

A Purple Ribbon

By Leslie Potter

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You have to admit, he looks good in purple. In an act of support for the rare-in-Kentucky Morgan breed, my co-boarder Dana and I decided support one of the only nearby county fairs that offered a Morgan class. I'd never actually competed at a county fair before, so I wasn't sure what we were in for, but for a twenty minute drive from the barn and five bucks a class, there really wasn't much to lose.

When we arrived at the fairgrounds there were already lots of trailers parked and kids riding their horses around. It was an interesting mix. There were lots of riders in fairly plain clothes and work tack, but there were also a fair number of serious-looking competitors with full show attire and gleaming horses. The show ring was situated at the bottom of a natural amphitheatre, down the hill from the fair's midway. I wasn't sure how Snoopy would handle the roller coasters and whatnot, especially once the sun went down and the rides became illuminated, but he actually seemed to find them more fascinating than scary.

I've been working on converting Snoopy from saddle seat to hunt seat. Granted, I'm no trainer, but he'd started making the transition on his own, so I just tried to encourage it. The difficulty was that he took naturally to the longer and lower way of going at home, but popped right back to saddle seat mode as soon as he realized he was at a horse show. I was expecting he'd revert to his lifelong saddle seat mode at this show, but instead he trotted quietly into the ring and stayed relaxed and relatively huntery throughout our classes! I was pleasantly surprised.

In our second class, he was a bit more upheaded and pulled his classic move of taking a couple of trotting steps when we were meant to be walking. He gets impatient. Otherwise, he was quite close to perfect, but we still ended up bringing up the rear in the placings for that class. After they'd awarded six ribbons without calling my number, I figured we were leaving that class empty-handed, but I was happy to find out that they were awarding ribbons up to 7th place. Okay, a last place ribbon is a last place ribbon, but this one was purple! Bonus!

I'll admit, I enjoy winning as much as the next person, but I'm going to call this one a positive experience at the low, low price of \$18 (two classes and admission to the fair) and one Thursday evening. We may still have a ways to go (and probably a few riding lessons) before we really get the hunter thing, but this show was definitely a breakthrough on that front. Who says you can't teach an old horse new tricks?

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