

A Lifetime with Morgan Versatility

By Susie Weiss



Susie Weiss with Cosmos Raphael during a 2022 National Drive.

On February 24, 1980, I purchased an entire herd of 12 Morgan mares from the Westrak Morgan Farm. My purpose was to supply dependable horses for an equestrian program I was running at the time at a local children's camp, while also maintaining my boarding, training, and lesson facility at Domino Stables, Inc. in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Little did I know this would start my Morgan breeding program, when the same year I also purchased my first stallion, Saddleback Sentinel, establishing what for me was a golden cross. Since the early 1980s, nearly 90 Morgans have been registered with my Cosmos (meaning unity and harmony) prefix.

Our Cosmos Morgans have touched on just about anything you ask a Morgan horse to do. They help us do chores, checking on

us to do it right. They are family horses that are dependable for all ages. Reliable to ride or drive anywhere we ask of them with confidence, athleticism, and just plain fun.

When Combined Driving Events were just getting started in the United States, I drove singles and pairs across much of the Midwest. At that time "marathon vehicles" were unheard of—we competed in antique vehicles.

Villa Louis Carriage Classic at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, has become one of the most prestigious carriage driving shows in America. Over the course of 20 plus years, Cosmos Morgans has dominated the different divisions of singles, pairs, novice, and antique vehicle, with myself and my clients as the drivers. Our Cosmos Morgans had the trot, presence, and style that made them so competitive.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Cosmos Raphael at Baraboo Circus Parade; Cosmos Rokytko at the Field of the Cloth of Gold Unit; Cosmos Phoenix with grandkids; Doing chores with Cosmos Raphael and Cosmos Technicolor.

I had retired Cosmos Rokytko in his upper teens from carriage driving. Instead, one year at Villa Louis, I was showing the four-year-old Cosmos Spencer in the novice horse division. A couple of show officials were embarrassed when they reported me for showing an experienced horse in the novice division, not recognizing it was a different and 15-year younger Morgan.

One year we were in the side saddle unit of the Great Circus Parade, which originated in Baraboo (also the home of the Ringling Brothers Circus for many years). Eventually we rode in the “Princess under the Canopy” for the Field of the Cloth of Gold (English and French Royalty) Unit in the Great Circus Parade held once yearly in Milwaukee, Chicago, and finally Baraboo, televised and in front of thousands of spectators. My Morgan became so used to “being in the shade” that he stayed in the middle of the canopy and turned square corners when we approached them. He had a stylish walk to the “oohs” and “ahhs” and applause of the crowd.

I have been associated with the Circus World Museum in Baraboo since childhood, meeting many of the animal train-

ers who worked there over the summer. Johnny and Mary Jane Herriot were nationally-known animal trainers. They trained for themselves and other performers with horses, elephants, and many different exotic and household animals. Heidi Herriot, their daughter, wanted to use my Morgan gelding, Cosmos Raphael for “Horse Trix,” a do-it-at-home training series for horse owners. Heidi used Cosmos Raphael for the fundamentals of trick training. He is the only bay Morgan horse in the videos at www.heidiherriott.com/horsetrix-training.

With different Morgans over the years, we were in the Morgan and carriage driving demonstrations at the Wisconsin Midwest Horse Fair that attracted more than 50,000 people each year. We demonstrated as the Morgan ambassador at the Recreational National Drive in Edinburg, Indiana, where the rules were to be safe and have fun.

These are just a few of the many things we have achieved with our Cosmos Morgans over the years. Morgans definitely can spoil you with all their great abilities. ■