



Legacy Mares

Westwold Dona Resa: Career Mom

With an album of rare, vintage photos of one of the greatest Morgan mares of all time!

Westwold Dona Resa (Orcland Dondarling x Rena), a lady of the 1960s and 70s, kept up with the times: she was the very definition of a career mom.

From her junior years until the age of 11 she dazzled the show ring, competed in harness and under saddle, won the harness stake at Northampton, and performed as part of a pair that promoted the breed by attending the 1967 World Fair in Montreal. She was a vehicle for the show careers of Joe Parker, “Dr Bob” Orcutt, Pat Tataronis, Judy Nason, and Dorothy White. Then, in her teens, she turned her attention to giving the Morgan breed a dynasty of foals that would become world champions, most notably Van Lu Starbuck, Van Lu Love Story, and Van Lu Jolie.

Westwold Dona Resa is Morgan breed royalty on both sides of her pedigree. Orcland Dondarling was a monument to his

times with 124 foals in his progeny record. Dondarling was sired by the Government-bred stallion Ulendon, out of the outstanding broodmare Anna Darling. Dondarling was used heavily as a herd sire at Orcland Farms and popularly with other familiar prefixes of the day, including Broadwall, Pinecrest, Fiddler’s Ru-Lee, Paramount, and Saddleback. He sired Dona Resa in his second year at stud, she being foaled in 1962.

Dona Resa’s dam is Rena, who obviously crossed well with the sons of Ulendon—she famously produced Chasley Superman when bred to the Ulendon son Orcland Leader. Rena’s pedigree is intensely inbred. She carries two crosses to Mansfield through her sire Magellan and three crosses to him through her dam Nubia. Magellan (who was sold to China in 1947—see “Notes From Shelburne,” June 2012 for the story of the China Morgans) was out of the mare Topaz; Nubia’s dam was Fairytop (also the dam

By Stephen Kinney

Westwold Dona Resa’s ancestors include (clockwise from top left): Rena, Ulendon, Mansfield, Nubia and Orcland Don Darling.



(Photo © Freudy Photos)

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Van Lu Jolie, 1985 World Champion Mare and as a foal with her dam, Westwold Dona Resa.

of Mentor) and her second dam was Topaz, so the adage of “give the stallion the best of his dam” was very much in play in the conception of Nubia.

Bred by Faith Middleton, Dona Resa was owned by the Mad River Morgan Farm of A. C. Drowne in her junior years. Joe Parker brought her to the attention of a Morgan public who was very ready for to have a mare like this on the scene.

That charismatic talker Bill Parker speaks in superlatives about Dona Resa, but he tells a story about her early years as well: “We started her and broke her and trained her. She’s the one that messed my father’s leg up cause she ran off in the buggy and threw him out. Just to think she came from that to being a pair horse is pretty interesting. This mare was possibly one of the most thoughtful park horses you’ve ever seen.”

What’s a “thoughtful park horse?” you may ask: “I mean,” Bill explains, “that they have this natural ability within them, like Ace and all the rest of them, that all you have to do is tap into the resources that they have and you get in harmony with them and they become the horses they are. Dona Resa...through her training her attitude was never lost. She could go from Dr. Bob riding her and beating the park horses...to, you could put her in the harness and she would be so elegant in that pair.

“Sometimes this mare was shown two or three times a day. Dr. Bob would show her under saddle and Mrs. White would come and drive her. That’s how durable she was. She and Mrs. White were perfect together. People took them for granted. They were always so perfect.”

Bill has some opinions about Dona Resa as a producer as well. The Parker family had very real familiarity with the produce of Rena, since that mare gave them their signature horse Chasley Superman. Bill said Rena looked like a “cavalry horse” but produced like an “incubator.”

“Dona Resa inherited Rena’s way of producing,” he continued. “Just as good as Rena. Some mares have this gift to be able to

produce the golden cross....a mare who continues to produce champions when you mix her with other bloodlines. I had never seen genes like that in horses. Dona Resa had that touch in her genes.” Certainly this “touch” will be explained as we continue.

But back to her show career. After being sold by Al Drowne of Mad River Farm, she was shown by Dr. Robert Orcutt, Pat Tataronis and in ladies harness classes by her new owner, Dorothy White, for the remainder of her very active show career. All of these noteworthy individuals are no longer with us to comment on the mare that did so much for them.

Helen (Orcutt) Noble, Dr Bob’s daughter has very distinct memories of the mare: “I remember when Dad bought her from Al Drowne for Charlie and Dot White. I remember Dad winning the Park Harness Championship (1968) at what would have been the ‘National’ (now New England Regional) then. Dad had just had knee surgery and wasn’t riding right then.

“She was big, but she still looked like a Morgan. For a Morgan in that era it was unusual to have a mare that was an ‘over’ horse. He felt she would fit the bill for Dot to drive.

“She was a big mare and a pretty mare. She didn’t have a load of motion, but what she did, she did well. She was very kind. Could be fussy to ride. She had to be kept happy, like a typical mare. She was particular. I remember my Dad rode her more than Pat did. She was a park horse at heart. My Dad’s adage was that ‘you’re only as good as the horse you have under you,’ and he had a great one in Dona Resa.”

In the 1970s, when Charlie and Dot White opened Green Acres, Judy Nason came on as resident trainer. Judy always has interesting insights into horse’s personalities:

“The main thing I remember was she was a kind of an edgy horse. She had always been worked as a park horse. Dot wanted me to show her at Mid-A in a pleasure class, but didn’t want Charlie to know about it. The English pleasure horses used to be quieter than the classic horses are today. That was one of my challenges. We won the class and Charlie heard our name and he was OK with it because she won.



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Van Lu Love Story winning the 1980 World Champion Ladies Park Harness with Judy Whitney, whip.

"I don't think we pursued it any more because they were trying to breed her at the time.

"Dot (White) showed her quite a bit when she was with Dr. Bob and Pat. It was before I was involved, but I remember her being around the circuit." In keeping with others' memories of the mare, Judy adds, "Dona Resa was Dr. Bob's highlight horse during her time there."

In addition to being a "highlight horse" in the Morgan show ring, Dona Resa made a special month long trip to Montreal, Canada to take part in a special series of harness demonstrations made by the Morgan breed at the 1967 World Fair.

Recalls Helen Noble: "I was a freshman in High School, but I went up for one weekend. I think my dad brought four pairs. He brought a bunch of singles as well. They were gone a month, they gave two shows a day dressed in historic attire. Dona Resa was in the pair with Long Hill Adonis, owned by Mrs. Wilson. Dot (Dorothy White) drove Windcrest Benn Beau and Wind Crest Showgirl." Benn Beau and Showgirl are among the most famous Morgan park harness pairs in the history of that nearly lost tradition.

Larry Wahl, Helen Noble's brother-in-law, also remembers the Montreal Morgan gig: "I was dating Mary (Orcutt) at the time. The World Fair was a big deal. Everyone was really proud to be representing the Morgan breed."

About Dona Resa, Larry continues, "The thing I remember about that mare was she was good to work on in the stalls and when she came out of the stall and was saddled up she went to work. She didn't fool around. Of course, Doc made them all that way, too."

But being in front of the public was only to be part of her world. In her second phase she would be as much a part of history as a mother as she was as a show horse.

Her next owner would be Simone "Simy" Corbin for whose Van Lu prefix she created a dynasty.

"We purchased Dona Resa when she was 12 years old. Leo LeFebvre, who was trainer at Tara Farm at the time, let me know that Dona Resa was available for purchase and introduced

me to the White family. I was told that Dona Resa had not been able to produce foals. In talking to Bernard Parker, while at the Connecticut show, I expressed my concern about her ability to foal. Bernard told me that if I took her out of the show ring and brought her home to relax in the pasture and be pampered, she should be able to produce foals—and indeed she did," says Simy Corbin from her North Carolina home.

"Indeed she did" is an understatement!

Between 1973 and 1984 the show mare turned mom in her teens produced eight foals. Six of these carried the Van Lu prefix; the final two were for Futurity Farm. Her reputation was earned through four of these foals, three of which would win multiple world championships and one who would serve his family in the best tradition of Morgan geldings.

The mare Van Lu Dona Lucinda was born in 1973. Dona Resa had come in foal from the Northeast to the famous park saddle horse Gay Dancer and Lucinda was the result. Park Place Morgans would be this mare's home and she produced two foals there.

For her next foal Simy Corbin stayed close to home breeding her to Tara Farm's Pecos son, Empyrean Apollo and in 1974 Van Lu Love Story was born. Empyrean Apollo is, of course, the sire of 1981 World Champion Stallion Apollo's Reflection, but that would not be the only world champion to his credit. Van Lu Love Story was World Champion Mare in 1980 for her breeder. In 1979 and 1980 Van Lu Love Story would win her breeder also the titles of World Champion Ladies Park Harness and World Champion Ladies Park Saddle. Quite a record in any age for a horse showing in multiple divisions at two consecutive Grand Nationals. She was also the 1977 Three-Year-Old Park Saddle World Champion, all these wins recorded with the great Judy Whitney (Harris) presiding.

Her 1976 foal was sired by Tara's Rhett Butler. The gelding Van Lu Magnum Force, who just passed away in the spring of this year, was very much loved by the Collins sisters, now both professional trainers, Christine Nava and Erin Von Steenburgh and as Fred Nava's driving

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(Photo © Tarrance Photos)



(Photo © Tarrance Photos)



(Photo © A. C. Drowne)

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1984 World Champion Stallion Van Lu Starbuck.

horse. Simy Corbin remembers the colt well: “The sweetest stallion foaled by Dona Resa was Van Lu Magnum Force. He was such a sweet colt. He never ever tried to bite or kick. He was my love and my favorite.”

Christine Nava shares Magnum Force’s history with us: “Magnum was a wonderful horse, a true show horse. He was always ready to go. We acquired him from Linda Freeman many years ago. He was a ‘freebie’! His former owners were done with him and were considering putting him down. Linda couldn’t bear to see that happen to such a great horse! I believe he was only 15 years old at the time. She called my mom and asked her if Erin and I would like to take him and show him. Her only stipulation was that we could never sell him. If we didn’t want him any longer she would take him back.

“We took him and soon realized he was a handful! It took three people to hook him to the buggy and when you were mounting him, you’d best be ready. As soon as your foot hit the stirrup he was off! Erin showed him classic saddle and did OK with him. Then one day we threw Freddy in the buggy and they clicked! He was now Fred’s horse! Watch out! They were undefeated in the classic pleasure driving division in 1992 and may have won a world title that year except for the fact that we got married in October and went on a honeymoon instead of OKC. I know—what was I thinking? I have never lived that down with Fred. He was part of our family for the rest of his life. The next Christmas my mom had transferred Magnum’s papers into Fred’s name and put them in his Christmas stocking. It brought tears to Fred’s eyes. He was crazy about Magnum.

“Anyway, Magnum finished out his life with us here at Timber Hill. He died on April 30th at the age of 36. He had a healthy, happy life. When he passed he was surrounded by Fred, myself, and Sarah Hall. (Sarah had won her first blue ribbon with him at a local show when she was just a kid. He was special to her as well!)

“We were blessed to have him in our lives. He was a great show horse that gave his all every time he came out of his stall. We have a lot of wonderful memories to hang on to.”

Dona Resa’s 1978 foal was a close breeding to the cross

that produced Van Lu Love Story. Van Lu Starbuck was sired by Apollo’s Merry Don, a son of Empyrean Apollo, making him a three-quarter brother to his older sibling. Starbuck would grow into a statuesque black stallion and, in 1984, would capture the title of World Champion Stallion, led by Bob Whitney, for the Owl Hollow Partnership. This family was going places.

In 1979 a son was born sired by Eaton’s Talisman and named Van Lu Beauregard. He sired many foals for the C-Vale prefix and has been owned since 1995 by Kohler Stables.

Undoubtedly the overachiever in the family was Van Lu Jolie, the 1981 product of breeding Dona Resa to Beamington. As a four-year-old, in 1985, Van Lu Jolie was World Champion Mare. Clearly these siblings like the sound of the title! The mare could trot as well. In 1986 she won the titles of both Ladies Park Harness World Champion and Open Park Harness World Champion. Judy Whitney would again be the lady on the lines. For Valli Corbin, who continued her mother’s prefix, Jolie produced the big trotting Van Lu Joie De Vivre who won many English pleasure titles in the Northeast.

Judy Whitney Harris has great memories about showing these three world champion offspring of Westwold Dona Resa. Of Love Story she remarks: “Whatever fits the horse is going to fit me. I’ll show them in harness or under saddle, ladies or open, depending on which way they are more comfortable. Her first win was a harness class. I have a picture of her after her win standing in the middle of the ring, showing herself off. She liked to show off and I just loved it, I just let her. She was a little bit nervous, but she quieted down and she came to go in the ladies class quite nicely.”

Talking about the two mares, she continues: “You know, I guess they thought they were pretty and they showed that way in hand. They’d come to the center of the ring and push forward and act like a pretty mare, a model mare. It just proves who they were.” Starbuck made a lasting impression on the great lady as well: “He was wonderful. When he came to us, when we got him, we tried different ways and he finally let us know which way he wanted to

Appearing at the 1967 World Fair, Montreal, Canada, in a pair with Long Hill Adonis.



(Photo © Bob Pichette Studio)



(Photo © Tarrance Photos)



(Photo © Warren E. Patriquin)



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Van Lu Magnum Force

go, in-hand and under saddle. He didn't especially like harness. I think he was a very nice saddle horse. He was tough, but yet his thoughts went in the right direction."

She concludes, "They were all great horses. They all aimed to please. Even though Starbuck was a stallion he wasn't a mean stallion or nasty or anything. He was always doing whatever we asked. Dona Resa was a lovely mare and she sure produced. You knew they were great."

Registry records show that in 1981 ownership of Westwold Dona Resa was turned over to Grande Ronde Morgans, then in 1983 to Futurity Farms. Her daughter Van Lu Love Story made the trip with her to become a broodmare at Futurity Farm, as well. During this time Dona Resa produced two more foals: D'Resa Futurity, a filly by Figure's Dauntless, and Futurity's Sky High, a stud colt by UVM Promise. Tim Arcuri was intimately involved with the transactions that led to this final chapter in the mare's career.

"I'm the one who purchased her and Love Story together for Futurity Farm," Tim recalls. "Doctor Bond bought a few horses from us at the time to have some nice horses that could pull a buggy around his house. He bought three horses, and I had never met him, but I talked to him on the phone. He asked, 'What have I bought?' and I told him if he wanted to be on the top he could buy a mare like Westwold Dona Resa or her daughter Love Story. He said 'I want to have the best broodmares in the world.'"

"We were buying Carlyle Command at the time. I heard from Maxine Snow that Dona Resa might be for sale. I called Dr. Bond back and told him that if he wanted a horse like this he had to move pretty fast. He told me to get on a plane that night and get her bought.

"I got there right away. Dr. Bond wired money and I bought her and Van Lu Love Story. I called him back and he said, 'How am I looking?' and I said you're looking pretty good for having two mares. And that started him on a few years of acquiring the best mares he could. Those were his first two."

Of the filly D'Resa Futurity Tim recalls: "That was a wonderful filly and Bill didn't want to sell her. We worked her and she was a star. He came down and watched her. By then we had bought Nobelle and Yellow Iris Jewell and Wynakee Alvina. He came down and looked at her and he said, 'I love her, but I want to keep her and breed her.' So she was not shown."

Love Story also outdid herself as a broodmare Tim says: "All hers by UVM Promise were absolutely gorgeous. Incredible. And talented as could be. We had them all and they were stellar. We showed all of those and they all won. They won Grand Champion Stallion titles and such and Bill got so excited with them that he'd want to breed them and he'd bring them home. So we never got to make performance horses out of them." Van Lu Love Story's progeny by UVM Promise included the 1983 filly Futurity Endless Love; the 1984 colt Futurity Lovestar; and the 1985 colt Futurity Royal Love.

Tim Arcuri waxes enthusiastic when he talks about this great mare and the collecting of bloodstock to which she led Dr. Bond of Futurity Farm. So we'll turn to Tim to sum up: "I thought that mare was as significant a broodmare as there has been in the Morgan breed. She was incredible. Not just great, but legendary. You still compare mares to Love Story today and wish you could have some like her. Dona Resa was a great horse herself, she was a great producer and there was so much history to her." ■

The inspiration for this article came when we were shown an album of vintage pictures, all of Dona Resa in her prime, at the recent New England Regional. Jeff and Darlene White had found the album among family files and permitted The Morgan Horse use of the album to scan the photos for archival purposes. Given the fact that the mare played such a role in the Morgan show ring, both as an individual and as a producer, we thought it would be an unprecedented opportunity to have a first hand glimpse into history by publishing the entire contents of the photo album with this article.

Appearing at the 1967 World Fair, Montreal, Canada, in a pair with Long Hill Adonis.



(Photo © Warren E. Patricquin)



(Photo © Paul A. Quinn)



(Photo © Freudy Photos)

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