

# Morgan Horses

## The Family Sport for Sue and Shane Oliver

by Bob Funkhouser



Fighting back tears of joy, Sue Oliver won New England's Amateur Park Saddle qualifier with MEM Blue Chip. Husband Shane Oliver, trainer Rick Lane and mother Shirley Goodspeed who showed Hugo Boss to a top three in the Western division with Taylor River Farm, joined the victory picture back at the Cabot Morgans tack room.



Shane Oliver has replaced kayaks with pleasure carts. He won two classes this week with Med-E-Oka Noble Prize.

It was bound to happen. Although raising and showing Morgan horses has been *her* longtime passion, husband Shane joined the competitive equine foray not too long ago when he could no longer compete in white water racing at a world-class level. Both Sue and Shane admit to being competitive people and now showing horses together is something the Woolwich, ME couple is really enjoying.

"My mom (Shirley Goodspeed) grew up with horses, my grandfather had Belgians," said Sue who had grade horses as a child but now has Morgans with her husband at their Silver Lake Farm.

Her family's first Morgan came in 1972, purchased from the famed Brunk family. Sue's first Morgan was a horse she loved dearly named Applevale Tarry On.

"He did everything," exclaimed the proud owner/breeder.

Shane is also passionate about animals. He grew up with cows and a few grade horses. His thrill was navigating rushing water around rocks of various sizes and when it physically took its toll on his body he settled into Sue's farm life.

"I love animals and a happy wife is a happy life," said Shane with a smile. "We built a farm and I got into it. We have a couple of mares, including Queen's Guardian's mom."

Sue showed horses regionally for some time, enjoying the competition of the Morgan Horse. For the past two years the Olivers have had a horse with Rick Lane at Cabot Morgans. George Schott's 2015 reserve world champion MEM Blue Chip had returned to Cabot from Memory Lane Farm and a couple of months ago Sue happened to be there when Rick was working him.

"He threw me up on him and it was amazing," explained Sue. "I was so honored just to ride him. It has been my dream to show at this level."

"They were a good match," added Shane.

So in a short time Rick worked everything out and put the deal together. Sue debuted at the new Seacoast Morgan show held at Topsfield, winning the Open Park Saddle class and taking reserve in the grand championship. The amateur qualifier at New England would be just their third class ever and wow, what company they were in.

"I knew who I was competing against," recalled Sue after the qualifier. "My goal was just to have a great ride. I didn't want to let Jenny Taylor or Rick [Lane] down. When they called my number out first I just went "wow!"

"Blue Chip is my fire breathing dragon, full of personality and energy. You have to do your job when you're riding him. I couldn't believe how many people came up to me after the class and said, 'I love this horse.'"

Shane also had his time in the spotlight. In just his third and fourth classes ever, he made victory passes down the center of the famed Northampton track with Sammi Hazen's Med-E-Oka Nobel Prize in both the Gentlemen's Classic Pleasure Driving and Limit Driver Classic Pleasure Driving classes.

"This was only my second show ever," said Shane. "Rick has these ideas sometimes and he thought I should show. I had only ridden and driven a little around the farm but I'm game. I'm really enjoying being a part of it. Besides raising a few foals and showing we're also involved with the Maine Morgan Club."

Rick Lane is the one who pulled this all together and it has actually come full circle for him.

"Sue and I have been friends forever," explained Lane. "We used to show against each other as kids. Now as a horse client she is just the best. Sue and Shane were very open to my ideas of restructuring their horse interests. Seeing them enjoying success is what it's all about."

"The timing was right for Sue and Blue Chip. We had brought him home from the Taylors and this was a perfect fit. Shane used to just come along just to support Sue. I had 'Nelson' (Med-E-Oka Noble Prize) sitting around the barn not doing anything so I said to Shane, 'you should try driving and be a part of this.' Now he is as into it as Sue is."

For decades the Three County Fairgrounds has been the site of dreams crushed and dreams realized. This week for the Oliver family of Silver Lake Farm, those dreams became reality and the experience is something they'll never forget. Their relationship with the Morgan breed continues to be a perfect family sport.