

O-AT-KA Don Moro & Lucinda's Victoria

SAMANTHA VICTORIA

by Ellie Mason

It was the latter part of the 1960's and I was in the market to purchase a filly or mare to match up with my handsome three year old stallion, Marvelous Gem. I wanted to get either a pure Lippitt or at least one that had a lot of Lippitt breeding in it. I came across an advertisement for a three year old by O-At-Ka Don Moro, a stallion that I had long admired. I became very interested in this bloodline after seeing various pictures of another stallion, Springdale King, who was a son of Don Moro. I wrote to the Barretts in Jersey Pa. the owner of the filly and received information back regarding her. She indeed had a very strong pedigree being out of Lucinda's Victoria, a pure Lippitt mare and I recalled seeing a picture of this mare and her then month old foal a few years earlier in the Morgan Horse Magazine which was quite captivating. After some corresponding we decided to purchase "Sam". She was what I was looking for except for color as I was hoping to find a bay and she was medium chestnut, but that was not the deciding factor as most important was the horse herself.

It was April 1969 and a friend<sup>dd</sup> made the trek to Pennsylvania from Gilbert, Az. to pick up Sam. When we arrived and went to the barn to meet my new mare we were greeted by a head with no ears and snapping teeth. Whoa I thought; I came all this way for a monster horse!. But that was just Sam. Actually she turned out to be a pussycat to handle, but she always laid her ears back when first approached. The only time she really meant harm was when she had just foaled and then she wasn't kidding. This we found out when she had her first foal in 1970 a lovely chestnut filly. I walked up to the stall not realizing there was a new baby in there and Sam almost came over the door after me and so for the next two weeks we would open the door and run and when it was time to go back in we would take a broom or something that looked threatening and guide her towards the stall. Luckily her babies were all very sweet and would come right up to be petted and scratched so Sam soon got over her super protectiveness. Actually she was a wonderful mother and a super easy breeder; if she sniffed the stallion's nose you could just about guarantee she was in foal. I did learn from that experience to put a halter on her before she foaled which made it much easier to go in and do the post foaling checkup and blood work.

Sam was extremely athletic and it is a shame I did not develop her potential, but with working full time and raising a family there never seemed the time. She could almost fly at the walk and trot and was so smooth to ride. Her canter while comfortable could be a challenge as she would want to go and start to canter sideways and switch leads. She learned early how to discourage riders while being ridden by my daughter and a neighbor girl. Go around once or twice and then a little buck up and they got off. Another favorite trick of hers was to suddenly spin and be heading back to the direction she had come from. If you weren't sitting correctly you would be on the ground because there was no warning and she was fast as greased lightning. I decided that if I ever got my reining horse Sam would produce it and it was her son, Marvelous Medallion, by Moro Hill's Medallion that turned out to be a super reiner. Trained by Jimmy Paul of Scottsdale, Az. Medallion amazed everyone with his ability. Until that time they had never had a Morgan to work and they were so impressed with him they said he could compete with any open horse of any breed he was that good. They took him to an open show in Pomona, California where he was twelfth out of thirty four reiners and Jimmy Paul said it was obvious California was taking all the big money as his mare that had never been defeated finished only in eighth place. They were thrilled with Medallion and said the crowd went wild everytime Medallion sat down and slid he was so spectacular.

Sam's foals were always nice, but she and Marvelous Ideal produced a steady stream of the most wonderful young horses. They were very similar and in a few cases the only way to tell which year's foal it was you were looking at was because we had put up new fencing from one year to the next. Always they were bay, with none or very little white, typy, pretty with wonderful conformation and personality. I might also add they wore their ears forward. When Sam foaled number thirteen she suffered a tear in her cervix which we didn't realize and so after that she would conceive, but not keep the pregnancy. When she was 23 we did surgery to repair the tear and at twenty-four she had her fourteenth foal that we named Dr. Woods after the vet that did the repair work. We decided not to try to breed her again. She had done enough.

I had given some riding lessons to a young lady who credits Sam with really teaching her how to sit down and stay with a horse, which was true of course. If you did it wrong Sam would have you on the ground and this has really paid off for Nina as she is now riding cutting horses. One day she mentioned if I ever wanted to let go of Sam she would love to take her for her little girl who was then five. Nina realized Sam was too much horse for her daughter, Jessica, to ride, but felt she would be perfect for her to learn to groom and handle. I bathed and trimmed Sam one sunny morning and took her to her new home. Little Jessica had no idea she was getting a horse until we arrived. She was so excited; she had to lead Sam from the trailer to her stall and from that day on no one else could brush, wash, feed or even clean her stall. Old Sam might just as well have gone to horse heaven; she lived her last years in such comfort and care. Although she was low man in the pecking order at our place she immediately let Nina's other two horses know she was top horse there and bossed them around. Sam celebrated her 29th birthday in May 1995 and a few months later began experiencing some difficulties. Our summer weather had turned into an inferno and even young horses were having some problems handling it. Sam went down a few times, but seemed to bounce back and appear alright. In early August Sam laid down and decided she had been around long enough. The vet could find nothing wrong, vital signs were good and yet she didn't want to get up. A temporary sunshade was put up; water and feed was right at her nose and Nina and Jessica constantly monitored her and the vet was just a cellular phone call away. At five the next morning, felt it was time to say goodbye and Sam was put down. Jessica wanted to be there with Sam and she said "well now the flies can't bother Sam's eyes anymore". It was difficult to say solong to such a great mare, but she enjoyed life to the fullest and the end was very easy for her. Most horses don't have it so well. Sam left such a legacy through her sons and daughters and now her grandchildren and great grandchildren. We have her lovely daughter, Marvelous Samantha, to carry on for us. So many things to appreciate about her; she was never sick a day in her life; she competed in a novice competitive ride, she helped us raise an orphan foal while raising her own, she loved to eat (typical Morgan) and she stayed fat on the minimum of feed. She had that wonderful soundness that one expects from the breed and such style. A trainer friend once said "I could really make a park horse out of that mare if you want". I would not be a bit surprised to find her bossing someone around up in horse heaven. Now as I look back I can say I made such a good choice when I decided to get that chestnut filly from Pennsylvania.