

# Morgan Dressage association

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



## MEMBERS AND THEIR MORGANS 2013

July, 2013  
Volume 3 Number 3

### News and Reminders:

- Check out Page 15 for **new** **Classified** listings—they are growing!
- Don't forget to find us on [Facebook!](#)
- It is **past time to re-new your MDA Membership** for 2013—but never too late! You can [renew online](#) or just fill out and mail in the application on [Page 18](#).
- 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.
- MDA saddle patches, magnets and key chains are still available. See [Page 6](#) for more information.
- Don't forget deadlines are coming up for MDA Scholarships and Year-end Awards.

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Morgan Dressage Members and their Morgan partners (from left to right, top to bottom): Intaglio Desert Storm and Carol Hibbard; SC Island Jubilee and Katie Hoefs-Martin; SNR Savannah and Elizabeth Cummings; Whippoorwill Monument, Rob Robillard (up) and Addison Van Ness; Aldora's Nobel Heir and Deb Frigulti; Universal Selection and Kristal Homoki; BlueandWhite Jubilee and Joanna Kelly.

## Two Trainers, Two Morgans, and Two Days with Conrad Schumacher

*By Cathy Echternach and Beth Heubisch*

*Trainer Cathy Echternach and her colleague, Beth Heubisch, recently had the opportunity to ride with celebrated Dressage Master Conrad Schumacher in a clinic held at Shepherd's Run Farm in Maryland. Echternach rode Whippoorwill Dorado ("Dory"), a thirteen-year-old Morgan gelding who has competed through Intermediate II, and Heubisch rode Blue and White Bravo, an eight-year-old Morgan gelding competing at Third Level. Both Dory and Bravo have been at Sugarloaf Equestrian Center for all of their training; Dory came to Sugarloaf as a walk-trot broke two-year-old and Bravo arrived as a yearling colt.*



Cathy Echternach and Whippoorwill Dorado  
with Conrad Schumacher

### ***Cathy Echternach and Whippoorwill Dorado***

On Day One of my clinic with Dory, Conrad watched my general warm-up and a short exhibition of my regular work. We then discussed my goals and my concerns about the horse's training. We agreed that Dory's trot work, general flexibility, and strength work (i.e. canter pirouettes) were his strong points. Dory's weakness lay in the canter work that called for canter clarity--namely flying changes. Conrad pointed out that although Dory does not have a "wonderful" canter, I was contributing to the problem by not getting him through enough in his neck and withers. Dory's tendency is to brace his neck and get wide behind. When this happens, I need to help him use his strong back and hind end by unbracing his neck. As I was able to release this strength, Dory's canter quality-- and thus his changes, improved.

The tools Conrad employed on the first day of the clinic were cavaletti and half-pass gymnastics. The trot and canter cavaletti helped me to "ride forward" to more impulsion, while lifting Dory's feet and increasing the "jump". This concept of riding forward

to the jump was helpful for me since I was originally a hunter rider. The other tool, half-pass gymnastics, involved riding the half-pass in walk, trot, and canter while flexing and counter-flexing Dory so that his neck and withers were relaxed and not fixed. This turned the steadiness to an elastic steadiness and allowed much better reach.

One of the difficulties for me was to then keep this elasticity into the tempi changes. It is fairly easy for me to keep an elastic focus in half-

pass as well as while performing a single change. Translating that to a longer straight line of straight and elastic changes is one of my personal challenges. Conrad helped me to be more focused and patient with my aids by showing me that I could subtly supple my now limber horse with little flexions during the changes. Patience and small aids were my tickets to success. Preparation is the most important key to success in the movement coupled with attention to when the horse is staying supple enough to continue correctly. For me, this meant remembering that four good changes are better than seven iffy or braced changes. When I focused on the quality, the quantity followed.

One reason Conrad is so helpful is his ability to diagnose underlying weaknesses and to help find solutions in a constructive way. He is clear about what is wrong and, by adjusting the rider's aids and communication, provides a clear, constructive path to success.

On Day One, Conrad and I also worked on Dory's passage and piaffe. Dory is most eager to piaffe, at times piaffing without any reason. Conrad helped me to find a clear and consistent way to control this positive tension without stifling Dory's enthusiasm. We worked on walk leg-yields to correct leg position to piaffe, so that I could control the piaffe entirely and walk/piaffe/halt/piaffe/passage/piaffe effectively. This was very helpful in terms of positive submission in the horse and in my

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# Massage Assistance for Issues of “Coming Through” In Dressage Work

*By Dawn Cooper, TBMI, TPM, Cn., Eq.*

The classical Morgan back, as described in the conformation guidelines, supports a flat top-line from the dock of the tail through the croup. Though sport horse breeding has produced a more rounded rump by comparison, the shape of the hindquarters and back can still pose some challenges for the dressage rider. Along with the confines of conformation there are still more complexities of saddle fit, rider balance, and to some extent, competition from the horse for control over his own work product, or more commonly expressed as resistance. Some of these factors are locked in. You can't always change saddles. You can't alter conformation. But, with some simple massage techniques applied in a key area of the back, you can help your horse open one common area of tension and help to relieve a piece of its resistance.

There are many different shapes of the back that will contribute to more resistance than others. We won't have time here to isolate the fractional issues of each type. Rather, by considering an average back and the functional requirements of specific regions, you can begin to extrapolate the relevant areas of your own horse's back for massage work. By working just minutes a day, several times a week, you will be able to extend your horse's elasticity allowing for better articulation to the bit through its top line.

## ***Lumbar Skeletal Structure and How It Functions***

The lumbar spine might be easily overlooked as a trouble spot, since it is behind the position of the saddle; and because it has no heavy muscle for limb attachment, it can seem inconsequential. However, this is often precisely where much of the structural connection can be lost. The limbs are in active communication with the musculature of the hind quarter. These muscles are largely responding and reacting to the stresses of the movement requirements of the hind limbs themselves. But

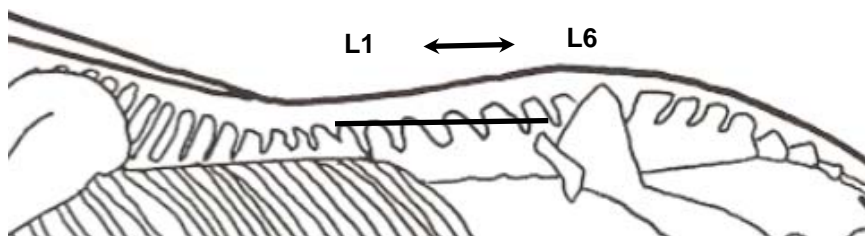
the lumbar region is the back's “bridge” of communication between the hindquarters and the forehand.

The lumbar spine has more stability in its design for carrying the weight directly above it, (note that packs are often carried behind the saddle) but has more vulnerability from the side to side shifts, which occur when weight is planted on a limb in movement. The lumbar is responsible for much of the impulsion of the hind, as well as the stabilization for the reciprocal apparatus. But more importantly for dressage movements, it is instrumental in the action of lowering the hind so the chest can get off the ground and relieve concussion for the front end.

Let us return to the planted limb on the hind. When the horse pushes off, the psoas muscles stabilize the hind as the muscles attached through the lumbar area “round” the spine. Without interference from riding style, the horse's back will contract, raising the head and neck, lifting the forehand off the ground. In doing this, the sling protection of the muscles in the shoulder area protect the chest cavity from concussion, keeping the front feet from carrying the weight from the hind onto the forehand. When the abdominal muscles contract, they apply traction to the lumbar and thoracic portions of the spine, allowing them to “bow” counter to the back muscles. The flexibility of the spine muscles in the lumbar region, allow the abdominal muscles to draw the upper spine in a contour curve, away from the natural contraction of the other muscles, while also drawing “upwards” to the lower line of the abdominals. This, in effect, is like the shape of a football lying sideways. This “bow” affect allows the horse to go upwards and forwards. When there is tension in the region of the lumbar muscles, little of the aforementioned activity can take place through light contact.

The result can be a false frame, resistance through the head and neck as well as stilted movement in the gaits.

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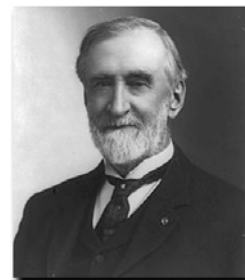


# The Government Family of Morgans: An Introduction

*By Gail Perlee*

## *Beginnings*

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century there was concern that the Morgan breed, which had been so vital to the development of the American nation, was facing extinction. US Senator Redfield Procter, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, became the spokesman for a group of horsemen who were becoming alarmed by the dwindling numbers of the breed which for almost 100 years had been recognized as the most useful general purpose horse in America - the Morgan. Much of the best Morgan blood had been lost in establishing the Standardbred, Saddlebred and the Walking Horse. The gradual mechanization of agriculture and transportation was causing the horse market to dry up and destroying the incentive of breeders to produce foals. Military leaders were beginning to experience difficulty obtaining remounts for the Cavalry.



Senator Redfield Procter enjoyed driving his team of Morgan horses. On one occasion he was reprimanded by Washington D.C. District police for driving "at too fast a clip".

Remembering the excellence of Morgans as cavalry horses during the Civil War, the US Government moved in 1905 to establish a breeding program. The Department of Agriculture had commissioned a study in 1904 to determine the characteristics of the ideal cavalry horse and had found that the Morgans fitted the bill except in the matter of size and a tendency to flat withers developed during a half century of breeding for harness use. The stated aim of the Government's program was to preserve the type and excellent using qualities of the Morgan, while increasing size and quality to produce a superior cavalry mount. They advertised for foundation mares as follows:

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*"The Army Remount Problem" by George M. Rommel is available free at the National Agricultural Library*  
<http://archive.org/details/armyremountprobl00rommrich>

"They should be from 5 to 8 years old and standing 15.1 - 15.3 hands and weighing 1000 to 1500 pounds. Colors preferred: brown, bay, chestnut. Grays not to be submitted for inspection unless exceptional individuals. Mares submitted for inspection should be sound, with good conformation, style and action, and a pure trotting gait. They should be well bred along Morgan lines, but registration in the Morgan Horse Register will not be necessary."

The last sentence in the ad caused an uproar and started a controversy that rages to this day. Unable to find enough purebreds to meet their exacting standards, the Government acquired five unregistered mares, three from Vermont and two Kentucky Saddlebreds. However, the Kentucky mares were only a small part of the original herd and were actually deep in Morgan blood, especially through their dams. The furor over that purchase had hardly died down when a wealthy eccentric, Joseph Battell, presented the Government with a 400 acre farm near Weybridge, Vermont. Along with the land and buildings came a controversial stallion, General Gates.

Colonel Joseph Battell was born in Middlebury, Vermont in 1839. He attended Middlebury College, studied and travelled abroad for several years, was proprietor of the Breadloaf Inn, editor of

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*Morgan Dressage*  
association

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

## 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:  
Morgan Dressage Association • c/o Karin Weight • 1069 N. Geneva Rd. • Provo, UT 84601