

HOW THE WESTERN WORKING FAMILY CLUB BEGAN

By Dorothy Hallock
from
THE WESTERN WORKING FAMILY NEWS
published Feb 1996
Vol. I. No. 1

The Western Working Family Morgan Horse Club came to life because my gelding died of sand colic. I'd had "Timber" (US Menmar x Coffey Choice) for almost 18 years. I joked that I'd better start looking for a retirement home that would take horses, as he would still be around when I was collecting Social Security. I was wrong. Timber died during emergency surgery just before Christmas, 1995.

I soon realized that I had lost more than a dear companion who'd carried me safely over thousands of miles of trails in Oregon, California, and Arizona had lost an antique that might be irreplaceable, Timber was one of US Menmars last foals, and was born very near the end of his dam's reproductive life, too. When I added his sire and dam's age to Timber's I saw that I was looking at bloodlines that were nearly 40 years old. A replacement blend of Old Government, Sellman, and Lippitt- was not going to be easy to find. I contacted the UVM and explained that I was looking for descendants of US Menmar, or close relatives: Was there anything in their barn that might suit me? No. Although UVM had a photo of Menmar which they copied for me, they inexplicably did not have a copy of his pedigree. I reciprocated with a copy of Timber's pedigree to provide information on Menmar's lineage. Photos of several horses for sale arrived. I began to see that "Government" Morgans aren't Government Morgans anymore. They have evolved into fine show animals, but weren't much like my sturdy old companion.

I read ads, studied pedigrees, and began to write letters. Several helpful and knowledgeable people interested in old type Morgans offered advice, but were not optimistic that I'd find a mature gelding to buy. An article in the Morgan Sport Horse newsletter led me to Rolie Gray, who was carrying on her grandfather, Roland Hill's, breeding lines. She had no suitable horse for me. She had a fine old stallion, but was having trouble finding suitable mares for him to keep the California branch of Morgans as pure as possible. Where were all these old homes, anyway?

My daughter contacted AMHA and forwarded the whereabouts of the woman who had last owned Timber's dam, and of the man who had purchased his half/sister. Maybe there were offspring somewhere in Canada or Maine-Second it cousins, perhaps? None!

My daughter also placed an ad in the AMHA Newsletter, which led to many kind responses, and some new friendships,-including a charming woman in Washington who may own Menmar's last breeding son (Renwood Deaman [US Menmar x Beckridge Sparkle])--but no appropriate horse to take me trail riding.(*). The realization was dawning that the scent was really cold, and there was a moment when I blurted out, "Maybe I'll have to make my own if I want another Timber!" I bought three mares, and leased a stallion.

From talking to so many people, it was clear that I was not alone in my concern for these disappearing "heritage seed" of Morgandom. I encountered a lot of frustrated, discouraged people who lit up when they discovered that someone else was interested in these grand old Western Working horses.

My patient daughter listened to months of tales of one isolated Western Working fan after another, until she suggested a remedy: Why not start a network so we would all know who was out there, what bloodlines are still active, what breeding stock could be identified, what individuals might be for sale-and most important, for people to share with us what they know about the Western Working Family. The Western Working Family Morgan Horse Club was born, with its own Western Working Family News.

(*)P.S. I found a good using gelding eventually-SJS Lucky Winchester, line bred Funquest. He's not like Timber, but he's a member in good standing of the Western Working Family.