

## Parade of Breeds

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My first trip to Kentucky was a field trip with my riding instructor and a group from my barn when I was about 15 years old. We visited several of the legendary Saddlebred farms in the area, watched a race at Keenland and spent a day at the Kentucky Horse Park. I was pretty sure I'd found heaven.

My favorite part of that trip was the day at the Horse Park. We went through the International Museum of the Horse, visited the Hall of Champions (which at the time housed Quarter Horse racehorse Sgt. Pepper Feature, Saddlebred champion Emperor, and Thoroughbred legend John Henry, among others) and watched the parade of breeds. If you've never been to the Horse Park, the parade of breeds is a presentation of about five of the countless breeds housed at the Park. They tend to come out in costume or show ring turnout, and at this particular showing, one of the horses was a Shire in full medieval knight costume. At that time, they let tourists pay three bucks to sit on one of the horses and have a Polaroid taken, and I jumped right on that opportunity. Somewhere I have a photo of me in all my awkward teenage glory, sitting astride a very bored-looking Shire in fake warhorse attire.

Sadly but understandably, they no longer allow tourists to sit on the horses, so if you missed out on visiting the park prior to the mid-nineties or so, you're probably out of luck.

Now I'm a Lexington resident, and visits to the Horse Park are a regular part of my life. A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to make an appearance in the Parade of Breeds again, this time on my own horse. The Horse Park gives various local equestrian organizations the opportunity to present their breed or discipline during the parade of breeds for a weekend, and this September, the Bluegrass Morgan Horse Association had their featured weekend.

Several members of the BMHA volunteered to participate. I rode in hunt seat attire while the others went saddle seat. We entered the arena as a group while the announcer gave a brief history of the Morgan breed. Then we rode one by one while she read our individual horses' biographies. Snoopy was well-behaved, as always, but he is a curious fellow and so despite my efforts to get him to bend nicely through the corners, he went around the ring somewhat inverted as he stared at the crowd. To be fair, there is a lot to look at in that arena, and this was his first time seeing it.

After the presentation, we rode the horses over to the rail so that people could come and meet them up close. Snoopy liked that part, and he did his best to charm the dozens of people who came by to visit (he didn't realize none of them had carrots.) He posed for photos with visitors while I answered questions about him and about Morgans in general. A lot of the people who come to the park are new to horses, so it was fun to talk to them about how I got started with horses and how Snoopy entered my life. I think he did a good job representing his breed and giving the tourists a positive impression of Morgans.

Next time, I'll remember to bring my medieval knight costume.

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