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# THE MORGAN HORSE IN POLAND

*In discovering our breed this family of horsemen found the perfect animal for reenacting the once proud traditions of their native hussars.*

**By Julia Poltorak**

**T**his story started five years ago. Our family saw our first Morgan horses in the stables of a friend, and we were enchanted by their beauty. We've bought three horses from this friend and the more we lived and worked with them, the more we fell in love with the Morgan breed.

After the sudden death of our friend, we gave home to all of his horses, including three Morgans. Eventually, we thought that these great bloodlines could not be squandered, and we

decided to breed the first Morgans in Poland. We bought stallions and more mares from Austrian, English, Texan, and Canadian bloodlines.

Like most Morgan owners, we were also delighted with the extraordinary versatility of this breed. Most of our horses pull carriages. We jump with them, ride dressage, put on a Western saddle for reining, then we change equipment and compete in Working Equitation, always having great fun. However many disciplines we

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*Irek and Agnieszka Poltorak and their daughters, Julia and Anna, own 17 Morgan horses at their Larysza Morgan Horse Farm in Sietesz, Poland. They have become international ambassadors for the breed.*

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**ABOVE:** Agnieszka and Irek Poltorak with Bochun and Kmicic after carriage driving lessons (photo © FAPA-PRESS/Piotr Dzieciolowski).



1. Agnieszka and Irek Poltorak riding in a November 3 celebration of the feast of St. Hubert, patron saint of the hunt; 2. Julia and Fionka, Irek and Bochun, Anna and Kmicic; 3. Irek and Bochun (photos © Marry Kolesnik Photography, Arthur and Joyce Photography, Boguslaw Jedrych Photography).

enjoy, we live in Poland and our main focus is the historical Polish Horse Riding School.

Polish equestrian history was very rich in the periods when Polish School of Riding was known and admired throughout Europe and Asia, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time, Poland's outstanding cavalry units were known as "hussars." They were the elite heavy cavalry of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, consisting of the wealthiest nobility, belonging to the national authority. Among the hussars characteristic features were wings attached to various parts of the armor or saddle.

The hussars prided themselves on their ability to win battles against opponents much larger in number. For instance, in the 1518 Battle of Mogilev, where about 500 Polish horsemen won against 30,000 Moscow soldiers; the 1610 Battle of Kłuszyn with 5,600 hussars against 30,000 Russians and about 8,000 mercenaries; and

one of the most famous victories of the Polish cavalry, the Battle of Vienna in 1683. These great victories and the fame that the hussars enjoyed in Europe at the time would not have been possible without their amazing horses, characterized by extraordinary courage, physical endurance, and trust in their rider. In addition, Polish horses were famous for their beauty, wisdom, and lightness in movement.

We found in our newly acquired Morgan horses the combination of all the features for which Polish hussar horses were so respected in the 16th and 17th centuries throughout Europe. Together, with our Morgans, we go to shows not only in our country but also abroad, exhibiting the beauty of antique Polish historical clothing and equipment, but above all, the beauty, movement, and training of our horses. It is in these moments, taking part in reconstructions of battles with weapons and cannons, in front of



1. The Poltoraks and their Morgans join colleagues on a hussar team; 2. Julia Poltorak and Fionka at a historical show in Książ Castle; 3. Anna Poltorak in her armour, mounted on Kmicic (photos © Boguslaw Jedrych Photography, Arthur and Joyce Photography).

audiences and among crowds of people, dealing with excitement and noise, that the true nature of the Morgans comes to light. Our Morgans feel like children in a candy store at these events. They are always calm, but you can feel their eagerness and excitement, fully focused on the rider and approaching every task with courage.

It seems to me that what we feel at such times is best reflected in a fragment of an old Polish poem name "Mohort," written in 1855 by Wincenty Pol:

*...And the bond and the eye and the sensitive blood will play,*

*And when he hears the clash of weapons and the bugle,  
It bursts its nostrils and trembles until it gasps,  
And you feel clearly in your heart through the saddle,  
Who is the master of this blood and what led you into the battle.*

We are grateful for finding the Morgan breed. With these horses we combine our passions and enjoy the richness that horse riding has to offer. We hope that the beauty, grace, courage, and versatility of the Morgans will also be recognized in our country. ■