



WAR



PAINT

BY LAURA BEHNING

Before the White Rule was rescinded in 1996, an unknown number of Morgan foals were born who, because of misplaced white or a blue eye, could not be registered. We are fortunate to be living in a more enlightened age where increasing knowledge of color genetics, as well as DNA, means that there is no longer suspicion about the parentage of Morgans of the more unusual colors. However, the White Rule had a very lasting impact on the breed as a whole- and it severely limited the effect that one very well bred and excellent example of the breed might have had- and this simply because he was pinto marked.

War Paint was foaled in 1959 on the Cross Ranch in Wyoming. He was a frame overo-sabino combination; his blue eyes, bald face, and general spotting pattern due to his frame gene, and his jaggedly-topped stockings, the front right embellished with a disconnected spot, resulting from sabino. War Paint's sire was the chestnut Brunk bred stallion Chief Justin Morgan (Brunkey X Mylynda) and his dam was the chestnut frame overo and sabino patterned mare Painted Girl (Warhawk X Black Girl). I was unfortunately unable to acquire a picture of her to accompany this article, although I understand one has surfaced recently. Painted Girl was marked with two spots on her right side and one on the left, a star, strip left front and left hind stockings. Oddly enough, neither of her parents are noted as having any markings at all. However, Painted Girl's dam Black Girl is generally thought to be the source of War Paint's frame gene through her maternal grand-dam, who was non-Morgan and whose dam was said to be a pinto. While minimally marked frames generally have at least a thin blaze (leg markings are not typical of frame overo by itself), I've heard of horses with no facial white at all testing positive for the frame gene (LWO), so we can only assume that such was the case with Black Girl. Like

all the overo patterns, frame can "crop out" of horses that appear to be "solids", but who are really carrying one or more of the overo pattern genes. In this way these pinto patterns can sometimes "hide" for many generations.

War Paint was one of two Morgan stallions (the other being the famous smoky cream, Chingadero) from Ab Cross' breeding program who attracted the attention of the AMHA board in the early 1960's. Because of their unusual color (Chingadero was actually thought to be "white"; color genetics knowledge was very primitive at that point in time) Ab's horses were suspected by some to not be purebred. The board then passed the controversial "White Rule" in 1962, which disallowed horses having blue eyes or white over the knee or hock. I've heard several different versions of the story from this point. One is that personal vendettas were involved, and Ab was forced to choose one stallion whose get would continue to be registered- and he chose Chingadero. Another is that the AMHA actually attempted to pull War Paint's papers, but after many years of negotiation it was decided instead to no longer accept any foals by him for registration.

At any rate, all six of War Paint's registered get came after the 1962 ruling. They were: the chestnut 1963 mare Ogallala Woman (out of Cinder); the buckskin 1964 gelding H Buck (out of Cinder); the chestnut 1964 gelding H Warrior (out of Little Squaw); the smoky black 1964 mare La Mancha (out of La Pluma); the buckskin 1964 mare Miss Tigee (out of Sara); and the palomino 1964 mare H-Pally (out of Yellow Girl). All four mares had AMHA registered offspring which have bred on.

Ogallala Woman produced 4, but only her 1970 bay daughter Avilita (by Waer's Don Juan) bred on. She produced 5 offspring, one of whom, the 1985 chestnut stallion

GHM Viking Spirit, is noted as having a diamond star, snip, two fore socks and one hind sock higher in the rear, and a scar on the belly. A scar, or a white spot? I recently spotted Avilita's solid bay 1991 daughter, GHM Avilita's Legacy (by GHM Marchtime), for sale on Dreamhorse.com.

Miss Tigeer produced 12 foals, 5 of which bred on. Her 1969 chestnut daughter, H-Katrinka (by Kenfield), is behind the 1981 gelding The Gingerbread Man (by Beau Sealect), who had foals before he was gelded, including the good broodmare Long's Ginny Lynn.

H-Pally was the dam of 2, both of which bred on. Her 1970 chestnut daughter H-Imp was the dam of H-Hun (by Chingadero), a smoky black stallion (later gelded) with no white markings who was owned by Roger and Denise Bruhn of Colorado, well known for their enthusiasm for horses of Cross Ranch breeding. H-Hun was shown very successfully as a stock horse, in english pleasure and road hack. He had 25 offspring before he was gelded at age 12 to become a walk-trot mount for the Bruhn's 8 year old daughter. Denise Bruhn wrote a "Letter to the Editor" that appeared in the March 1987 issue of THE MORGAN HORSE magazine; the subject was the White Rule. She included some pictures of Cross Ranch horses. One picture showed a loudly marked frame overo/sabino mare sired by H-Hun and out of a registered Morgan mare. Unfortunately the name of the "registered Morgan mare" is not specified, so the source of her daughter's frame gene is uncertain. However, unless the "registered Morgan mare" was related to War Paint or his dam Painted Girl herself, then the pinto color almost certainly came from H-Hun- despite his "solid" appearance. Keeping in mind that War Paint's dam Painted Girl was from several generations of blacks who were said to have no white markings at all, you see why it is important to DNA test the numerous War Paint descendants for the frame gene!

La Mancha had 9 foals, and unfortunately only one has bred on, the 1987 black mare Chip's Blazing Star (by Chat's Chipper). La Mancha's last owners, Carolyn and Katherine Firch, bred Star and the 1985 bay gelding Royal M Kodi (by Paramount Royaltorch). Star was sold a few years ago to breeder Kim Chappell in California, but Kathy still has Kodi, who has "done it all" in true Morgan style. He has been shown in many divisions, including sidesaddle, and has his Gold Medallion from AMHA in the Show Division. Kathy reminisced about how they acquired La Mancha, whom they nicknamed "Munchie". "La Mancha came east with a truck-load of horses from the Cross ranch. She was lame when she got off the trailer. Nancy (Bower) remembers her well, as she and her husband were going to buy Munchie until they saw she was lame, and they bought H-Bell instead. Munchie passed through several different owners before we bought her in the fall of 1983. We had bought Volar Nelcon (son of La Mancha) in the spring of 1983 as a yearling, and went back and bought Munchie and El Cuervo who was at her side. We had never heard of War Paint, having only been in Morgans since 1979, and Munchie was to be our foundation mare."

"We were in for the shock of our lives when we went to find stallions to breed to Munchie," she continued.



*La Mancha (War Paint X La Pluma), 1964 smoky black mare, pictured in 1987 with her last foal, **Chip's Blazing Star** (by Chat's Chipper). Photo courtesy of Kathy Firch.*

"No one wanted to take the risk of her throwing a spotted foal. And, on top of that, went to the first AMHA convention in Orlando, just to hear all of the talk on the possibility of pulling the papers on the 6 offspring of War Paint that remained in the registry!"

"LaMancha had been abused somewhere along the line, and did not trust people. The only way to catch her was to run her in a stall, then offer her a crop or your hand (she always came to the hand). Once caught, she was no problem, as long as you didn't mess too much. She was supposedly broke to saddle, but we had been warned that she'd broke ribs of the last person who tried to ride her, so we kept her strictly as a broodmare. She thoroughly understood the breeding process, however, and would joyfully stand for the vet to check her out! She was an overly protective mother, and we were lucky to handle her foals until

they were several months old. After she got too old to breed, she was a wonderful surrogate mother, with other mares 'sharing' their foals with 'grandma Munchie'."

War Paint also sired some spotted offspring while he was at the Cross Ranch. Since these horses were ineligible for AMHA registration, they were registered in the Pinto Horse Association and/or the Moroccan Spotted Horse Association instead. Included in those bred by Ab Cross were 1967 chestnut overo stallion (later gelded) War Chief Charlie (War Paint X Sara, by Warhawk), who would go on to become a PtHA Champion and a LOM winner in the Moroccan Spotted Horse Registry; the chestnut overo Buzz (War Paint X Anne); and the War Paint granddaughter Ella Dominio (Buzz X Chancey, by Chingadero), a black overo mare- all full Morgans.

In 1967, Ab advertised War Paint for sale in the

Pinto Horse Association's magazine, and in 1968 the spotted stallion was sold to pinto breeder John Coates of Illinois, whose father was a long-time friend of Ab's.

John Coates kept War Paint for the rest of his life. He was truly dedicated to the stallion, and spent a great deal of time, energy and resources in an attempt to reestablish War Paint and his offspring into AMHA. He was, unfortunately, unsuccessful. How many purebred Morgans War Paint actually sired (other than the 6 registered by AMHA and a handful of known PtHA-registered purebreds) is unknown, but his total number of foals is reported to be around 130. In Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin the colorful stallion had quite a following, and people brought their mares of all breeds to him. Mr. Coates bred him to his own mares of various breeds, as well. Some of these mares were pure Morgan. Longtime Morgan breeder Sharon Harper of Illinois recalls that

HIDE AND SEEK!

Frame, like all of the pinto patterns, can "hide" in seemingly "solid" individuals (although this happens very rarely with the tobiano pattern and is far more common in the three overo patterns). A test for Lethal White Overo (LWO) is available through UC Davis (<http://www.vgl.ucdavis.edu/service/horse/coatcolor.html>). This test was designed originally for Paint horse breeders. It identifies horses that are carrying the frame overo gene, so that two frame overos (who may not look "pinto" at all) are not inadvertently bred together (which results in a lethal white foal in 25% of such matings). In this way, horses which appear "solid" can be "unmasked" and their true genetic makeup revealed. It is hoped that owners of Morgans who might potentially be carrying frame will get them tested. So, who might want to test their horses for LWO in an effort to discover where might the frame overo gene might be hiding in our breed? Well, we can certainly start with any descendants of War Paint! But another potential source for frame could be found in various lines related to War Paint.

Consider War Paint's dam, Painted Girl. She had 10 offspring, only three of which did not breed on, and there are quite a few descendants of her in the breed today. The buckskin broodmare Megabucks Delight, owned by Rainbow members Bill and Carol Pettis, is a great grand daughter of Painted Girl. The well known palomino broodmares mares Robbi Sue's Fairlite and Mochum's Joy are out of Julie Ploof's buckskin mare H-Roni, a daughter of Painted Girl. Both mares have offspring currently of breeding age. Black Dimples (Chingadero X Painted Girl) produced the stallion Ethan's Hawk and the buckskin mare Ethan's Faunie (dam of Junie Moore, dam of the perlino stallion PHPM Lord's Gift of Gold). There are many others.

Another line to check out would be descendants of the mare Tia, who is the only plausible color source

behind the palomino frame overo mare Sky Walker AB (Moreeda Andrew X Q Tawny, out of Tia). There has been some discussion that Tia, foaled in 1965 and whose parents are given as Chingadero and Yellow Girl, may instead have been sired by War Paint himself; Tia's 1964 foal, H-Pally, had been by War Paint. Another possibility is that Tia's dam was actually War Paint's dam Painted Girl (who did not have a foal registered out of her in 1965, the year Tia was born, but is listed as producing a foal in 1964 and 1966). Either of these scenarios would account for the frame gene coming down to Sky Walker AB. Tia's markings are given as "Connected Large Star, Strip" and no leg white, which is consistent with her possibly being a minimally marked frame overo. For further evidence of Tia being a source of frame, consider that her daughter Q Tawny (by Merry Madison) was marked with a "Connected Star, Strip, Snip Extending To Both Nostrils And Upper Lip. Right Hind Ankle White"- in other words, a large blaze face and minimal leg white, a classic expression of a minimally marked frame overo. Q Tawny produced at least one other offspring besides Sky Walker AB who had suspiciously frame-like markings, the palomino mare LAS Future de Oro (by Heathermoor Dynaquiz). I understand from people who have seen this mare that she is definitely a pinto; her markings are given by the Registry as "Connected Star, Wide Strip, Snip. Snip On Lower Lip. Left Fore Pastern. Both Hind Socks. Small Irregular Scar Right Side Lower Abdomen." I am told the "scar" is a white marking, not merely a white spot left by an injury.

Is it possible that the frame gene might be found elsewhere in our breed? Absent an obvious frame overo being born seemingly out of nowhere, as happened with Sky Walker AB, the best thing to do would be to have horses of War Paint and Painted Girl descent tested for the overo gene. We might well be in for some very exciting discoveries!

John Coates "...purchased all the 'high white' Morgan mares he could get his hands on to cross to War Paint and told me several times that they were all line-bred Brunk in their pedigrees. Living in the midwest I believe him as I saw a ton of Brunk breeding."

Sharon continued, "War Paint himself was a nice big (about 15.1-15.2) horse with a very definite "Flyhawk" look to him (and I saw hundreds if not thousands of Flyhawk horses around the midwest). He had a handsome head, typical Flyhawk neck (rather lowset and perhaps lacking a little in shape), level Flyhawk topline and croup, and good straight legs. By the time John got him (and one of the reasons Cross Ranch agreed to sell) he had gotten one hoof caught in a beartrap and had lost half of it. Thus he was no longer suited for the hard life of a ranch stallion. John loved him dearly and laughed at the stupidity of the registry- War Paint had a stud fee of over \$1000 (when you could breed to top Morgan stallions anywhere for the same or less) and John sold his spotted get for prices STARTING at \$3500 (when the top Morgan foals in the area were bringing about \$2000)."

Eventually, Ella Dominio had also made her way to the midwest and was bred to War Paint, producing two PtHA registered frame overo mares (Ballamona's Mylinda in 1974 and another unnamed mare in 1977) as well as the 1976 chestnut frame overo stallion Chief War Paint. Chief War Paint has many full and part Morgan descendants today from the breeding program of his owner, Lowell Rott. Lowell was a good friend of John Coates, and the two men worked closely together to develop working genetic theories about the various pinto patterns. Sharon Harper says "I remember competing with Cedarcrest Cinnamon against his (Mr. Rott's) chestnut pinto purebred Morgan stallion in pleasure driving at open shows. The stallion was a lovely, typy Morgan



Chief War Paint (War Paint X Ella Dominio), 1976 chestnut frame overo stallion, bred by John Coates and owned by Lowell Rott. Pictured at 16 months old. Like his sire, Chief War Paint had two blue eyes! Photo courtesy of Lowell Rott.



War Paint in 1979 at age 20 (the year that he died). Photo courtesy of Lynn Ponto Peterson.

and, I believe, a pinto national champion." Lowell still owns a Chief War Paint son, the chestnut minimally marked (a blaze is his only white marking) frame overo stallion Chief's Flashy Flyhawk (out of Funquest Swiftwing), foaled in 1994. 50% of this stallion's foals from Morgan mares have been spotted, proof that although he himself may appear to be a "solid", he is not!

War Paint died in 1979 at the relatively young age of 20, and John Coates passed away not long after that. While it is a bit sad that such a fine horse did not reach his full breeding potential in the breed of his birthright, he nevertheless has a goodly number of full Morgan descendants today. To my knowledge, none of them have been tested for LWO, so whether any of these horses is actually carrying the frame gene as a legacy to their famous forbearer remains to be seen. It is hoped that this article will raise awareness in the colorful Morgan community that indeed, such a possibility exists.

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