



~ SIGNIFICANT SIRE SERIES ~

# THE STARFIRE ENIGMA

*The colorful story of the sire of Waseeka's Nocturne*

By Stephen Kinney



**I**magine a fantasy world that hosts a “Jeopardy”-like game show for horse lovers. “I’ll take Morgan horse trivia for \$500.”  
 “He was a son of Senator Graham, a stallion thought to be the most significant sire of his generation. In turn he sired that other most significant stallion, Waseeka’s Noc-

**MAIN:** Never before published photo of a mature Starfire at Wind-Crest Farm in Windsor, Vermont, Ted Davis, lead, taken in 1953 by Nancy Caisse on her Brownie camera (photo courtesy of Nancy Caisse); **INSETS, TOP TO BOTTOM:** Starfire as a yearling winning Grand Champion Stallion at the Illinois State Fair in 1949 (*The Morgan Horse*, October 1949, photo © Frye); Starfire at age four with Ted Davis at Wind-Crest Farm (photo from Judeen Barwood); Starfire, rider unknown, at the farm of Col. Raymond Emerson in Concord, Massachusetts (photo from Judeen Barwood).





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Windcrest Wunderbar, full sister to Waseeka's Nocturne; Her daughter, Windcrest Starlet (by Wind-Crest Sensation), at Big Oak Morgan Farm in Ontario, Canada, (photo by Calvin Hanson); Starlet's son Big Oak Black Tie (by Waseeka's Serenade) with Merton "Bud" Hanson (photo by Calvin Hanson); Waseeka's Vanguard, son of Windcrest Tinklebar, who was out of the Starfire daughter Wind-Crest Wunderbar, at Cambridge Morgans in Colorado.

turne," our host says.

Does our imaginary panelist blurt out, "Who was Starfire?" Or does he squint his eyes and scratch his head for a moment before saying, "Gosh, who was Nocturne's sire?"

Yes, the scenario is fantasy, but the issue is not. Starfire (Senator Graham x Wanda by Highview King) is the Morgan stallion who is as enigmatic as he is important. Born in 1948 he sired only nine foals in his lifetime. One of them, Waseeka's Nocturne, became central to much of Morgan breeding activity in his own time and for generations beyond.

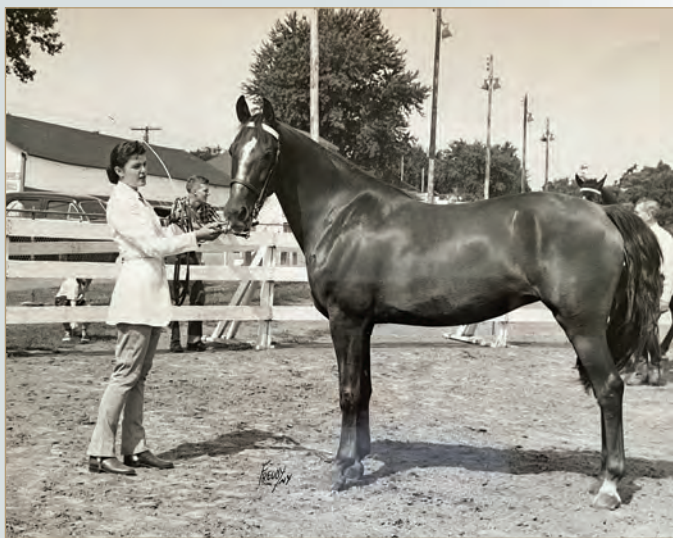
Given the significance of this one son, why is so little known about Starfire? His story is a colorful one.

**I**t would be interesting to know what Ted Davis had on his mind in 1949 when he visited Helen Brunk Greenwalt's High View

Farm in Illinois and selected Starfire, then a yearling, for his herd at Wind-Crest Farm in Windsor, Vermont. Wind-Crest was, of course, already home to Upwey Ben Don, a horse beloved in the Northeast for his conformation, athleticism, and character, but not without detractors due to the fact his paternal grandsire was the Saddlebred Upwey King Peavine, whose blood was accepted before the Morgan registry was closed in 1948. Ben Don and Davis were legends of the Morgan show world in their day and the stallion became the prolific sire of 137 offspring.

Whatever Davis was thinking, he chose a solid pedigree filled with dynastic Midwestern bloodlines. Helen Brunk Greenwalt had gone to extraordinary bother to get Starfire's sire, Senator Graham, first finding and acquiring from Army Remount the Brunk-bred stallion Senator Knox, shipping her treasured mare Fanita to Kansas to be bred to him, then having to reclaim the resulting colt—





**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Upwey Casablanca & Wind-Crest Springtime winning Mare and Foal at The National in 1952 (photo © Ira Hass); Wind-Crest Springtime with Judeen Barwood (photo © Freudy); Springtime's son Noremac Serenader (by Parade) with Royalton Eldon, Judeen and Wendell Barwood up (photos courtesy of Judeen Barwood).

involving sheriffs in the dark of night—after her business partner, Elmer Brown, passed away with Senator Graham still in his possession. Starfire is mostly known from a picture when he won Grand Champion Stallion at the Illinois State Fair as a yearling. If you are familiar with the solid builds of Senator Graham, Flyhawk, and other Brunk-bred Morgans, that photo shows a horse that seems just a little leaner in his muscle groups, particularly in his rather swanny neck. Morgan historian Renee Page, who has firsthand knowledge of many of the Brunk horses, says Starfire's dam, Wanda, "was by Highview King. Mrs. Greenwalt said she was a lovely mare. Highview King was a prominent horse in Mrs. Greenwalt's program. He was a grandson of Jubilee King, and they were gifted performance horses. The Highview King line was more elegant and longer necked. Highview King crossed well with Senator Graham blood. They complemented each other, the Senator Graham line being better off its hocks."

It is apparent that, in Starfire, Ted Davis found a clear outcross stallion to breed to his mares sired by the King Peavine son Upwey King Benn. One of these mares was Upwey Ben Don's full sister, Upwey Benn Quietude. Another was Upwey Casablanca. Both were out of Government bred mares—respectively the dams were Quietude by Troubadour Of Willowmoor and Upwey Cassandra by Mansfield. Six of Starfire's nine foals are from these two mares.


From Upwey Benn Quietude, Starfire sired the 1951 filly Wind-Crest Wunderbar, winner of Two-Year-Old Mares at "The National" in 1953. She became a broodmare at Wind-Crest, but her evident kindness resulted in her being the trusted show ring companion of Davis's daughter Helen. Through Wunderbar the Starfire line bred forward, most notably from her 1959 daughter Windcrest Starlet (by Wind-Crest Sensation by Upwey Ben Don). Starlet was chosen from a pasture at her then-owners, East of Equinox Farm, and brought to Ontario, Canada, by the Hansons of Big Oak Morgan Farm.

The Hanson's son, noted Morgan researcher Calvin Hanson, especially appreciated Starlet for the son she gave them. "We kept one son of [our stallion] Waseeka's Serenade and his name was Big Oak Black Tie and he was out of Windcrest Starlet. He was massive, 15.3, and very broad, very big-bodied, very upright and typical of Starlet's type and frame, with Serenade's action and disposition." Black Tie sired 14 foals registered with AMHA, as well as others registered in the Canadian Livestock Records.

Starlet's full sister from 1960, Windcrest Twinklebar, is most notable as the dam of the 1973 stallion Waseeka's Vanguard (by Windcrest Music Man), a prolific sire of 84. Edward Young came east from Colorado in search of new blood for his Cambridge Morgans. In the 2013 profile "Born of the Mountains Out West" Young was quoted, saying, "When we had a good individual that was not strong in a certain trait, I tried to find an outcross that could consistently produce that trait, and incorporated it into our breeding program. For example, I wanted more refined, prettier heads. The Waseeka genes carried this trait. I went back East and purchased one of their last yearling stallions, Waseeka's Vanguard...He was a small, refined animal with a very pretty head..."







*Get them while you can!*  
**Two of the top winners of 1954**

**Waseeka's Nocturne** } Starfire  
 11181 Upwey Benn Quietude  
 Foaled May 1, 1954  
 Reserve Junior Champion Stallion — National  
 First — 1954 Stallion Foal Class — National  
 In the first two ribbons whenever shown.

**Sterling Velvet** } Monitor  
 07783 Gladys  
 Foaled May 7, 1949  
 Shown in 9 classes this season and in the first 3 ribbons  
 8 times. See her record at the 1954 National. She is a  
 winning Performance Morgan who will continue to improve  
 as she matures.

Also a 9 year bay gelding, not a Morgan, suitable for lady or teenager to ride and drive. Well broken with  
 good manners. Excellent opportunity.

**WASEEKA FARM** ★ ★ **Ashland, Mass., Tr 3-7804**



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Upwey Ben Quietude & her 1954 son Waseeka's Nocturne at the 1954 National Morgan Show (photo © Freudy); The Waseeka Farm ad in *The Morgan Horse* from the same year offering the foal for sale; John Lydon with Waseeka's Nocturne, retirement ceremony, Northampton, Massachusetts (photo © Freudy).

but when crossed with my big, strong-boned horses, I achieved my purpose."

Next from the cross with Upwey Benn Quietude two sons were born, Wind Crest Stardom in 1952 and Wind Crest Stardust in 1953. They did not attract buyers for Ted Davis, even as broke geldings, which is a fateful factor in Starfire's story.

Davis also crossed Starfire on the Upwey King Benn daughter Upwey Casablanca, the most notable offspring from that mating being Wind-Crest Springtime. The filly and her dam won the mare and foal class at The National in 1952. In 1953 Judeen Barwood was in her mid-teens and had a part-bred Morgan as her first horse. "I fell in love with Morgans and I just had to have one. The first Morgan show I went to was The National when it was held at Ted Davis's farm. I visited her and I fell in love. I did all of Springtime's training. The Wind-Crest horses were beautiful, and they were different than many of the other Morgans we had seen in those days." Four of Springtime's six foals—two colts and two fillies—carried Barwood's prefix Noremac (her maiden name Cameron spelled backwards). Of Springtime's son Noremac Serenader (by Parade) Judeen says, "He was a wonderful all-round using horse. We drove him, we rode him, he did everything." Springtime's two daughters continued the line, Noremac Sonnet producing five and Noremac Starlet 11. Casablanca also produced the 1951 gelding Wind Crest Cassman by Starfire.

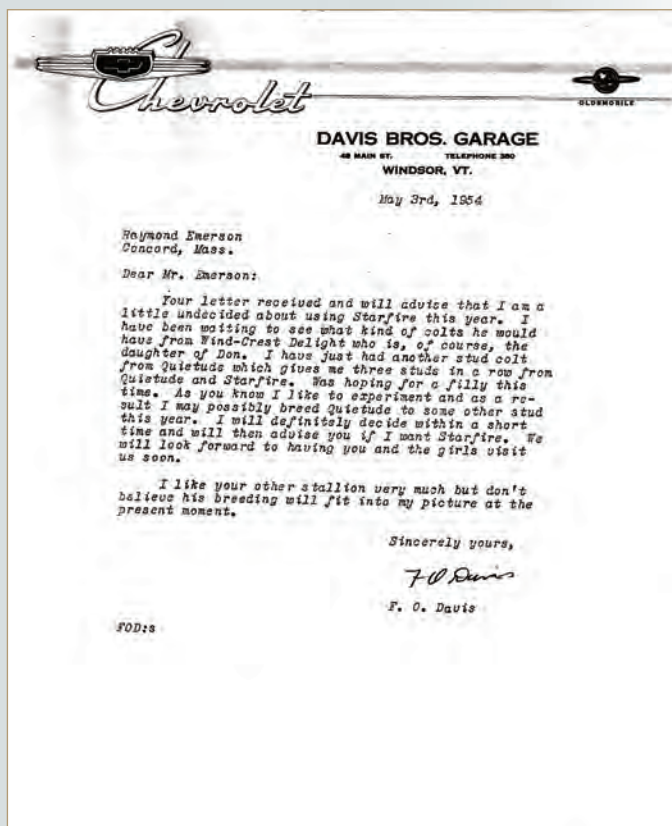
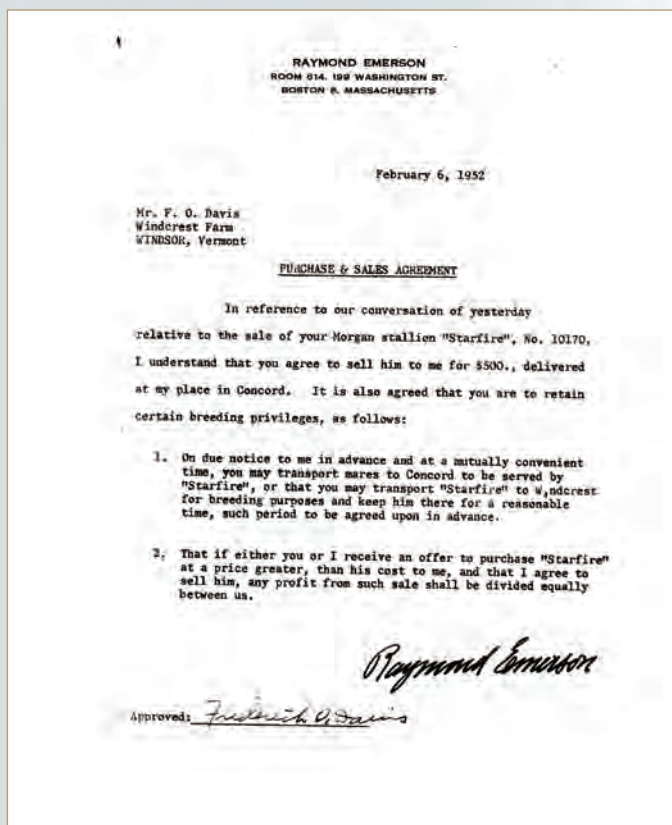
Davis bred one other Upwey King Benn daughter, Maggie Allen, to Starfire, getting the 1952 chestnut gelding Johnny Starfire, who, with rider Dyanne Spatcher, was a presence as a pleasure horse on the Class A circuit and participated in endurance rides.

In the January/February 1978 issue of *The Morgan Horse* an article called "Starfire...Remembered" contains some firsthand knowledge of the horse and his circumstances by author Jordan Denner, about whom more later. Denner tells the story that Col. Raymond Emerson—grandson of poet Ralph Waldo Emerson—was searching for a typey Morgan stallion as a riding horse, and only a riding horse, as he had no interest in breeding or showing. According to Denner, Ruth Dickson, mother of Ruth Orcutt and Anna Ela, told Emerson that Ted Davis had such a stallion and might be willing to sell him.

Ruth Dickson's granddaughter, Nancy Caisse of Townshend Farm, confirms the story, adding some personal color. "The Emersons and Dickson families had houses near each other on Pleasant Bay in Orleans, Massachusetts," Nancy explains. They were the type of family friends who "saw each other at weddings and funerals." Among the close-knit extended families it was Nancy's grandmother who "did everything with Morgans." So she was a natural go-to person for Emerson.

Through the family's friendship Nancy is in possession of the bill of sale written on February 6, 1952 by Emerson to finalize his purchase of Starfire, stating the price of "\$500 delivered to my place in Concord." In it he granted Davis breeding rights stipulating, "you may transport Starfire to Windcrest for breeding purposes and keep him there for a reasonable time..."

Over the decades mystery about Starfire, cloistered from



**ABOVE:** Two documents from the treasure trove in Nancy Caisse's collection, given to her by the Emerson family: Starfire's 1952 bill of sale; correspondence between Ted Davis and Col. Raymond Emerson.

breeding opportunities, has created a legendary status around the Colonel from Concord. Nancy Caisse hopes her recollections will help demystify the man. "He liked stallions, liked the bravado of male horses. He was accomplished as a Colonel, a surveyor, and engineer specializing in land design. All he cared about with the horses was enjoying them. He lived in a beautiful setting at the end of Estabrook Road. You went through his property to get to 1,200 acres known as the Estabrook Woods—now the biggest land conservation near Boston. He loved the land, loved the horses, and he loved riding in those woods. He had two granddaughters and he would get them up and they'd go to the barn by 6:30 in the morning. Riding with his granddaughters was important."

The horse had a rather magical existence in his wooded isolation. "Starfire's pasture went along Estabrook Road," Nancy recalls. "It wasn't a conservation area at that time. It was a big chunk of land that everyone could use. And Starfire would bugle away up and down the fence line when horses came by as riders accessed the trails." The 1978 *TMH* article reports that Emerson delighted in showing his stallion to visitors and encouraged children to draw pictures of the horse.

Two interesting asides about Emerson and his Morgans: First, among the Emerson family papers is the 1950 transfer of ownership of the stallion Rarben (Raragraph x Benita—b. 1935). This means Emerson already owned another stallion of old Brunk breeding when he purchased Starfire. Rarben had been owned earlier by Grace Brunk Woods, who got him from her father J. C. Brunk and brought him east. "He bought the horse my grandmother told him about," Nancy says, "but he already knew the pedigree."

Second, Emerson also received a rather high-profile entreaty to sell his stallion. "Ma [Greenwalt] always kept track of horses she bred who were of specific interest to her for breeding crosses and tried to go after them when the time was right," says Greenwalt's protégé and friend, Mark Staehnke. "That's what she did with Ellen Bar and Ella Bar (dams of Senator Barr, Beamington, Irish Lane, and Irish Breeze), but sometimes it just didn't work so well. She tried hard to get Starfire back, but that went nowhere. I remember her telling me his owner was 'just too ornery.'"

In accordance with the bill of sale, Starfire was transported one time from Concord to Wind-Crest so that Davis could use the services he retained. The photo that opens this article was taken by Nancy Caisse at Davis's farm in 1953. Registry records show the stallion sired two colts born the next year. We know he was there.

When, in the early 1950s, Elizabeth Power was beginning to purchase Morgans for her Waseeka Farm, breeding was not on her mind. Her daughter, Sue Annis, remembers her mother with a driving horse, herself with a horse to ride, but not having a third horse so a guest could come along. In 1954 they sought the advice of John Lydon to help search for a quiet mare for that purpose. Lydon suggested they try to persuade Ted Davis to sell Upwey Benn Quietude. Sue Annis says, "John guaranteed mother she would be a suitable horse for company. We agreed on a price for the mare and Ted [Davis] said 'what about this colt?' He offered him to us for no extra money. At the time bloodlines weren't the selling point. Ted turned the colt out and John said, 'we'll take him.'"





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Jubilee's Star, Starfire's final son and the only offspring not out of a descendant of Upwey King Benn; his line bred on through his daughters. Nashoba Amey (x Ashland Clistina) produced Gaitwood Murren (photo © Jack Schatzberg) and Gaitwood Garmish (photo © Bob Moseder) and UNH Narcissa (x Arissa) produced Highover Narcotic (photo © T. Douglass).

Sue continues, “Mother had absolutely no intention to have a breeding farm. She just wanted to show. We had basically been given this colt, always with the idea we were going to sell him because we had no use for a stallion or a young horse.” The first name submitted to register the colt, Sue relates, was Windcrest Nocturne Of Waseeka. It was rejected, and the second choice was granted—Waseeka's Nocturne.

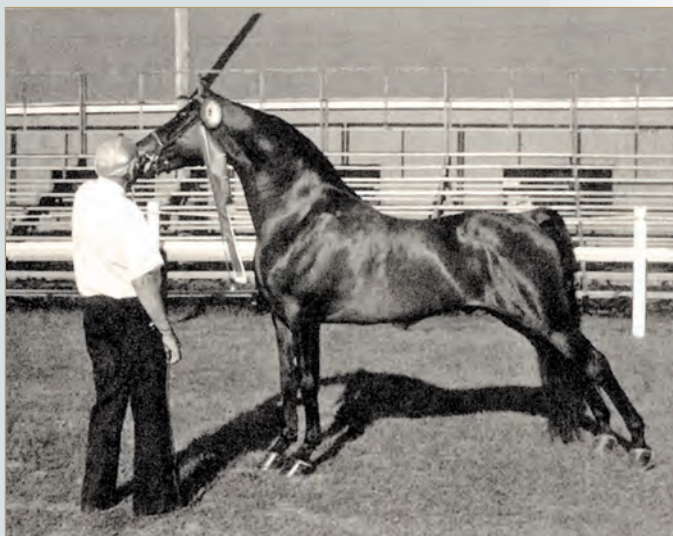
She also confirms a well-worn tale in the Morgan world. When Waseeka's Nocturne was advertised for sale as a weanling, the first to come calling was the breeder of the colt's sire—Helen Brunk Greenwalt. “Mother told John [Lydon] that Mrs. Greenwalt offered her \$500 for Nocturne. John said, ‘if you will sell him for that much, I will buy him myself.’ Mother was looking for a way to get Windcrest Sentimental Lady out of John's hands so I could ride her and that was the unstated trade-off. She kept Nocturne for John. He already loved the horse. He was basically John's horse until the day he died.”

Waseeka's Nocturne, of course, became one of the most influential sires in Morgan history. His legacy is well-recorded in articles, in competition results, and production records. While he is associated with prominent Morgan show horse bloodlines, that his blood is intensely influential in all sport, reining, and endurance disciplines in the breed is easily documented. Nocturne sired 98 foals, among them the similarly influential Waseeka's In Command (x Miller's Adel), the sire of 165.

Sue remembers her mother did in fact pursue an interest in Starfire, whom Mrs. Power first saw after the horse's sale to Col. Emerson. She found a horse that was, “absolutely gorgeous, with a big eye, nice shoulder, level topline, and straight legs. And the kindest disposition you could ever hope for...not super-stretchy, but a good cross for a stretchy mare”—like Upwey Benn Quietude.

The goal to breed back “UBQ” came to naught. Col. Emerson





**TOP TO BOTTOM:** At Waseeka Farm Upwey Benn Quietude produced a daughter by Parade, Waseeka's Thisizit, who, when bred to Waseeka's Nocturne, produced Waseeka's Showtime, making him a double grandson of Upwey Benn Quietude (photos from *The Morgan Horse*).

was firm in his word that the stallion did not stand at stud. "We were basically ejected from the man's property because John Lydon was so persistent in trying to get a breeding. We were pleading and he got upset," Sue recalls. Instead, in 1954, the mare was bred to Parade, producing Waseeka's Thisizit, dam of Waseeka's Showtime. Showtime was sired by Nocturne, so sire and dam, both out of Upwey Benn Quietude, were maternal half-siblings.

Given the rising success of Waseeka's Nocturne another riddle about Ted Davis emerges. Having pioneered a cross, then abandoning it, only to find it had produced a popular young sire, why didn't Ted Davis breed to Waseeka's Nocturne? He did this only once when Nocturne was four, taking the Upwey Ben Don daughter Windcrest Delight to him. The result was the 1959 stallion Windcrest Music Man, a horse who looked like he stepped out of a Jeanne Melin Herrick painting. Music Man was owned by Ernst and Carol Rodenbach, siring foals for their Windy Hill prefix and for other prominent New England breeders including Dr. Bob Orcutt's Burkland Farm. Nancy Caisse has a simple response to the riddle. Foals had begun arriving at Wind-Crest in 1959 by other stallions including the Upwey Ben Don son Windcrest Sensation, and Sealect of Wind-Crest by Pecos. Nancy speculates, Ted Davis had moved on.

Col. Emerson did, however, relent one time, resulting in the production of Starfire's other breeding son. This is where Jordan Denner, author of that 1978 article, "Starfire...Remembered," comes in. Denner's wife, Vicki Ann, and her father, Victor Blanchard, owned the mare Jubilee's Cinderella, sired by Jubilee King, the grand old Brunk-bred stallion who lived part of his productive life with Frances Bryant in Vermont. The mare was out of the government-bred Arissa (Mansfield x Narissa by Troubadour Of Willowmoor). Vicki Ann wanted a foal out of Jubilee's Cinderella and, according to Denner, Emerson "liked my father-in-law so much" he agreed to a mating with Starfire.

Starfire's last foal and only other stallion son, Jubilee's Star,—bay with a distinctive star—was born in March of 1959 and would sire 46 foals. He sold in 1963 to Theodore Stefan of East Pepperell, Massachusetts, siring six foals carrying that owner's Nashoba prefix. The stallion's next owner was Irving Morgan of Gaitwood Morgans in Littleton, Massachusetts—12 foals carry that prefix. At Gaitwood Morgans the Jubilee's Star daughter Nashoba Amey produced two sons that distinguished the line. The Wahlstrom family campaigned the sleek chestnut Gaitwood Murren (by Fairfield's Freedom) to the title of 1982 World Champion Gelding. And Gaitwood Garmish (by Gallant Lee) was a well-known park saddle horse who graduated to be a favorite carriage driving horse for Jeff Morse of Green Meads Farm. The Jubilee's Star daughter UNH Narcissa was a broodmare for Kay Thompson's Highover Morgans in Maine where she produced the hunter pleasure campaigner Highover Narcotic. So, the blood of Starfire is also present in the breed today through his other son. However, Morgan historian Brenda Tippin has found no direct sire line to Jubilee's Star exists.

We have to use our imaginations about what Ted Davis had in mind when he traveled to High View Farm and purchased Starfire from Helen Brunk Greenwalt in 1949. However, the remain-





**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Windcrest Music Man, the only offspring of Waseeka's Nocturne with the Windcrest prefix;  
An aged Starfire with owner Col. Raymond Emerson.

der of Davis's journey with the stallion is documented. We have the record in the Morgan Registry, and we have the evidence of Davis's correspondence. In Starfire, Davis acquired a classic pedigree and an individual of solid Morgan conformation. He crossed him exclusively on the descendants of Upwey King Benn, the son of Upwey King Peavine. "I think he found strength of topline in the stallion's pedigree and refinement in the mares," Nancy Caisse suggests today.

Sue Annis is philosophical about their old family friend's rationale. "Ted Davis was a successful automobile dealer. Don't get me wrong, he loved his Morgans. But he was not prepared to keep horses he couldn't sell. He had three foals by Starfire out of Upwey Benn Quietude and he decided to reduce his inventory."

Davis's correspondence with Emerson is cordial, even fond, referring to the granddaughters with whom the Colonel rode as "your girls." On May 3rd, 1954, Davis wrote, "...I am a little undecided about using Starfire this year. I have been waiting to see what kind of colts he would have from Windcrest's Delight, who is, of course, a daughter of [Upwey Ben] Don. I have just had another stud colt from Quietude which gives me three studs in a row from Quietude and Starfire. Was hoping for a filly this time."

Starfire was, of course, already Emerson's horse. That same year, Upwey Benn Quietude would be sold, intended as a pleasure mount though she produced five with the Waseeka prefix. Her two older gelded sons—Stardom and Stardust—remained at Wind-Crest Farm for some years. Nancy Caisse remembers Davis driving them. "Ted always had a pair and would go on the foliage drives at the Green Mountain Horse Association. I remember him driving those two geldings on his farm. He would have seen it as a way of selling them."

All of this would be simply the common story of breeding expectations unfulfilled. Except for the fact the 1954 colt from Upwey Benn Quietude, referenced in the letter quoted above, was Waseeka's

Nocturne. Having brought Starfire back to Wind-Crest in 1953, breeding and then selling Upwey Benn Quietude the next year with her colt, Davis gave the Morgan world a horse that would advance the efforts of breeders well into the future. But it was Elizabeth Power whose prefix would dominate so many pedigrees as a result of naming, owning, and perpetuating the blood of Waseeka's Nocturne.

As for Starfire, his name would become something of a Morgan enigma. ■

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