

J.J. Morgan, Celebrity Dog

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When my sister Juanita and I were tiny kids, one of our dearest toys was a floppy stuffed dog much like the one pictured, known to us as Morgan. His origin in our lives is lost to memory, but I believe he may have arrived as a baby gift when I was born.



For years I suspected that our Morgan might have been homemade; certainly patterns for similar hounds were ubiquitous when I was a kid. The design was so popular that Simplicity released it in at least three different pattern packs.



When made up, the Simplicity hound looks just like our Morgan.

Whatever his origins, Morgan was greatly beloved, and though he disappeared years ago, he's lived in our memories ever since.

So important was he to us that a few years back my sister and I were both inspired to make our own contemporary versions of our long-ago toy.

Our Morgan was originally pink, but his coat was dulled over the years by much toddler love, and in our memories he's a pinkish-grey colour.



In both colour and shape, Juanita's crocheted Morgan closely recalls the original toy. He's beautifully rendered and gorgeously made up – a perfectly recalled and reproduced version of our beloved toy. He's just as I remember him.

For my own updated version of Morgan, I went in a slightly different direction. He's still a floppy hound, but he's spindlier and skinnier, with a somewhat enhanced shape. He is



a vibrant pink though, as I always imagined that our Morgan might have been when new.

Although I like this design, looking at him



now I can only feel that he's missing something of the nostalgic appeal of the original, which my sister's version caught and expressed so well.

Little did either of us realize that there's a whole lot more to the story.

Until I was doing some research in preparation for writing this post, I hadn't realized that our Morgan was actually a very popular commercial toy. Nor had either of us known that he was named for a basset hound who appeared on several different TV shows in the 1950s and early 60s. The dog's TV name was J.J. Morgan.



Among the shows on which Morgan appeared were *Blind Date*, *A Couple of Joes*, and *The Garry Moore Show*. He was also featured in popular magazines, including a tongue-in-cheek photo spread in *Life Magazine* in 1950. The public adored him, and the stuffed versions (there were many) were extremely popular for many years.

Not having known his origins, my sister and I had always assumed that the name Morgan was of our own invention.

It's only within the past couple of days that I discovered this lost history of the celebrity dog, but I must say that it's kind of nice to discover the back story to a toy that we so loved when we were kids. Browsing on line, I found that many more of J.J. Morgan's "plush brothers" were treasured by millions of other little kids, just as we treasured our Morgan.



In view of all this, I'm tempted to round up a copy of that Simplicity pattern and make a Morgan for myself. Or maybe I'll have another go at designing my own version, this time more in keeping with the original. He can come out at Christmas and rest under the tree, a treasured reminder of times and places now gone.