

# Wild About HARRY



Harry Mark Sebring passed away on June 20, 2015 after a brief illness and long battle with cancer. A celebration of his life was held at Sebring Stables on July 11 where many of his friends came to reminisce and to share why they were wild about Harry.

When I was new to the publishing world, Harry welcomed me into the Morgan world. Harry was one of those people who had a light emanating from within him that had a way of drawing you closer to it. He had a warmth about him that you could physically feel every time you came into the room. It was a genuineness that made you feel like he really did care that you were there, even in a room of hundreds of people. It's what made him the husband, father, friend, and true Morganite that we all loved and cherished.

Over the past two months, I had the privilege of having several conversations with Harry because it was important to me to be able to share his story and I talked to many of his friends, in hopes of sharing their words with him in a feature story where he could reflect upon a life well lived and hopefully bring him some joy. Harry's death caught me unaware despite knowing that he was coming to the end of his life, and I struggle to control my emotions and to put words on the page, but I will, because I truly am wild about Harry.

Initially in our conversations Harry explained where his love of the Morgan horse began. "I've always been horse crazy. I grew up with Roy Rogers, Fury, and Flicka. Saturday morning was spent in front of the TV and I would only eat Cheerios since horses ate oats. I had all the little plastic Lone Ranger figurines. I had five pound potato chip cans full of those little rubber horses.

"My two younger cousins and I were 5, 6 and 7 years old when my uncle would take us to the pony barn at another relative's butcher shop. The shop was half filled with the horses and half with the pigs for slaughter. We went every Saturday morning to sit on the ponies. If it was a really good Saturday morning, they'd put saddles on them and we'd ride outside. My uncle got us a young horse, way back then, and expected me to be able to do anything with a horse. She hurt me pretty bad and that scared me, and for a few years I didn't want anything to do with horses.

*Harry had a genuine love of people and he always made me feel welcome.*

"But when I was twelve, I got the bug again. My cousins wanted horses and I had a farm to take care of them. The first horse we ever bought was an old American Saddlebred we called Dan. The horse arrived on an old farm truck that was higher than his chest. We backed it up to a bank and he stepped down off the truck probably two feet down. Dan was very broke to ride and drive and before long it sparked the desire to find another horse.

"I drove by the farm on Gypsy Hill in my hometown where all the older kids would go parking. The most beautiful horse I ever saw was there, Townsend Vigilita. She was a Morgan horse, very high-headed. She would be competitive even today. I stopped and met Sandy Neifert. We struck up a friendship and became the best of friends. I would go there to clean stalls just so I could be around the Morgans.



Harry and Carolyn were married 32 years.

"Once I was bit by the Morgan bug, I wanted my first Morgan. I started with a one-eyed mare named Dark Ruffles. But I would trade up with each horse that I sold. Then in a partnership with Sandy, I bought Braeburn Sunshine who was the reserve Grand National Champion Four-Year-Old Park Saddle in 1976 with Ann Scussell in the irons. My fondest memory of her was in 1978 or 1979 when she won the Park Saddle Ladies Class at New England with three other World Champions in the class.

"She was my first show horse. I was going to college so I didn't have any money, but I graduated college in 1973. After graduation I managed an Angus cattle farm for a year, but then I went back to horses full time. In 1974 I bought a horse van to ship some horses to the Midwest to make money. My father went with me on these trips. I went all the way to New Mexico to pick up Just A Nod Lieder who was by Windcrest Music Man. I ended up buying him from the Nobles. He was a wonderful stallion. He looked black but he was actually a very dark chestnut. Four white legs and a white face. He's the horse Jim used to ride when he was little.

"I'll never forget we were standing in mud in the paddock one day. Jim said 'You'd better let me get him. He knows me.' He was about five years old at the time. Jim walked that stallion from the paddock to the barn. Every time I led him, he wanted to breed something, but he was a perfect gentleman with Jim. His registration papers are still hanging on my wall."

Harry remembers meeting his future wife Carolyn before she remembers meeting him. "I was working out of Bridle Vale and Carolyn came by to visit Ann Scussell at Easter. She doesn't remember that, but I remember her Dorothy Hamill haircut.

"The first time we officially met was in 1978 when I came to help her hook horses. Carolyn graduated in the spring and that October I asked her to help at Oklahoma. When that was over she stayed on giving lessons and helped work horses. We moved to Mike Goebig's place with 20 some horses. Mike was living in the house so we stayed in our 30 foot camper. We would shower in the barn and sleep in the camper. In the winter there would be frost on the inside walls. That's when I knew she really must love me. This was

the start of Harry Sebring Stables.

"In 1983 I got the nerve to ask her to marry me. We got married in May of 1983. Mike moved to Louisiana and we moved out of the camper and into the house. Mike left a few clients during this transition which we helped with at the shows. In 1984, we had the opportunity to move to Connecticut. We were hired to manage Fantasia Farms in Guilford, CT. We could take training horses with us, as well as manage the big Fantasia breeding syndicate and train the farm horses. It was short lived but not all in vain. In 1985 Jim was born. That following summer we were asked to leave which took us to Greenville, NY. We were excited to be starting fresh with new clients who wanted to have a horse farm. Heathersfield Inc was established and we continued to grow. This too was not to last, in October of 1989 Jessica was born. In December of 1989 we were celebrating Christmas in Richmond, MA. This would be the final move and roots were established and the home of Sebring Stables was made. We moved with 21 horses and quickly grew to 35. We were very fortunate to have been able to rent the beautiful historic Green Meads Farm. It's Morgan history was in every nook and cranny and we were proud to be training show Morgans there once again."

Richmond was home. Sara was born here and our kids would start school, we became part of the community. "When Jim was five, we went to a preschool picnic and I met our neighbor Doug Kimple. He loved Morgans and he had a barn full, himself. We became great friends. He loved watching horses work, sharing stories, and dreaming of building his own place. He was 10 years older than me, but he's the man that built the Sebring Stables barn we are in today. We drew up the plans around my kitchen table over coffee. In 1999 we built the barn. Doug passed away ten years ago from cancer, but he helped me make my dream come true and I think we helped him fulfill his dream too.



*Harry was honored at the 2015 AMHA Convention as he was inducted into the Hall of Fame. He was surrounded by his family, Jessica, Carolyn, Jim and Sara Sebring.*

Park horses, along with R Bar B Lord Spence. Rapidan Georgian wasn't very big but he had a big heart and a great big motor. R Bar B Lord Spence was the first expensive horse I trained. He cost \$60,000. That made me treat him with kid gloves and he took advantage of that forever. Finally, enough was enough and we ended up lying in the middle of the arena together. Then he became my horse again.

"I loved Eminence Front. By Rapidan Georgian and out of Braeburn Sunshine, Carolyn and I chose a Who song for his name. He won the Junior Exhibitor Park Harness title and eventually become a pleasure driving horse. He was almost unbeatable.

"Savage Arms was the horse that got Ann Hailey involved in the breeding end of the Morgan industry. He showed English Pleasure, Park Harness and In Hand. He was wonderful in hand. Ann like him but he was on his way to Oklahoma. If he did well, she was going to purchase him. He was Reserve World Champion Stallion so she did buy him. Savage Arms was buried on the farm this spring after 31 years.

"Matter of Time was probably the best training job I've ever done. He had no turn to his neck when we started. I won the three-year-old stallion class, his owner came to the show and treated him like a pet and he was third or fourth in the championship. He would always show really great in the qualifier and then he wouldn't do well in the championship so I quit letting her see him. We won as a five-year-old in 1992 but there aren't any great pictures because when they turned the spotlight on, he ran off. I laughed. He ended up as a walk/trot horse.

There were so many favorite horses that Harry couldn't settle on even a few. He loved Salem Command (Amy did a lot of the work with him), CEN Can't Touch This (one of the great foundation broodmares of the Copper Beech program), Contagious (blew the rest of the class away in an 18 horse workout in the Amateur Pleasure Driving Class at Oklahoma), Millbrook Spellcaster (Jessica and Sara won world titles with him in equitation at Oklahoma), CBMF Restless (his career speaks for itself), CBMF Crown Prince (we planned his breeding and started from scratch) and many, many more.

While he became known as Mr. Park Harness, Harry always loved to show top Morgan horses in hand. "When I was younger, that's what I liked to do. I didn't show many two-year-olds. I brought them along slow as a two-year-old. I was blessed to have Ann and her patience. She liked in hand, but she



*Harry was joined by his son Jim and friend and fellow trainer Rodney Hicks after receiving the Richard E. Lavery Professional Horseman of the Year Award at the 2014 UPHA Convention.*

Harry was surrounded by wonderful horses and wonderful clients through the years. He talked about some of his favorites.

"Rapidan Georgian was quite the show horse. He was a three and four-year-old World Champion with lots of wins. We bought him at the Rapidan sale for not much money, started him, and he put us on the map for



*Harry was blessed to work side by side with his children. Jessica and Jim followed their parents into the family business and with their mother Carolyn and sister Sara, they carry forward the legacy of Sebring Stables.*

would wait until I thought it was right. I liked bringing them out as three-year-olds.

Harry also speaks of many, many clients but didn't want to name names in fear of leaving someone out. He did give credit to the Jubans who owned Rapidan Georgian. "They had faith in us when we hung out our shingle and were willing to pay us to train horses," said Harry.

He remembered fondly Jim and Bonnie Wecht. Ann Hailey has been a client for over 25 years. "She came in and wanted to buy a trail horse for her husband," explained Harry. "I had the perfect horse. She came back and bought another horse, but it turned out to be a loser – allergic to leather. So she tried again and bought another show horse. She got interested in breeding and then really took off.

"Patsy Lloyd and her daughter Liz have been with us the last ten years. They surprised me by coming to Minnesota for the convention. They also came to Chicago when I got the Richard Lavery Professional Horseman Award. They were always so supportive. If I wanted to make an investment in horses myself, Patsy would underwrite it and we'd make a little money on it."

Besides breeding, owning, showing and training quality Morgan horses, Harry Sebring was committed to serving the Morgan breed. He served as an AMHA board member for many years and was the President of the AMHA for two terms. He also served on the AMHA Judging Standards Committee, AMHA Professional Committee, USEF Morgan Committee, and administrator for the Judges' schools.

Dear friend Cindy Mugnier says, "Harry certainly has been unbelievable in his volunteering for AMHA. He was a cornerstone in getting the judges' school underway. For months on end every Monday, Harry, Bob Brooks and I would meet at a restaurant in Connecticut to iron out the curriculum. Harry was the key to its success for sure.

This past February, Harry was inducted into the AMHA Hall of Fame at the AMHA Convention. In 2008, Harry received the USEF Pegasus Award and the Bill Robinson Harness Trophy for outstanding achievement in the harness arena. In 2013 he was honored by the UPHA with the Richard E Lavery Professional Horseman's Award.

"He was an exceptional President of the AMHA for two terms. He was truly a President of the People. He has been a treasured, cherished friend. Whenever I've had a professional or personal issue, I've always sought Harry's counsel," said Cindy.

Mike Goebig says, "Harry has been such a huge part of our industry, both his personality, and in donating all his time to so many projects. He's also professionally a great trainer. I've bought a lot of horses from him. He has a lot of craft. It's really easy to follow when you buy a horse from him which is a very comfortable thing when you buy a horse. He really covers all aspects of the industry.

"I loved working with him on the AMHA board. He's really far sighted and he looks at the ramifications of each item that comes up of importance.

"He's always been a great friend. For forty years, he's in all parts of my life, good and bad," said Mike.

Georgie Green said about him, "Harry's always been my go to guy. If I needed anything, he was dependable, honest and a mathematical genius. He made a great Vice President Finance. He was a very effective President. He traveled a lot and had an understanding of the entire landscape of the Morgan horse. He was a person that could put his own personal druthers aside for the good of the group.

Garn Walker spoke of him fondly. "I've known Harry for a long time, 40 years. He's been a great asset to the Morgan breed. He was a great horse trainer, AMHA president and leader of the judges' school. He's devoted his life to the Morgan horse. I have amazing respect for him. He was always open to any dialog about judging, horses, buying or selling. He worked very hard and has shown some great horses."

One of Harry's other passions was music and with other horsemen and friends, he formed Harry and the Lashwhips, a rock band that made their debut at the 1996 Morgan Grand National and continued off and on through the years including playing at the 2014 AMHA Convention.

Harry's life spoke volumes. He was dedicated to the Morgan breed. He was madly in love with his wife and fiercely proud of his children. And he was a wise and caring friend. Besides raising his own family, he took in junior exhibitors like Amy Neifert Champion and Megan Ballin Schatzberg throughout the years to make them a part of his family.

"I met Harry when I was just 12 years old," said Megan. "My parents were divorcing and we moved to Massachusetts. I had a horse that we boarded at Sebring Stables. Harry and Carolyn welcomed me into their life. I was there every day after school and on the weekend. I truly became part of their family. I was there when Sara was born. I grew up with them and it was a wonderful place to grow up. The kids are amazing, I mean we're not kids anymore, but they are all so funny, so smart and so hard-working. Harry and Carolyn are wonderful parents and they raised amazing kids."

And the beauty of Harry's life is the legacy that he has left us. Through Carolyn and their children, Jim, Jessica and Sara, who carry on his love and devotion to the Morgan horse and will for many more generations to follow, to the countless talented Morgans he has bred and bloodlines he has developed, Harry's legacy is timeless. I was blessed to know him.



*Harry's legacy will also be carried forward in the foals born of the breeding program that he and Ann Hailey developed for Copper Beech Morgan Farm.*