



~ HISTORY LESSON ~

THE ORCUTT FAMILY MORGAN LEGACY

Part 7: Burkland Today

By Brenda L. Tippin

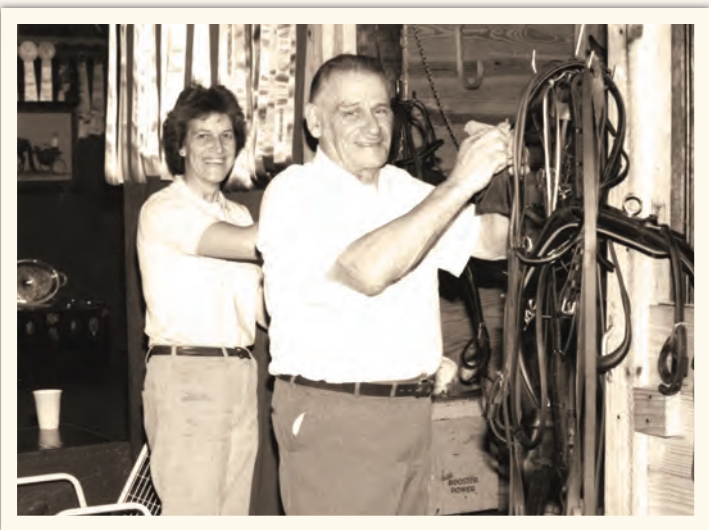
Dr. Samuel Robert Orcutt, known fondly as “Dr. Bob,” spent his entire life of 93 years with Morgan horses, building on the traditions of generations of Orcutt family breeding. Pat Tataronis was also a major part of the legendary Burkland team, and the influence of breeding, training, and showing Morgans remains strong today.

BURKLAND FARM, GROWING YEARS

Dr. Bob and his wife, Phyllis, continued to build steadily on the Or-

cutt legacy already established. Two of Vigilda Burkland’s daughters in particular, Vigilda Jane (by Ulendon) foaled in 1951 and Betty Burkland (by Vigil Day) foaled in 1953, would become cornerstone broodmares in the continued breeding program, while Gay Dancer, great-grandson of Vigilda Burkland, continued his strong influence, both as a sire and in the show ring. Dr. Bob thrived on endless work and impossibly long hours, getting up long before dawn to train and work the horses. After lunch he would go out on his vet calls, frequently putting in another 12 hours, not returning home until

ABOVE: Dr. Bob and Phyllis Orcutt with children Helen, Mary Jane, and Robert mounted on Havolyn Dancer; **INSET:** (L to R) Lief and Helen Noble, Mary Jane and Peter Wahl, Josh and Caleb Noble, with Fred Nava, at the induction of Dr. Bob Orcutt and Pat Tataronis Orcutt into the New England Morgan Horse Show Hall of Fame in 2006 (photos © Orcutt Family Collection, Shane Shiflet).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Orcutt children, Robert, Mary Jane, and Helen Orcutt, riding offspring of Vigilda Burkland: Vigildendon, Vigilda Jane, and Betty Burkland; Pat Tat and Dr. Bob; The Orcutt vets who gave their initials to SRH Veterinary Service: Helen, Dr. S. Robert, and Robert; Larry Wahl and Mary Jane [Orcutt] Wahl being inducted into the Deerfield Fair Horse Show Hall of Fame in 2023, Richard Pitman presenting (photos © B. Stone, Jon McCarthy).

midnight. However, his enthusiasm was contagious, with a son and a daughter joining him in the veterinary practice and another daughter continuing a lifelong involvement in the Morgan show world.

In hiring Pat Tataronis, Dr. Bob found an able assistant. “Pat Tat,” as she became known, was beloved both by Dr. Bob’s family and the Morgan community in general. She was pure magic with the horses, always seeming to know exactly how to handle a difficult youngster and make it look easy. It was a rare feat to beat her in the show ring, and she opened new doors for many women who sought to follow her example as a professional horsewoman. Pat was also an able assistant for Dr. Bob in the veterinary practice.

THE NEXT GENERATION

The Orcutt’s son, Robert, was actively involved in training and showing Morgans, both under saddle and in harness, as he grew up. He recalls, “Growing up, I did barn chores, and I used to ride and drive quite a bit. But that all stopped when I went to vet school.

Probably the thing I got to see more often was that he was one of the few vets...doing standing castrations on horses. He was doing that before I went to vet school; some people didn’t always do that. A lot of horses would come in for wound repairs and he’d ask me to hold the light up for him. If I wasn’t doing it right, he’d say, ‘Hold the light so I can see, not so you can see.’

“He was always an advocate of having horses that were being treated being properly restrained, so you were less apt to get injured in the process,” Robert adds. “I, probably, during my vet career, strayed a bit from that, and suffered a few injuries probably as a result of it. He was pretty rigid about that. He wouldn’t work on a horse unless the owner allowed him to restrain it. I oftentimes tried to wing it, without restraining the horse, and got at least one broken leg as a result of it.”

Robert attended the Governor Dummer Academy (now known simply as The Governor’s Academy), an independent day and boarding school, in Byfield, Massachusetts for four years,

from ninth through 12th grades. It is the oldest boarding school in New England, founded in 1763, located on a 456-acre campus. He graduated *cum laude*, and then attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Biology, graduating *magna cum laude*. While at Brown, Robert was nominated as a Woodrow Wilson Scholar and became a member of both Phi Beta Kappa—the oldest and most prestigious honor society in the United States, founded in 1776—and Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Honor Society that was founded in 1886. Robert went on to earn his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, with Distinction, from Cornell University's New York State Veterinary College, receiving the Jane Miller Award for physiology and both the Cornell University and Pfizer Awards for Large Animal Medicine. There he was inducted into both The Society of Phi Zeta—the only honor society for veterinary medicine in the United States, established in 1925—and The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, founded in 1897 to recognize superior scholarship. He also completed the Tufts University Chiropractic School of Medicine training course. Robert returned to Massachusetts in 1974 after working for four years in the Department of Large Animal Medicine, Obstetrics, and Surgery at New York State Veterinary College and three years as a staff veterinarian in Granby, Connecticut, at Salmon Brook Veterinary Hospital for Drs. Milkey and Davis.

Meanwhile, Mary Jane [Orcutt Wahl], the Orcutt's eldest daughter, continued her involvement with Morgan shows. She recalls riding in the competition called the Green Meads Davidson in Quentin, Pennsylvania, saying "I rode my junior exhibitor park horse, Bold Venture, against Mike Goebig. What a class! The ring there and the grounds were great. Once I got married, I did a little showing. In the early 1970s, I started being a horse show secretary with Art and Jeanette Dennis (both have passed away), who did the North Shore shows. I also started with the New England Arabian Association. Then I got connected with longtime horse steward and judge [the late] Helen Fenton—she managed a bunch of horse shows and worked at Brooks Academy. I've been doing horse shows steadily since 2000. I am the head secretary for four shows a year."

Mary Jane's husband, Larry Wahl, was a horse show ringmaster from 1970 to 2011 and paddock announcer for 15 years at the New England Morgan Regional Horse Show. He has worked for many years in these roles at both U. S. Arabian Nationals and Morgan Grand National. Mary Jane adds, "He was fire chief here in town; he would go to the horse shows to get a break. He had a pretty full life there for a while. I met Larry at the New England Horsemen's Council banquet in 1965. We've been married for 55 years. Larry's dad had a track on his farm in Evans City, Pennsylvania, and he helped jog racehorses boarded there."

Mary Jane continues, "I still have the connection with the horses, but I don't think I've ridden in 15 years. The last time I showed, I drove. I miss it when I'm at New England, when I'm on the grounds there. It's like coming into a warm house. It still feels like home." Mary Jane and Larry continue to work at their business, Wahl to Wahl Sound, with the help of their son, Peter, daughter-in-law, Cathy, and grandsons, Ethan and Trevor.

Dr. Bob and Phyllis's youngest daughter Helen remembers

how she met her husband, Leif Noble, "Leif and I met through Morgan horses as well. I was working at Stonecroft farm in Dalton, Pennsylvania, owned by Mary Dewitt. Johnny Lydon was the trainer. I was getting my residency in Pennsylvania in order to get into veterinary school. Leif was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island, in the Navy, and had just bought a black Fiat and drove to Pennsylvania to visit old friends as he had lived with his brother Eric at the farm. I had known who Eric was from the horse shows, but I had never met Leif. Johnny Lydon always bought horses from Leif's parents at Just a Nod Farm. The rest is history. We got married August 14, 1976, and I started veterinary school on August 28. It was just like the other family weddings. The Noble family had to have the wedding be planned between horse shows. Our wedding was the week before the Mid-Atlantic Morgan horse show. While picking up things at the horse show from my dad after the wedding, I drove Phyllistines Encore and won the Ladies Park Harness class. As I did my victory pass, they played 'Here Comes the Bride.' I must say, that was pretty awesome."

Helen earned her undergraduate degree in biology from Suffolk University, graduating *summa cum laude*. She then earned her VMD degree from the Veterinary College at University of Pennsylvania, graduating *magna cum laude*. Although she works extensively in all aspects of medical care, for both large and small animals, her primary focus is equine reproduction. This interest began when she was working at Hanover Shoe Farm, the well-known Standardbred breeding operation, while in veterinary school. Next, Helen worked collecting studs for the famous Hamilton Farm and was a member of the research team which developed the Equitainer.

"A lot of things have changed with breeding horses," Helen remembers. "It used to be live cover, then it was artificial insemination. Cooled semen came along in the 1980s and was brought in by the husband of one of our clients. Meg Hamilton's husband, Diarmaid Douglas-Hamilton, was a scientist. He is the one who learned that by cooling semen, you could keep it longer. And you wouldn't have to ship in mares from all over. My father and I happened to be doing the breeding work for Hamilton Farm. Through that, my name was put on papers. It was just being in the right place at the right time."

Helen has also done missionary work in the Philippines and in India, through the Christian Veterinary Mission. This organization enables professional veterinarians to help spread the gospel around the world. She has served on their board of advisors and considers the work an important part of her life.

Helen and Leif's two sons, Joshua and Caleb, took an early interest in the Orcutt family farm at Burkland, were able to learn from their grandfather, and are primary in continuing the Burkland breeding legacy today.

Dr. Bob was named to AMHA's Hall of Fame in 1986. Around the same time in the late 1980s, Phyllis suffered a stroke. "Dad took care of mom for seven years," Helen recalls. Phyllis passed away in 1994.

THE LEGACY OF PAT TATARONIS

Like many young women inexplicably born with a natural love of horses, Pat Tataronis was one who strongly believed in making her



BURKLAND STALLIONS, THE MIDDLE YEARS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Gay Dancer straddled the generations as one of Dr. Bob's earliest show horses and then the primary sire for Burkland Farm; Windy Hill Maestro; Glenallen's Nelson D with Mark Hanna up; and Tedwin Taurean (photos © J. Livingston, Warren Patriquin, Howard Schatzberg).

dreams a reality. While she was in high school, she got a job at a polo club, not for the purpose of earning money but for the fact it would give her the opportunity to ride a lot of horses, and riding horses was what she wanted to do more than anything. Fate was kind to Pat when she had the opportunity to work with the beautiful chestnut Morgan stallion Saracen (Upwey King Benn x Arissa [Mansfield x Narissa]), bred by Martha Van Buskirk. The cocky teenager quickly took the Morgan show world by storm, beating the likes of Johnny Lydon, Whitey Fenton, and Dr. Bob, who promptly solved that issue by hiring her as an assistant.

Dr. Bob was a workaholic who seemed to thrive on the most impossible schedule of working down to midnight, and Pat was up for that. She could handle the most difficult horses and win with them, as well as ably assist with complicated veterinary cases.

In the show ring, she continued to be unbeatable, making a striking team with the beautiful Vigilendon (Ulendon x Vigilda

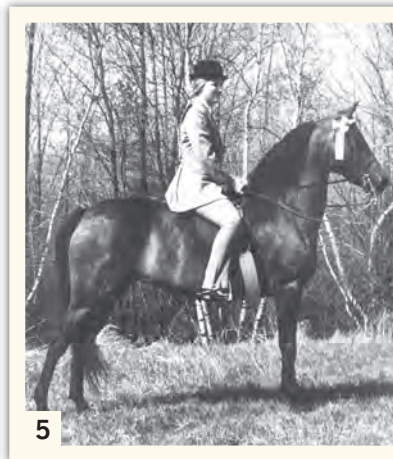
Burkland), also competing with him in the Green Mountain Horse Association 100-Mile Ride in South Woodstock, Vermont, where she was a lifelong member. Pat was also a recognized judge of horse shows and easily handled officiating at top shows all over the United States, as well as Europe.

Pat especially loved kids and willingly taught them everything she knew about training and handling Morgans. Helen remembers, "Pat always made sure the boys had a horse to show during the summer."

Josh adds, "She's the reason we're still doing what we're doing. Pat always found us a horse to show and carted us around to all of the shows. Pat and I butted heads often, but she was my biggest advocate when push came to shove."

Caleb recalls, "My grandfather and Pat were avid supporters of the GMHA 100-Mile Ride. They competed for many years and always wore bib numbers 1 and 2. That was a big deal for them

VIGILDA JANE FAMILY



The mare (1), pictured at two years of age with Mary Jane aboard, was an important breeding daughter of Vigilda Burkland. She was dam of show horses Command Performance (2), shown with Helen riding, and Bold Venture shown here as a weanling with Pat Tataronis (3) and with Mary Jane in the irons (4); Burkland Lady Jane with Helen (5); Vigilda Jane with her 1960 daughter Fashion Plate (6); Two Broodmare Hall of Fame mares descend directly from Fashion Plate. They are Mantic Mardi Gras (7) (pictured with her 2010 filly Causing Chaos, who went on to be named 2012 and 2013 World Champion Mare) and Mardi Gras's daughter, Long Acres Broadway (8). All of Vigilda Jane's offspring listed here were sired by Gay Dancer (photos © Warren Patriquin, Morris, Howard Schatzberg).

every Labor Day weekend. They enjoyed showing horses, but they also loved competitive trail rides—it was not always about the show ring.”

Many years later, in 2003, Dr. Bob married again, this time to his long-time assistant, Pat Tataronis. Pat passed away not long after in August 2005, following a long battle with ovarian cancer. Dr. Bob passed away the next spring in April 2006, at the age of 93.

Following her death, the Ladies English Pleasure Championship at New England was established in her honor, at which time Morgan trainer Bonnie Sogoloff offered the following wonderful tribute. “Pat Tataronis was the first professional horsewoman I ever knew. As a matter of fact, at that time I didn’t even know one could be a professional horsewoman. In a way, Pat broke a lot of barriers for those women who tried to follow her example. She was formidable in the show ring and basically couldn’t be beaten. When Pat was around, we were all looking at a red ribbon because she had the blue. But more important than all those blue ribbons was her supreme confidence in what she did. Pat Tataronis was proof positive that a woman could do anything with a horse that a man could—and that wasn’t common thinking in the 1960s. All of us lady horse trainers should bow down to Pat, because in a large part we have to thank her for our careers.”

Pat earned AMHA’s Golden Reins award in 2003, and Dr. Bob was named as a recipient in 2005. Dr. Bob and Pat were also the inaugural members named to the Northampton Horsemen’s Hall of Fame in 2006. At the time of her passing, Pat was President of the North Shore Horseman’s Association.

SRH VETERINARY SERVICES

When Robert came home in 1974, he initially started his own practice a few miles away in Topsfield, Massachusetts. Helen began working with her father, who had started his practice in 1951. In 1987, Robert asked his father and sister to join him in Topsfield and the two practices merged into Combined Veterinary Services. In 1991, Robert and Helen purchased property in Ipswich, where the large and small animal hospitals are currently located, and they adopted the name SRH Veterinary Services. Helen smiles, “I always wanted to practice with my brother.” The initials SRH stood for Samuel, Robert, and Helen, a unique family partnership between father, son, and daughter, which has continued for more than 70 years. Both Robert and Helen continue to work with all kinds of large and small animals, but Helen’s specialty is still equine reproduction while Robert focuses on equine sports medicine. He especially enjoys the challenge of diagnosing difficult lameness cases.

BURKLAND, THE MIDDLE YEARS

The important early components of the Burkland program were detailed in “The Orcutt Family Morgan Legacy, Part 6,” published in the October 2023 issue of *The Morgan Horse*. Since its establishment, Burkland Farm has bred more than 85 registered Morgans, with more than 70 bearing the Burkland prefix, first used in 1964. Although a small operation today, Dr. Bob’s heirs continue the prefix, with 11 Morgans currently residing at the Rowley, Massachusetts, homestead.

Following Gay Dancer, many different stallions were used throughout the years, such as Glenallen’s Nelson D (Ulendon x Tinkerbell); Serenity Fleetwind (Fleetwing x June Mischief); Windy Hill Maestro (Windcrest Music Man x Irish Velvet); Gladgay’s Excalibur (Immortal Command x Glory Command); Tedwin Taurean (Tedwin Topic x Spenmay Gay Society); and Immortal Command (Waseeka’s In Command x UVM Vision), to name a few. Dr. Bob was a strong believer in continuing to improve the lines they had in order to breed the best horses possible.

During this era, Burkland brought in some new mares. Bradvue’s First Lady (Legacys Viking x Indurlea), tracing her sireline through Orcland Leader, was added in 1992 and produced five Burkland foals. Troutbrook Alexis (Troutbrook Centaur x Rejoice Command), added in 1991, produced four Burkland foals including Burkland Taurie-Adora, foaled in 1998, and still a family favorite. Another daughter, Burkland Fancy Flight (by CKH Master Of The Game), foaled in 1997, was also retained and produced nine Burkland foals.

GAY DANCER

(Havolyn Dancer x Deerfield Leading Lady)

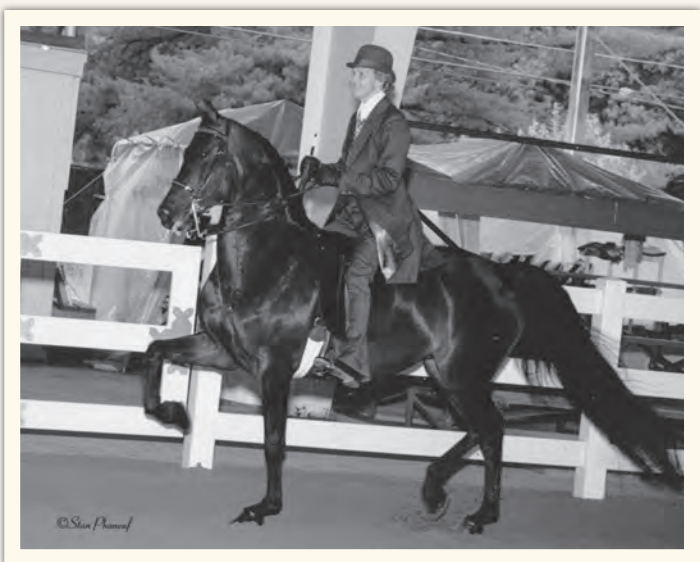
The blood of Gay Dancer and Vigilda Jane continued to be a strong influence for Burkland Farm for many years, and this cross proved to be an especially golden one. Gay Dancer also played a key role for all of Dr. Bob’s growing children. Helen remembers “He was park harness champion, and I used to ride him bareback after the class, and one day I shook hands with James Cagney.”

VIGILDA JANE

(Ulendon x Vigilda Burkland)

Vigilda Jane was a small, typey dark brown mare marked with a star, snip, and right front coronet, bred by Dr. Bob Orcutt and foaled in 1951. Of the legendary cross between Ulendon and Vigilda Burkland, she was a full sister of Orcland Leader, Orcland Vigildon, and Vigilendon, all great show horses. Vigilda Jane was Mary Jane’s horse, whom she learned to ride on, and she showed her regularly. Vigilda Jane also went on to become an important broodmare for Burkland Farm. She was the dam of eight foals, including Gay Sensation, Bold Venture, Fashion Plate, Command Performance, and Burkland Lady Jane, all by Gay Dancer.

It is worth mentioning that not only was Vigilda Jane a daughter of the legendary mare Vigilda Burkland, bred by Dr. Bob’s father, Frank Orcutt, but through her tail female line she represented an unbroken line of five generations of Orcutt-bred mares, tracing back through the original mare Laura, bred by Dr. Bob’s grandfather, Harrison Orcutt, and foaled in 1880. This exceedingly remarkable mare line survives today and, in fact, is responsible for at least two AMHA Broodmare Hall of Fame mares who trace their tail female line back through Vigilda Jane. These are Mantic Mardi Gras (Nobility x Mantic Monique [Mantic Peter Frost x Porvenir Glamor Girl]) and her daughter, Long Acres Broadway (by Tug Hill Whamunion). It is one of three tail female lines tracing through Laura, whose female line traced ultimately to a daughter of Billy Root (Sherman Morgan x mare by Justin Morgan), and who was responsible for the most tail female lines in the entire Broodmare Hall of Fame list.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Betty Burkland, the other important breeding daughter of Vigilda Burkland, kept by Dr. Bob and Phyllis, is the grandam of Burkland Rafinette (who has her own section in this article); Burkland Taurie-Adora, shown by Pat Tataronis, was the result of introducing new blood to the Burkland herd (photos © A. C. Drowne, Stan Phaneuf).

Gay Sensation

(Gay Dancer x Vigilda Jane)

The first foal of Vigilda Jane, foaled in 1958, Gay Sensation was a handsome chestnut colt bred by Dr. Bob and marked with a stripe on the face. At the National Morgan Show that year, he won the Stallion Foal class and was shown with his mother for the Broodmare with 1958 Foal, class which they also won. He was later gelded, and owned by Helen.

Bold Venture

(Gay Dancer x Vigilda Jane)

Vigilda Jane's second foal, Bold Venture, was a brown colt bred by Dr. Bob and foaled in 1959, marked with a star, snip, and right hind pastern. Bold Venture won the Stallion Foals class at the 1959 National Morgan Show and showed with his mother, helping her to win the Broodmare and Foal class for the second year straight. Mary Jane remembers riding Bold Venture in park saddle classes when she was a junior exhibitor.

Fashion Plate

(Gay Dancer x Vigilda Jane)

Foaled in 1960, and bred by Mary Jane, Fashion Plate was Vigilda Jane's first daughter, who herself became the dam of eight foals. She helped her mother win the Broodmare and Foal class at the Morgan National for the third straight year, and won reserve for the Mare Foals class. She was later sold, passing through several owners. It is through her line that the Broodmare Hall of Fame mares Mantic Mardi Gras and Long Acres Broadway trace, through her daughter Porvenir Glamor Girl (by Windcrest Bob B).

Command Performance

(Gay Dancer x Vigilda Jane)

A brown stallion marked with a star, Command Performance was bred by Mary Jane and foaled in 1962. He was later owned by Helen who remarked about his versatility, "You could show him all summer, then after show season you could shorten up his feet and trail ride him. Didn't matter. And he beat the pants off everybody. In 1971, he was undefeated. He would still be a park horse today." Command Performance went on to sire 18 offspring, including seven colts and 11 fillies.

Burkland Lady Jane

(Gay Dancer x Vigilda Jane)

A brown mare bred by Dr. Bob and Phyllis, Burkland Lady Jane was foaled in 1964 and became the first to bear the Burkland prefix. The last of the Gay Dancer cross, she was transferred to Mary Jane as a four-year-old and went on to become the dam of four Burkland foals.

BETTY BURKLAND

(Vigil Day x Vigilda Burkland)

A lovely chestnut daughter of Vigilda Burkland, bred by Dr. Bob and Phyllis, and foaled in 1953, Betty Burkland was especially important in continuing the Burkland breeding program. Betty Burkland had a remarkable pedigree tracing to the very oldest roots of classic early Vermont Morgan breeders on every single line. Her sire, Vigil Day, was a son of Vigilant (Welcome x Lucille) out of Sirenelle (Sir Ethan Allen x Lucinne). The lines were repeated on her dam's side as Vigilda Burkland was a daughter of Vigilant and out of Lucinne. She represented six solid generations of Orcutt breeding on both sides of her sire and dam's pedigrees. Betty Burkland was the dam of 10

BURKLAND RAFINETTE FAMILY



Burkland Rafinette (1) was arguably the most productive mare of Dr. Bob's final period of breeding Burkland-prefixed foals. She was the dam of world, Grand National, and regional champions including Burkland Nicholas (2), shown with Judy Nason, Burkland Elegant Lady (3), shown with Larry Bolen, (both by Windy Hill Maestro), Burkland Rafinesque (4) (by Gladgay's Excalibur), shown with Ann Anderson, and Burkland Commanderette (5) (by Salem Command), shown with Pat Tataronis, Stephen Kinney, and Gail and Ron White (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Debbie Uecker-Keough).

foals. Of these, her first foal, the brown filly Rafinette by Rafinesque (Ulendon x Tinkerbell) was chosen to retain for breeding. Rafinette produced five foals, and they kept the last one, Burkland Rafinette.

BURKLAND RAFINETTE (Serenity Fleetwind x Rafinette)

A brown mare marked with a small irregular star and small snip, bred by Dr. Bob and Phyllis, and foaled in 1974. Of Burkland Rafinette, Josh recalled, "She produced a lot of horses in the mid-1980s through the '90s, and she had a lot of babies that won, including Burkland Nicholas, Burkland Specialty, Burkland Rafinesque, Burkland Elegant Lady, Burkland Commanderette, and Progress Report."

Burkland Rafinette established a dynasty of successful show horses herself, as the dam of 13 foals. Burkland Nicholas, Burkland Symphony, Burkland Elegant Lady, and Burkland Rhapsody

were all full siblings by Windy Hill Maestro (Windcrest Music Man x Irish Velvet) and all were widely shown, winning many championships and titles for a number of owners. Nicholas, who was Western Pleasure Reserve World Champion in 1997 and '98, was the sire of 29 offspring and his full sister, Burkland Elegant Lady held multiple Grand National titles in Western pleasure ladies and amateur competition. Burkland Rafinesque (by Gladgay's Excalibur) held multiple Grand National and world titles in pleasure and classic pleasure driving. Burkland Rhapsody, a bay mare marked with a star and snip foaled in 1994, was kept, and among her victories she won the Broodmare and Foal class at the New England Morgan Horse Show with her 2003 filly, Burkland SuiteInspiration (by Suite After). SuiteInspiration, bred by Dr. Bob and Pat, was the last of this famous mare line to be bred at Burkland Farm, although the line still survives through mares Burkland has sold.

BURKLAND TAURIE-ADORA

(Tedwin Taurean x Troutbrook Alexis)

A lovely brown mare with no white markings, foaled in 1998, “Taurie” is a daughter of Tedwin Taurean and out of Troutbrook Alexis, bred by Dr. Bob and Pat Tataronis. Tedwin Taurean was a son of Tedwin Topic out of the Gay Dancer daughter Spenmay Gay Society (x Double J Society Miss). Through this line she traces twice to Vigilda Burkland. Caleb says, “She’s the last one still alive that my grandfather and Pat bred. She’s always just been really pretty, and I showed her as a junior exhibitor. She’s the last horse that Pat showed.”

BURKLAND TODAY

Today, Burkland continues as a breeding farm, run by Helen and Leif’s sons, Joshua and Caleb Noble, and their wives, with their kids helping out too. Under their shared efforts the Burkland program is thriving with new, additional bloodstock. “My grandfather was a big believer in always trying to improve,” Josh says. “He emphasized the importance of being willing to change. It’s using the knowledge of the people who came before you, but also incorporating what’s new. The goal is continuing to breed quality—it’s all about quality.”

STONECROFT FLAMMABLE

(Stonecroft Trilogy x Sizzle)

An elegant brown mare with no white markings, Flammable was bred by Stonecroft Farm and foaled in 2006. After winning multiple National and world champion titles, she was purchased for the Burkland breeding program in 2012. She produced four foals, but sadly had to be put down after her 2018 filly.

WVS CAMMANDING KNIGHT

(Immortal Command x Sumadia)

A striking black stallion marked with a star and right hind coronet, WVS Cammanding Knight was bred by Richard and Patricia Pitman of Pitman Old Centre Farm and foaled in 2009. Helen purchased him in 2017. He is especially rich in lines to old government breeding and carries more than 80 crosses to the great mare Artemisia (bred by Dr. Bob’s father, Frank Orcutt) as well as four lines to Vigilda Burkland.

GRAND CRU MARGAUX

(Stonecroft Trilogy x Sizzle)

A full sister to Stonecroft Flammable, Grand Cru Margaux is a lovely brown mare with no white markings, bred by Cheri Barber, and foaled in 2008. Burkland leased her for their breeding program beginning in 2017, and purchased her in 2018. She has produced three foals so far, including Burkland Sweet Escape and Burkland Tough Enough.

Burkland Sweet Escape

(Astronomicallee x Grand Cru Margaux)

A lovely black filly marked with a star, Burkland Sweet Escape was bred by Burkland Farm and foaled in 2018. She won Junior Champion Mare and Reserve Grand Champion Mare at the 2019 New England Morgan Show. She was sold later that year to Joanna Hender and Megan Gallagher.

Burkland Tough Enough

(No Contest GCH x Grand Cru Margaux)

A bay stallion marked with a star, Burkland Tough Enough was bred by Burkland Farm and foaled in 2020. He was sold as a yearling, passing through several owners, and is currently owned by 41 Degree Investments LLC in Goshen, Indiana. He won Reserve World Champion Junior Stallion in 2022. Josh remarks, “He’s probably the nicest foal we’ve had in a long time; even that I can remember Gramp having. He’s got a lot of quality, a lot of presence.”

BURKLAND TIGER KING

(Saralin Seabourn x With Every Breath)

A chestnut gelding marked with a large blaze scattered with multiple dark spots and covering both nostrils, a disconnected star over the left eye, both hind stockings, right fore sock, and left fore fetlock extending to sock in rear, Burkland Tiger King was bred by John Surprenant and Charleen McCarthy, and foaled on the property of Burkland Farm in 2020. He has nine crosses to Vigilda Burkland, as well as many other lines to early Orcutt breeding woven into his pedigree. Josh feels he is one his grandfather really would have liked. “He’s super athletic and so flashy.” Tiger King was sold earlier this year (2023) to Gregory Durant.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Burkland Farm today is a family affair. Josh earned his business degree at Kentucky Wesleyan College and worked for top Saddlebred farms before returning to Burkland Farm. After Pat passed away, he spent many enjoyable evenings talking into the late hours of the night with his grandfather, Dr. Bob, about judging, training techniques, and breeding. When his grandfather passed away in 2006, Josh assumed responsibility for the farm.

Caleb earned Bachelor of Science degrees in both Television Studies and Broadcast Journalism from Lyndon State College and has a Master of Arts Certificate in radio and television to teach high school classes. He spent six years as Executive Director of Media for Newbury Media in the town of Newbury, Massachusetts. In addition to his work at Burkland, he runs Noblesteed Productions, a high-quality video production company, and performs as a farrier for Burkland and many other farms.

Like their parents, Josh and Caleb met their wives through the New England Morgan Horse Show. Melanie, Josh’s wife, recalls, “I first met Josh through Caleb in 1999 when I was riding with John Bennett Stables. I was pretty good friends with Caleb and we were hanging out at New England and Josh was there, coming in and out of the stalls. Then everyone went through college, we stayed friends, and then reconnected and were married on August 11, 2012. We picked our wedding date by looking at the horse show calendar and picking the only weekend we or our guests were not away at a show. We got married right before Mass Morgan, left the next day for the horse show, came home and packed, and left the next day for our honeymoon to Aruba.”

Josh and Melanie have three daughters, Mackenzie (8), Lyla (7), and Audrey (1). All the new foals born at Burkland are named by Mackenzie and Lyla. Lyla names all of Grand Cru Margaux’s

BURKLAND PRODUCTION TODAY



The grandkids have carefully added new blood to carry on the Burkland tradition. Central to that was the grand mare Stonecroft Flammable (1) (Stonecroft Trilogy x Sizzle) who, before she passed away, contributed a daughter, Burkland Flammabelle (2) (by HVK Bell Flaire), to the program. Burkland Flammabelle is shown with her 2023 colt, Burkland Undressed (by Dressed Up GCH). Stonecroft Flammable has been replaced in the herd by her full sister, Grand Cru Margaux (3), who is the dam of Reserve World Champion Junior Stallion Burkland Tough Enough (4) (by No Contest GCH) and East Coast Reserve Grand Champion Mare Burkland Sweet Escape (5) (by Astronomicallee). Burkland Tiger King (6) (Saralin Seabourn x With Every Breath), shown as a weanling, joined the Burkland show string in 2023. Burkland Taurie-Adora (7) (Tedwin Taurean x Troutbrook Alexis), the last of the old stock, is a family favorite. She is shown with her 2022 colt, Burkland Anticipation (by WVS Cammanding Knight) (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Andy Illes, Dallys Malenfant, Shane Shiflet).

babies while Mackenzie names all the rest. Melanie says, “Watching three generations of people in the same stall with a brand-new baby is pretty cool. It was the middle of the night in January, and they were all there—Helen, Josh, and Mackenzie. Lyla had gone back inside and was talking to us through the monitor.”

Mackenzie and Lyla were both able to show “Marge” [Grand Cru Margaux] in leadline at the Rowley Riding and Driving Club horse shows. Lyla’s favorite baby from Marge is Burkland Tough Enough, who was born on her birthday. Not surprisingly, Lyla wants to be a horse trainer like her dad when she grows up. “We’re going to keep the next baby Marge has, even if it’s ugly,” Lyla says. “Because we sell all the babies.”

Mackenzie’s favorite horse at the farm is Burkland Taurie-Adora. “I showed Taurie in leadline,” Mackenzie says. “I like to climb into her stall and hang out with her. I like to braid her mane and tail.” Mackenzie plans to be a veterinarian when she grows up, following in the tradition of her grandmother Helen, great-uncle Robert, and great-grandfather Dr. Bob. She loves living at the farm and likes that she gets to ride horses and see babies born. “I woke up at midnight once just to see a baby and help it learn how to do stuff,” she says.

Caleb’s wife, Emily [Tassinari], grew up in New Hampshire, the daughter of Morgan breeders Steven and Jill Tassinari. The Tassinaris are the owners of the Broodmare Hall of Fame inductee Queen’s No Mercy and breeders of multiple world champion Ledgefields Jagged Edge and the 2023 World Champion Mare Ledgefields Juliet. Interestingly, Ledgefields Juliet traces her tail female line all the way back to Laura, the original mare foaled in 1880 and bred by Harrison Orcutt, Caleb’s great-great grandfather.

Emily recalls, “I met Caleb at New England Morgan in 2014, on a Friday night. I was there watching my sister show. I did leadline when I was six and did no more showing until high school. My sister was always showing.”

“We met at Woody’s lemonade stand at the New England Morgan Horse Show,” Caleb adds. “She was ordering a lemonade by herself with her back to me and I could tell she was listening to my conversation, so I started talking to her. She turned around, and the rest is history.”

Emily went to school for biology and works at SRH as a large animal tech; she’s always on the road with Helen or one of the other veterinarians. Emily helps in many supportive roles where she is needed to fill in the gaps. The work day starts at 4:00–4:30 a.m. in the summer. Caleb and Emily have a one-year-old daughter named Juliet.

Describing himself and Josh at Burkland Farm, Caleb says, “He’s like Batman, I’m like Robin. He’s the trainer, I’m the ground person. He is more daring, and I am more cautious, and we meet in the middle when we break horses, especially to drive. He is in the cart, and I am the ground person.

“What I love about shoeing,” he says, “is that it is hard work, it’s a challenge, both mentally and physically. Sometimes I get the opportunity to help horses that aren’t performing to their full potential. There is nothing better than getting a positive message from a customer. That means the world!”

Josh notes, “We all have full-time jobs, so it really takes all of

us—Emily, Melanie, Caleb, and myself—to fill multiple roles depending on the day. Early in the morning, we do stalls. My alarm goes off at 4:15 a.m., we feed, do the stalls, turn them out, come back and work the horses in the afternoon. It takes all of us for the farm to function and continue.”

“It’s like the spokes of a wheel. It wouldn’t roll without all the spokes working together. We all serve a purpose in helping the farm function and survive,” Melanie explains.

When asked what Dr. Bob would think of Burkland Farm if he could see it today, Caleb says, “He’d probably be impressed that the place looks a hell of a lot better! It instills a sense of responsibility. Having horses helps with self-worth. It’s giving [our kids] the opportunity to grow up on a farm like we did.”

Josh adds, “I think he would be really proud on many levels, from continuing the breeding and training, to myself judging, to Caleb shoeing, to his great grandchildren enjoying something he loved so much. He would not recognize the property! We have put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into fixing it up and making better use of the land. We still have a long way to go, but Rome wasn’t built in a day. Like my grandfather, we have sold the best horses (other than broodmares) so that we can afford to continue to breed.

“I just hope to give my kids the opportunity that I was given by Gramp and Pat and my parents. I hope to teach them how important hard work, honesty, and determination are. Whether they continue the tradition or not, that’s up to them.”

Burkland Farm was inducted into the AMHA Breeders Hall of Fame in 2011. ■

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THE NOBLE FAMILY



Josh, with the late Meg Preston, at the retirement of Immortal Command in 2013 (1). Burkland owns the frozen semen on the three Rumbrook stallions Immortal Command, Green Meads Galaxy, and Serenity March Time; Helen, Josh, Melanie, and Caleb Noble with Soldier Talk at Deerfield, New Hampshire fairgrounds (2); Emily, Caleb, Josh, and Melanie Noble at NEMHS (3); Caleb and Josh striking a pose with HSV Flawless at the Maine Morgan Breeders Cup (4); Melanie showing Burkland Tiger King at NEMHS 2023 (5); Caleb taking his first ever NEMHS victory pass in 2023 driving LBJ Danger Zone (6)

(photos © Andy Illes, Shane Shiftet).