

# Morgan Dressage association

*Dedicated to promoting and supporting Morgan Horses in Dressage.*



## GRAND PRIX MORGANS— BIG BEND DOC DAVIS AND MONA SANSOUCY- GAUDET : THEY WERE THE FIRST

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*By Marthe Reynolds*

*(Editor's note: With the passing of the years, it is sometimes difficult to remember those who forged the trail that the rest of us try to follow. Big Bend Doc Davis and Mona Sansoucy-Gaudet competed in a time when the dressage world did not look so kindly on the non-traditional breeds such as Morgans—but Mona and Davey excelled in the sport despite the bias. Theirs was a partnership that was unique and proved that Morgans could (and still do) have the ability to be competitive at the highest levels of dressage. The future will certainly give us other Morgans that reach the top level of Grand Prix, but Mona and Davey will always be the first.)*



*Big Bend Doc Davis and Mona Sansoucy-Gaudet*

**MR:** Hi, Mona, it's so good to finally talk to you. I've been a fan and this interview is just my ruse to speak with you!

**MG:** (laughs).

**MR:** Is your name French, or French Canadian?


**MG:** It is French Canadian, actually.

**MR:** Ok, let's jump in. When did you actually purchase Big Bend Doc Davis? How old was he? What was he like as a youngster?

**MG:** My family bought him in the spring of 1975. Davey was a weanling; he'd been weaned at four months. Connie Barton was the owner of Big Bend Farm. Davey was the second offspring of her mare Big Bend Connie F that was sired by Green Mt. Doc Bird. The first foal had to be euthanized. I was a Junior in

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### News and Reminders:

- Check out [Page 12](#) for **new Classified** listings—they are growing!
- Find us on Facebook! 
- It is **past time to renew your MDA Membership** for 2012—but never too late! Be sure and fill out the application on [Page 14](#) and mail it in **today!**
- Want to keep dressage in our breed shows? Show the show managers and organizers you support your sport either as a competitor or a spectator ([Page 11](#)).
- MDA saddle patches, magnets and key chains are still available. See [Page 6](#) for more information.

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## Spotlight on the Members



Elaine Mendel-John and Triple S Blackwood Image

**Triple S Blackwood Image** (Triple S Red Wind X Triple S Ebonella), is known by his fan club around the barn as “**Nick**”. In between hurricanes, recessions and job changes, we continue to work on our dressage, but enjoy jumping and plenty of trail rides. This year, we are schooling cross country and hope to compete in the Fleur de Leap Horse Trials, sponsored by Southern Eventing and Dressage Association, our local organization.

**Nick** is not my first horse, but he is the first Morgan I have owned. When I was horse-shopping several years ago, I was not specifically looking for a Morgan, but **Nick** was the just the best horse for me in every way. *Elaine Mendel-John*

My name is Lois E. Thiergartner. Together with my husband Mike, own Lavender Meadows Sport Morgans.

My journey with Morgan Horses began in 1995 with a little powerhouse Royalton/Ben Don gelding named **Aquila’s Royal Silk** (“Silkman”). I bought this 14.1 hh horse for my then pre-teen daughters to share. He learned to jump at age 12 and was always in the ribbons.

As **Silkman** was aging, I bought a Government bred filly, **Books End Slogan** (many crosses to Mansfield). She was bred to be a Park Horse, but is now my Second Level dressage horse. “**Satin**” and I have qualified 4 times for Grand Nationals in dressage.

When I began to get a little more serious about dressage, I looked for a more sport type Morgan Horse, which I found in the Kells (Flower Valley Morgans) in Minnesota.

I bought a yearling stallion named **Kells Full Monty** (Spring Hills KCL X Kells Onyx Pearl [RG Black Tie Affair X Coal Creek Justice]). He still, at age seven, measures a pony and is two-time National Dressage Pony Morgan Champion. In 2011, we were Adult Amateur Recognized Show Champions for MODA (Mid – Ohio Dressage Association). **Monty** has never spent a day with a trainer.

In June of last year, I was lucky enough to purchase his sister, **Kells Beloved Briana**. I plan on competing **Monty** at First Level this year and we have some future plans to do some breeding. *Lois E. Thiergartner*



Kells Full Monty and Lois Thiergartner

*Looking for something to visit over the fence about? Have an interesting story you want to share? A little (or big) brag? Well here is your chance!*

Send us a short (two or three paragraphs) tale about yourself and your Morgan horse (with a picture, of course!) and we will be happy to share your story with the rest of the MDA Membership on our “Spotlight on the Members” page. You don’t have to show or be a breeder—just a lover of dressage and Morgan horses! Come on, don’t be shy...we would love to hear from you! Send your story and photos to [sally@montanasky.us](mailto:sally@montanasky.us)



# Cross-Training the Dressage Horse

By Bill Broe

The common denominator in all equestrian sports is the horse. In order for the horse to perform to its potential and stay sound physically and mentally, it needs to have confidence, balance and proper muscling. Being able to perform different tasks like driving or jumping can help develop the dressage horse both physically and mentally. Riding down the center line, or driving down the center line, or riding a line to a jump all has the same requirements: confidence, proper muscling, and balance.



Why choose driving over the other disciplines? What does driving bring to the horse's development? Other disciplines will bring similar benefits to the horse's development; i.e. jumping will help the horse use its back and develop the hind quarters. However, the first thing that driving develops in the horse is confidence and trust, and from those comes relaxation. In addition, the development of the back and hind quarters can be done without the burden of weight on the back.

When the horse is put into harness with a closed bridle, half or better of its natural defense, its field of vision, is taken away by the blinders. The horse can only see what is directly in front of it unless it turns its head. From that point, the horse must go forward based on trust with a heightened sense of hearing, listening for verbal commands and the assurance that all is okay. This creates a very close bond between horse and driver/rider. In the show ring, the driving horse must become accustomed to horses in close proximity as well as frightening noises that cannot be seen. When entering a cross country hazard or water crossing that is scary the horse cannot be hesitant and often must be reassured by the driver's voice or a light touch of the whip. When you go down the center line approach during a dressage test, the judge often has an unfamiliar perch, such as in a horse trailer. A driving

horse's training gives it the confidence and trust it needs to be more accepting of unfamiliar things and places.

Talking to the horse is not allowed in ridden dressage and that is where the cross-training

comes in. When I am training riding using my leg and seat, I also use words that coordinate with those aides. For example, if the horse is getting a little excited about some new object in its view, I will say "easy" in very low tone while gently playing with my ring fingers, squeezing and relaxing combined with a reassuring leg. When I use my seat and leg for canter I say the word "canter." When changing leads, I just say "canter left" or "canter right" as I use my seat and leg aides accordingly. It is similar when going into a walk, trot or rein back.

In driving, the use of the whip and the half halt take the place of the leg and seat when asking for the canter and lead changes. When doing a leg yield, I will accompany the manual aide with the word "over." When using the whip to move the horse to the side, I say "over" and the horse moves away from the whip. Combining a verbal vocabulary and manual aides over time gives your horse dual controls which can come in handy. It will begin to do what is asked of them simply by your saying it, creating a heightened sense of awareness between horse and rider/driver. Your leg and seat aides must be consistent as well, and the words you use with these aides must be consistent so as not to confuse the horse.

I find the muscular development without a burden on the back of the horse to be very helpful. In my view, the horse is better designed to pull than to ride. When training a horse under saddle, the trainer goes by feel. In driving, the trainer has the unique opportunity to

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## Why Do Ground Work? A Little Work that Garners Big Results (Part I)

*By Brenda Aloff*

Most of us have horses because we love, Love, LOVE to ride. Therefore, working with your horse from the ground often seems not only boring, but unwieldy and sometimes even dangerous!

Making ground work count with your horse not only results in a better horse on the ground, but it translates to big results under saddle as well. People who drive horses in harness have long understood that before you risk your precious self in a cart behind a horse for the first time, a system of communication and desensitization must already be in place. When I started to work in dressage, I found that all the things I learned driving and lining horses could be used to improve my dressage, even though I might be applying some of it with a slightly different philosophy in mind.

I have found that the principles of Natural Horsemanship and Classical Dressage in-hand work are not only very complementary, but also accomplish different types of education with your horse. Using Natural Horsemanship together with the principles of the Classical Dressage work in-hand makes your horse safer. Better yet, it can improve your relationship with your horse—and bring the satisfaction of achievement for both of you. In addition, ground work improves your work under saddle in multiple areas by teaching you about the biomechanics of your horse and how your body affects your horse in a way that you do not “get” when you are only in the saddle. I cannot imagine using one to the exclusion of the other at this point.

It is my hope that you read this article and get so fired up that you explore ground work exercises and use them with your own horse so you, too, can discover the secrets of horsemanship that only ground work can teach you!



*Natural Horsemanship has gotten us really working together as a team.*

### Roots - The Origins of Ground Work



*Get your horse use to all the equipment in a deliberate and step-by-step way. Don't rush this part!*

*This is work in “free” long reins. Free because there is no saddle or surcingle. This is great fun to do, but you must have a horse with a well established communication system in place!*

*The horse must be able to follow the wall, walk and halt on a verbal cue. The idea is to NOT overuse the reins but use them for connection and guidance. This is where you learn to make your body language match your intent!*

Natural Horsemanship begins and ends with safety, mutual respect, trust, and loving your horse as a partner. These techniques were developed by certain types of working cowboys and ranchers whose goal was to promote safety and reduce injury of both horse and rider; producing with a safe equine working partnership. They had a job to get done, so there is a lovely practicality and simple elegance about these exercises. Often a cowboy’s very life depends upon how well-trained the horse is and how the horse thinks of him, so there was a strong motivation to have reliable and thinking horses. The men and women who developed these methods and passed them one to another loved horses, and it is clear from the results they obtained that the end goal of a particular kind of relationship – one that was trusting and relaxed – was important.

In its early history, Classical Dressage was not for the commoners. It was developed as training for war and as an art form, practiced by those who had plenty of time and money to spend on determining burning questions such as whether a shoulder-in on four tracks was superior to a shoulder-in on three tracks, for the purposes of gymnasticizing a horse—an argument that is still raging on even today in some circles. It developed alongside Work Under Saddle and its origins are very old with the first treatise on classical horsemanship and the horse as a partner rather than as an adversary written by Xenophon around 438 BC. After Xenophon, horsemanship entered a dark age and it was finally with de la Gueriniere, a French nobleman, who published “Ecole de Cavalerie” in 1730, that modern Classical Dressage was born and the horse

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association

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## Membership Form

Membership year runs from January 1 – December 31. Please print out this form, fill it out, send it and a check to: Morgan Dressage Association, Karin Weight, 1069 N. Geneva Rd., Provo, UT 84601. Checks should be made payable to MDA.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Farm name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please list family members participating in MDA programs and note birthdate of any junior young rider members.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Please check your membership category:

Renewal  New  Jr/Young Rider \$10  Individual \$25  Family/Farm \$35  Patron \$100   
Check all that apply: Rider  Professional Trainer  Breeder  Enthusiast

Please indicate if you are willing to help the organization by donating your time and skills. (Check all that are of interest to you.)

Newsletter  Membership directory/advertising  Write educational articles  Awards coordination   
Breed promotion  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Professional/Breeder additional information to be included in the 2011 MDA Membership Directory and on MDA web site for an additional \$15 charge. Up to 30 words describing your services and/or program/stallion (Use additional sheet if necessary).

Category (Check all that apply): Trainer/instructor  Breeder/Stock for sale

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Web site url for listing in directory and link on MDA web site \_\_\_\_\_

*If you've already renewed and want your information/listing to be included in the next directory and on the web site now, just send the bottom portion of this form with a check for \$15 and mark: "Already renewed" at the top.*

**Please be sure your email address is clear and legible; all newsletters and MDA Extensions will be sent via email.**

Please make your checks payable to MDA and return this form with membership dues to:  
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