

Did you see the fabulous picture from the last year's Morgan Grand National that showed Morgandom's quintessential gentleman and sportsman, Daryl Hobson, shaking hands with another western trainer? Who was that guy? Florida based western trainer Rick Gervasio made that famous shake. The picture from center ring captured the heartwarming camaraderie of our Morgan breed and celebrated the extreme ends of the United States coming together in our adopted Morgan hometown, Oklahoma City. Beyond the shake and getting to know this relatively new Morgan trainer, Rick Gervasio has devoted his lifetime to training horses and honing his craft with several other breeds. Recently we have had the pleasure to welcome him to the Morgan world and appreciate seeing his western creations.

"I have a great group of clients right now that believe in their horses, want to show them, and want to buy better ones or sell their nice ones. They support each other at shows and enjoy coming to the farm." ~ Rick Gervasio

Rick's when he started high school.

At 20 years old, Rick apprenticed with other trainers. He spent two years with **Troy Oakley** and then

background begins in moved to Texas for three years and Ringoes, New Jersey where he was worked for Edgewood Farms, one raised by divorced parents. By the of the country's leading American age of 15, Rick knew he was going to Quarter Horse breeders. After that, he be a horse trainer. His father, Arnie worked for Tom Chown at Willowtree Gervasio trained American Quarter Farm for two years. Rick reflects, "I Horses so Rick grew up training spent a long time apprenticing for horses with him from the time he whom I consider to be some of the was young. Rick laughs, "The way I best western pleasure trainers in the look at it, I was just free help until I business. . . I've never had another was old enough to move out of the job other than training horses. I house!" He spent weekends and never really showed much in youth summers on the farm and eventually or junior exhibitor because I just rode moved in with his father full time at the barn and went to horse shows and helped Dad with the customer horses. I always rode young horses: that was my specialty."

In 1994, Rick set up his own horse

training Pleasure Horses, and in 1999 bought "We have a great support community his current farm in the horse capital (vets, farriers, feed and equipment) of the U.S. - Ocala, Florida. The facility here that is unequaled anywhere else is 15 acres with four paddocks, three in the country." round pens, an arena and a trail course. He lives on the property and keeps a 14-stall barn with two employees and himself and tries to make a few improvements every year. The temperature year round is ideal; Rick works outdoors all year and rarely has to take a day off for rain.

around the corner from the HITS show over quantity." facility, where all the hunter/jumpers spend the winter. Rick cannot imagine

business, Rick Gervasio living anywhere else and enthuses,

Rick manages his facility with a quality versus quantity philosophy, "I do not believe that bigger is better. I don't want any more stalls than that and I do not really want to be taking 15 head to the horse show. My ideal number is 4-6 horses to a show. I don't want to take horses to the show that I Being lucky enough to reside in the don't feel are the quality to win, really horse capital of the U.S., Rick is just respectable horses. I want quality

Barbara Irvine: How did you get involved with Morgans?

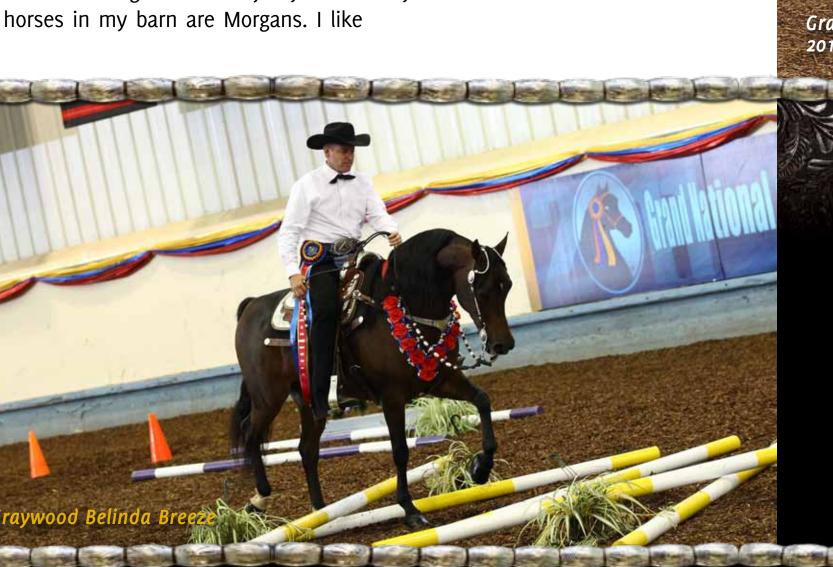
Belinda Breeze, she was the first me out the driveway trying to buy that Morgan I ever rode and maybe even the horse. I took her to a couple shows and first one I'd ever seen. She was looking the next thing I knew, a couple people for a western trainer in the area. I liked started sending me Morgans. That one her and took her to my first Morgan horse really introduced me to Morgans. show -- it was Tampa Charity. I showed I thought they were all going to be like her and never had a horse that so her. I found out they weren't.

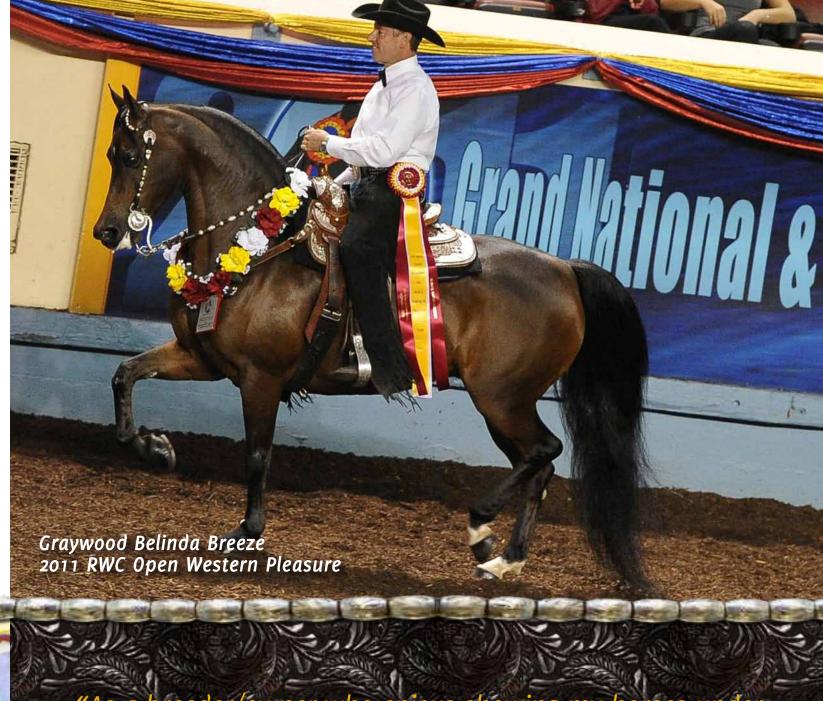
Betsy Marsted sent me Graywood's many tried to buy. They were chasing

Are you working with other breeds?

is on the Morgans. The majority of the anymore.

I still have a couple Arabians in training to catch ride other breeds for trainer and go to a few Arabian shows each friends at NSBA shows or Appaloosa year, but my main focus at this point Nationals, but I just don't train them





"As a breeder/owner who enjoys showing my horses under saddle, it is paramount to me that my horse is trained well enough that my "beyond middle age" fluffy self does not end up with a horse only a professional can ride. I want a horse that is started with the end goal of having an amateur owner in mind. I think to best sum up Rick, his calm laid back personality is what truly transcends to his training." ~ Laurie Faust



I know that you had great success at the Morgan World show last year. Can you tell us about that and other success that you have had in the Morgan show world?

Last year was my third year showing Morgans and going to the Morgan Grand National. Of course, last year was the best I've ever done out there. The years before, I just had Belinda (Graywood Belinda Breeze, 2011 RWC Open Western Pleasure). I think the reason I did better last year was that I had four good horses to show. I just kept coming back, so the judges got to see me more than once. Each time I came back in with another good horse and all four of them got ribbons. I think that was the difference and that's why last year was better -- I just had more than one good horse.

There was also one other thing I did different last year. Usually I go to the Morgan national and then the Arabian nationals. I knew I had a nice group of Morgans, so I decided just to skip the Arabian Nationals and stay focused on the Morgans. I had confidence in my Morgans and

made them my priority and once I did that, it made a big difference.

I was very proud of my three year olds from last year. Everyone thinks about the Open, but I was very proud of my three year olds. I took two; I won the Grand National Three-Year-Old Western Pleasure Mares (**TFF Selene**) and was reserve with the three-year-old stallion (Gael Mountain Bugle Boy). In the Championship, I was reserve with the mare and I had Julie Adams show the stallion. She had never ridden him before and was third behind me. I felt good that I could turn him over to someone else to ride and he did well. She darn near beat me!

I also tried out the new Western Dressage at the Grand National and placed 8th out of 11 in the Primary Level Test 1 Finals with Selene, the same three-year-old mare that went RWC in pleasure (all aged horses in the class). It's a different class than

I'm used to showing, but not far off my horses' normal work routine, so just another chance for them to express their training.

Belinda Breeze was also Reserve World Champion Open Trail Horse, which is a class I enjoy for the variety for both horse and rider. I have a trail course set up at home and all my pleasure horses spend time there as well as in the work arena.

Last year was really my best year at all the Morgan shows. I went to Citrus Cup, then Bluegrass was my next show and I won the Reserve Open Championship (Treble's Take The Stage), won the junior horse championship with TFF Selene. I also won the Mare qualifier with the three year old (Selene). Then I went to Jubilee Regional and won the open qualifier with Take The Stage. I didn't take any of the young horses there; so Oklahoma was a nice ending to a good season.

"Rick is talented and has worked hard to make his training center recognized as one of the premiere training barns in the country. Although his roots were in working with Quarter Horses and Arabians, he has demonstrated his versatility as a trainer in working with Morgans as well. Having started with just one Morgan in his barn 5 years ago...he now has filled his stalls with Morgans in training which speaks for itself." ~ Karen Burridge



Can you tell us about other success that you have had in the open show world?

Quarter Horse Congress in three-year-old Arabian Nationals. futurity western pleasure, was National

I've been the National Snaffle Bit Champion Appaloosa Open and Junior Association (NSBA) High Point Rider Western Pleasure, and have been Top twice (high money earning), won at the Ten at the Paint Horse Nationals and the

What is your training philosophy?

has to be a true three beat lope. It's very do that. important that they take a lead correctly and transition from one gait to the next. Body position affects both transitions and good gaits. Then once you have those three things, then everything else is built from that.

I think you have to do your training at speed. I never just work on slow.

It's very important to me to have home, your conditioning, your discipline. what I consider a well-trained, well- All my training and hard work is done at broke horse. To me, the most important home, so when I get to a horse show, things in training are body position, it's easy for the horse. They'd rather be correctness of gait and transitions. The at a horse show than at home. When we three go together. If you don't have one, go into the show mode, they've just got you won't have the other two. That's to go on the rail, I hold my hand still, just the most important thing. The jog they just go down the rail at all three has to be a good two beat jog. The lope gaits, that's easy and they're happy to

> I never train a horse to go slow. I never work on going slow. I work on a horse's cadence and rhythm, their speed is variable, so they go whatever speed I ask them to go. So when I ask them to go fast, medium, slow, they'll go any

Specifically in reference to preparing and presenting western pleasure horses, do you have any special or unusual training or presentation methods that you could share?

things: body position, correctness of gait, and you need to pay attention to what and smooth transitions. I never force a works for them and make sure they're horse to go slow. Just make sure they getting what they need to be healthy follow my lead, my rhythm, whatever I and happy. Although Ocala isn't the do with a horse when I show or train, cheapest place to buy feed, thanks to our it's like two people dancing and I'm the Thoroughbred industry here, we have leader. They have to always follow my outstanding hay in all varieties shipped lead. They're always waiting on me to in by rail all year long. We also have a tell them how fast, how slow, when to wide selection of feed distributors here lope off; they're always waiting for me. so I can get exactly what I need to keep

I also feel that proper nutrition is really the horses in top condition.

Basically it goes back to the other three important. Every horse is an individual





In what ways do you find Morgans to be similar to training other breeds? How about ways in which you find Morgans to be different from other breeds?

really like riding and training Morgans arena.

My experience is with stock breeds and and most of all I like the style, way of Arabians and I pretty much feel like going and presentation. They still have they're kind of a combination between a true gait and a nice natural head the Arabian and the Quarter Horse. carriage. I enjoy training and riding their The Morgans are smaller in body and style, as opposed to what some other brighter than the Quarter Horse. And breeds have done with going too slow, conversely, the Morgans are bigger or their heads too low. I enjoy the way than and not as hot as the Arabian. I the Morgans are presented in the show

What are some of the challenges that you have had competing?

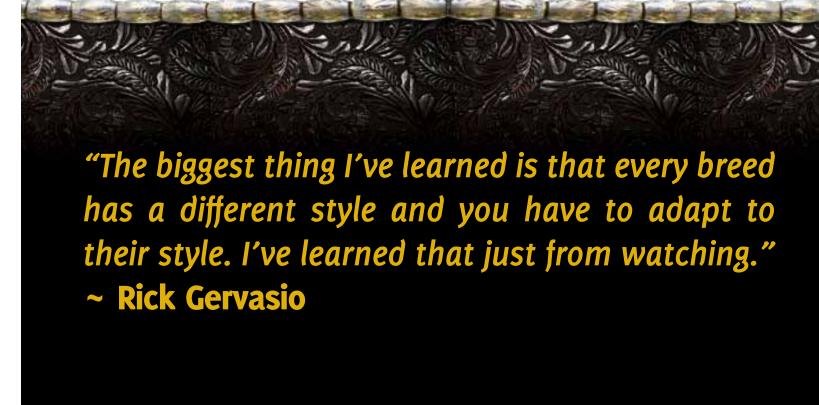
You should need more than a beautiful In the Morgans, you've got a breed where preferences to pin.

horse to win; it should be trained. In they're showing in several different the stock horse breeds, your judges and disciplines and it's hard to have judges trainers and exhibitors are all specialized that are comfortable and thoroughly in the same discipline - western. So knowledgeable in all these different when the judges step into center ring, disciplines. So they may tie a western they know exactly what they're doing horse because he looks like their kind and there is very little variation in of horse, which might be a hunter, or a saddle seat horse.

Who are your mentors?

I'd have to say my first mentor was my I don't really have any other particular father; he's the person I've learned the person, I like to do trial and error and most from. He used to train and show, just try to figure things out for myself. but now he's a horse shoer full time. Whenever I go to a new breed, I just pick Usually if I have problems with a horse, someone out that is a good horseman I reach out to him. He shoes for top and I like the way they work and I just competing hunter, jumper and dressage watch them and try to pick up little people. He still has a beautiful farm up bits and pieces of the picture they're there in New Jersey.

presenting.





"I have known Rick for about 5 years now; he is charming, funny and perhaps even a bit modest about his training ability. At first glance you may see a man who looks great on a horse but if you look a bit closer, you will see a man who clearly has a deep connection with his horses. Simply put, you see the ease with which the man and horse work together. It is more of a partnership, and it is very apparent that his horses not only appear happy working, they are willing to work." Laurie Faust

Conclusion:

We celebrate the addition of Rick Gervasio to our Morgan community and are fortunate his varied paths through other breeds have led him here. As with any trainer/farm owner, time is a limited resource. So if there is a little time left over, Rick enjoys his motorcycles and relaxing on his boat. A little fishing does a mind good! Rick aspires and concludes his earlier sentiments, "I'd like to continue to build my Morgan business with quality horses." Take a moment to visit www.RickGervasio.com or better yet, visit him in the Sunshine State. Here is a quick peak at his farm and one of his western creations that is available for purchase, WRR Eldorado:

