseeka's In Command)

“Citation's Glenda is by Award's Citation, by Trophy's Award. I didn't see Glenda until she was probably ten or 12 years old. Bill Holtz bought her as a broodmare. I bought her from Bill and bred her to In Command in 1980 and got HRH Legend Command [pictured here at 30 days old, Glenda is 14], then we bred her back again and got HRH Image Command. These were exceptionally high quality foals, I sold them both as weanlings. This mare put us on the map big time.”





Dr. John Stoker and Century Free Spirit

(Wham Bam Command x Windhover Antigone)

“Dr. John Stoker was a very good friend and local doctor in Altoona, Pennsylvania. He was the guy who owned the mare, Trophy’s Corrigan. She was his daughter’s show horse, sired by Trophy. While his daughter went to college, Dr. Stoker took Corrigan and bred her to Waseeka’s In Command—that was the golden cross producing Wham Bam Command, I Will Command and Ladybird Command. Dr. Stoker had Wham Bam Command in training with Joan Lurie and, as a two-year-old, Wham Bam got very sick at a show and they nearly lost him. After that he was a breeding stallion. Dr. Stoker lived very close to us, and we couldn’t wait to see for ourselves the first offspring of Wham Bam Command. When Mike and Trudy Caisse called us and told us that the second offspring of Wham Bam had been born out of Windhover Antigone, we couldn’t wait to get over and see him. As a matter of fact, we were out to dinner with Dr. Stoker and his wife Elaine, and we decided to go see Century Free Spirit. We went over that night and got the first look at him. This stud colt, at two days old, could stand up and use his neck. Here was this chestnut with a big white blaze, and he had style from day one! I said to Doc, ‘Hey Doc, how do you like that one?’ And he just smiled ear to ear.”

Elm Hill Charter Oak

(Pecos x Bar-T Coreder)

“Elm Hill Charter Oak always fascinated me. He’s by Pecos and out of an Orland Leader daughter, and Orland Leader sired Chasley Superman. Charter Oak had so much presence. This was taken in 1985. When he looked at you, he was really looking at you. Looking at this standing picture, Jeanne [Herrick] is on the other side trying to hold his tail up a little bit, there was probably another 18 inches on the ground, and Fred’s [Herrick] getting his attention. You don’t see a horse come out and stand like that everyday.”



Bernard & Bill Parker and ER Hope Diamond

(Waseeka’s In Command
x Headline Hey Jude)

“I always liked ER Hope Diamond. I saw her shown many times. The way Billy Parker handled her and showed her, he could get her to pose and stand up. I never saw her lose a class. At the time, I had a mare named Black River Sheba that Lynn Peeples showed for me. Many times, if we were at a show, ER Hope Diamond was the Grand Champion Mare and we were often second or third. She just had such fantastic quality.”





Fiddler's Trustee

(Waseeka's Tiz So
x Deer Run Command)

“That picture’s almost perfect. I bred to Trustee many times. I loved going up to Fiddler’s Green Farm—I got to know the Murphys very well. I saw Trustee as a weanling and as a yearling and I always said, ‘Whenever you stand him at stud I’m going to send a mare up to him.’ He produced several nice babies for me.”



Bob Dunn and Gallant Lee

(Bay State Gallant
x Windcrest Dona Lee)

“Gallant Lee was a fabulous park horse, wonderfully bred. He was by Bay State Gallant and out of Windcrest Dona Lee, who was considered by many to be the best [Upwey] Ben Don performance horse. Gallant Lee was a big horse, who had lots and lots of natural motion. Bob and Beverly Dunn became very good friends of ours and we visited them regularly. That picture was taken at Ardun’s Farm in Connecticut. They produced a lot of nice horses up there.”

Michael Hoover and HRH Image Command

(Waseeka's In Command
x Citation's Glenda)

“Michael was 14 here, he was my main handler for those babies by In Command. You look at the neck, the shape, you don't have to wonder if that's a good horse.”



D. F. Switzler and Kane's Rose Marie

(Wal-Thor x Springbrook
Rosemary)

“My daughter, Dana, was three-and-a-half years old here. Rose Marie was a broodmare that D. F. Switzler owned. He was a great man, and he loved the horses—he took me under his wing. This was a broodmare that he bought out in Michigan, when bred to Trophy produced Trophy's Lucky Lad who was a great show horse. You can certainly tell she was gentle and nice to be around. No one had been riding her and when I asked D. F. Switzler if I could put Dana up on her, he said, 'Oh, sure.' And you can see the expression on Dana's face, she is just grinning ear to ear!”





Kingston

(Upwey Ben Don x Junefield)

“That headshot is kind of unbelievable, isn’t it? It was taken in the middle of summer in Delaware, Ohio, near where Gold Cup was held. I went up to Cashman’s, and it was a big farm with a lot of horses. Kingston was out in the paddock, not clipped, dusty. I showed Bill Cashman a selection of my horse pictures, and he was kind of impressed. So I asked if someone would clip him and shine him up for a picture, and after they saw those pictures, the grooms jumped up and trimmed and polished him. What a great end result!”



Lord Appleton

(Waseeka’s Nocturne x Vigilmay)

“I didn’t see Lord Appleton in person until Martha Dupont bought him. The thing I liked about Lord Appleton was that he was out of Vigilmay, Vigilmarch’s full sister. It was a rare opportunity to photograph him, and Henry Dupont was holding him for me that day. I happened to be at Dupont’s, and I always carried my camera, so it worked out.”

**Reatas
Mexicali Rose**

(Fleetwing x Midwest Melody)

“The first Fleetwing offspring I ever saw up close was Reatas Mexicali Rose. She was owned by Karen Bauer, and she lived to be 36 years old. She produced some wonderful show horses, including K-Lyn’s Tasmarrisk [by Chasley Superman], K-Lyn Gambit [by Trophy], and the broodmare K-Lyn Miss Filicee [by Krinisor’s Rob Robin], who in turn produced 1988 World Champion Amateur Pleasure Driving and 1999 World Champion Amateur English Pleasure horse, HRH Lacey [by Windy Hill Maestro]. This picture was taken at Bill Holtz’s in 1975.”



Tedwin Topic

(Fiddler’s Contender
x Waseeka Cajun Queen)

“This was taken up in Massachusetts at Beaton’s. Mike and Trudy Caisse were with me that day in 1985. We took Topic outside and as soon as we got out in the daylight, we stood back and watched him come alive in the sun. Once he starts raising his head and getting bendy in the poll, he was looking down the road somewhere, he came to life and was fired up. He was doing his thing! You just had to let him be his natural, talented self. And once that head came up in the air and that fancy neck, everyone wanted to breed to him.”





Wham Bam Command

(Waseeka's In Command x Trophy's Corrigan)

"He was 30 days old here. Dr. Stoker and Elaine had I Will Command. Elaine didn't want Corrigan sent out to be bred again; she wanted her to stay home with her baby. So they skipped a year. When Wham Bam Command was born two years later, Elaine wouldn't let Doc send Corrigan away to be bred again, so Wham Bam was out at the Stoker Farm. We'd go out to the farm once or twice a week, and I was just walking around with the camera and this is what I came up with. Wham Bam had so much character, running with his mother in the field. There's a gleam in his eye here."



Waseeka's In Command

(Waseeka's Nocturne x Miller's Adel)

"I took that picture in November 1983. He has winter hair on him! You take him out and set him up, and In Command has an almost telescopic neck, so high headed, and then he bends it. I drove 750 miles that day to drive up to New York and see him and come back home. To have the opportunity to take a picture of him, that was something."

Trophy's Jade

(Trophy x Ruthven's
Nancy Ann)

“This was 1973. He was a fabulous show horse. He was bred by D. F. Switzler and purchased as a weanling by Bill Holtz, who committed to buying anything Ruthven's Nancy Ann produced by Trophy after owning Trophy's Emerald. Look at the shoulder, he had such sharp ears. Such a sensational horse. Paramount Perfection and Jade's Hotshot [the only horse bred by Hal without the HRH prefix] were probably his most famous offspring.”



Bob Whitney and UVM Promise

(UVM Highlight
x UVM Empress)

“When Tennessee Valley Morgans had UVM Promise, they sent him to Whitney's. He was showing in-hand and winning with Bob. He did very well under saddle with Judy. Judy wasn't in the picture here with Bob, but you better believe she was dancing around off to the side. When Bob showed a horse, he had their attention, and he could back off and they did not take their eyes off of him. Bob and Promise were both the best of what they were.”





Trophy
(Mentor x Norma)

“D. F. Switzler died in 1970, Trophy was 20 years old. The Switzler family sold Trophy to Ed Gamble in Western Pennsylvania. Four years later, Dr. Stoker and I drove out to Ed Gamble’s one fall day to see Trophy at the age of 25. Ed brought him out, and Trophy was sound and in good flesh. So Dr. Stoker helped to get his ears up, he raised his head and cocked his tail and he looked like the old Trophy I’d seen at the Switzler Farm. He was a little more grey in the face, but talk about a great day.

That is the best picture I ever took of Trophy.” ■