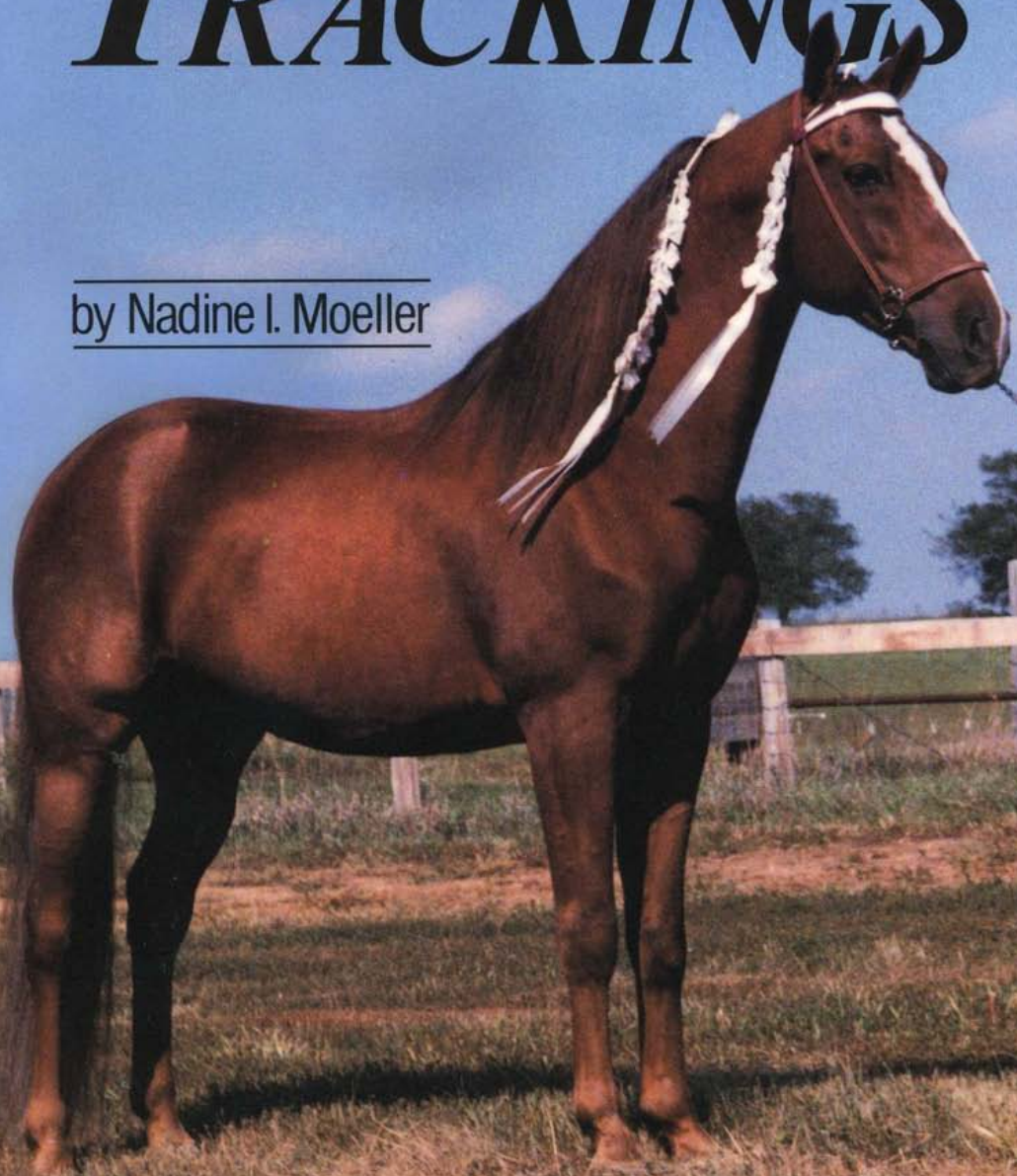


# *Fox Trot Trackings*

by Nadine I. Moeller



History and Legend of the Fox Trotting Horse

## Merry Princess and David

David and Dr. Andrew Love

The first time we realized David was interested in showing horses was the day before his accident. I was riding MODEL DOLL, the grey mare I was showing at the time, and he asked me if he could show MODEL DOLL that summer. I said, "Sure. You can start right now by riding her." So, he got on MODEL DOLL and rode her around for maybe five or ten minutes then got off. The following day he was injured.

David's accident occurred when he was seven years old, April of 1979. He was visiting his grandfather on the farm for the day. We had plans to go visiting the next day. An odd accident happened and he fell into a fork lift injuring his head causing a great deal of brain damage, partial paralysis of the right side, blindness, and loss of the senses of smell and taste. The accident was completely unrelated to horses; it just happened to occur on the farm. David laid unconscious for over two months.

When he finally came home from the hospital, he started going to the barn with me to feed the horses. One thing led to another, and soon I started putting David on MODEL DOLL, then leading him around the barn. After that, I turned him loose, and he would make a few trips around the barn on his own. His mother didn't know about it—I made Davey promise he wouldn't tell her, she would have had a heart attack!

We never intended for David to show the horses; riding was just something he enjoyed. But one day, when David happened to be riding the horse, Elmo Rosa saw him and said, "The way that boy rides, he ought to be showing horses." For a while, that was the end of that; nothing more was said until the next year. Again, Elmo saw David riding, and he said, "You know, I believe he could show MERRY PRINCESS. She's been in the show rings so many times with my kids on her that I believe she could do it with David." But again, nothing more was said about it.

The next year (1982), Elmo not only made the suggestion that David try showing MERRY PRINCESS, he set a date for it. David was to show at the St. Louis show in one class only. Much to my relief there were only three horses in the class. Except for David, we were all nervous wrecks, worried that something would happen to him, or that he would run into another horse and mess it up. I was also concerned about how people would accept David; I was afraid of criticism for letting him show. Well, it ended with David winning second place. Later that night I was awoken by David in his room alone talking to himself. Finally I got up and walked into the hallway to listen. He was saying, over and over, "—and in second place, ZANE'S MERRY PRINCESS and DAVID LOVE", shouted out

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excitedly the way the announcer had said it.

David's entry into horse showing was unprecedented, no equipment was available for non-sighted riders. But David loved it so much, and Elmo was so enthusiastic—in fact, we all thought it was so great that the technical difficulties didn't seem too important, until two weeks later when we went to Springfield, Missouri to the Mid-America Fox Trotting Horse Show.

David practiced a lot on MERRY PRINCESS. When I came home, every night he was waiting at the door wanting to ride. At Springfield, people kept coming up and saying, "I heard David showed a horse at St. Louis." They all thought it was neat. I was very, very pleased with his reception.

The class didn't go so smooth this time. The Coliseum is, unfortunately, very close to Interstate 44, and the truckers kept cutting in on his radio frequency. David made several stretches on his own. After that class, and David's nearly running over one of the judges, we decided to change the equipment. I don't remember what David got in the class, but he did get a ribbon and we were very pleased.

We looked all over for better equipment until finally one day Elmo called and said he'd found what we needed in Illinois. We drove over and got little Walkman radios that work on FM. They have ear phones; the reception comes in on one ear, and there's a mouthpiece much like you see used by interviewers at sport events, only this is smaller.

We went to the Celebration at Ava with the new equipment, which is the same radio David uses today. It's stamped in my memory; I see it just like it was only yesterday, watching that class. I was standing at the gate, and I remember Quentin Middleton coming up to me and saying, "Doc, that boy is not only winning this class—he's running away with it" Quentin also said, "Doc, there just isn't a whole pasture full of horses like that little mare (MERRY PRINCESS)." David won his class—straight firsts from the three judges. The only problem with the equipment this time was that Davey had put his radio on "voice activated" while lined up so that he could talk to Elmo and when he started to make his victory lap the crowd stood and cheered. This activated his speaker and he was unable to receive; unable to hear Elmo. David and MERRY PRINCESS made the victory lap on their own. They did just great. David had seen victory laps and MERRY PRINCESS had made them many times before.

David: My first horse that I remember riding is MORNING STAR. She was a sorrel horse, sorta like a pony. She was bought for my sister, and I kinda inherited her. The first Fox Trotting Horse that I rode was MODEL DOLL. I remember she was grey. Her dad was POOLE'S BLUE BOY. I didn't show MODEL DOLL because my friend Elmo said I could ride MERRY PRINCESS.

Doc: I think the reason you didn't show MODEL DOLL is because it takes a special horse to do what MERRY PRINCESS does. Don't you?

David: Yeah, MODEL DOLL wasn't a very good horse. She would rare and act up. MODEL DOLL was a little mean.

Doc: MERRY PRINCESS doesn't have any bad habits like that. She

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doesn't get mad, doesn't get excited. She's been in the show ring a lot of times. She has one bad habit in the ring. Right, David?

David: She always wants to line up, so I have to pull the outside rein hard as I can.

Doc: I guess it's the only fault she has in the show ring. She always knows when you reverse it's time to line up.

David: Last Saturday night was the first time I cantered in the ring and I beat my Dad. Beating Dad was awesome.

Doc: It was pretty neat.

David: Elmo told me to speed MERRY PRINCESS up and we could pass Dad. I wasn't too sure about that, but if I don't do what he tells me, he gets kinda mad.

Doc: He just mostly gives directions like left, left, right, right, straight ahead. When it comes time to set the gaits, David does very well. He knows exactly when he is walking, he knows all that. Davey is expected to do that on his own. He has to find the trot and set the gaits. All Elmo is there for is to give directions.

In 1983, David was unable to show MERRY PRINCESS except at the Celebration because she was nursing a colt. In 1984, she was injured and unable to show so he rode the Rosa's SENSATIONAL MISTY LADY. They were Reserve in the Youth Stake.

MERRY PRINCESS has been central to David's success. When she was injured, and it looked like she wouldn't be able to show again, we set out to find David a replacement horse. I looked and looked. Certainly there is a limit to what I would have been able to pay, but I never decided against a horse for David because it was too expensive. I kept looking during every horse show, every kids's class, every ladies class, thinking, "Would this horse be able to replace MERRY PRINCESS?" I never saw one that I thought could do what MERRY PRINCESS does, class, after class, after class. I was so relieved when she recovered. There maybe better horses but Elmo, Davey and MERRY PRINCESS don't make mistakes.

David gets so much from the horses. Many people come and congratulate him after his classes. Through showing he has made so many special friends. I love to see him happy and you never see him happier than when he has done well in a class.

I remember after his first win at the Celebration, Jerry Middleton came to our box, sat down and talked to him. Jerry said, "I'm sure glad I don't have to show against you." As Jerry and Davey looked at Davey's trophy, Jerry said, "Dave this is the biggest trophy I've ever seen." Dave had succeeded. He knew he had and he enjoyed every second of it. He needed that, his mother and I needed that. The road ahead is still long and will be difficult, but David and MERRY PRINCESS with Elmo's help, had just taken one giant step.

David: When Jerry wins, he always gives me a flower out of his garland. Jerry told me to remember, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." When I win a garland, I'm going to stop and give Jerry a flower.

Doc: Showing Fox Trotting Horses is at the center of Davey's recovery

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from his accident. Without MERRY PRINCESS and Elmo's help there would not have been any horse showing. In showing MERRY PRINCESS Davey has changed from the little blind boy that seemingly didn't have much going for him, to— gosh, he's a champion, now.

David: No comment.

Doc: I was so pleased when David won the Equitation Award (World Champion Youth Equitation) with MERRY PRINCESS this year. It's like the cherry on top of the sundae; David and MERRY PRINCESS. —September 28, 1985, David and Dr. Andrew Love, St. Louis, Missouri (MERRY PRINCESS was truly a family horse for the Rosa family and now just this year, she became David's horse.)

