

Triumph Stables

John and Belle Hufferd In their 'Field of Dreams'

BY JENNY GREY

John and Belle Hufferd, owners of Triumph Stables in Roanoke, Indiana are the perfect match. They fit like a glove with complementary skills and expertise across all of the major divisions in the Morgan horse repertoire. To date they have achieved over 250 national and world titles – a phenomenal score by anyone's standards. John, Belle and the Triumph Stables team not only provide a winning environment, they provide a home away from home for their clients and act as surrogate parents for the young people they instruct. They do not consider their chosen careers as jobs they perform before returning home at night; it is a lifestyle they both love, aptly described by Belle as a 'Field of Dreams'.

John Hufferd was a city boy, born and raised in Indianapolis. Spending the summers as a young boy with his horse-trainer uncle, David Hadley, who worked at Sugar Run Farm in Ohio, he became infatuated with horses. From the time he was 13 until age 17, he worked at the farm starting at \$10 a week, spending the last two years living with his uncle until returning home to Indianapolis. Needing a job, he worked for Terry Rutledge at Highland Farm while going to school at night. While Sugar Run Farm was primarily focused on breeding and training, Highland was exclusively a training operation with several great horses in the lineup. It was through this experience that John began to think about a career as a trainer.

The transition did not happen immediately and it was several years before John met his future wife and soul mate, Belle. Leaving Highland Farm to work for an entrepreneur for two years, he learned invaluable lessons about business and how to manage people. Still unsure about which direction his life was taking,

he considered a career in the military but another, more attractive opportunity arose. His Uncle Dave arranged for him to interview with Pierre Loiselle, head trainer at Sherry Cole's Triple Creek Farm. John was hired, bringing along his younger brother, Kurt, who was about 15 years old at the time.

"Everybody loved John", said Sherry, remembering with pleasure the time he spent at Triple Creek. "He was so mellow and easy to get along with. First, I have to say what a wonderful father he was to his little girl, in spite of the long hours he worked. He was also a great father figure to Kurt. I was so impressed back then by the kind of person I knew he would become." Even though John was only 19 or 20, Sherry never worried about her own teenagers if they were out with John. "He was so good with my kids...I was very comfortable knowing they were with him."

John was also a fast learner who had the opportunity to work with Triple Creek's broodmare manager, June Brockett-Wright, who bred the great Vigilmarch. "It was obvious early on that working with the foals was his forte", Sherry observed. "June taught him a lot but he was a natural." When Triple Creek donated a yearling filly to the Indiana All Morgan show for their auction, John, who trained the horse, told Sherry she should be shown. She disagreed, thinking that if the filly did poorly, then nobody would bid on her. "John was right", she declared. "She was much prettier than anything out there. I should have listened to him!"



John Hufferd is well known for training and presenting a long list of winning young in hand horses. Ultra's Formal Request was his first of many Morgan Breeder Sweepstakes and Morgan Weanling Gala Champions. She won the top prize in 1993 and went on to several world championships.

Before long, John became Pierre's assistant trainer, working with all of the horses including the wonderful Triple Creek stallions, Applevale Boy King and Tedwin Topic. He also learned how to ride, taught by Triple Creek's instructor during the day and by Cathy Grimes at night. "He grew so much in the five years he was with us", Sherry said with pride. "I can't say enough good things about John. He is such a good guy. Every year when I go to Oklahoma I have to give him the biggest hug!"



The Triumph Stables team provides a warm and welcome environment for everyone who pulls into the driveway. L-R Linel Mullendore, Kelsey Irvine, Tyler Hufferd, Axel Ortega, Belle Hufferd, Aaryn Whitacre, Alex Vicente and John Hufferd.

After Triple Creek, John worked for Pierre's mother, Josephine Loiselle, in Michigan for a year then joined with Jim Lowry to work for Jack Boyd Smith before they leased a farm in Ohio that once belonged to the late Jack White. At the beginning, it was an uphill battle. John worked horses during the day and delivered pizza at night to make ends meet. A kind neighbor, who worked for the Campbell Soup Company, would deliver cans of soup to the barn at a discounted price during the lean, winter months to make sure he had enough to eat. Persistence, belief in himself and hard work paid off as the business gradually grew.

When Jim Lowry left Ohio to work for Apple Flat Farm, John continued to manage the now-named Triumph Stable as a sole owner. It was during this time that Russ and Jeanette Quilhot of Indian Creek fame sent horses to him for training. When Russ decided to build Indian Creek Farm on a beautiful piece of property in Roanoke, Indiana, he leased the existing barn to John where the Quilhot owned horses were

housed and trained until the new barn was built. A satisfied customer, Russ offered John the position of head trainer at Indian Creek. While John appreciated the offer, he declined because Triumph had become very successful. At John's recommendation, Kurt was hired for Indian Creek and has remained there ever since, now working alongside Shanna Gish.

Already well-established at Triumph Stables, John's life became even better when he met his future wife, Belle, at a horse show in 1994 and married her in 1995. She grew up in Howell, Michigan, where her parents owned orchards. Because they were not horse enthusiasts, Belle's opportunities to ride as a child were limited to back yard ponies and 4H until she graduated from high school and went to college. Life took an unexpected turn in her first year away from home. Her dad was diagnosed with cancer and was forced to sell the farm. Moving back home to help care for him, she filled the void with horses, buying her first Morgan, Memorial, from Steve Smith. He was not only a beautiful animal, he became one of the best

hunter pleasure horses of his generation. Before meeting up with John, Belle showed Memorial around Michigan and the neighboring states, enjoying the horse shows with her friend, Lori Marino.

When Belle moved to Indiana to begin a life with John, she not only gained a husband, she became mom to Tiffany, who now lives in New Orleans and Tyler, a familiar figure in horse show circles. A natural parent who has been 'mom' to many junior exhibitors, she is a wonderful role model and encouraging coach to these young people. Loved by everyone who comes to Triumph, she is described by Diana Lahr as the sister all women would want.



Belle and John enjoyed taking a ride while on a well-earned winter vacation in Costa Rica.

"My personality meshes very well with Belle", Diana explained. "She gives me confidence and she is very patient. I came from the stock world so it was a rough transition to get a head set. I had never shown a Morgan before." John and Belle found the beautiful Dragonfire Timeless for Diana and in her debut year, she won two world titles in the hunter pleasure division. When she was called to the presentation area, Diana was in a state of disbelief. Waiting to ride her victory pass under the spotlights Belle said, "I knew you could do it!"

"They are very unusual in that they make it a family affair", Diana added. "There is always an 'adopted' child they are willing to help out." When Diana's daughter, Olivia, was given an internship in Fort Wayne, she lived with Belle and John for the summer.

Home to Morgans, plus a few 'in-hand' Saddlebreds and Dutch Harness horses, Triumph Stables is a hive of activity, especially at this time of year when the weanlings and yearlings arrive to prepare for the



The 2014 Morgan Weanling Gala Champion Intense was not only trained and shown by John, but also bred by John and Belle. She was purchased just prior to Jubilee by Roxanne Sardelli Greenway and recently added New England's Grand Champion Mare title in her 2015 season debut.

Sweepstakes at the Jubilee Regional show, Louisville and the All American Cup. John's success rate with the in-hand horses is quite remarkable. Last year at Jubilee he won the Morgan Weanling Gala with their home-bred Intense, owned by Roxanne Sardelli Greenway and the Futurity Colts and Geldings Futurity Yearling Championship with Dennis and Cletus Yoder's Fantasia. At the Grand National last year, he won the Junior Gelding World Championship with Diane Kleinecke's LSB Game Time. Always at the top of the ribbons with their in-hand horses, both trained and home-grown, John and Belle are very proud to have bred and sold the great Graycliff Tony in utero.

John's eyes literally light up when he talks about the thrill of competition. A self-confessed workaholic who hates to lose, he is fed and invigorated by the young horses he shows and what they represent for the

future. He learned long ago from a horse psychologist that a horse's brain is fully developed at birth and he differentiates himself by treating them the same as the older horses. He learned in the early days that conditioning is key and the babies can quickly learn how to do their job.

John and Belle are also responsible for training, showing and handling a legion of mature horses who have achieved greatness both in the show ring and in the breeding shed. They handle Minion Millennium, one of the top-producing stallions in the country who sires champions in all divisions. A long history with Morgan horses has enabled John to give invaluable advice to his clients on breeding. "I know what's in the background", he observed. "I like to put the parts together so they make sense."

Attending their first Louisville show at the Kentucky State Fair in 2006 was a huge thrill for John and Belle. With a big money prize on the line, they competed against at least 25 American Saddlebred weanlings in the ASR Futurity of Kentucky with The Power of One. "I love chasing the money!" John admitted. "When we won second place (a reserve world's championship in Louisville terms) and the crowd gave us a huge cheer, we felt like rock stars!" he exclaimed, remembering the occasion as if it were yesterday.

Belle has enjoyed her own show ring success with her trademark crisp, clean performances. Just in the last decade she has achieved world championships with Orrwood's Special Edition, Briar Oaks Patriot and Silverheels Lumination CH in the hunter pleasure division and with Meadowmist Legacy in western pleasure, her favorite discipline. "It's so precise. It takes so much time and patience to teach them", she explained, relishing the challenges it brings. Belle still aspires to win an open western pleasure world championship. With her innate talent, patience and focus on all of the minute details making the difference between a good performance and a great performance, she has all of the ingredients necessary to achieve this ambitious goal.

While Belle enjoys winning, her most important career achievements have come more from the joy of seeing her clients succeed than for adding to her

personal list of accomplishments. She is especially proud of her past and present junior exhibitors. Those who have won world championships in both pleasure and equitation under Belle's direction are Leslie Linvill, Alyssa Rumsey, Lauren Cook, Olivia Lahr, Travis Wilson and Josh Rohrs. "I don't see this as a job", Belle stated, in a way that made it clear there is nowhere else she would rather be and nothing else that would make her as happy as she is today. A nurturing person who enjoys people, Belle opens her home to out of town clients and visitors. "I want to make everyone welcome", she emphasized. Understanding that their clients' time at the barn is often an escape from busy, high-stress jobs, she wants to provide an environment where they can relax and enjoy their 'horse therapy'.

John, who had worked primarily with horses in the park, English pleasure and in-hand divisions, had little experience with junior exhibitors until Belle came into the picture. He admits he had no concept of how much work it takes to put a finished, young equestrian into the ring – a process at which Belle is an expert. While the young people she has trained have been extraordinarily successful, Belle understands that her job is also to develop character. "It's about life lessons", she observed. The discipline, focus and respect for others learned at Triumph have been invaluable assets to its graduates, many of whom have gone on to become doctors, lawyers or have found success in other professional fields.

Both John and Belle agree they could not be successful without their great team -- assistant trainers Aaryn Whitacre, Alex Vicente and their son, Tyler, as well as Alex's son Werner and his nephew, Axel Ortega, who groom and perform farm chores. To keep the business end of the farm running, they rely on their office manager, Vicki Higgins. Uncle Dave Hadley and Aunt Sandy are still prominent figures in John and Belle's life. They take care of the farm, the house and the dogs when everyone is gone to a show.

Alex Vicente, a familiar presence in the show ring who has worked at the farm for 15 years, feels part of the family. He enjoys every aspect of his job and is an invaluable resource, especially for his assistance with the many weanlings and yearlings being trained

for the in-hand division. When John and Belle were at the New England Regional show, Alex was at home working the youngsters in preparation for the Morgan Weanling Gala at Jubilee.

Very appreciative of the opportunity she has been given and of the trust they place in her, Aaryn Whitacre, hired as an assistant trainer, has been at Triumph for 9 ½ years, doing everything from working horses, to giving lessons, administering medications and performing other aspects of farm management. When Aaryn was married in Jamaica recently, John walked her down the aisle. "They are like a second family to me and John is like a dad", she told us. "I can go to them about anything. They do kind things for people all the time. They both have the ability to look at horses and know if they are special. They have a unique eye for the extraordinary. John has an amazing feel for whether a horse is using itself correctly – especially a driving horse, and he has a great eye for the babies and the breeding aspect of the business. He taught me this job doesn't end when you pull out of the driveway; it's 24 x 7. It's a career, not just a job. Belle excels in attention to detail, presentation and pulling together the whole package."

Tyler Hufferd, who began showing in the lead line division wearing Travis Higgins' outgrown western clothes, has made a successful transition from being the junior exhibitor son of well-known trainers to being an assistant trainer himself. "When I'm working, I'm treated like any other employee", said Tyler. "But when I walk in the house, I'm their son...I cried the first time I got on a horse. My sister was more into it than I was." Tyler quickly caught up with Tiffany. While still riding in 13 and under, he won three world championships in the classic pleasure division with such great horses as Bery Banke Toot Toot, Merriehill Stonewall Will and All Hail to the Chief GCH. Called upon many times to catch ride and drive in multiple divisions, he had years of opportunity to learn and grow his skills. Spending time in a military boarding school during the high school years he also considered a career in the armed services but the horses were a stronger draw.

Tyler is now a full-time assistant trainer in what



Tim and Carol Selinsky are the proud owners of Causing Chaos, the 2013 World Champion Mare, beautifully trained and presented by John Hufferd.



Belle Hufferd has won multiple national and world titles in both the hunter and western pleasure divisions including the 2013 Four-Year Old Western Pleasure World Championship with Lyn and Jimmie Estell's Meadowmist Legacy.

he describes as a tight-knit team who knows how to get the job done. He considers his dad's biggest strength is his determination and his ability to figure out each individual horse in his care. From his mom he learned patience and attention to detail. "They are both very good with clients", he added. "People know they will be taken care of."

Cathy Blackburn and her daughter, Lauren Osborne, who became Triumph clients at the end of the 2014 show season, are enjoying Lauren's last year as a junior exhibitor. With five horses in training for equitation, western pleasure and hunter pleasure, they appreciate the diversity of Triumph Stables. "Lauren has catch-riden for them a few times over the years so we knew how talented and professional they were", Cathy observed. "It was a huge draw for us that they can provide training in all three seats." Lauren commutes from Oklahoma, staying with John and Belle who have generously opened their home and treated her as one of the family. In the fall she will head to the University of Louisville with a slightly easier commute. "It was the best possible fit. They do whatever it takes to do the right thing by their customer and the horses." A great example is that of matching Lauren up with Sandy Sessink who is coaching Lauren in saddle seat equitation.

Belle trains Lauren in the hunt and western seat equitation disciplines. "She is perfect for working with junior exhibitors – so positive and caring", Cathy explained. "She's also a very hard worker! She and John truly care about every horse at the farm and root just as hard for the horses who have left for different owners. If something will benefit a customer or a horse, they do it! Lauren loves it there." A few years ago when there was a big cadre of junior exhibitors showing under the Triumph banner, she and John attended a show without them (they were only showing in-hand horses). We saw Belle looking a little down one morning and asked her what was the matter. "I miss my kids!" she responded.

Speaking from the junior exhibitor's point of view, Lauren Osborne loves the atmosphere at Triumph. Having lost her beloved Cingate Jack Flash last year, she found herself lacking in confidence and

needing an encouraging environment for her last year as a junior exhibitor. "Belle is amazing!" she affirmed. "If you are doing something tough, she pushes you but is encouraging at the same time. Her kindness makes you want to not disappoint her. Belle's goal is to give me self-confidence. She is big on 'I can do it.'" Lauren proved that she could indeed 'do it' at New England this year, making history by being the first person ever to win her qualifying classes in all three seats as well as the western and hunt seat equitation championships and top three in the saddle seat equitation championship at this prestigious show.

Lauren had never shown a horse other than Cingate Jack Flash in western seat equitation. Not only did Belle go out of her way to find the right mount, she arranged for Lauren to lease Merriehill the Lion King from the Rumsey family because Simba and Flash are half-brothers. "He's Flash in a different horse", Belle told her. Lauren also told us of John's kindness when she was feeling a little down about being away from her home and friends on Valentine's Day. John knew she has an obsession with sweets so that night he came back from the store with a huge bag of candy and a card to brighten her day. "Both Belle and John have a parent relationship with their junior exhibitors. I stay at their house; we eat together – I can tell them anything!" she added, reaffirming John and Belle as wonderful parents, not only to their own children, but to all of the young people who come to Triumph Stables.

Roxanne Sardelli Greenway, who has enjoyed a long and successful association with Triumph Stables over the years, had the best description we could imagine for John and Belle Hufferd. "They are the Ying and the Yang of the horse business", she emphasized, stating that John has been very influential in their breeding programs as well as brilliant at developing the park and pleasure horses while Belle excels in hunt and western. Roxanne has known John and Belle since the early 1990's, beginning when John showed Stonecroft Shalimar. "They are so true and honest. You know what's going on and there is no sugar coating. I appreciate that."

When one of the Triumph customers was getting ready to retire from the horse business, Roxanne was

considering the purchase of a weanling filly from their show string. John questioned, "Why not the stud?" They both started laughing; then almost before realizing it, Roxanne purchased Minion Millennium, although she had not considered buying a stallion (John can be very persuasive). "John does a wonderful job of managing a stud", Roxanne emphasized. "I never wanted to own a stud but it has been a wonderful partnership... and when they are not intent on getting a horse into the ring they are a lot of fun -- laid back and social."

Barb Rudicel, owner of Raintree Morgans, became one of Triumph's first customers when John moved to Roanoke, Indiana in the 1980's. Like Roxanne Sardelli Greenway, she appreciates John and Belle's honesty. "It's the reason I have stayed with them for so long", she explained. "I have sent them several horses and some didn't work out. They let me know before I spent a lot of money." Raintree has enjoyed great success with their Triumph trained horses. The first weanling Barb sent to John (before he met Belle), was reserve in the Sweepstakes when it was still held at the Mid-A show. "I was the first client who made John really think about conditioning the young ones", Barb remembered. "She (Raintree Celine) was a nice baby. She came out like a star the first time around and was first on every card; then she ran out of gas – she needed more conditioning. After that the babies were worked as hard as the horses. They would run them to Kurt's barn and back and all around the farm." The Triumph trained youngsters are known for showing back with a bright, fresh attitude. Their willingness to keep on showing is a differentiating factor that keeps them at the top of the cards.

"John and Belle work very well together", Barb added. "We have always been good friends. You can drop into the barn any time unannounced and the horses are groomed and turned out as if they are ready to go into the show ring...and Alex, Aaryn and Tyler are an exceptionally good team. I appreciate all they have done. They have made me a lot of Grand National champions!"

Tim and Carol Selinsky of Fieldcrest Farm are also very satisfied clients. Tim's father raised Morgans



When John and Belle married in 1995, Belle became 'mom' to Tiffany (above left) and Tyler, now an assistant trainer at Triumph Stables.



A father figure to many of the young people at Triumph, John walked Aaryn Whitacre down the aisle at her recent wedding in Jamaica.

during the 1960's and 70's with the Fieldcrest name passing from father to son. It was not until 2005, however, that Tim and Carol began a new Morgan breeding operation as a retirement project, beginning with a broodmare purchased from Lynn Peeples. Both Tim and Carol had studied bloodlines, but needed an expert trainer to show their stock. John's name came to the forefront with his great reputation for showing the babies. Deciding to purchase Whispering War Chant who was in training at Triumph, they embarked on both an exciting breeding and show career. Outstanding in both the in-hand and pleasure driving divisions, War Chant was unbeaten at the New England Regional in 2012, giving John one of the most exciting wins of his life as the East Coast Pleasure Driving Champion in an environment as fiercely competitive as that of the Grand National in Oklahoma City. It equaled the excitement of winning the World Champion Mare title with the yearling, Ultra's Formal Request.

Carol tells a funny story of when Belle and John came to Fieldcrest to see Fieldcrest Captainelectic, nicknamed 'Bubba' for Tim's dad, 'Bub', who had recently passed away. Carol trains her babies to come to her instead of having to catch them. As a result, Bubba followed her around like a puppy dog. "When John came to see little Bubba, he wouldn't do anything", Carol remembered. Bubba wasn't interested in working with John, and John saw no potential in him as a weanling. "John keeps telling me you can't baby these horses", she added. "But I'm a good mom and I treat them the way I treat my kids... in fact John often calls me 'Mom'! ...We knew what we had so Tim worked with him and long lined him until the 'stallion' started coming out and we knew we needed someone else to handle him." When John and Belle came back to see Bubba later and Tim and Carol turned him loose, he put on quite a show, snorting and running around with his tail over his back as if to say "So what do you think of me now?" They thought enough of him to take him back to Triumph for training and by 2014, he was crowned the Reserve World Champion Junior Stallion as a two-year old.

When Tim and Carol decided to purchase a top broodmare prospect for Fieldcrest, John led them

to the perfect horse. When they were sitting by their stalls situated near the in gate at Oklahoma City, Carol saw a mare she had admired for some time. John, who was watching with them, stated "No – that's the one you want", pointing to Causing Chaos. They followed her back to her stall, closing the deal shortly afterwards. This lovely mare won three world championships, including World Champion Mare with Frank Miller leading in 2012, then after the purchase by Tim and Carol, she was undefeated again in 2013 under John's direction as World Champion Senior Mare and World Champion Mare. She is now taking a sabbatical back at Fieldcrest to carry her own foal by Mizrahi.

Another purchase for the Selinsky family probably would not have happened without Belle's intervention. Looking for a bombproof mount for their grandchildren who are not able to ride frequently, they asked John and Belle to look around. Belle, who loves kids, knew of a perfect child's mount – a 15 year-old gelding named Curious George, owned by Connor Farley. Belle persuaded Connor to part with him, knowing he would go to a wonderful home.

These are just a few of the stories and testimonials illustrating the lives of John and Belle Hufferd, extraordinarily caring people who use their talents to make others successful. Although the farm keeps them extremely busy, they pursue other interests when they have time. Belle, who loves to garden, has created beautiful flowerbeds around the house that add to the



While on a visit to Triumph, the junior exhibitors raided John and Belle's closet, dressed up in their clothes and put on a dance concert for their trainers. L-R Sydney Withers, Olivia Lahr, Travis Wilson, Madison Wurster, Alyssa Rumsey and Kaitlin Emmerson.

warm atmosphere of the environment. John, who used to have no interest in what Belle planted, discovered the joys of gardening more recently and has taken to it with the same zeal as he approaches his profession. On the rare occasions when they do take time away from the farm, they love to take a winter vacation somewhere warm or even rent a cottage on a nearby lake where Belle can kayak and John can fish in between running back to the farm to take care of business.

They are superbly talented trainers with an incredible record of achievement. Not only do they produce an outstanding product, their customers and the young people they train are treated like family, with Triumph Stables being their home away from home. This is a place where stars are created in an environment where warmth, fun and friendship abound in John and Belle Hufferd's Field of Dreams.



One of the many world titled entries sired by Minion Millennium, Millennium Force claimed the 2013 Four-Year Old Pleasure Driving World Championship and Reserve World Champion Gelding honors with John presenting for Roxanne Sardelli Greenway.



Memorial, Belle's first Morgan, was one of the best hunter pleasure horses of his generation. Shown by Leslie Linvill, this world championship winner was a frequent visitor to the presentation area.