

## **TROUBLE ON THE LINE -- WORLD CHAMPION**

**After chiropractic college, my buddy, Dave Hughes – all American chiropractor practicing 50 + years – took me to the Parker Seminar. Jimmy Parker taught us to set goals, look at them, plan for them and *expect* them to happen. So every year, I started writing in the back of my address book lifetime goals. I would take them out and look at them only once a year at New Year's. I would circle the ones that had come true, add on some more and cross out uninteresting goals. In 1970 I wrote down "Win a championship at the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration". After ten years it was still on the list, and I was still carrying it over year after year. Forty one years later, this week, I had that championship ride of my life at the 2011 National Celebration. It was surreal when it happened. I had ridden in many classes when I thought I had a good chance to win, but it never happened. Eight years ago, my daughter Amy and I decided to breed our family mare to LINED WITH CASH and she produced a stud colt that we named TROUBLE ON THE LINE. My son in law, Stan McCurdy, actually named the colt after a country song by Sawyer Brown. Seven years later, this week, he made a perfect show. I got to ride him without a flaw, and we won the "blue" in the Novice Amateur Gelding Championship. It truly was the ride of a lifetime. It was so sweet to be with my family and some of our best friends to celebrate at the championship wall where blue winners have their pictures taken. I have always loved the power of those 1000 pound animals beneath the saddle, but to have one perform at this level, with all the competition and subjective judging involved with this breed was breathtaking for all of us. My oldest grand daughter who shares the love of this horse with me broke down and cried like a baby for me, for TROUBLE (or Scooter, as we call him) and for all that it takes to get to this point. If I had known 41 years ago what it took to win this championship, I might have had second thoughts. This New Year's I get to cross that win off of my goal list.**

**I grew up in northern Kentucky. The town of Park Hill sits atop Covington, overlooking Cincinnati and the Ohio River basin. We lived in a neighborhood, but my Dad's best friend was caretaker of Devou Park up the street and their daughter Carol Ann had a horse. We used**

**to ride that horse double around the park all summer long. I loved the smell of the old stable, the sweat stained leather tack, and being around that horse. He was long past his prime, but he tolerated us kids very well. After I got in my first practice in Warsaw, Kentucky I bought my first horse, a Tennessee Walking Horse (TWH) from a patient of mine. I fell in love with the smooth gait and disposition of this strawberry roan mare. Later after Mary Ann and I got married and we moved to Tupelo, MS, we built a training stable next to our home and began the process of building a show string of champions. It was our family hobby to go to the horse show every Saturday in the summer time. Tommy, Amy and Jack all showed their own horses, but only Amy had the spirit and stayed with it. Today, it is her children who we now follow around these shows and watch ride, much to our enjoyment. When it all comes down to it – the family involvement is what kept us in the business and trying for a championship all these years. On that “goal list”, for over a decade are the names of my family members I am helping win their first championship. Will it take 40 years? I don’t know but it is the process and fun along the way that makes it that much sweeter. When I told my best friend about the championship, he reminded me today of a poem that we had to learn when we pledged the frat at chiropractic college. Here it is:**

**THE TEST OF A MAN *by O. Lawrence Hawthorne***

There’s little satisfaction to be gained from doing things that hold no difficulties. It is the tough old task that brings keen sense of worth and power to the man who wins the fight. His failures test his courage and his problems prove his might. Until a man has conquered loss and overcome defeat, he cannot fully understand just why success is sweet.

I’m thankful for my disappointments; for the battles lost; and for mistakes that seemed to charge an overwhelming cost. I’m thankful for the days of doubt when it was hard to see that all things work together for the good that is to be. I’m glad for all that life has brought because today I know that men must brave adversity if they would greater grow.

**Sunday, we always go to the Celebration worship service held in the north end of the Celebration arena. The preacher spoke on asking God for what you wanted (Philippians 4:6). I bowed my head and asked God to let me win a championship this year. Mary Ann bought me a new**

riding habit, and the night of the show I was not nervous in the warm up ring, before my class. I saw my great trainer and coach, Gary Edwards speak to his head groom – Slim, about when it was time to brace the horse’s tail in the show set. Gary and brother Larry gave me my last instructions how to ride. And then it was time for Gary to warm him up for our class. Gary had been the only person to ever train TROUBLE. He had been by him for six years through thick and thin, through injuries and illness, he never let me loose hope that TROUBLE could win in the big ring. That night when Gary warmed him up, I could see how proud he was of this horse. TROUBLE seemed different. He did not seem amped up like he usually is before a show. He and I were not nervous. You never know “horse thoughts”, but I sensed he was thinking about his performance, like I was thinking about my ride. We were focused and ready. I thought about the positions I wanted to be in at all stages of the class, how fast I needed to go without getting him out of form (my biggest flaw in riding). Hannah was with me in the warm up ring as usual, and we said our pre show prayer before I mounted - and then it was time for me to throw my leg over the saddle and mount TROUBLE for the class. It was a big class (18 head), but I could not even see, nor did I look at the competition. I was focused on my ride. I sat up straight in the saddle with my head tilted slightly and held a slight smile. It was our first trainer Jimmy Carnathan, who taught all our family how to ride and show. I knew he was out there watching and I prayed not to disappoint him or Gary who had worked tirelessly getting the horse ready for this performance. When the class was called, TROUBLE walked slowly and seemed at ease going down the chute to the big ring. Even when we turned the bend at the bottom and the bright lights and the steady roar from the crowd came into view, he was still calm. This was something he rarely did at previous shows. I clucked to him and he sat down on those famous walking back legs and I pulled the steel bit into position to square him for his entry into the ring. After I was in the big ring and the class was called to the rail for the “flat walk” gait, I was still not nervous, only interested in my position in the ring and my effort not to get covered up. I knew I had to stay away from a congestion of horses that sometimes happens in big classes. TROUBLE’s first pass in front of the five judges was flawless and I knew he was in the best form of his life. I picked him up in the bridle in the “running walk” and his speed was more than I wanted, so I pulled him down some and stayed at a good steady walk. When I would pass in front of my trainer he would give me hand signals and he looked

like all was fine with him so far. When we stopped and turned around for the same gaits on the reverse, this is when I knew the class was to be won or lost. Something magical happened on the reverse. I was all by myself in the ring. All the other horses seem to be in a wad somewhere else and I could hear the crowd cheer me on. I knew Amy, Mary Ann, Hannah and Libby were screaming their lungs out but I also heard the entire crowd rise up for me like I was their favorite. In the “running walk” I turned TROUBLE on to his peak speed and he was waving his big front legs in more action than I could ever remember, it was like he knew it was his time to be a champion. He rode me down the straight a way in front of the grandstand and on to victory. When we pulled up to the line up in the South end, I was still not nervous. I knew it was all in the hands of the judges and I knew about the judges. We had long ago had a pact in our family about judges. Our goal was to be very proud of our ride and our horses. We were not ever going to let the judges determine our happiness, so I was just sitting there feeling the big fellow move his diaphragm back and forth as he was winded from his performance. Hannah, our oldest grand daughter ran up to where I was parked out and began to take our picture. The photographer also came up to where I was and took our picture first. But, I was still not convinced we had won. However, after the trophies and sponsors were read out and the announcer told us which way for the winner to pull out of the line up and come down to get our ribbons and be crowned champion – I began to feel some jitters inside my stomach. Then they call out my back number, the name of the horse as winner. I sat there a beat or two and could not take it all in, and then I felt real nervous for some reason. I walked TROUBLE forward out of the line up and turned left to the winners circle. This had never happened before, but TROUBLE was not tired but rather he felt energized under me and showed himself off going in to get the blue ribbon. While I was riding in I placed my hat over my heart to thank God and everyone there in the arena that night as I pulled up to the presenters and ribbon girls. My trainer, Gary had jumped the wall and had this big grin on his face. It was at that time it hit me that I had won, and was in the “books” as a world champion for life. My name and horse would be on that big winners plaque at their barn with all their other world champions. I began to tremble all over. I did not lose it, but when I looked over next to me in the grandstand, Hannah was standing there bawling her eyes out and hugging Paige, Gary’s wife. Gary looked up at me and said “I told you”. It was surreal. I looked down the presenter’s line at the

ribbons and trophy and picked out Karen Callaway who was presenting a sponsors' trophy. She was smiling up at me and congratulating me and that is when I broke out in this BIG smile! I knew it was too big, but I could not wipe it off my face. Then I began giggling. It was a silly thing to do, but I could not help it. It seemed to go with that silly grin on my face. I had that grin all night! Even typing this out today I am grinning some and wonder how long that grin and this thrill will stay with me. I know all emotions are fleeting and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the only unchangeable power in my life. He let all this happen to me and He was letting me enjoy this moment in time like the GREAT GOD HE IS.

Gary hooked the blue ribbon in the top of the bridle for the victory pass and after the ring was cleared, I started around the big ring for my final victory pass. The organ was loud in my ears as was the crowd and I picked TROUBLE up to his peak form and I believe he made the best pass in his entire life. When he was born on our farm, he used to run fast and then slow down and sort of "scoot" across the pasture. So the grand children called him "Scooter". Even though everyone now calls him TROUBLE, we all could not help but call him Scooter that night after that win. We were so proud of him. Later when Hannah and Libby were kissing on him, he dropped his head for them just like the young Scooter had done many years ago. I managed to ride him that night with out a hitch and he proved himself every bit the champion my trainer kept telling me he was. After TROUBLE went back through inspection we led him back toward the barn and that is when Mary Ann, Amy and the girls came running up to greet us. We had our moment together before we were led to the winner's wall for more pictures. Everyone who knew us and the horse lined up for the pictures and then it was all over. Later, back at the Edwards Stables we all stood around for a long time and enjoyed the well wishes from stable friends and acquaintances. I kept Mary Ann up back at the camper as long as I could before she almost fell out of her chair, but I was not tired. Even when I finally did go to bed, all I could do was thank God for his Grace and Glory, and relive each step in the ring that night. I know the Edwards' are used to champions, but I bet they never had any customers more thankful and excited than the Morgans.

It has been three days now, and I am still getting comments on the horse and my ride. Our oldest son Tommy called me and shared our

**happiness. He had ridden seven years himself (until he got his motorcycle) and knew the riggers of the horse show world. Jack and his family were vacationing in Hawaii and he called too, remembering when he used to ride. He knows what it took to get to that moment. They all knew I worked hard to develop as a good rider. They knew TROUBLE came from our family breeding program as I could not just go out and purchase a big time horse. They knew the years and dedication we all shared, and it was a sweet victory for all of us. I was not a “natural” rider like my daughter Amy, but I worked at it all these years and I guess it paid off this week. What’s next for the horse and rider? Back to that goal list - it says: “Amy, Mary Ann and Hannah WORLD CHAMPIONS”! Got to get to work on it.**

**September 1, 2011**  
**Thomas Outler Morgan, D. C.**  
VolumeDC@aol.com