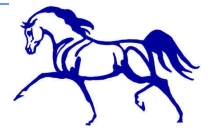




# MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD



DJ Sproat

Congratulations to Denyse (D.J.) Sproat on achieving the 2009 Meritorious Service Award by the IMBA Board of Directors. For almost as long as she can remember, DJ loved horses. She drew horses, collected model horses, read about horses, ran like a horse and perfected a very credible whinny. When playing house, DJ didn't want to be the mother or father or baby sister, she was the family horse. DJ was born in York (north of Toronto), Ontario, Canada, to parents who were not horse-people, but they were outdoorsy and loved animals. So, her interest in horses was not discouraged but because of living in town, her only access to horses was through the local trail riding stables.

The very last day of horse camp one summer, DJ's mount named "Dutchess" ran off with her, swerved near a fence and the young girl flew off, suffering a very bad break on her index finger. In the hospital, she talked constantly of her remorse in not getting back on Dutchess and riding again. Her father, perhaps feeling he had to do something because his daughter was hurt and upset, promised her a horse.

Soon, they went to see Azkhyme, 12 years old, a chunky bay Half-Arab with a pretty face, big eyes and a friendly nature. His owner had trained him and shown him in English, Western, side-saddle and harness. Supposedly, "Khyme" (pronounced "Kim") had a Morgan dam. Of course, since the IAHA did not record the breed of the non-Arab parentages, there was no official record of this. The year was 1975. About a year later, the Western Horseman magazine had a little article showing a grey horse. The caption indicated he was a stallion and the first horse registered with a new MORAB horse registry. Except for the colour, this horse was the spitting image of Khyme. Same body shape, same head, same eye. DJ then realized her horse was a Morab! And forever after this is how she referred to him. In her small way, DJ was doing her best to promote the Morab in Ontario as far back as the 1970's.

Khyme was the perfect first horse. He was tolerant and kind, enduring adolescent impatience and temper. DJ was a loner at school but owning a horse made her feel special and gave her something important to do every day. Her horse needed to be groomed and exercised and his stall cleaned. She never noticed that she wasn't part of the high school social scene. Thanks to Khyme, DJ gained the confidence needed to be an independent person. DJ and Khyme rode every day, exploring woodlots and ravines. They went to pony club events, hunt club days and various shows. After the first three shows, they were never out of the ribbons.

After four years, DJ was getting ready to go to university. She sold Khyme to a family that showed at the same club. Later, she discovered too late that Khyme was not well looked after and was sold again. She never knew exactly what happened but vowed

that from then on, her horses would have a home for life!

Subsequently, she owned several horses but never had that really special horse. Over the decades, and with the help of the Internet, she found a variety of Buckskin Morgans and even a few Morabs across Canada and the US. She travelled all over Ontario and into the States to visit a few horses but nothing quite worked out. Then one day she checked the Classified ads on [www.morab.com](http://www.morab.com). There was a 3 year-old buckskin Morab listed.



DJ with Alex and Mocha, her Morab Buckskin gelding.

Windmere Mocha, he was called. He sounded nice. DJ began an email conversation with the owner, Carol Hardy (now King). Carol sent photos and a video and DJ liked what she saw. DJ arranged for a shipper and paid for Mocha sight unseen. Later she worried, "What if he is really ugly.." But when the trailer pulled up and she saw a pretty buckskin head looking out, her fears vanished.

Mocha has been DJ's dream horse, very people friendly with an entertaining personality, athleticism and good movement, including an awesome jog. He is 15.2 hh, a beautiful dappled gold, and has the substantial body conformation that typifies the Morab. Mocha likes going on rides and to shows – especially if there are people to pat him. He displays genuine talent for Trail classes. He is kind and willing, good on real trails and going cross-country too.

Several years ago, DJ attended the Villa Louis Carriage Classic with fellow IMBA friends, Wes and Jane Licht, and thoroughly enjoyed the driving scene. She purchased another Morab Buckskin, a mare named Magic, who has learned to ride and drive. She also has a chestnut Morgan, Alex, who is her main driving horse.

DJ was asked to run for the IMBA Board of Directors. She served on the Board for two years (2007-2009) until a serious health condition forced her to resign. DJ has always been a cheerful, positive and very intelligent force on the board who promoted goal-setting and creating a vision for the future. She promoted and with the assistance of Ingrid Buchmeier, established the first IMBA Online Open Horse Show. Now in its second year, the Online Show is going strong, (though it can always use more entries).

The Morab community will be pleased to learn that DJ's health is steadily improving and she has high hopes of playing with her Morabs this Spring. Thanks again, to a dedicated horse owner who facilitates and promotes that special connection to our equine friends.

