



≈ MORGAN PEOPLE ≈

# JUNE BROCKETT WRIGHT

## ONE MARE, ONE WOMAN, ONE GIANT LEGACY

By Stephen Kinney and Patti Brooks

June Brockett Wright proved a breeder with one great mare could leave a legacy in livestock that was out of all proportion to the numbers she produced. Her story is a colorful one, both inside and outside the Morgan world.

June's obvious claim to fame in the Morgan world was as the breeder of Vigilmarch. She did this by discovering a golden cross, choosing Orcland Vigildon to mate to Mayphil, the mare she fell for while studying animal husbandry at the University of Connecticut. As important as Vigilmarch is, he is only one chapter in Mayphil's story. June kept Mayphil's 1956 daughter Vigilmay

(also by Orcland Vigildon). When she leased the mare to Jon Huber for him to breed to Waseeka's Nocturne the resultant foal was Lord Appleton who ultimately became herd sire for Martha Dupont's Nemours Morgans. Another full sister, Bro-Rock Vigilmay, was chosen when only a yearling by T. D. Ulrich who was starting up his Shaker Hill breeding program in Ohio in the early 1960s.

In addition, June was employed to share her savvy Morgan breeding instincts at both the Kohler Stud and at the Sparks family's Triple Creek Farm facilities, where she shared responsibility for selecting matings for the large number of Morgan foals being

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ABOVE: June Brockett Wright in her teens; seated on Orcland Ike; Mayphil, Vigilmay & Vigilmarch.



**MAYPHIL FAMILY**

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Mayphil; Winning a Mare and Produce class at “The National,” left to right, Mayphil, her daughters Maylenda & Vigilmay; Mayphil pictured with Vigilmarch when he was a weanling.

produced. Her unique gift for handling young stock made an impact on a number of horsemen who learned through their association with June.

“She bred her own great horses and her advice resulted in great horses for her employers,” said Mike Carpenter, a trainer at Kohler while June worked there.

**M**organ horses are not where things started for a high school-aged June Vasillov, with the blond hair and adorable freckles that looked more Scandinavian than New England. Despite her tender age June was a model with a national career, appearing on the covers of high-profile magazines. June’s daughter, Anne Wright, shares that part of her mother’s history. “My grandfather was a photographer. He worked for Conde Nast and was friends with Richard Avedon. He showed Avedon some pictures of my mom. That’s how it started. She was on the cover of *Harper’s Bazaar*. She was also on the cover of *Redbook* and *Mademoiselle’s*. I have the magazines. The important thing to know is that it wasn’t a big deal to her. It wasn’t her cup of tea. She wanted to be with animals. She’d be photographed by Avedon one day in Manhattan. She’d come home to Connecticut the next day and sleep in a tent with her pig, Belinda.”

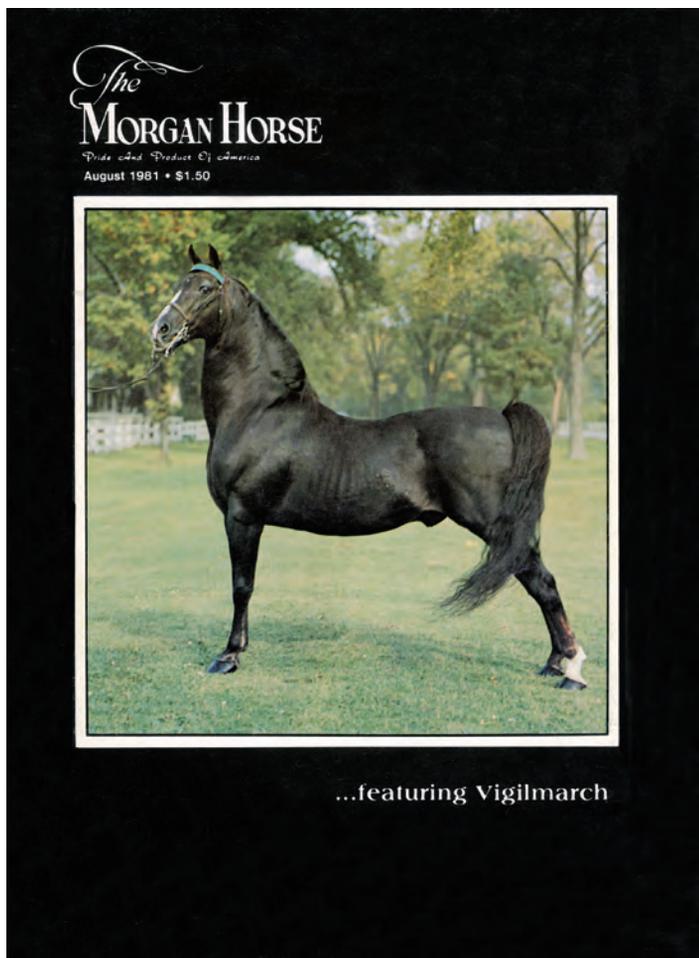
The *Harper’s Bazaar* cover was from December of 1947. June was 17 years old. In her early teens she also developed her natural artistic talents, eventually doing charcoals of people’s animals and pets. The funds she earned would become a factor in pursuing her horse breeding dreams. Anne explains, “She did charcoals of animals to pay for stud fees to breed Mayphil to Orcland Vigildon. Her modeling career ended after college. She stuck with modeling so she could pay to go to college at UCONN.”

June’s youthful, not-to-be-denied love of livestock blossomed at UCONN. There she studied Animal Husbandry where she fell in love with Mayphil. And also with David Brockett, who worked at the university. They married while June was still fairly young. Brockett’s mother gave her Mayphil as a wedding gift and Dave Brockett took a job managing Appleton Farms in Ipswich, Massachusetts (not to be confused with Appleton Manor, Jon Huber’s former horse farm in New Ipswich, New Hampshire, more on that later).

“June was in charge of the sheep at Appleton Farms,” her friend Barb Ackley said. “She and Dave lived just ten steps from the barn.” June also raised Great Danes, showing horses in the summer and dogs in the winter.

It is at this time that June’s great work as a Morgan breeder took shape.

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**VIGILMARCH FAMILY**

**TOP, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Vigilmarch on the cover of the August 1981 issue of *The Morgan Horse*; a few of his significant sons HVK Hotspur, Serenity March Time & HVK Fieldmarch. **BOTTOM ROW:** His daughter Pleasure Driving World Champion and significant producer HVK Cimarron; the great show gelding VAL's Terry; Vigilmarch's grandson, Serenity Grandmaster, sire of Serenity Masterpiece. (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Jane Lynick, Bob Moseder)

Although Mayphil was bred by the University of Connecticut Morgan Farm she was of pure Government descent. Mayphil's sire, the government-bred Magellan, was a grandson of Mansfield on both his sire's and dam's sides. Mayphil's dam, Phillipa, also traces back to Mansfield on her sire's side. The mare had already had two foals for UCONN, Finale by Captor and Tormenta by Mentor. David and June Brockett are listed as the breeders of her third foal,

The Tormentor, also by Mentor.

June was looking forward to showing Mayphil but found the feisty mare difficult to train— apparently Mayphil had plans of her own.

In 1955 June took her mare to Orcland Vigildon (Ulendon x Vigilda Burkland), the much-admired herd sire at Townshend Farm. She must have been impressed with the resulting 1956 filly



**THE BRO-ROCK VIGILMAUD FAMILY**

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Bro-Rock Vigilmaud winning Grand Champion Mare at Gold Cup in 1970; her son Shaker's Alimon; her grandson Shaker's Intrigue (photo © Durham).

Vigilmay because she bred back that year, producing Vigilmarch in 1957. June was on her way to making a dynasty from a handful of Morgans.

To fully document Vigilmarch's significant place in Morgan pedigrees would require a lengthy article but we'll share a few highlights here. June sold Vigilmarch as a three-year-old to A. J. Andreoli who bred Morgans under the Reatas prefix in Akron, Ohio. There are only three foals sired by Vigilmarch with Andreoli's prefix and the stallion was eventually sold to Virginia Fletcher who used the VAL's prefix. She bred ten by Vigilmarch. It was June who encouraged Fletcher to breed her mare Vicky V to the stallion, resulting in VAL's Terry, one of the most memorable and titled show geldings in Morgan history.

For eight years, Kathi Rutledge Hummel and VAL's Terry cast a golden aura, particularly in ladies park harness classes around the country—as well as claiming the championship eight times at Grand National. The flaxen mane and tail of VAL's Terry made a beautiful picture with golden haired Kathi at the reins. Terry also captured World Champion Gelding twice and Grand National Champion Gelding ten times.

Kathi's family, the Rutledges of Serenity Farm, also in Ohio,

discovered early the potential of Vigilmarch, breeding ten with their prefix by the stallion. In that time, June's friend Scott Ferrell observes, crossing the blood of Vigilmarch and Fleetwing was considered by her as its own golden cross. Serenity Farm provided the proof of June's instinct, producing Serenity Grandmaster (Black River Thor by Fleetwing x Serenity Mar Kaye by Vigilmarch). Grandmaster is the sire of Serenity Masterpiece, one of the dominant sire lines in the Morgan show ring today. Another Vigilmarch son, Serenity March Time (x Triwana) would sire Trijas Mr Peppertime (x Little Ms Pepper) for Bob and Patti Brooks's Story Book Stable. Bob was famously quoted as describing the Peppertime get as so smart it was as if they had read the *Morgan Judging Standards* and simply followed all the specs.

Vigilmarch was 13 years old when he caught the eye of Herbert V. Kohler, Jr., though an important breeding stallion was not exactly what he had been shopping for.

"I went to this sale at Bob and Judy Whitney's farm," Herb Kohler said, "to find a Morgan mare in foal for my kids and a gelding for my wife. I came away with a Morgan stallion whose presence and history I found extraordinary, and who left my trainer at the time [Mark Staehnke] dumbfounded. Vigilmarch



**VIGILMAY FAMILY**

LEFT TO RIGHT: Vigilmay with her 1962 son Bro-Rock Vigileader; her son Lord Appleton by Waseeka's Nocturne (photo © Dodo Knight).

proved to be quite remarkable—in the ring and as a stud. He was the first of only two stallions I purchased in my life. He became the foundation for a remarkable string of horses.”

“I had seen Vigilmarch at Virginia Fletcher’s VAL Farm several times and fell in love with him,” Mark Staehnke said. “When VAL Farm dispersed, I decided that I wanted Vig for Herbert Kohler—who had no thought of ever having a breeding stallion. So June and I talked and she stepped up and helped me talk Herbert into at least considering Vigilmarch for a breeding program he didn’t yet have. And the rest is history!”

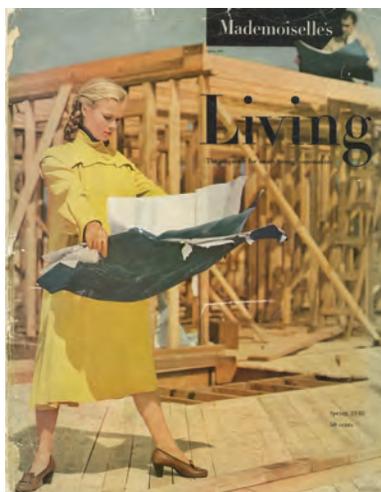
Most assuredly, a breeding program did develop and quite likely, in great part, due to the arrival of this stallion. Some highlights of what Vigilmarch contributed at Kohler: The breeding son of Vigilmarch to be retained by Kohler was HVK Fieldmarch (x Julie Bennfield), Grand National Champion Three-Year-Old Stallion in 1978. Fieldmarch was the sire of HVK Dragon Fly and HVK March Fire, foundation broodmares for the major breeding programs of the Fu Family at Dragonsmeade and Ann Hailey at Copper Beech, respectively. Fieldmarch’s son HVK Diregueur (x Waseeka’s Tiz Me) was a practically unbeatable Roadster to Bike World Champion for Kohler. HVK Hotspur (x Bar-T Bermuda) sired HVK Belleek, the dam of HVK Bell Flaire, World Champion Stallion, Park Harness, and Park Saddle, and a leading sire of his generation. Vigilmarch’s daughter, HVK Cimarron (x Reata’s Lucky Charm by Fleetwing), was 1980 World Champion Pleasure Driving. By Noble Flaire, Cimarron gave Kohler Pleasure Driving World Champion HVK Grand Entrance and HVK Make ‘Em Cry, the sire of the winningest Lady’s Park Harness World Champion in history and Broodmare Hall of Fame inductee, HVK Ancient Cry. Kohler also owned the Vigilmarch daughter VAL’s Christy who was the dam of Noble Flaire’s first offspring and one of the prefix’s winningest show horses, the late HVK Courageous Flaire.

Meanwhile, at Shaker Hill Farm, Bro-Rock Vigilmary was the

dam of Shaker’s Arrow by Windcrest Play Boy, a highly successful show horse for Karen Shields. She also produced the mare Shaker’s Ingrid. Purchased by Gwen Tubach of Couser Creek Morgans in California, Ingrid’s mare line led to the production of a grandson, CCR’s Outrajus Corajus, who made so many fans on his way to becoming the multiple English Pleasure and Pleasure Driving World Champion.

There is an important departure from June’s Mayphil bloodline. On his 1963 visit with June, T. D. Ulrich brought home two other females from June’s small herd. One was the mare Mayquinn (Meade x Manequinn), with her gorgeous government pedigree. The other was her weanling daughter, Bro-Rock Vigilmarch. Vigilmarch was an important show and foundation mare for Ulrich. She was crowned Grand Champion Mare at Morgan Gold Cup in 1970. Her daughter, Shaker’s Gina (by Tas-Tee’s Firefly), produced Shaker’s Intrigue (by Tedwin Tijuana), a stallion who Ulrich kept for breeding purposes and who sired, among others, Shaker’s Pedro, the gelding who won world titles in a career spanning 13 years and multiple loving owners. Vigilmarch is also the dam of the breeding stallion Shaker’s Alimon (by Troutbrook Playboy), sire of Chandel Absolut and grandsire of SpiceOLife Present Tense GCH. Bratt Bradley was a caretaker for Alimon when the stallion was owned by Dean and Pam Ashback’s Chandel Farm. Bratt said, “Al had Vigilmarch’s shoulder and neck and when you stood him up, he’d look out like a king. Al was the most beautiful horse I’ve seen.”

Life in the horse world sometimes means accepting the fact your unique talents are going to lead you to multiple career paths. This sounds like it was the case for June. She had married Dave Brockett in her college years—her daughter Anne thinks 1949 or ’50. After their divorce in 1964 June met and married John “Tex” Wright and moved with him to start J. B. Wright Training Stable in Ohio. They had horses including Devan



**"JITZ"** JUNE HAMPTON VASILLOV *College*

Girls' Sports Club 1-4	Archery 1, 2
GSC Treas. 2	Variety Show 4
F. F. A. 2, 3, 4	Roman Wedding 1
F. F. A. Sec. 4	Bowling 2
F. F. A. Rep. 3	Junior Red Cross 1-4
Girls' Glee Club 3, 4	K. A. A. 1, 2, 3, 4
Basketball 1, 2, 3	Camera Club 3
Latin Club 1, 2	

Here's a girl with a specific interest — purebred livestock. "Jitz" dreams of owning a ranch someday, and her ambition may be realized if a Hollywood scout doesn't see her first.

### JUNE BROCKETT WRIGHT MEMORABILIA

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** June Vasillov was 17 the year this portrait was taken. She was already involved in a modeling career that would put her through college; June on the covers of *Mademoiselle's* & *Harper's Bazaar*; from her high school year book which foresaw her future.

Jason, Black River Dandy, and Reata's Lucky Charm. She took with her the show horse Orcland Ike and, of course, her mares. While their stable competed successfully, the Wrights separated from a troubled relationship in the late '60s and June moved back East. First she rented stalls at a racetrack for Orcland Ike, Mayphil, and Vigilmay. Eventually she went to work for Jon Huber at Appleton Manor. Huber's horse operation was high-rolling in the day of tax sheltered investments in livestock.

June leased Vigilmay to Huber to breed to Waseeka's Nocturne, the resulting 1972 colt being Lord Appleton. The stallion was purchased by Martha Dupont in 1980 and most of his 118 foals were for her Nemours Morgan Farm. Ann Wright has a special childhood memory related to that bit of equine history: "Jon was so happy [with his colt] that he gave my mom, my brother, and me a vacation. We drove to New York City in his limo, stayed in his penthouse, then he flew us to the Bahamas."

By the mid-1970s June had moved on to instructing and training at Clock Farm, across from Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. There she teamed up with Jean DeGutis who would become a premier equitation coach in the Morgan world.

In 1979 Kohler came calling. Legend is that June followed Vigilmarch there. But Anne Wright's version of what happened is that Kohler trainer Tom Caisse (in Connecticut Tom and June shared Addy Connelly as a mentor) reached out to give June a place to settle and give Kohler a savvy breeding consultant and handler of youngstock.

This role of June's—training and handling—was in every way as influential as her role as a legacy breeder. She trained the horses she showed and liked them to have spirit.

Orcland Ike was one of her show ring challenges as a performance horse. "My mom took Ike to the Woodstock Fair and tried to show him. He'd stop and squeal and pitch her," is the story Anne Wright grew up with. Mark Staenhke, who met June while she was part of the J. B. Wright Stable, says. "They had a horse named Swamp Fox she showed. He was no spin-in-the-park kind of horse, but the shows she put on with him were so memorable and in a very, very good way."

Her forte, however, was working with and presenting weanlings. In June Brockett Wright, Mike Carpenter, who was a trainer at Kohler at the time, found a mentor. "Everything I know about breeding choices and showing babies I learned from June." Often, after a full day of working horses in Kohler's training barn, Mike would go see what June was up to with her babies. "To this day, with every baby I show I think of June. She earned their respect and made them love her, all at the same time."

June moved again, this time to Triple Creek Farm in Sheridan, Indiana. There she managed the broodmares and foals and had a significant hand in advising which mares to cross on Triple Creek's prominent sires Tedwin Topic and Applevale Boy King. Her opinion on stallion selection for certain mare lines was valued by horsemen whether she worked for them or not.

At this same time John Hufferd was an assistant trainer at

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Triple Creek. Today, he ranks as the winningest, all-time trainer of Morgan Breeder Sweepstakes and Morgan Weanling Gala entries. He says, “At Triple Creek the entities were pretty separate. June let me enter her world. Not everyone on the training side went over to spend time with June. I was inspired by her and I embraced it. She was definitely a mentor in a lot of different ways. That was the beginning of being a baby trainer for me. I learned from her how to prep them physically. A lot of people think you just teach a baby to pose, but she could fit a baby. How? You go out to the barn and feed them three or four times a day. They were dewormed. You made sure their mothers aren’t stealing their grain. You do whatever you have to do to make them ready. She also sparked my interest in pedigrees. I have followed her advice for years. It was an honor for me.”

**H**er words and practices have carried forward in the lives of many, even all these years later. Of both her breeding stock and her show horses, Barb Ackley says, “June wanted horses with attitudes and with heads held high and that could bend their knees.”

Scott Ferrell remembers that June paid attention to the show records of prospective broodmares and sires. “If a horse tended to be a fourth-place horse over a number of seasons, listen up,” he says June would counsel. “That many judges can’t be wrong,” Barbara Ackley also recalls some central breeding philosophy of

June’s: “A little bit of this and a little bit of that won’t get you very far.” And, “Average kills a breeding program.”

Scott Ferrell proposes a way to assess an influential breeder such as his friend: without them, he asks, where would we be? He is referring to the fact that without June Brockett Wright’s contribution we would have today no Serenity Masterpiece, no Lord Appleton, no HVK Bell Flaire, no SpiceOLife Present Tense GCH. VAL’s Terry would exist only as a fantasy for little girls in love with flaxen manes. “June was a true breeder,” Scott adds. “She studied the whole picture.”

**I**n the 1980s, June found herself doing familiar work with breeding stock at Nemours Morgan Farm. She was badly attacked by a horse there and it was her last job at a Morgan farm. She passed away the week before Grand National in 2004. The next week her granddaughter Natalie was led by Nikki Raw Woodworth at the show’s headline presentation, seated upon Gradell’s Pandora.

When June Vasilov was 17 her high school yearbook editors knew enough about her dreams that they wrote this: “Here’s a girl with a specific interest—purebred livestock. Jitz [her nickname] dreams of owning a ranch one day. And her ambition may be realized if a Hollywood scout doesn’t see her first.”

Her daughter Anne says, “She knew then she wanted to raise great quality, purebred livestock. I think she did just that.” ■



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