

A Gaited Morgan at the Show

Mary Mels Glo-Girl by Dan Simmons

This is the story of a gaited Morgan who placed very well at the Morgan Grand Nationals and World Championships over a two year period, plus won and placed at several lower level shows in Roadster classes.

My wife Letha and I discovered this story when we learned that the gaited mare Mary Mels Gloworm was right here in Southern Arizona in Tucson practically under our noses. We had been searching for quality gaited Morgan broodmare stock when we got a tip that she was here and available. We immediately got in contact with the owner, Martha Miller, and made arrangements to see Gloworm.



We were very impressed with Gloworm and bought her on the spot; but that is another story. We also got to meet and have become friends with Martha Miller, a Morgan person in our area we didn't even know was here. My wife is the current Vice President of the Arizona Morgan Horse Association and we have been making efforts to find, meet, and encourage the Morgan owners in Southern Arizona to become aware of each other and potentially more involved as a group. With our particular interest and involvement in gaited Morgans and now the MSFHA, we were even more excited that all three of Martha's Morgans were gaited. In addition to Gloworm, Martha has a five year old palomino gelding named Mary Mels Yellow Tyke by Mary Mels Swanee out of Mary Mels Golden Rod, and a coming two year old chestnut filly out of Gloworm by Mary Mels Brandy; her name is Glo-Girl's May Day Belle. Martha was introduced to Morgans by her 4th grade teacher Martha Vernon. Martha showed some Morgans for others at the Circle J Regional in Estes Park, Colorado at the age of 16 or so. The first Morgan of her own was Mary Mels Glo-Girl.

Glo-Girl's first show at the Rocky Mountain Morgan Show,

As we were getting the tour and meeting the other horses, Martha told us a little about Mary Mels Glo-Girl, Gloworm's dam, and showed us some pictures on the wall of her wearing ribbons she had won in various shows including the Morgan Grand Nationals. This really intrigued us and we asked Martha to tell us more about Glo-Girl, a gaited horse in the show world.

But first, let me give you some background on Glo-Girl. She was a Stellar daughter out of Irish Mist; a chestnut foaled in 1972 bred and owned by Mel Frandsen until 1980. Martha says she was about 14.2 hands or so. Martha owned her from 1980 until 1990 at which time Martha made a career change and went back to school and sent Glo-Girl back to Mel where she remained until her death around 1997. Glo-Girl had ten registered foals in her life; Gloworm was the next to last in 1992, and the last was Mary Mels Mystery in 1993, a stallion of some note which Letha and I very nearly bought last year and is currently in Wisconsin.

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Also in 1981 Glo-Girl went to the Kachina Show in Albuquerque, New Mexico and competed in the Roadster Under Saddle class.

In 1982 Glo-Girl made her first appearance at the Morgan Grand Nationals and World Championships. She competed in the Open Roadster to Bike class and finished in 6th place.

In 1983 she went to the American Royal Show in Kansas City, Missouri and won second place in Roadster Under Saddle Martha thinks it was. Also in that year she won 1st place in Open Roadster at the Dallas Big D Charity Show as the only Morgan against a field of Standardbreds and “she stomped them” Martha says!

In 1983 Glo-Girl returned to the Morgan Nationals and she finished 9th in the World Morgan Roadster Under Saddle Championship, and 5th in the Amateur Roadster Under Saddle Championship.



Cliff Swanson of Colorado was the trainer/driver/rider during all these events.

As good as Glo-Girl was in the show arena, Martha came to realize that she was not a happy horse on the show circuit and Cliff had to work hard to keep her in a trot. At a Circle J show, Martha found her lying down in her stall and allowing kids to crawl all over her—Cliff was sure the kids were going to get killed, but Glo-Girl was letting them do it. Martha says the horse was obviously miserable and she decided to pack her up and take her off to home and put an end to her show career.

Glo-Girl in harness probably taken at the American Royal Show in Kansas City, Missouri in 1983.

Of Glo-Girl, Martha says she was amazingly athletic and great under saddle, both English and Western, or in harness. She was also very easy to get along with, and virtually bomb-proof for children; she used to take her infant daughter riding in a Snugly all over the desert when she lived in Page, Arizona. Martha told me of another time when she used to live in the Flagstaff area and rode in the mountains with a goat for company as she didn't have a dog at the time. On one ride the goat got tired, so Martha wrestled the goat up onto the saddle while Glo-Girl stood

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The last thing Martha says she really remembers is riding in Sabino Canyon in Tucson on Christmas Day 1987 with snow and ice. "I came down a trail that I normally went on, and looked for a place to cross the raging river. We started across, and were soon swimming....BRRRRRR - she [Glo-Girl] clambered up the other side, over rocks and boulders and through bushes, snorting and steaming like a demon, with both of us covered in ice - and nearly ran over an astonished couple who were out taking a walk! There was nothing that I couldn't do with her."

During Glo-Girl's time back with Mel after 1990 was when Gloworm and Mystery came along and Glo-Girl was doing what she was happiest at, making babies.

It seems to me Glo-Girl epitomizes the qualities of the Morgan horse; very versatile and capable of doing almost anything, with great minds to match. She was a gaited mare, yet she was able to excel in the trot and win and show in the arena. She was great in harness or under saddle, English or Western, and was a pleasure to ride even with an infant or even a goat aboard. It is amazing how many times I hear stories about Morgans who have the intelligence and mind to distinguish the difference between an adult and an innocent child and treat them with tenderness and



Glo-Girl in Roadster Under Saddle either at the American Royal in Kansas City, Missouri, or possibly at the Circle J Regional in Estes Park, Colorado in 1983.

