

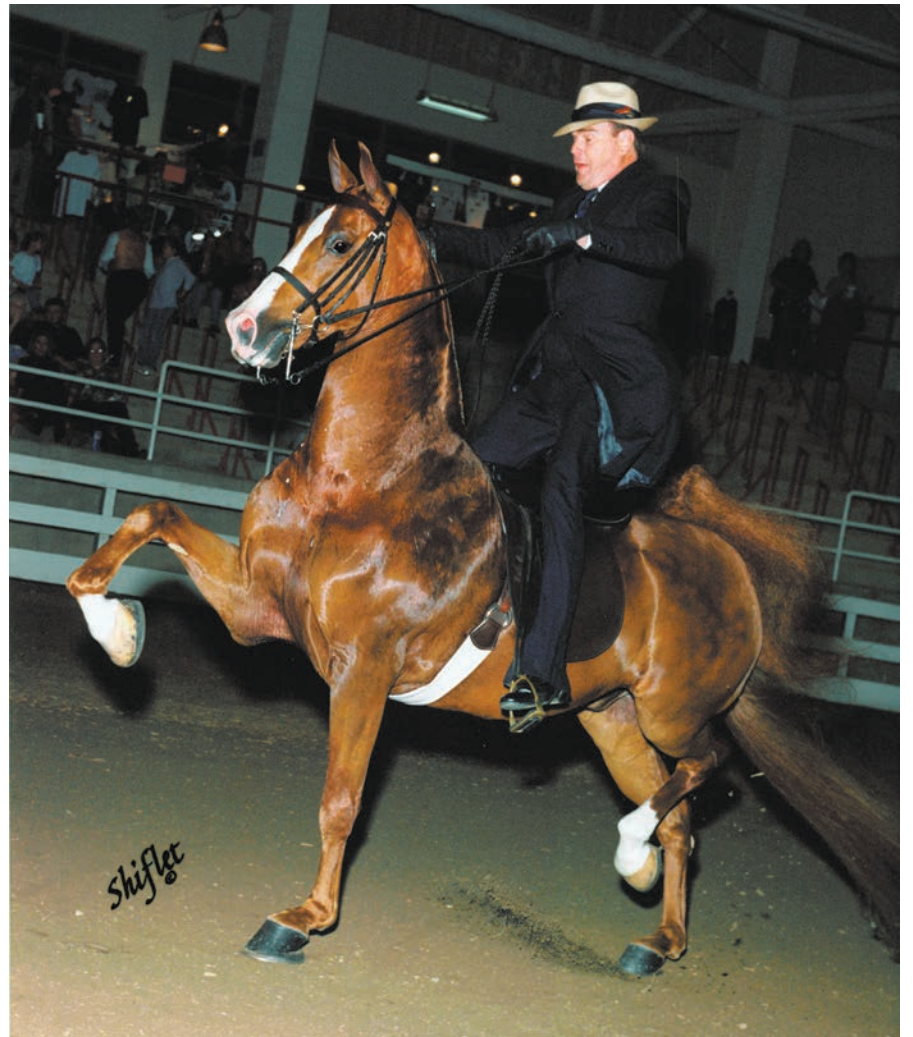
# FAREWELL TO THE REMARKABLE

## *CH Yes It's True*

By Bob Funkhouser



After repurchasing CH Yes It's True Sam Stafford won the 2001 World's Grand Champion Three-Gaited honors for Pigeon Roost Farm.



Pictured at Asheville Lions Club, Larry Hodge won Yes It's True's first world's titles, taking the junior over two stake and junior championship in 1998.

*Noted NFL coach Bill Parcells once said, "You are what your record says you are."*

If that's the case in the sport of showing horses, CH Yes It's True will be forever remembered as one of the greats. Of all the walk-trot horses that have competed over the past two decades, few if any, can compare when it comes to success with different trainers, different exhibitors and different divisions. Over a 14-year span he accumulated 64 ASHA Championship Points, 12 Louisville wins and 4 reserves to go with a boat load of other titles from places like Kansas City, Lexington, Rock Creek, Asheville Lions, and Devon, among others.

The beloved champion peacefully passed away February 4 in the retirement pasture at Mercer Springs Farm at the age of 23. Karly Morgan was CH Yes It's True's last student and Smith Lilly his last trainer. They also gave him the life he deserved in retirement.

Bred by Caughman Farms, Inc, Eastover, SC, the beloved champion didn't start out as a walk-trot sensation. In fact, he didn't even start out being named Yes It's True. CF Pop The Cork was a son of CF First Night Out and the Broodmare Hall of Fame matron, Callaway's Coronet, a CH

Will Shriver daughter. CF Pop The Cork got his start there at Caughman Farms with Craig Chase and then was purchased by Sam and Anne (Neil) Stafford.

"We bought him from Caughman as a three-year-old," said Sam Stafford. "He was gaited and still a stud. He was very nice doing that but couldn't step up. We gelded him and took him to Mrs. Parker's and turned him out for a little while. We got him back up and here he came. He enjoyed the three-gaited thing so much more.





Elisabeth Goth had some thrilling rides during her ownership, including a world's champion amateur over two title.



Phillipa Sledge and the game world's grand champion won three consecutive amateur world's champion of champions titles.



Kathy Lyda Berger was among the four amateurs who ever showed Yes It's True. They earned a reserve world's champion of champions title.

He was such a kind horse and a people's horse. He gave you his all but he wasn't always the easiest. You asked him to do something, you didn't tell him to do something."

"He couldn't rack fast enough to get hot," added Anne Neil. "We quit racking him, gelded him and trimmed him. This was before we had bought First Night Out and I told Sam we needed to get that done before this horse (Yes It's True) came out. We knew he was some kind of stock. He could go slow and poke his knee way up there. He had a kind eye and was just a great horse, one of my all-time favorites."

With his name changed to Yes It's True, the dynamic gelding first went to the Asheville Lions Club Horse Show where Stafford won the Junior Three-Gaited Stake. It was also where Larry Hodge purchased the gelding for Tommy and Bonnie Hamilton.

"Larry bought him while Sam was still in the ring," recalled Anne. "I felt bad that Sam didn't get to show him more but Larry had made up his mind he wanted him."

"I first saw him as a two-year-old down at Caughman's," added Hodge. "I liked him a lot then, but didn't get it done. When I saw him there with Sam I knew I wanted him."

A couple months later Hodge and Yes It's True made a test run at Shelbyville and then took the junior over two stake at Louisville and the Junior Three-Gaited World's Champion of Champions honors. It was a pretty good junior championship with Lady Periana, New York State Of Mind, Cabaret Girl, Callaway's Blue Agate, She's A Contender, Simply Majestic and Cocktail Dreams in the ribbons.

"One of the great ones," exclaimed Hodge when describing Yes It's True. "He was a super horse. If you remember when I showed him as a junior horse I came in posting like an equitation rider and everyone was going crazy. Lillian Shively told me I could have a career in equitation. That's not how I usually ride but he was so comfortable, so correct, you could post either diagonal and it was so comfortable."

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In January of 1999 Elisabeth Goth was the new owner and they made their debut at Devon, winning the open class and Three-Gaited Championship. In August they were crowned the Amateur Three-Gaited Over 15.2 World's Champions. Hodge was back in the saddle for the 2000 season as Goth was showing Hollywood Excellence. Yes It's True and Hodge won both classes at Rock Creek before heading to Louisville where they were reserve to George Knight and American Win in the over two stake,

defeating horses like Castle Bravo and Page Me. Back in the world's grand championship both of Goth's entries showed up taking first and third. Kim Cowart and CH A Sweet Treat garnered the reserve world's grand championship behind Goth and Hollywood Excellence.

The next year Hodge and Yes It's True swept the over two qualifier and championship at Rock Creek and Lexington Junior League. That victory pass on the Red Mile would be their last together and Blythwood Farms repurchased the gelding.

"We always loved him and decided we wanted him back," said Anne Neil.

"We felt like he a lot more still in him," said Sam Stafford. "I didn't have much time with him before we had to go to Louisville but it was great to have him back. He brightened up when we got to Louisville and he put on two really good shows. That horse was so balanced and could go a park trot. There was no need to step up and go fast. By the end of the week the Sledges owned him."

Stafford and CH Yes It's True were the World's Grand Champion Three-Gaited titleholders for 2001 and it was a class of exceptional talent. Elisabeth Goth and Hollywood Excellence were reserve, Mitch Clark and Castle Bravo were third, Gene Boggs and To Die For were fourth, Jerry Hutson and Page Me were fifth and John Biggins aboard CF Burn Out were sixth.

The next chapter for the newly crowned world's grand champion would be the amateur division with Phillipa Sledge. Mary Jane Sledge and her family were known for great walk-trot horses going back to world's grand champion Nellie Pigeon and Yes It's True fit right into the family's heritage.





Paul Boone had the utmost respect for the gelding and what he brought day in and day out.



Karly Morgan was the last person to show the legend before giving him a great life in retirement. They won numerous junior exhibitor championships in their four seasons together.



Always noted as a "people horse," CH Yes It's True had a great connection with his last owner, Karly Morgan.

"It was a lot of work because he was a game sucker," explained Stafford. "You had to stay on top of him. I jogged him lightly and as we got closer to the horse show I cranked it up and increased the work. Phillipa [Sledge] did a great job with him."

"I was so proud of her," added Neil. "Phillipa worked really hard to master that. She worked out and rode a lot at Rob and Sarah's [Byers] so she could stay up with this horse. She fit him beautifully and rode him beautifully."

Indeed she did! For the next three years CH Yes It's True and Phillipa Sledge were the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Three-Gaited team. Over that time period they defeated the likes of Callaway's County Fair, Pas De Deux, Designed, CH Man On The Run, CH Radiant Success, CH SS Lies And Alibis, Strapless, Callaway's Buttons and Bows, CH Trapp Mountain, CH The Super Nova, Carolina's Top Gun, and She's My Desire BH, among others.

With Sledge having professional commitments, Stafford was back in the saddle for the 2005 season winning at Germantown and then sweeping the open division at Lexington Junior League before returning to the green shavings. They earned their second World's Champion Three-Gaited Over 15.2 title, this time beating a good group, including Manila Thrilla and Todd Miles in reserve and Bob Phillips with Albelarm's Radiant Lady in third. On Saturday night Manila Thrilla and Miles took the title with Yes It's True parading out with the reserve world's grand championship ahead of CH Rejoice, The Engraver, Victoria Lynn, Lime Twisted Gin, I'm Sky High

and Sightline. In 2006, Stafford and the gelding would earn two more Louisville reserves, including another reserve world's grand championship to Manila Thrilla and Miles.

Paul Boone was looking for a top walk-trot horse for Kathy Lyda Berger who was coming off of back surgery and Yes It's True turned out to be that horse. Boone got the first couple of rides and then Berger took over winning the amateur qualifier and championship at Blue Ridge, following up on that with the Reserve World's Champion



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of Champions Amateur Three-Gaited title. A shortened 2008 season saw Boone win the Three-Gaited Jackpot at Blue Ridge Classic and an top three prize in the over two stake at Louisville before selling Yes It's True to the Fred Morgan family for their daughter Karly.

"He was a heck of a horse and he was the perfect people trainer as well," laughed Boone. "He trained four trainers and four riders how to do it HIS WAY. You did it his way, I promise

you that. He was game and had a perfect mouth but you had better be ready to ride. There was no down time once you were in the saddle.

"We sold him to Smith Lilly's people at the age of 14 and his gameness never faded. His grit and energy allowed him to be so successful for so long. He wasn't fragile and needed very little maintenance."

So the final stop for CH Yes It's True would be West Virginia at the Lilly family's Mercer Springs Farm.

"He was Karly's second horse and her first 'A level' show horse," stated Smith Lilly. "She did a great job learning to ride him. He never stopped thinking like a stake horse. The Morgan family saw him through the final chapter of his career honorably and gave him a great retirement."

Before he enjoyed that life of retirement he gave Karly some thrilling rides, winning junior exhibitor championships at River Ridge, Roanoke, Bonnie Blue, ASHAV, Raleigh Spring and Bluefield, in addition to a reserve championship at Lexington Junior League and top three at Louisville.

"He was my first real show horse and from day one it's been about more than just the ride," said Karly Morgan. "Our connection is unbreakable, it always will be. I'll always have his rebellious, loving soul with me. 'Ty' was a legend and it was an honor to be a part of his life."

What a career, what a personality, what a spirit. You also have to give credit to the trainers and owners who were a part of his life and were smart enough to let him be who he was and as Karly so aptly said, that was a legend!