

Lehigh Co. Morgan wins nat'l honors

BY SHEILA MILLER

NEW TRIPOLI — What do you get when you put one 16-year-old girl together with one 6-year-old Morgan gelding and one 32-year-old horse trainer and driving expert?

The answer is a national champion.

And that's just what happened when owner and trainer John Greenall of New Tripoli, Lehigh County, teamed his Morgan horse Thornyhills Donegal with equestrienne Tracey Picus. The pair rode their way to the American Morgan Horse Association's highest honors — the national high-point championship for Open English Pleasure Horses.

Tracey learned of her accomplishment just a few weeks ago. However, the points needed to achieve this national recognition were earned in horse shows throughout the East from January 1980 until January 1981. According to Tracey, the competition between the top two horses in the U.S. was "very close."

A justifiably proud Tracey comments that she is thrilled with the fact that Donegal has been judged the best of his class in the nation since it was a hard climb to the top.

She explains, "It's hard to show a Morgan in open competition and win because the judges usually don't know what a Morgan is. They're used to hunters and Donegal is usually the only saddleseat in the class. It's extra hard to do well because we're so different."

What made the way a little easier for Donegal, claims Tracey, was his consistency. "He catches the judge's attention because he's always bridled-up — he's got a natural, flashy headset. At the same time, he makes it look easy — consistently."

A seven-year veteran of the saddle, Tracey is an accomplished master of both English and Western riding and driving, with her preference leaning toward English saddleseat competition. Her aptitude for horsemanship

was groomed right from the start by her instructor and coach John, which explains her admitted preference for Morgan horses.

John, who has been breeding horses for the past 14 years, never runs short on praises for the "versatile" Morgan. Having grown up with various breeds as a child, John explains that he wanted a horse that he could perform well both under saddle and harness. He chose the Morgan as the horse that "could do everything well."

Donegal, the 1981 national champion Morgan gelding, is a product of two of John's best horses — the stallion Sirocco, a national champion driving horse, and the mare Mayo Mist, winner of two reserve national riding and driving championships — Open English Pleasure and Carriage Americana. Mayo Mist is now owned by Tracey's parents, Gerald and Mary Picus.

Following in his parents' hoof prints, Donegal won the 1980 grand national championship for Carriage Americana horse, driven by Tracey as a single. The year before he was teamed with his full sister to win the 1979 grand national championship for Carriage Obstacles with John in the driver's seat.

The difference between the Americana and Obstacle classes in driving competition, explains Tracey, is the latter is an event based on the best time over a particular course while the former is a class where the horse, carriage, harness, and driver are judged. This combination of horse and equipment is termed a "turnout."

Donegal, who according to John has won more year-end championships than any other Morgan in the Mid-Atlantic region, recently was part of a tandem pair in competition at the Devon Horse Show. In tandem hitches, the two horses are hitched one in front of the other instead of side-by-side. At Devon, Donegal was the leader while stablemate Ledge Hill

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Thornyhills Donegal, a six-year-old Morgan horse owned by John Greenall of Lehigh County recently was named the American Morgan Horse Association's highpoint champion in Open English Pleasure. Riding him to this national recognition was 16-year-old Tracey Picus of Wescosville.



At age fourteen, Tracey drove Donegal to his second national grand championship in the Carriage Americana division during the Grand National Morgan Horse Show in Oklahoma City. The previous year, Donegal took the top championship in the Obstacle carriage competition, a timed event.



Tracey poses with her 5-year-old Morgan mare Loth Lea Ebonaire. Tracey won the mare in a N.J. Morgan Horse Club essay contest and had hoped to show her until the mare accidentally broke her leg last year. Bred to Dirrah Dandy Lion, the unfortunate mare may produce a future champion for her young owner.



At the recent Gruber Wagon Works Centennial Celebration, John hitched his national champion Donegal, near side, with another Morgan stablemate, Ledge Hill Starfire, to one of his favorite vehicles, a shooting break.

Dressed in appropriate driving attire, from top hat to apron, John's turnout was the perfect picture of a bygone era. Seated next to John is Tracey, with Sherwood Muth playing the part of groom.