

THE MATERNAL GRANDSIRE EFFECT

Greatness sometimes skips a generation. Many old time horsemen knew this from practical experience. Modern day studies suggest that Mendel was not right that in all cases a gene is a gene irrespective of where it comes from. In the maternal grandsire effect, a stud passes on some characteristics to his grandget, not through his sons, but through his daughters.

The example often cited anecdotally is the 1973 triple crown winner, the great thoroughbred, Secretariat. Secretariat's sons and daughters were not the race horse he was, and his records still stand now over 30 years later. However, his daughters have often proved to be exceptional broodmares producing top runners like the champions Summer Squall, A.P. Indy, Storm Cat, and Gone West to name but a few. Secretariat, himself, had received much of his athletic ability from his dam, Something Royal, not his sire, Bold Ruler.

Now studies have given researchers an explanation of the phenomenon. They call it genomics imprinting. Some genes are only maternally imprinted. There is a good discussion of the work of Dr. Douglas Antczak of Cornell University, and others, in a back issue of Equus written by Laura Hillenbrand, the author of the book Seabiscuit.

Is there evidence of the maternal grandsire effect in Lippitts? A look at nearly any aspect of Lippitt breeding today must take into consideration Royalton Ashbrook Darling. It must simply because he is the most prolific Lippitt sire with 68 purebred get, 34 sons and 34 daughters. His two most celebrated sons are Royalton Ashline and Equinox Beaubrook. Ashbrook Darling's influence though is far more pervasive.

Oldtime breeders paid attention to the prospective grandparents a foal would have, not just the sire and dam when making a breeding decision. Reading the following list of sires is to take a trip through a large part of the annals of modern Lippitts: John Ethan Ashbrook, Royalton Donald Ash, Ryegate Jediah, Croydon Minuteman, Tradition Derby Day, Horton's John Moro, Royalton Asa Ash, Braelea Gifford-Ashe, Royalton Ebenezer. Each of these stallions has a different sire. Each has Royalton Ashbrook Darling for maternal grandsire.

Dana Kelly, owner of Royalton Morgans, told me that the old adage, "Return the stud to his dam's blood", meant not to breed the stud to his dam, but to his dam's sister. He did it twice out of 164 purebreds produced, with Melinda in 1973 and Melanie in 1974. They were by Ebenezer and out of Melissa. Neither mare bred on.

Dana had made a more interesting breeding with Melissa in 1970 when he bred her to Lippitt Ashbrook Moro and got Minora in 1971. When Minora was bred to Ebenezer she produced Royalton Seth Warner. Seth Warner has Lippitt Ashbrook Moro for maternal grandsire. I'll come back to him later.

What started me thinking about the maternal grandsire effect was in Volume II Issue 3 of the LMBA Guide and Bulletin. It was a stunning picture of a colt that reminded me of a horse that haunts me, Quietude Robin Hood. The colt's name is Randallane Testa Rosa, and it turned out that its maternal grandsire was Robin Hood.

This realization motivated me to take a look at the distaff side of some pedigrees, and follow the consecutive maternal grandsires to see what turned up. In addition to Testa Rosa, I chose to follow the pedigrees of Horton's Vermont and OM Jacob Ash because they had the same sire, John Ethan Ashbrook, but different dam lines.

In just five generations I quickly arrived at the heads of three prominent Lippitt lines, born over 50 years ago. Then, another realization hit me, but first, the three heads of the lines are Lippitt Ashmore, Lippitt Moro Alert, and Dyberry Ethan. Ashmore and Ethan were born three days apart in May 1952, two years after Ashbrook Darling, and Moro Alert was born two years after them, in 1954.

It is true that a stud is often best known for his son, and Ashmore, or Tommy to his friends, was no exception. He was the sire of Lippitt Moro Ashmore, or Oscar. Oscar showed excellent type and sired 43 Lippitts. In the process he made the Meredith program his own, (With some help from Lip. Sallie, I think.) His picture is in the July, 1973 "Lippitt issue" of the Morgan Horse. Oscar's credits include being the maternal grandsire of three bay stallions, Ryegate Moro Magic, Madrona Ethan Ash, and Tradition Stary Nite, as well as the sire of Meredith Bruce and Lippitt Bruce.

Ashmore's prettiest daughter was Lippitt Victoria Amanda, Grand Champion mare at the 1962 Gold Cup show. Ashmore had one of the beautiful Lippitt heads and Amanda got it, but she left no Lippitt in turn the maternal grandsire of Randellane Testa Rosa. There is some tape on Robin Hood. In my opinion he did not receive the breeding opportunity he deserved, siring only six Lippitts. Testa Rosa's dam is one of only three daughters.

However, Robin Hood's dam, Royalton Drucilla D, had a little known full brother, Royalton Welcome. Welcome is pictured winning the blue ribbon at 4 months of age in 1961 at the Green Mountain Stock Farm show, on page 4 of the "Lippitt Issue", July, 1973. Welcome sired Royalton Donald Ash. Donny, as he was called, and he won Sire and Get in a class of 5 entries at TLCS in 1977. Donny had an exceptionally pretty head. He stopped me in my tracks when I first saw him at the 1975 show and I never forgot him.

Last year in a mountain pasture, I saw a filly with that head. Donny is her maternal grandsire. He is also the maternal grandsire of Venturous Magestic Prince through his daughter Venturous Elan. The head of the second line, Lippitt Moro Alert, is pictured on page 214 of the Peggy Pittinger book, Morgan Horses. Although bred by Royal Knight in Warwick, RI. after the first Lippitt dispersal in 1952, Robert Lippitt Knight brought him back to the stud when he restarted his breeding program. We are fortunate that he did.

Alert's best known son is Lippitt Ashbrook Moro, the maternal grandsire of Royalton Seth Warner. Seth sired Border View Emmaline, Grand Champion Mare as a yearling at the 1993 LCS. Interestingly, Ashbrook Moro is the sire of, Ryegate Moro Joy, from which there is an unbroken four generation line of mares to Woodbrook Jordan Russell. Jordan is the dam of Annaray Lady Ellen, Grand Champion Mare as a weanling at the 2003 LCS, and Jr. Champion in 2004 when she could not compete for Grand Champion.

There is a series of pictures well worth looking up of these three stallions. Lippitt Moro Alert is on page 34, and Lippitt Ashbrook Moro on page 38 of the, "Lippitt issue", July 1973, and Royalton Seth Warner on page 12 of the May-June 2000 LCN. The three are posed uncannily the same, facing right.

Lippitt Moro Alert's daughters are just as important. Alert's Miss Muffet has a substantial family. Lippitt Alsibeth was a fancy show mare and the dam of Meadowood Alert and Aleta. Lippitt Beth Alert, a red chestnut, was Junior Champion mare as a two year old at the 1960 National Morgan Show.

It is Beth Alert's son, and Moro Alert's grandson, Lippitt Bruce, that is in turn the maternal grandsire of Horton's Vermont. Vermont won Sire and Get at TLCS and he sired Storybook Salute Vermont, Grand Champion Mare as a two year old at TLCS 1994. Champion quality fillies seem to illuminate this line.

The third of the triumvirate of line heads is Dyberry Ethan. He came into being when Dr. Parks bred Lippitt Gladys Moro's maternal grandson, Lippitt George, to her full sister, Lippitt Miss Nekomia. This is a close to the version of, "Return the stud to his dam's blood", that Dana Kelly was to speak of 20 some years later. I know of no other instance where anyone replaicated this same pattern in Lippitts. Dyberry Ethan's pedigree is singular, and on a 1 to 10 scale, Ethan was a 9.9.

Perhaps more than any other stud, Ethan was known for his sons, 22 out 30 Lippitt get. All 30 were bay, black, or brown. Of the sons, 8 were sires, and sires of note. They have been well publicized, but 7 daughters produced nearly as many Lippitts, 52, as the 8 sons, 85.

Ethan's daughter, Moro Hill's Alrita, produced Michelle, the dam of Manito. Alrita also produced Marquis, sire of Ransomvale Kate and Sue Moro, and Shamrock Seville. Ethan was also the maternal grandsire of Emelyn's produce including Emelita, Athena, and Ashlyn. There was also Sweet Success, dam of Meredith Smoky. Another Emelyn daughter, Rohan Tasha Darling was the dam of the champion, Rohan Elbereth.

Al Lyon