

# LINGERING HILLS STABLE

## The Realization of a Dream

By Jenny Gray

Beginning over 30 years ago, Lingerin Hills Stable in Afton, New York grew from a four stall barn into a flourishing, full-service training stable for Morgan horses. A generation later, Scott, Travis and Danielle Neidlinger have taken a giant leap forward -- relocating to a state of the art facility in the heart of East Coast Morgan horse country. "Everything we have done so far has led us to this point", said Scott Neidlinger, referring to the new Lingerin Hills Stable in East Windsor, Connecticut. Read on to discover how these dedicated young trainers have made their dreams come true.



The journey began in the early 1980's when Mari Neidlinger quit her job to train horses at the family farm. Thriving in this environment, her sons Scott and Travis learned to ride as soon as they could walk; eventually showing both customer horses and their mom's beloved Morgans. Scott, a natural leader, began training while still in his teens. Travis, five years younger than Scott, was in great demand for his ability to catch ride, developing an immediate rapport with each mount. Scott's future wife Danielle, who grew up showing Arabians and Morgans, had aspirations to become a trainer one day. A graceful, elegant rider, she would later bring a new dimension to the Lingerin Hills team.

After graduation from Caserovia College, Scott apprenticed for and learned from such notable horsemen as Mike Goebig, John Warner and Jan Lakers while also training horses with Travis at the Afton farm. Knowing his career would benefit from taking sole responsibility as a head trainer, he accepted a position in 2007 with Robert and Loek Neimeth at Misty Meadows Farm in Connecticut. Thrown in at the deep end, it was daunting at first, but in typical Scott fashion he successfully rose to the challenge for Robert and Loek who respected him as a trainer while treating him as a son.

Misty Meadows provided the right situation at the right time. While Scott was sorely missed at home, this move stretched him in ways he probably would have never imagined. A private barn, it allowed him the ability to buy, train and show top-quality horses as well as to take full responsibility for running the

business. He focused on bringing costs under control while expanding the operation to include outside clients. Shortly after joining Misty Meadows, Scott was working 20 horses -- 13 of them still juniors. Fortunately he loved the challenge and continued to build a well-deserved reputation (shared with Travis) for developing and marketing these youngsters.

Danielle was hired as an assistant trainer at Misty Meadows while still in college. She confessed, laughing, that she actually begged them for the job, finally convincing Scott and the Neimeths that she was willing to do anything and everything. She worked every weekend before moving to the farm full time after graduation. She and Scott forged a strong working relationship as well as a deep friendship that evolved into something more. Married in 2012, they are now parents to three young children.

When Misty Meadows closed -- an event that happened quickly, it left them to place both client and Misty Meadows horses in just a few weeks. While Scott received many good offers of training positions, Mari persuaded him to come home, bringing several horses with him, it was necessary to build more stalls while in the middle of show season. This time was both exhilarating and insane as well as a hodgepodge of things to come. The situation was made more challenging because Danielle was pregnant with their first son, Lane, and they were forced to live in a trailer by the barn, sharing this small space with Danielle's Doberman, until they could move back into a house Scott inherited from his grandparents.

With Scott and Danielle back home, the training schedule fell neatly into place. Mari continued to run a thriving lesson program; Scott and Travis

played to their strengths, each working the horses that suited them best and Danielle, equally at home on a hunter or a big-moving park horse expanded the depth and breadth of the operation. In a friendly, cooperative environment, Lingerin Hills continued to build on its success in the five years that followed.

Scott is described as a powerful horseman with a true gift for developing a world class driving horse. He expects a lot from his equine charges and they willingly respond. Concerned for their welfare as well as optimum performance, he knows when they need time off or a change in routine. Preferring to work them lightly at a show, he wants them to be at their brightest in the ring. "I figure out their buttons and how to push them. I've learned what not to do", he reflected.

Travis, flexible and intuitive, takes a soft and subtle approach. Exercising great patience, he coaxes maximum performance from a nervous horse or rider, taking the time to ensure they feel safe and confident in the show ring. He takes an extra step to adapt his style on each client horse to the way they ride and how they are capable of performing. "I learned a lot from riding other breeds", he remembered. "Once in a while when something isn't working, we remember a







Scott, Danielle and Travis Neidlinger made their dreams come true this year when they relocated Lingerin' Hills Stable to a state of the art facility in East Windsor, Connecticut. In careers that began when they were very young, they all have a broad range and depth of experience in multiple disciplines that have resulted in multiple regional, national and world titles.



Cavit Stone was delighted with the results Scott Neidlinger and the Lingerin' Hills team achieved with her homebred Wicked Cool. He earned the 2014 New England Junior Pleasure Championship and went on to a reserve world title.

trick from the early days and try it out." His personal preference is to ride the junior saddle horses as well as enjoying a good western horse. Asked whether he has any new up and coming performers he said, "I can't tell you, I want it to be a surprise!"

Danielle, an accomplished and successful rider who switches from division to division with ease, has a gift for teaching young children. Together the team has an almost uncanny ability to understand each individual horse and rider, patiently nurturing their potential while determining where they best fit within the spectrum of the show horse world. "They're a fine-tuned machine," Mari declared.

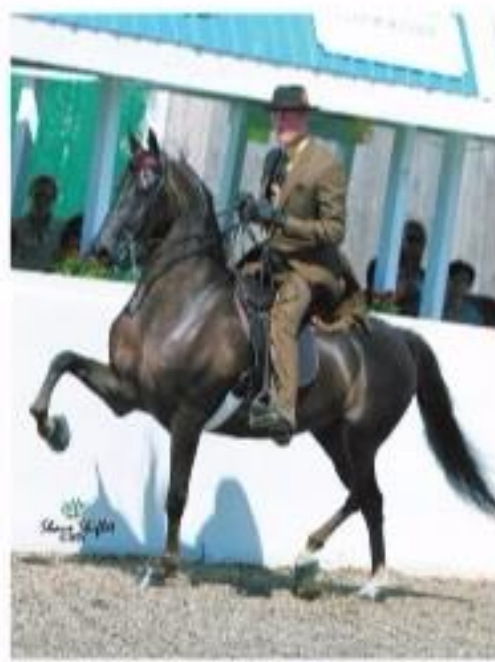
When we visited the Afton farm last year with the intent of writing a story, the Neidlinger family had determined the time was finally right for a move. Although very successful with a growing client base and an invaluable list of contacts built while Scott and Danielle were at Misty Meadows, they continued to be frustrated by the difficulty of marketing their horses in this remote area of New York as well as harboring a concern for their loyal East Coast clientele. Shortly after the New England show last year, Scott called to let us know the final decision had been made to move to the hub of the Morgan horse world either in or close to Massachusetts. We are delighted to report they have moved to their dream location this spring.

In a search beginning over two years ago, they finally found the perfect property in East Windsor, CT, on the Massachusetts border, only 3.7 miles from the Springfield/Hartford airport. "I drew a 45 minute circle around West Springfield," Scott explained while outlining his decision criteria. This beautiful, 20 acre property has over 30 stalls as well as huge indoor and outdoor arenas, several outbuildings and a lovely, five bedroom home.

In a scenario similar to the move from Misty Meadows, the transition happened incredibly quickly in a whirlwind of activity. The deal was agreed upon two hours after their offer was made and they closed in 30 days. They moved the horses early in May then on May 7th, Scott worked at the new farm in Connecticut, returning in the evening to New York to be with Danielle who gave birth to their third child, Ella Mae, on Tuesday May 8th. (Ella's name was selected by her

brothers, Lane and Blake, insistent that the new baby be named Cinderella!) Fortunately everything progressed so smoothly that by the following Saturday, Danielle, who shares the Neidlinger family's intense work ethic, was at the new farm giving lessons.

We caught up with Scott on May 10th. Not only had he just become a new father, the Connecticut farm had immediate issues to be addressed. Tackling overgrown landscaping, he and Travis moved ten truckloads of tree branches, spread 50 yards of mulch, spent several hours weed whacking, built six stalls and began to renovate an old feed store into a comfortable,



MEM Tough Enough GCH was one of the impressive youngsters Scott Neidlinger trained, showed and sold while working at Misty Meadows Farm. He debuted in 2008 and finished the year as Four-Year-Old Park Saddle Reserve World Champion.

two-bedroom apartment for the clients in addition to working 28 horses in training and installing new pipes and plumbing for the automatic watering system.

There is very little Scott and Travis cannot do in order to maintain the property. In the early days, it was a matter of financial necessity. Now it is satisfaction of a strong work ethic as well as good business practice to keep costs down. They do, however, spend a few minutes each day to appreciate the beauty of their new home. Travis put it best when he told us, "I wake up and look at the view and I can't believe we have a property like this. It's hard to believe it's really ours. The barn is amazing!"

While Scott, Travis and Danielle are the next generation of trainers, this is also a new beginning for the extended Neidlinger family. Mari and her husband, Bill, will move nearby when Bill retires from New York Gas and Electric in October. Mari, already retired, can't wait to be back with her grandchildren. She plans to regain her amateur status and looks forward to showing her new horse, Take the Crown (Henry), in the western pleasure division. Danielle's parents, Steve and Sandy Paulve, also big supporters of Lingerin' Hills, have been lifesavers—staying at the farm, taking care of Lane, Blake and baby Ella and generally getting the house in order. With Steve and Sandy's help the purchase of the new farm was made possible.

When we spoke to Mari shortly after the family moved to Connecticut, she and Bill were experiencing their first week alone at the Afton farm with no children, grandchildren or horses in residence. Taking care of Lane and Blake every day while Scott and Danielle worked horses, her life is very different now they have moved. Watching Bill drive the tractor, she realized with a pang that Blake was not in his usual place on the tractor seat helping grandpa drive. It was a bittersweet memory but her family made it clear that a bedroom in East Windsor is ready and waiting wherever she wants to make the trip. With plans in place to move this year, Mari and Bill are looking for around 50 acres where Bill can continue to make hay for Lingerin' Hills at an affordable price. "I'm so lucky and blessed with this family," she reflected, anxious to join them as soon as possible.





In addition to beautiful barns and outbuildings suitable for top quality show horses, the East Windsor farm boasts a lovely, five bedroom home with plenty of room for a growing family and visiting relatives. There is also a guest apartment for out of town clients.

The family is equally appreciative of Mari and looking forward to the day when she and Bell will live closer. In the meantime they send her frequent texts and on May 14th Travis sent her a video of her new horse wishing her a happy Mother's Day from 'Henry'. "She pushed us and kept us showing", said Travis. "If it hadn't been for my mom I probably wouldn't have had a career with horses...As a family we never have issues, we never argue and we make it fun!"

After a completely exhausting week that included both moving and welcoming baby Ella into the world, Scott was both excited as well as a little overwhelmed. Sharing his vision for Lingerin' Hills he said, "I want to make this a destination - somewhere people can come and have an experience that's more than just watching their horses work." Close to good shopping and local tourist attractions, there is no shortage of things to do. Almost all of the clients Lingerin' Hills clients embraced the move to Connecticut. We have included their comments to give further insight into why they are such loyal supporters of the Neidlinger family.

The Misty Meadows experience taught Scott a new business model. Where possible, he encourages his amateurs to both show and breed. In doing so they enjoy showing a finished horse while bringing along a youngster that can potentially be sold for a profit. Amanda Hill of Land's End Farm has followed this model. With horses in training at Misty Meadows, she moved them to Lingerin' Hills when Scott and Danielle moved home. Owning a small breeding operation, she has reaped the benefits of Scott's advice on the selection of stallions as well as Scott and Travis' passion for developing a young horse. The East Wind, her first home-grown show ring star, has flourished in the park saddle division under the Lingerin' Hills banner, winning the prestigious Park Saddle Reserve Championship at the 2016 New England Regional show with Danielle in the saddle. Living closer to the new location, "I'm beyond excited for them!" she stated, "It's what they need to continue to grow their business."

Marcie Eaton, a resident of Manthos, NY, began showing as a child in walk-trot. First bringing her daughters to Mari for lessons, she began buying horses when Scott and Danielle returned to New York from Misty Meadows. Echoing the Neidlingers' desire to be in the heart of the Morgan world, she witnesses the change in spite of a four hour commute. "It's the kind of facility they deserve", she said, looking forward to a lovely facility with a heated barn and the ability to stay in a guest apartment on the property.

Marcie appreciates the way in which the team collaborates: bouncing ideas off each other and working the horses that suit them best. "They listen to each other", said Marcie. "When there's honesty in a relationship it saves a lot of time. They catch things before they become a problem. They give a young horse a good foundation, working from the ground up." Danielle trains both of Marcie's daughters and is blossoming in her relatively new role as an instructor. "She has no fear of learning ... she's a gorgeous rider, she loves a good hunter and she's also exceptional with the western horses. I want my children to have a role model and I can't think of anyone better than Danielle."

Always focused on what motivates a client, Scott asked Marcie about her goals while they were competing at the Grand National in 2013. Her response was to return to Oklahoma with the right horses who had the potential to win. In just three years the goal was met. Indian Creek Tomahawk won the 2016 Futurity Three-



Sarena Eaton started off her show career as the 2014 New England Regional Classic Walk-Trot Equitation Champion directed by the Lingerin' Hills team. She has gone on to achieve numerous accolades including a 2016 world championship.



Blaire and Lane Neidlinger were excited to welcome sister Ella Mae on May 8, 2017. It was a memorable time for the family as Ella was born just a week after they relocated to their new farm in Connecticut.

Year Old Pleasure Driving Reserve World Championship with Scott at whip and L. A. Ricochet carried Sarena Eaton to victory as the Classic Saddle Seat Equitation 9 and Under World Champion. Thrilled with the results, Marcie's next goal is to succeed with an open horse and eventually breed one.

The purchase of L. A. Ricochet exemplifies the trust their clients place in the Neidlinger family. With one of her horses not being a good fit for her daughter, Marcie decided to sell him and buy something more suitable for a young child. When Danielle heard Ricochet was available, she called Marcie, telling her he must be purchased that same night or they would lose the sale. When Marcie protested that she needed to sell the other horse first, Danielle assured her they would get the job done. Taking a leap of faith, Marcie bought Ricky and in the next 24 hours the other horse was sold. "They're easy to trust", she observed.

A client since 1999, Patty Casler has watched Scott and Travis grow into the expert horsemen they are today. "Scott was still in college when I arrived and Travis was just 14 so I was witness to their coming of age ... I can tell you that I have never seen such raw talent and instinctive horsemanship in any two persons before and it was the privilege of my life in Morgans to watch them bloom. In addition to their many talents they are the nicest family I've ever come across and I am very happy to count them among my friends ... meeting Mari Neidlinger enabled



me to come back to a life that I loved and has brought me a dear friend."

Patty bought the best horses she could with some-times limited funds, including TCF Immortal Affair, AMHF Absolut Top Calibre, RWJ Gabbana and RWJ Belle D'Avril upon whom Scott and Travis worked their magic, allowing her to sell and re-invest profitably. "Scott is a master at getting them to march down the rail perfectly, tails flapping". Patty told us, remembering the great passes he made with RWJ Gabbana and RWJ Belle D'Avril. She is very excited to show her new horse, QVM National Anthem, in the park saddle division this year.

An exceptional talent in the Lingerin Hills lineup, Little Black Dress is ready to take on the world this year both in hand and under saddle. Last year Scott showed her to many titles including Reserve World Champion Mare. Bristling with energy, this beautiful mare exemplifies what the team is able to produce. Carey Churchill, her penud owner, has been a Neidlinger client for 20 years and like Patty Casler, has watched Scott and Travis flourish saying, "I feel privileged to have watched Scott and Travis' young talent progress into the amazing talent they are today." With the addition of Danielle, Carey knows Lingerin Hills has three first-rate trainers who can step up to any challenge. Also emphasizing the importance of the friendships and fun she has experienced during her tenure at the farm she told us, "In those 20 years we have laughed, cried, cheered, practiced, won, lost, parted and through it all became a horse family that I love."

Long term Morgan horse owners, Frank and Carolyn Gibbard, residents of New Hampshire, are delighted the Neidlingers are moving to a great facility much closer to their home. They always faced a long drive to New York but felt it was worth the effort in order to have their horses in training at Lingerin Hills. Carolyn especially appreciates Scott's ability to be able to analyze and address any problem. "He can even take a complete rogue and turn it around", said Carolyn. "There's no forcing and they are willing to take it slowly. They are so kind and they're the kind of people that are real. They inspire me. I can't think of anyone I would rather see have this kind of new facility." In the fortunate position of being much closer to the new barn, Carolyn, at age 78, aspires to show under saddle again and with the combined expertise of Scott, Travis and Danielle, we have no doubt she will succeed.

Carol Stone of Brookshire Morgans in Vestal N.Y., has also watched Scott and Travis come of age. Active in the New York State Morgan Horse Society, she came to know the family quite well but it was not until 2013 that she took a horse to them for training. Initially bringing her 10-year-old granddaughter to Mari for lessons, she became captivated not only by the quality of training, but by the warmth and camaraderie by which she was received into the group. "It's been a wonderful experience," she enthused. "I wish I had gone there much sooner."

Carol sent her humbled Wicked Cool to Lingerin Hills for training. The following show year was to bring her one of the best memories of her life. By the spring of 2014, this big, powerful horse showed his true potential. Undeclared at the New York State Breeders' show and reserve champion in pleasure driving at Connecticut Morgan, Scott determined he might do very well at the New England Regional. "He took one look at the ring and said, 'that's mine!'" Carol remembered with pride as he stepped into the big New England ring for the first time. Wicked Cool won Pleasure Driving Four-Year Olds unanimously then came back to win the New England Regional Pleasure Driving Junior Championship with Scott at whip. Not only did the whole barn celebrate, people came to Carol



The red Lingerin Hills sign that welcomed clients to the Altun, NY property for so many years is now at the top of the driveway in Connecticut. "You should never forget your roots", said Scott.

navigating about her horse. It was a heady experience but the best was yet to come. Wicked Cool continued to rapidly mature and develop so Scott suggested to Carol that they compete in Oklahoma. More than ready to take on the world, he was crowned the Four-Year Old Pleasure Driving Reserve World Champion for his ecstatic owner.

"All of them are exceedingly honest", she summarized. "They are the hardest-working, no nonsense people...their work ethic is amazing and they are very loyal to their customers." While it was Scott who showed Wicked Cool to fame, Carol spoke of her

appreciation for Travis, both personally and professionally. Quieter than Scott but with a great sense of humor, Travis has infinite patience in the development of a horse as an individual. "He has the most beautiful hands I have ever seen. When he bridges a horse anyone could ride it...He communicates with a horse on a level that's exceptional. We couldn't be more excited for them. It's a reward for everything they have given."

2016 was an amazing season for Lingerin Hills. Building on their early success, their top notch show string earned blue ribbons and championships at a regional, national and world championship level. In addition to the great horses noted above, Distinguished CH won the Four-Year Old Gelding Grand National Championship with Scott leading and the Four-Year Old Park Saddle Grand National Championship with his owner, Elizabeth Ciccone in the irons. Equinox Cavalier, Wilkhamen Wild Child CH, LNT Cassanova and Java Joe rounded out this winning lineup.

In this new chapter of their lives Scott, Travis and Danielle are not resting on their laurels. "We need to have more people know about us and get our name out", said Travis... "We are a hard working family and we try our hardest with every horse, regardless of division. It's not just about showing. We make it fun and we want to keep getting better. There's no limit to how high you can go." Already full and with a growing waiting list, they are in high demand and perfectly located for anyone on a buying trip. Scott, sentimental about the past, has brought some of the old signage from his mom's farm as well as a new sign that includes a logo from Misty Meadows. "You should never forget your roots", he wisely observed.

Everything Scott, Danielle and Travis Neidlinger have achieved has led to the realization of a dream at their new location in the heart of Morgan horse country. There are few who have worked so hard or earned their success more. Having the greatest admiration and respect for all they have accomplished, we wish them good fortune, fun and joy in their new endeavor and will be there on the rail to see their future unfold.



The Neidlingers take great pride in their spacious, new stable with its wide aisles. "It's hard to believe it's really ours", said Travis. "The barn is amazing!"