



Visiting

Meeting Morgan horses at home creates memories of a lifetime.

By Denny Emerson

The chances are good that for the typical owner of a Morgan farm there's a day to day routine that makes living and working there seem normal. But I can promise you this, that in the imaginings of many Morgan fans, those owners live in a magical kingdom as bright as Disney World. If yours is a farm that encourages visitors, the chance to meet your Morgans becomes the stuff that dreams are made of.

When I had just turned 15 in 1956 my parents bought me my first Morgan, a nine-year-old chestnut gelding named Lippitt Sandy. I already knew about the Green Mountain Stock Farm where Sandy had been foaled from reading *The Morgan Horse* magazine, and I desperately wanted to see the farm and meet all those famous horses.

My mother called the farm to arrange a visit and during spring vacation in April of 1957, she drove me the 115 miles north, up old Route 5 from Greenfield, Massachusetts, through the Vermont towns of Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, and Windsor, then northwest over through Woodstock, Bethel, and into Randolph.

If you think this was just a ho-hum moment you don't know how 15-year-old horse crazy kids function. These were horses I had read about in a magazine. They were rock stars and it was like seeing Hollywood for the first time. It didn't matter that it was a bleak, chilly April day in mud season. Farm manager Jack Esser, trainer Art Titus, and staff members Otis Locke and Kneeland

Olmstead were friendly. They didn't treat us like interruptions to their day, but took the time to show us the broodmares, last summer's foals, and the handsome stallions. After that we went up the hill to the farm's own sugar house where they were boiling sap, and they gave me a tiny sample of golden maple syrup with a Lippitt Morgan label on the bottle.

That night we stayed at the Woodstock Inn and the next day we visited two more Morgan farms, Dana Wingate Kelley's Justine Morgan Farm and Mrs. Frances Bryant's Serenity Farm. It was like being transported into another world.

In the fall of 1957 my parents bought a rundown 235-acre farm in South Reading, Vermont, and in the summer of 1958, when I was about to turn 17, I found myself living in what was then "Morgan Central," the area around Woodstock and Windsor, Vermont. If Elvis Presley was the "King of Rock 'n' Roll" in 1958, the Morgan world had its own king in those times, a gorgeous dark brown stallion named Upwey Ben Don.

It turned out that my friend, Ted Niboli, knew Ted Davis, the owner of Wind-Crest Farm in Windsor, and I can remember to this day seeing Ted Davis leading Ben Don out of the red barn into the dooryard and watching the stallion arch his neck and scream at the mares in the nearby paddocks. I had watched this magnificent creature win classes at The National Morgan Horse Show in Northampton, Massachusetts, the year before and now here I was

ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): Denny's road crew visiting East Of Equinox Farm, left to right, Jeannine Krause Meyers, Ted Niboli, Barb Ackley, Jim Fisher, Dina Blazensky, Judy Cameron Barwood and Ivan Beattie; Jane Pietenpol hosted a local camera club at her Mossrose Morgans in Wisconsin (photos courtesy Denny Emerson, Jane Pietenpol).



LEFT TO RIGHT: Young people meet Morgan horses at the University Of Vermont Morgan Horse Farm and at Ledyard Company LLC
(photos © Margot Smithson for the UVM Morgan Horse Farm, Ashleigh Wood).

standing close enough to reach out and stroke his neck.

The actual mechanics of arranging a farm tour begin with asking whether visitors are welcome and if so, when? Be aware that farms have chore times in the mornings and evenings and don't simply assume that it's OK to drop by without making an appointment. In recent years I've been part of a small group of old friends who, together, have visited ten different Morgan farms. Some of them, like the University of Vermont Farm in Weybridge, are set up specifically to accommodate visitors, even by the busload, while others are small, private farms where the "staff" is also the owner.

When we go on trips we try to fit everyone into one car, and while it changes from time to time, our group usually consists of Judy Barwood, Ted Niboli, Jeanine Myers, and myself. We have visited UVM, Nancy Caisse at Townshend Farm, Josh and Megan Merritt at Meadowmere, Anna Smith at Smith Fields Morgans, Joy Smith's Weathermont Farm, Peggy Alderman at Salem Farm, Ivan

Beattie at East of Equinox Farm, the Chickerings of Meadowair, Margaret Gladstone at Newmont Morgans, and the Sogoloffs at Cedar Spring. Some places have stallions at stud, some specialize in training, others might have a couple of broodmares and perhaps a foal or two for sale. It ranges all over the lot.

Right now, in 2022, there are Morgan farms all across America and there are other farms in England, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere around the globe, many of which will let you come see their Morgans. Do it! Don't be intimidated to the point that you don't dare ask. Make an adventure out of it. Spend a few days on a road trip. Sure, you've seen the photos in *The Morgan Horse* magazine, and yes, you watched them win in Oklahoma or show in Northampton, but those people are still just people and most of them will be as nice to you today as all those Morgan lovers were to me 65 years ago. Those memories are there to be made. Be bold enough to email or pick up the phone. Start planning your adventures. ■

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