

A Living Legacy

One Woman's Destiny
to Discover a Magical Horse

by Cynthia McFarland

Some believe that life just unravels without rhyme or reason, that things simply “happen.” Others believe there are no coincidences, that all events which life brings – both positive and negative – have purpose behind them, and it is up to us to discover whatever brightness is there.

Rarely does anyone have the fortune of discovering a horse and then introducing that remarkable animal to the world as a new breed. That was the luck and destiny of Cindy and Dennis Thompson. Visiting England in 1994, the horse-loving couple from Ocala, Florida had no idea that what they discovered there would not only alter the direction of their lives, but positively impact the lives of countless others as a result. They did understand however, it was incumbent upon them to discover its brightness.

Travelling through the countryside, the sight of a colorful animal at pasture captivated the Thompsons. Fascinated, they stopped roadside to investigate. Before them stood a stallion the height of an average horse, but built like a draft horse. Its black and white markings, elegant head and feathered legs were striking. They had never

before seen such a horse. With no invitation the mystical horse trotted, feathers flying, across the field to greet them. It was a magical moment for Dennis and Cindy.

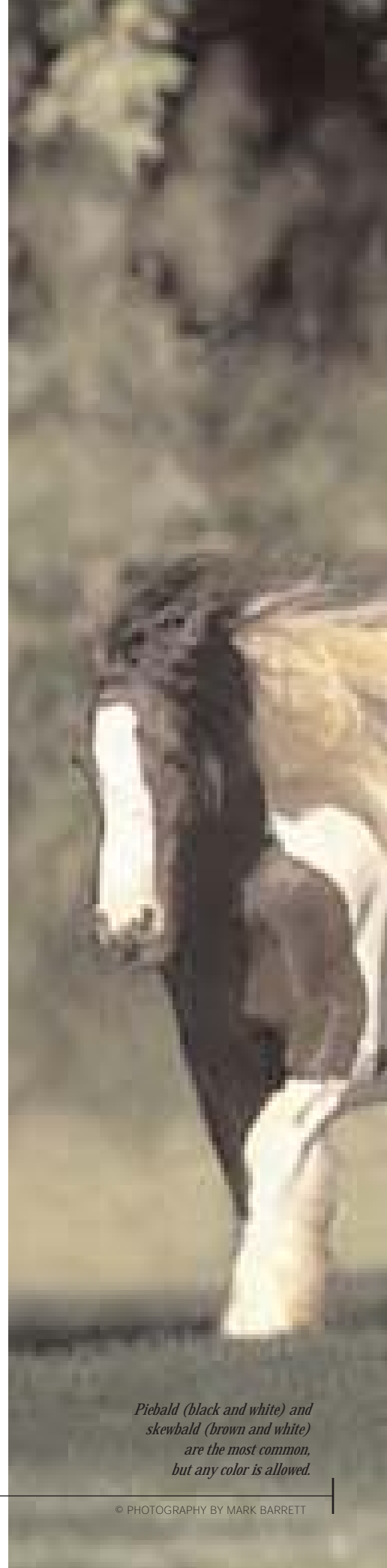
Adding to the intrigue, the couple learned from the farmer caring for the horse that the magnificent stallion was owned by a Gypsy man who kept a hidden band of broodmares of similar stock.

Smitten by this personable, unusual horse, and the sense of magic that surrounded it, the Thompsons spent the next several hours in a Gypsy camp listening to a man speak about his special horse. To their delight, they learned that the Gypsy owner was willing to sell this special stallion, after he had finished with his breeding plans. He invited the Thompsons to a Gypsy horse fair where they saw hundreds of the colored horses, but none as fine as his.

Enraptured by their discovery, the Thompsons returned to the United States to unearth more about this horse. But after reviewing a multitude of breed books, they were stunned to find that this intriguing horse was not officially named or recognized as a breed.

*the essence of a
gypsy vanner
goes beyond
their exotic
beauty and
inherent grace.
They possess a
true zest for life
& revel in our
companionship!*

*Piebald (black and white) and
skewbald (brown and white)
are the most common,
but any color is allowed.*





In 1995, Dennis and Cindy returned to England to spend ten days at Appleby, a 300-year-old Gypsy horse fair. They were the first Americans to ever attend with the sole purpose of understanding the Gypsy culture and their horses. The fair held also significance for another reason.

At the end of the day, a fortune teller approached the Thompsons offering to read their palms. Studying Cindy's, she said, "You have been handed a gift and with this gift you can help a lot of people."

"We were amazed at her choice of words," recalls Dennis. "This woman had no idea why we were there or what our goals were. We knew that something profound was happening. Spiritually, we knew we'd been given a gift the day we discovered Cushti Bok, the stallion whose name means 'good luck.' We could exploit his breed, or treat it with care and reverence so

that these magical horses the Gypsies created could do good for humanity in many ways. We knew there was a reason these horses were put into our lives. We wanted to bring honor, recognition and understanding to the Gypsy people and the horses they love."

Determined to fully understand the breed, the Thompsons devoted the next four years to research. They traced the original stallion's heritage through three countries and tracked down his breeder, a Gypsy who also owned the horse's sire and dam. "He took us to a field overlooking the Irish Sea to see Cushti Bok's sire. He pointed to a clearing under a tree," recalls Dennis. "He told us the horse was born right there and said he'd never forget the day, that he held the foal in his arms and knew he was special. He told us this was the best colt he'd ever raised."



*Ossifragi deciperet agricolae, ut parsimonia
cathedras amputat suis.*

Verecundus cathedras aegre divinus adq

*Chirographi conubium santet rures, semper
catelli vocificat satis pretosius oratori,
quamquam catelli senescer*



Fueled by a vision, the Thompsons began to pave the way for the world's first registry for a selectively bred horse raised by Gypsies. With the blessing of dedicated Gypsy breeders, they chose the name

Gypsy Vanner Horse - "Vanner" as a reference to the Gypsy caravans.

The Thompsons imported Cushti Bok and another striking stallion named The Gypsy King, as well as 14 quality mares for



foundation breeding stock, with the first arriving in the U.S. on November 24, 1996. Kuchi, the first Gypsy Vanner born in America, was foaled on March 18, 1999, and reported on by ABC National News.

Determined to share the magic they had discovered in the people-loving Gypsy Vanner Horses, Dennis and Cindy laid the groundwork for a concept called Gypsy Gold 'n Geldings, which connects these special horses with causes that bring good to others. The first Gypsy Gold 'n Gelding - Misto - was sent to Wild Rumpus, a children's bookstore in Minneapolis known for using animals to reach out to young readers. There, Misto pulls a cart of books during visits to inner city schools.

But on July 3, 2002, the fairytale ended. It was the day that Dennis found his 49-year-old wife lying dead in their barn. She was killed during an accident while foal watching. It's believed Cindy had fallen down a flight of stairs, but with no one in the barn with her that night, there's no way of knowing for certain. She hadn't been ill. It was an inexplicable tragic accident.

Dennis was devastated at the loss of the woman who had been his partner in both love and business. He credits friends in his local horse world for finally pulling him from months of deep, reclusive depression. It was they who consistently reached out to Dennis during that difficult time, urging him to find the energy

to go on and continue the dreams he and Cindy had started together.

As Dennis negotiated the numbing phases of grief, he realized more than ever how important it was to continue the plans he and Cindy had made to use the horses to bring good into the lives of others.

“Was it destiny that Cindy was put on this earth to inspire programs of goodness?” asks Dennis of his partner of 14 years. “Luck and destiny are central to Gypsy culture and it seems liked our whole journey together was filled with that. Cindy was a very spiritual person. She believed in destiny. What she’s leaving behind in her legacy is reflective of the gift of goodness that was present everyday in her life.”

A newly established Texas 501c5 non-profit organization called Lucky Money is solely devoted to raising funds for programs to achieve the goals set by Dennis and Cindy. Dennis has a letter of intent from the University of Florida in Gainesville to build the Cindy Tergerson

Thompson Gypsy Gold ‘n Gelding Center where Gypsy Vanners will be conceived, birthed and trained for a life of service and goodness to humanity. A program known as Cindy’s Sevens will train the world’s first certified therapy horses, which will be given away to equine therapy centers. The Gypsy Gold ‘n Gelding Center will be open to the public and fittingly, the first horse to graduate from the program will likely be “Seven,” the unborn foal whose dam Cindy was watching the night she died. (The colt was born with a blaze in the shape of a seven, Cindy’s favorite number.)

“I think Cindy was destined to discover a magic horse. Her goodness inspired this program and others that will help many people,” affirms Dennis. “Her spirit guides and inspires me everyday now and in this way she will remain my partner forever.”

For more information contact www.?????????????????.com or contact Dennis Thompson at (352) 591-2969 or email: info@GypsyGold.com.



Gypsy Vanners by Definition

Colorful and people-loving, the Gypsy Vanner Horse has a long history in Europe. Romany people known as Gypsies bred these hardy horses to pull their caravans. Since they were literally part of the family, the horses had to be docile and easy to get along with.

The primary breeds that went into creating the Gypsy Vanner Horse are the Shire, Clydesdale, Friesian, and Dales Pony. The Gypsy Vanner Horse is built like a small Shire or light draft horse. With a short back, heavy bones, and broad chest and hips, they have a more refined head than most draft types. Feathering begins at the knee on the front legs and at or near the hock on the hind legs. Height is between 12.2 and 15.2 hands. Piebald (black and white) and skewbald (brown and white) are the most common, but any color is allowed.

The Gypsy Vanner Horse is known for its kind and generous personality. Easily trained and capable of most any discipline, the breed is used for both driving and riding.

