

## The 2006 Year In Review Is

# Dedicated to Judy Whitney Harris

by Bob Funkhouser

"I thought I would work in the family's cleaning business and own a nice horse."

That's what the petite, young blond in jods thought as she worked after school at her parent's successful dry cleaning business, which had been in the family since it opened in 1937. Thank goodness for many Morgan horse owners and the breed itself that the horse crazed teenager was wrong in her evaluation of her future.

No woman in the Morgan industry, or any other breed for that matter, has accomplished what the dedicated amateur turned professional from Mansfield, Ohio grew up to do. Horses took over every fiber in Judy Swan's body. Her natural way with a horse and competitive drive to win have taken her to records that are unlikely to be duplicated.

The journey included marrying and partnering with Bob Whitney to establish one of the fiercest teams in the Morgan industry. In fact, they were named Horse World's Trainers of the Century (1900-1999) as well as Trainers of the Decade (1980s) and Reserve Trainers of the Decade (1990s).

Not only did Judy marry one horse trainer from Indiana who played basketball, just a few years ago she married a second in Saddlebred Hall of Fame trainer Don Harris. Both were widowed and found their way to each other.

"At least I'm consistent," exclaimed Judy. "I know what I like."

Consistent might be an understatement. Whitney Stables has won 225 world championships to date and that doesn't even include Grand



*Whenever it involves horses or horse shows, Judy Whitney Harris always has a smile on her face.*

National titles. Judy was just honored with the prestigious USEF Bill Robinson Trophy; has been inducted into the UPHA Hall of Fame; received the first AMHA Lifetime Achievement Award; and has been put into the Hall of Fame of both the AMHA and Dixie Cup.

You might say it's been a pretty successful professional career for the woman who started out hoping she would always be able to have a nice horse.

"My grandmother used to read this story about a pony named White Satin to my older sister, Carol," said Judy of her humble beginnings. "She read that story to her all the time and my sister developed a love of horses, so much so that my father bought a Shetland stud pony for her. We didn't know much about horses. That pony used to dump my father. I was coming along about that time and they would lead me around on him."

"Our next horse was a grade black horse named Smokey. My first



horse show was with another little black mare named Babe. That was around 1953."

Judy and her sister, Carol, were extremely close and they both loved horses. They enjoyed a great life going to shows together and improving as they went along. Carol would show five-gaited and Judy would show three-gaited so they didn't have to compete against one another. They got into Saddlebreds because there were several people showing Saddlebreds in the Mansfield, Ohio area. Some friends of the family had Saddlebreds and were going to give Judy her first personal horse but her father wouldn't let the man give him to her.

"My dad told me I had to pay for him and the man said the horse would cost a dollar," remembered Judy. "He was a gray Saddlebred named Silver Showboat but I called him 'Buck' because that's what I paid for him."

Judy and her sister showed on the grass roots circuit in Ohio with local trainer Thornton Carr. They both did quite well for themselves and continued to listen, learn and get better.

"Richard Lavery (father of Lonnie Lavery) had a top equitation rider named Vicky Rider and he would bring her to a few of the local shows to tune up for Lexington, Louisville and Kansas City," explained Judy. "My sister and I would follow them around and listen to what Dick told her and try to copy that. Carol loved playing instructor and yelling at me."

The sisters also started getting asked to show horses for other people, including neighbors and Mary Johnson at Countryside Farm.

"A friend was going to college and the family needed someone to show their Morgans and they asked me," said Judy. "I started getting familiar with them, showing and



*Judy Swan had a knack for the show ring starting at an early age. She is pictured at her first show in 1953 with Babe.*

being successful. One of them was a cute horse that could trot real high.

"I had made friends on the circuit and had done real well with the Morgans so I bought the one I had been showing. There's nothing like winning and my size fit the Morgan so I went with them and Carol stayed with Saddlebreds."

The Ohio circuit was strong in both the Saddlebred and Morgan

worlds. Another of the young trainers coming up at the time was George Knight.

"He showed the wildest things," said Judy.

Another guy in the area was Larry Bolen. Bolen has known Judy for 40 years and his earliest memories were that she was one tough cookie to beat in the ring.

"She had a local black trainer named Thornton Carr and she had a park gelding named Millsboro Major. They were unbeatable," said Bolen who rode with Bob and Judy Whitney in the '70s and early '80 before becoming a professional trainer. "She looked just like she does now, same hairdo, always immaculately turned out, as were her horses. Judy has a great sense of style, always a lady."

"I have always admired her. She has always been the epitome of class and professionalism. She's also the most dedicated person I've ever known. About the time you think she's going to slow down a little, she comes out with another great one. Her work ethic is incredible. She's one of my all-time favorite people."

That love of all things horse came at an early age as did her drive. Judy and Carol were fully engulfed in the horse show scene. They subscribed to the magazines and were star-struck with the contents.

"We loved looking through the magazines and were in



*Judy's love of horses began with and has continued over the years with her sister, Carol Kent. One of Carol's gaited champions was Attache's Express.*





awe of Garland [Bradshaw], Frank [Bradshaw] and Earl [Teater]. My sister and I had a lot of great times going to the shows together but I just thought I would be a part of the family business and have a nice horse to show. I didn't think of it going anywhere."

At the age of 20 a chance meeting with Bob Whitney changed Judy's life forever.

"I was at the Ohio State Fair and staying at the Olentang Inn," said Judy. "I had lost my room key for about the third time and I was outside my room in the bushes trying to pry the window open so I didn't have to go back to the desk and ask for another key."

About that time Bob Whitney drove by, saw the young lady in distress and stopped to help. He asked what was wrong, she told him and he offered to go to the desk and get another key.

"I was so flattered," remembered Judy. "I couldn't believe he stopped to help me."

When Whitney returned with the key he told Judy he had seen her show a Morgan and that she had done a good job. He then asked her if she would show an Arabian for him that night as his rider hadn't shown up. Soon he also asked her to show a parade horse for him.

"And the rest as they say, is history," exclaimed Judy.

Whitney was in Cox's Creek, Ky., at the time and mostly with Arabians. The two were married in 1966.

"It was a package deal," said Judy. "Me and the Morgan. Not long after, Bob was judging at the New York Morgan Show and he saw a mare Joe Parker had that he thought I would look good on. We talked about her for a while and later learned the owner had taken her home. We called to inquire about her and they said, 'no, she wasn't for sale.' I told them that if for some reason they didn't send her back to Joe Parker, I would like for them to consider sending her to me. They did and that was Hanover Super Lady. Black River Pegasus came with her."

John Hagan liked the job the Whitneys were doing with Hanover Super Lady and Black River Pegasus. The next year, 1974, he sent UVM Viking and three others to Cox's Creek. Then the tornado hit that wiped out the farm.

"The insurance we had on it was okay, but not enough to build back like we wanted," said Judy. "We didn't know what to do."

The couple packed up and moved to Culpepper, Va., to work at Rapidan Farm. They took one Saddlebred with them. That stay proved to be a short one as they longed to return to Kentucky and the farm, which they had hung on to.

"There's no place like Kentucky," said Judy. "We really wanted to come back here and rebuild. We had been pretty successful with the Morgans. Hanover Super Lady was the very first World Champion Mare. Black River Pegasus was a world champion in park harness and in amateur with Mr. Hagan. Mrs. Hagan drove UVM Princess very successfully and a son, Steven, won a junior exhibitor pleasure driving class at Oklahoma."

"So, when we went back to Kentucky we started getting several calls from people wanting to send us Morgans. In November of 1976 the barn was taken down and we started rebuilding. In the spring of 1977 it was completed."

In addition to the Morgans in training, Whitney Stables had also turned into a Saddlebred stallion station. Bob had always stood a stallion or two, but it soon turned into a large scale breeding operation.

"We had 55 mares before the tornado," said Judy. "At one point we had to have seven men just for the broodmares. There would be anywhere from 100 to 130 mares and eight stallions here. Breeding was our 'night job.'"

The likes of Green Hill's Red Flair, number one rated Oman's Desdemona Denmark, Vanity's Vanguard, World's Champion Fine Harness Stallion/Gelding Stonewall's Crescendo, Stonewall Beau Peavine, and Fine Harness Stallion/Gelding World's Champion Ronald Reagan called Whitney Stables home.



*After being involved with Saddlebreds, Arabians and Morgans, Judy and her first husband, Bob Whitney, created a legacy in the Morgan business that is unlikely to be duplicated.*



"We raised some nice horses like Hidden Melody, Oh La La and Aristocratic Flaire," said Judy. "One interesting story was that George Gwinn was on the board of our bank in addition to being the great breeder and trader that he was. He knew when we were hurting or low on money and that's when he would come and buy a truckload of colts. He always got some good ones at a cheap price, but we weren't in a position to turn down his offers."

When the Whitneys returned to Kentucky they hadn't planned on focusing on any one breed. With as much interest they were getting from the Morgan industry, however, they were finding it hard to do two breeds and do it the right way.

"We didn't know the Morgans would take off the way they did," said Judy. "It was about that time that the Morgan people were becoming more meticulous about how they were turning horses out and how they presented them. I feel like we were part of that growth."

"When we were just starting to get into it, the Whitneys more so than anyone stamped their horses with a certain look," said Diana Davidson, a longtime Morgan owner/exhibitor and Morgan Horse Editor of Saddle Horse Report. "The way they harnessed their horses and turned them out. You knew it was a Whitney horse even if you didn't know who was riding or driving."

At the time Bob and Judy decided to devote their time to the Morgan breed, some really good operations were starting to come along. Judy remembers the Herricks at Saddleback Farm, the Price family's Carousel Stables and the Parkers as being very professional.

"Kohler at that time had some nice horses," continued Judy. "Vigilmarch did a wonderful job but it was the get of Noble Flaire that took them to the next level."

The Morgan breeding industry was another area in which Judy had the will to succeed and improve. Noble Flaire was one of many horses that put the Whitney breeding program into the history books. Credited in many corners as revolutionizing the park division, he was foaled at Whitney Stables, being by Noble Command and out of an interesting mare that Judy had fallen in love with while attending a sale in Ohio.

"I had a horse for Cedar Creek Farm I was delivering to Larry [Bolen]," said Judy. "A sale was going on in Hilliard, Ohio, and I stopped in. There was this one filly that every time I passed her stall she would snort and blow and put on a show. She had dug a big hole in her stall. I liked her attitude and she went through the sale pretty late so I bought her reasonably."



*Judy was pictured in Helen Crabtree's book on equitation illustrating you can still show posture and form when showing open horses.*



*One of her top 10 favorite horses was the three-time Park Saddle World Grand Champion UVM Promise. They entertained crowds everywhere for Bob and Gloria Epperson's TVM Morgans.*



*Trophy's Becky Date was one of Judy's entries in 1963.*



*Bob Whitney headed Judy and Dr. J., winners of the first Roadster Under Saddle World's Championship at Louisville.*





*Val's Terry started his career with Judy and went on to win the World Champion Gelding title from 1974-'81.*

"It took four people to get her loaded. She had a lot of fire," continued Judy. "I worked her for a while but she was a bit of a handful. She was so talented we decided to breed her, hoping it would quiet her down."

Her first foal was Noble Aire (by Noble Command). According to Judy he was beautiful and very up-headed. This appeared to be a good niche. Lost River Sanfield's next foal was "a nice filly by Trophy's Jade." The Whitneys went back to Noble Command and in many ways, the next four resulting foals left a lasting mark on the Morgan horse.

There was Noble Airess, Nobility, Noble Flaire and Aristocratic Aire. Noble Airess was the 1989 Two-Year-Old Park Harness World Champion and went on to be the dam of several champions, most notably the 2005 and 2006 World Champion Park Harness sensation, JW That Special Flaire.

As a two-year old, Nobility was Junior Champion Stallion and World Champion Stallion. In 1987, he won the Four-Year-Old Park Saddle title and then in 1996 wore the roses as the Park Saddle World Grand Champion before retiring to become a sire of world champions.

An in hand winner at Oklahoma as a yearling, Aristocratic Aire was a twice reserve world champion in harness the next year before garnering the 1989 Three-Year-Old Park Saddle World Championship and World Futurity Three-Year-Old Park Saddle Championship.

And then there was Noble Flaire. Purchased from Judy by Herbert Kohler as a weanling, Noble Flaire rewrote the record books as a show horse and even more so as a sire. His first world title came in 1986 in the two-year-old park harness division. His trainer, Tom Caisse, judged Oklahoma the next year so as a four-year-old Noble Flaire returned to become the youngest horse at the time to win the Park Harness World Championship. They repeated their Park Harness World Championship in '89 in addition to standing tall as the World Champion Stallion.

That same year, at the age of five, his oldest offspring, HVK Courageous Flaire and HVK Make Em Cry won Grand National and world champion titles. Every year since, the sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of Noble Flaire have dominated the park divisions. It all goes

back to Judy Whitney and the mare with a lot of fire, Lost River Sanfield. Noble Flaire would go on to win the World Champion Stallion title and the Park Harness World Championship in 1991.

"I think there are stallions like Noble Flaire that come along in every breed," said Judy. "They change the look, improve the product. There was Wing Commander and Will Shriver for the Saddlebreds, and \*Bask for the Arabians. And now we have [HVK] Bell Flaire."

Judy is just as proud and happy of her accomplishments in the breeding world as she is in the show ring. Actually, they go hand in hand. An overwhelming number of her Oklahoma victory passes have come with homebred stock.

"I never had to go out and buy one," said Judy. "Many of our customers as well as ourselves have raised what we show. There are a few others out there that can do that like Dragonsmeade and Ann Hailey. I like knowing the families. When a trainer calls and says I need this and I need that, I know with confidence if I have something that fits those needs."

"I would hate shopping for horses, it's so hard. Don [Harris] loves it but I would just hate it. It's a tough job to buy."



*Noble Command secured Judy's place in history as a top breeder. When crossed with Lost River Sanfield, Noble Command sired Noble Flaire, Nobility, Noble Airess and Aristocratic Aire.*





*One of only two mares to ever win the Park Harness World Championship, Van Lu Jolie won the title in 1986 in addition to winning the Ladies Park Harness World Championship and the Ladies Park Saddle World Championship that year.*



*The first mare to win the Park Harness World Championship was also Whitney-trained, Wynne Command.*

Judy has earned the respect and admiration of professionals and amateurs alike. In fact, many of today's professionals have fond memories of the Whitneys and in many ways have tried to duplicate what they did.

"When I was a kid we had the Groom's class in Ohio and you always dressed up as something," recalled Grove Pointe trainer Tim Roesink. "My sister and I did it one year and we played Bob and Judy [Whitney]. We led a black pony in and he was UVM Promise. Tanya ran around and did the 'chirp' that Judy always does. We were trying to be just like them."

Roesink also has thoughts as to why they were so successful.

"In that day they were more ready than anybody else," he continued. "Their horses were in top order. They didn't make mistakes and they were turned out the best. They would beat you with horses that weren't necessarily as good as yours, but they were better prepared. I mean, they had great ones, but they weren't all great. They would bring 25 to a show and there would be 10 great ones, but all 25 would win."

"I look up to Judy for what she has done as a breeder as much as I do a trainer. Look at what she's bred. Noble Flaire will probably go down in history as one of the best sires ever. Nobility is right at the top. She has

bred some great breeding horses as well as many show ring champions."

Different owners look up to Judy for her professionalism. She shows the same manner in the barn and the home as she does in the ring.

"We had horses with Judy and Bob from 1972 until about 1992," said Bob Epperson who along with his wife, Gloria, had many TVM champions with the Whitneys from their Tennessee Valley Morgans. "We became good friends and remain close to Judy today. They are wonderful trainers and always extremely professional. They did the job that we wanted done and were never detrimental to the horse. They knew we didn't like that and didn't want that. The care and well being of the horse always came first."

"Judy and Bob promoted the Morgan to the horse public back then and used UVM Promise all the time to do that. We would go to any show, any event to promote the Morgan. I remember at the opening of the Kentucky Horse Park she took Promise to represent the Morgan horse and he stole the show. When she showed him at the Kentucky State Fair, the Saddlebred guys lined the rail to watch them."

Current customers Barbara and Arthur Jones, Top 'O The Hill Morgan Farm, New London, N.H., have been

with Judy going on seven years. They too have the utmost respect for the hard working professional.

"She's a peach to work with," said Barbara. "She's great in every way. We really appreciate the effort she puts forth to keep us informed since we live so far away. Judy always keeps us updated and she sends us tapes every now and then so we get to see our horses working."

"She's done so well with all our horses and handles the breeding career of Bell Flaire. The thing about Judy is that she is good at it all: riding, driving, and the breeding industry. She is truly a complete professional. And she's got a great sense of humor."

Judy Whitney Harris has been a confident woman both in the public's eye and at home. She has been happily married to two different icons and yet maintained her identity. Both relationships have been extremely supportive.

"With both Bob [Whitney] and Don [Harris], for all the things they have accomplished and as many people admire them they are still gracious and welcome talking to Joe Blow or some little child," said Judy of her deceased first husband and her current beau. "Neither one of them have ever felt that they were too good. Both are from Indiana. Both played





*The grand park stallion Nobility holds a special place in Judy's heart both as a show horse and a sire.*



*Judy has been associated with great horses and industry setting records all her life. One of those at the top of the list is HVK Bell Flaire, the great stallion owned by Barbara and Arthur Jones. In addition to being the sire of many of today's top world champions, Bell Flaire is the only Morgan to have won the Park Saddle World Championship, Park Harness World Championship and the World Champion Stallion title.*

basketball. Both are horse trainers. I guess I know what I like!

"Bob loved telling stories, loved making you laugh. Don is a real prankster. They both love their families and take an interest in their fellow professionals. They are eager to help young trainers. Don has sent several young trainers horses to help them get started."

Judy also tells the story of her and Bob at Dixie Cup one year. Bob always liked Jimmy Lowry but when he saw the young lad who was sporting an earring he had to say something to him.

"Bob sat him down and told him, 'You've got to get rid of that thing.' He took it out and never put it in again."

"Of course, I don't have to tell anyone what a great horsewoman she is," said Don Harris. "I watch her operate every day. She's so dedicated. She has that extra push that most people don't have. There's no let up in her. She's also some kind of a great wife. It's a miracle that we found each other. I couldn't have asked for more."

"We enjoy helping each other with horses. I like for her to watch me work one and she does the same. We talk about horses a lot, but we also watch basketball, football and sometimes kick back and do nothing at all."

It's just a great situation."

Like all couples, especially those who spend 24 hours day together working in the same profession, there were and are hard times.

"The bad part about Bob was that he would fire the help all the time. That was hard. Don, he takes thing to heart. He's very serious. He doesn't get upset if his horse doesn't get what it deserves but it hurts him because he loves them so much and he respects what they give him."

"Bob on the other hand was a tough loser. He was not so gracious. He would get disturbed if his horse didn't tie where he thought it did."

However, with their record in the show ring, the Whitneys didn't have to get upset too often. Year after year, decade after decade they bred, raised, showed and sold the best. The JW prefix continues to represent the highest caliber show star, no matter the division. To list all of her champions would take numerous pages. It would be hard to put together a list of all-time favorites but when pressed, it would look like this:

WYNNE COMMAND – "The first mare to win the Park Harness World Championship. There have only been two, Wynne Command and Van Lu Jolie and both under our banner."

NOBILITY – "A little bear when he was foaled. Turned into an elegant swan."

HVK BELL FLAIRE – "He's so awesome to get on or drive. He was born to be a show horse."

JW THAT SPECIAL FLAIRE – "Go all day and loves it. He absolutely loves himself."

JW ROMANTIC WAYS – "She's been a fireball since day one. The class wasn't long enough for her."

DUCHESS FROM DENMARK – "I won the Kentucky County Fair Three-Gaited Championship in 1967. It was the first time I showed at Louisville and I beat Helen Crabtree. I thought I had died and gone to heaven."

DR. J – "I won the first Roadster Under Saddle class at Louisville with him."

NOBELLE – "A lovely harness mare."

UVM PROMISE – "The Park Saddle World Champion three years in a row starting at 12 years old. He was 14.2 on his biggest day. He was a great show horse but not a great sire. Some people will disagree with me but I don't think he was a great sire."

SERENDIPITY STORM B – "He was always a show horse and loved to flag himself. He won the driving world championship and saddle world championship in the same year."





*Judy has always been fond of developing and showing homebred stock. A daughter of HVK Bell Flaire, Sheza Bell is a product of the Jones family's breeding program.*



*The influence of Judy Whitney Harris in the breeding world shows up at Oklahoma year after year. Owned by Tara Farm, JW That Special Flaire, the horse she drove to the 2005 and 2006 Park Harness World Grand Championship as a record setting two and three-year-old, is by HVK Bell Flaire and out of a mare she bred named Noble Ainess who is a full sister to Noble Flaire, Nobility and Aristocratic Aire.*

Some of Judy's favorites outside of her reach include Emperor and Starina in the Saddlebred world and Saddleback Supreme in the Morgan breed.

"He and Fred [Herrick] were such a pair," exclaimed Judy.

Working as hard as she ever has, mostly starting, developing and showing young stock, Judy continues to thrill and amaze the show horse industries like no other. From winning the Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Championship at Louisville just a few years ago to breaking unphathomable records at Oklahoma the past two years by winning the Park Harness World Grand Championship with the home-bred JW That Special Flaire as a two and three-year-old.

She is also as proud of the product the Morgan industry is putting on the ground as she ever was.

"We were in trouble with little horses for a while," said Judy. "The younger population had those long legs and torsos and we were losing new riders. We had to step up and keep up with the times to be competitive and we've done that. Price wise we've kept pretty competitive as well. Great ones bring high dollar and deserve to. The others are still in reach for a good portion of the public."

With her marriage to Don Harris, Judy has made a few appearances in the Saddlebred rings again. It's a place where she has been just as successful as she won the Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Championship with That's Exactly Right.

"I never stopped enjoying Saddlebreds," said Judy. "I went to Louisville every year. I enjoy riding a nice horse. It doesn't matter what breed it is."

Judy has spent her life riding nice horses. It would be hard to imagine her any other way. She's been blessed with more than 200 world championships; been inducted to numerous Halls of Fame; been honored with the highest industry awards. What could possibly be left that keeps the competitive fire burning for this most professional of professionals?

"I want to win the Park Saddle World

Championship one more time," grinned Judy. "Who knows what I might do."



*Judy Whitney Harris has had two wonderful relationships with two Hall of Fame trainers. While both were widowed, she and Don Harris started a personal and professional relationship that has been great for them both.*