

The Lippitt Morgan Stallions

by Al Lyon

It is the stallions and always the stallions that return to mind whenever I recall famous horses from my formative years. Very early there were of course the horses of print, Walter Farley's Black Stallion, and Thunderhead, son of Flicka. There were those also that lived in the flesh for many of us. Although they are different horses for each of us, they seem somehow to continue to live in our mind's eye. Perhaps too, on occasion, you have asked yourself as I have, "Just what is it about these stallions?"

A special one for me was a chestnut, first seen as a two year old on a hill farm in Vermont in 1952, wild as a hawk. And he endured as an old one in his 20's, small yes, but something about him, untamed spirit maybe, something, which stayed with you. They called this one Ashbrook Darling.

Then in the sixties, pictures of a stud started appearing in The Morgan Horse named Moro Hill's Adonis. There were also some reports by Sheila Cole on midwest horses and their activities. The names Moro Hill's Gay Ethan, and Prophet popped up. In the pictures they all had a look about them. There was in particular symmetry, balance, quality, and beauty in uncommon combination. But still, something more. Presence? Countenance? I never actually saw any of them in the flesh, but even in pictures there was something which spoke to their overall excellence.

Over a period of time I came to appreciate that the sire of these stallions was Dyberry Ethan. Today the name is famous. If you have been around Lippitts a while, you know that there was an issue of The Lippitt News, which featured Ethan. But, at the time I wondered, who was Dyberry Ethan?

It was not until the July 1973 issue (the Lippitt issue) of the Morgan magazine was published that I saw the first picture of the stallion. It is an informal picture of the horse, loose in a paddock. There is nothing pretentious about it. However, to say the least, I liked the horse. What each of us likes in a horse, our sum of preferences, is an outgrowth of the sum of our experience and knowledge. We will differ in preferences because our knowledge and experience base necessarily differs.

The Mid-West Morgan Horse Owners organization first published The Standard of Perfection, written by Dr. Clarence D. Parks, in 1952. This picture of Dyberry Ethan seemed to me to illustrate the

standard described better than any other stallion that I had seen. Further, that intangible, that "Something", which was evident in the pictures of the horses in the earlier magazines, appeared abundantly in the picture of the Ethan stallion. This I thought, was the source of, "That look", which had been so captivating. I searched the pedigree wondering what had produced him.

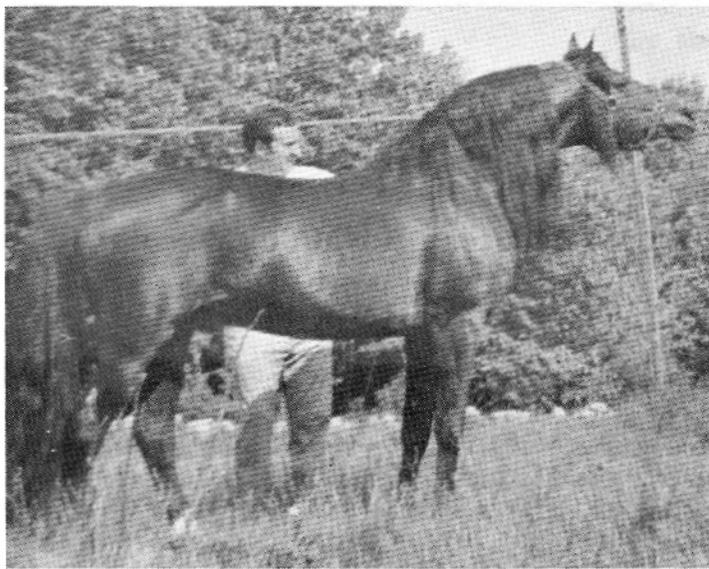
Soon I got to know an Ethan son in Connecticut, Moro Hill's Magician, a beautifully front-ended horse, and he helped give life to the pictures. By 1976, a telephone conversation with Chester Treftc, the man with whom Ethan had spent his life, revealed that Chet and a group of his friends were coming East to attend an AMHA judging seminar. So, I got time off from work, signed up, arranged for a babysitter, and went. I was pursuing Ethan, not a judge's card.

When I met Chet's Wisconsin friends, I met a group of true Morgan people; Jackie and Bob Schaumberg, Ruth Vidiloff, Barbara and Fred Johns, Mary Beth Sobrofski, and Coriene Hotz. These were in no way detached people. They were Dyberry Ethan advocates and the breeders among them are still breeding his blood.

I recall one of my first questions for Chet was, which was Ethan's best son? He said, "I don't know." And then turning the question back on me, "Which one do you think?" Hesitating, I said that I thought that I would choose Prophet. He looked at me hard for a moment, then he laughed and said that they had all been in a breed class together once. Prophet had won. "You know how a man can sometimes be almost too handsome?" he asked. "That was Prophet. He was so good looking, he was almost too handsome."

I had numerous questions to ask but, Chet never seemed to tire of answering. How did you come to buy Ethan? He answered, "I wanted a colt out of Lippitt Miss Nekomia, but I had to get in line and wait. I didn't care about who the sire was as long as it was a Miss Nekomia colt." He said that he believed then, as did the Bedouin breeders of desert Arabians, that the mare was more important.

Dr. Parks bred Dyberry Ethan. He was foaled in 1952, also the publication year of the Parks' Standard of Perfection, for a coincidence. Ethan was sired by Lippitt George. But, Miss Nekomia's three colts just previous, all outstanding, had been



Moro Hill's Magician

sired by Lippitt Billy Ash. What prompted Dr. Parks to make a change and now breed the great mare to an unproven two year old colt? The instinct of the consummate breeder? The thinking man's desire to experiment? Professor Loring Tirrell of the Univ. of New Hampshire once wrote words to the effect that colts are products of experiments in breeding. There are no mistakes in experimental work, only in the analyses and interpretation of the work.

My understanding of what had produced Ethan improved with the reading of the following passage, which appeared in the article on Lippitts by Mr. Sumner Keane in the December 1949 issue of the Morgan Horse. "Then there is a three-month-old stud colt by Ethan Ash out of Lippitt Georgia, she by Sam out of Gladys Moro. This outstanding weanling promises great things and is the apple of the Lippitt trainer's eye. A deep, almost mahogany bay, with a proud little head and a world of expression, he alternately strutted around the paddock at a bouncing trot or nuzzled gently at a small boy, and ate oats from his hand."

This colt described by Mr. Keane is Lippitt George, the sire of Ethan. Where Keane uses the words "A world of expression" in describing George as a three-month-old foal, the Standard of Perfection describes a horse's "Countenance". It says countenance is the mental expression of the horse, and it is different for every breed. In the Morgan it expresses, "An abundance of controllable energy, exemplified by a friendly attitude, and bold, energetic and fearless movement. Presence is the degree of perfection of countenance and includes stately bearing,

poise, dignity and style." These may be the best available words to describe that unique something I have seen or felt in some Lippitt stallions, which even comes through in pictures.

The time spent discussing, debating, and joking with Chet Treftc had made the judging seminar worthwhile. As we were preparing to depart to go our separate ways, Chet turned to me and said quickly, "You know that there is no such thing as a God horse." I replied, "I know." Then he said, "But Dyberry Ethan was a God horse." I looked at him closely, trying to read. Was this another joke? Was he being half-serious? I could not tell. Perhaps, although we may find the words to describe one of these horses, the words to describe their impact on us are the most difficult to reach.

All of this was now years ago. Today when I contemplate Lippitt Morgan stallions I think about the strengths and weaknesses of the bloodlines, and conformation, type, and countenance of individuals. Invariably, at some point, there flashes in my mind a picture and the name of a stallion, Dyberry Ethan. Just about a year ago I was shown a picture of Ethan Allen 2d, which was new to me. The horse depicted projects power, quality, refinement, and strong presence. It is not surprising to find the essence of this horse in a modern Lippitt stallion. The blood is there.
