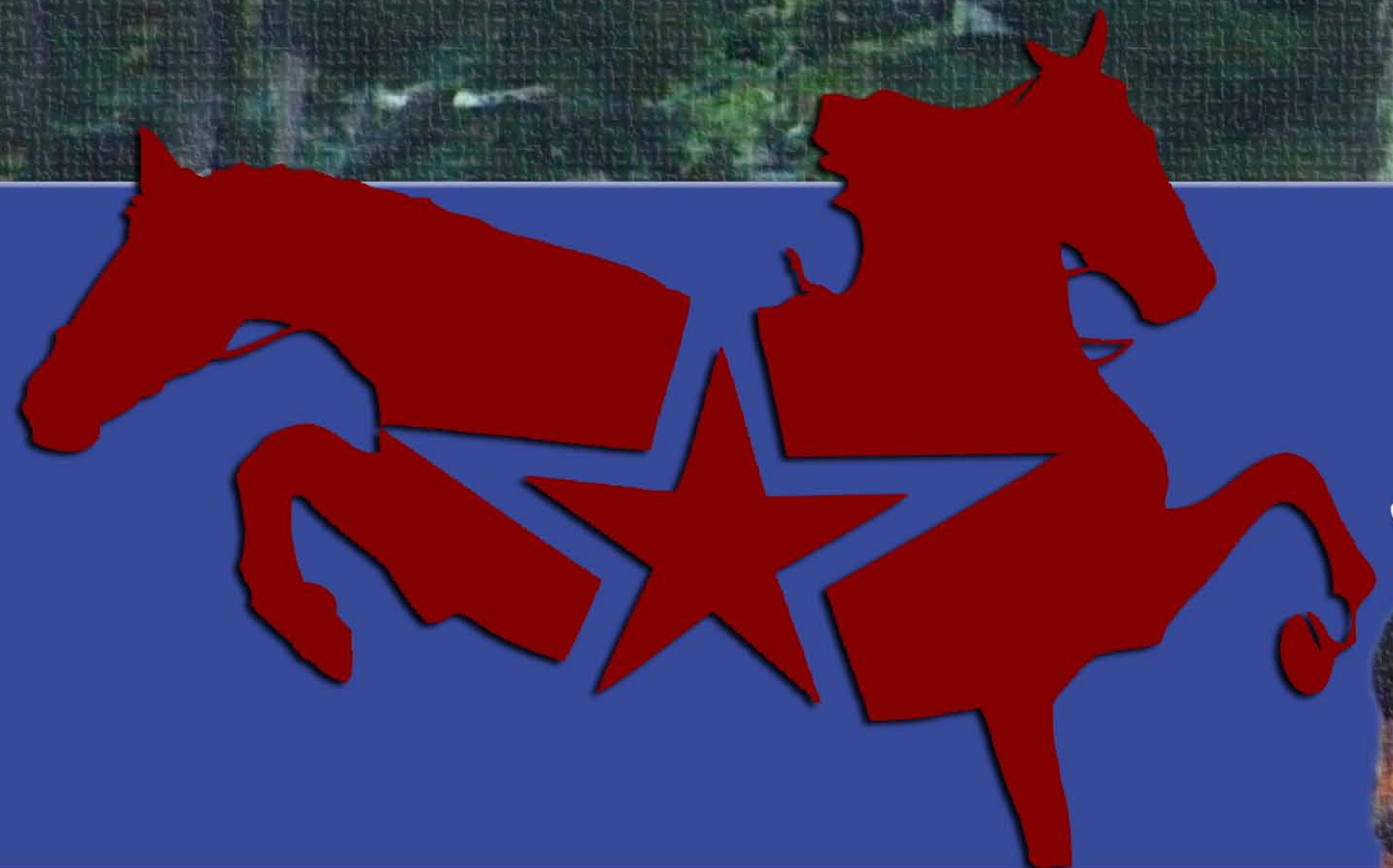
A photograph of two dark-colored horses grazing in a lush green field under a clear blue sky.

February 2011



Above Level

Celebrating all the American Saddlebred can do!

Volume I, Issue 1



Above Level

Celebrating all the American Saddlebred can do!

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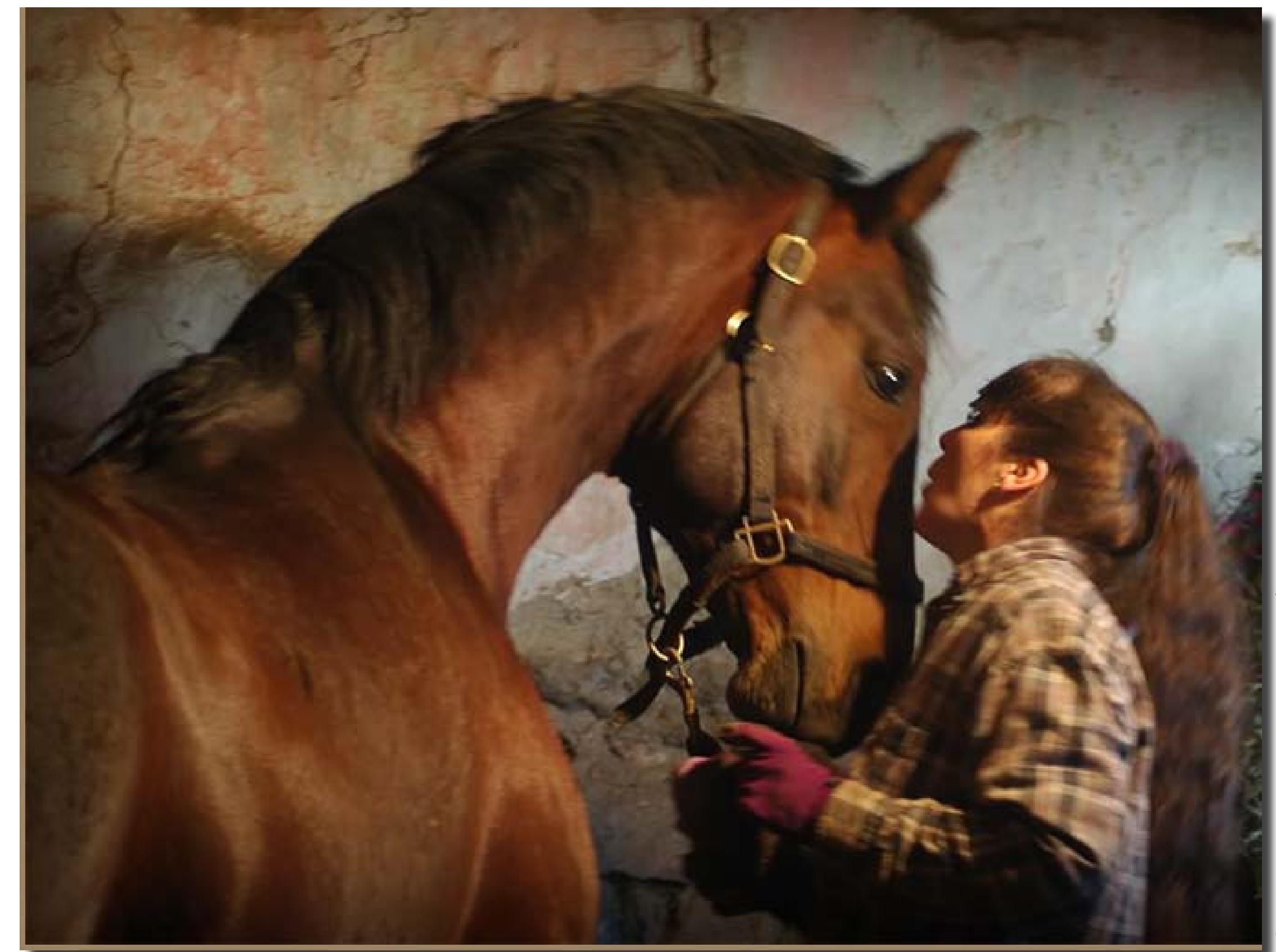
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Welcome to Above Level!



Welcome to the first issue of our ezine, *Above Level*. Our purpose with this new endeavor is to offer insight into the amazing creature that is the American Saddlebred horse. We intend to put everything that these horses are capable of doing—from performance in the show ring, to excellence in alternative disciplines, to being a best friend and partner—into the minds eye of the horse world.

This breed is often misunderstood, and that is to the detriment of breeders, yes, but more especially to the horses, themselves. *Above Level* will offer a special place to advocate for America's oldest registry, and original Sport Horse. From horses in need, to World's Grand Champions, whose value is estimated in the hundreds of thousands, we celebrate every single American Saddlebred foaled each year.

To do this, we need YOU, and your stories. If you have been touched by this breed—let us hear from you! If you are showing your American Saddlebred in any ring, across any course, or simply loving them on your farm, or in your backyard, your story is important. We are looking for first person pieces not less than 500 words, and with at least three pictures of you and your ASB partner, or your breeding program, or anything at all that you enjoy with your horses. Looking for a place to advertise? We are happy to offer display and classified options. Other ideas or suggestions? We want to hear from you!

We are here to support, and promote and educate, and most especially, advocate for a great and wonderful breed of horse. We look forward to hearing from their people.

Julie Lynn Andrew



Coming up...

In our April Issue of Above Level:

Brita Barlow continues her series on Metabolic Issues for American Saddlebreds, and shares her tips on best management practices for feeding your horses.

Our Experts weigh in:

Johanna Gwinn, Internationally known dressage Judge, Rider, Instructor and Clinician will offer her tips to help make your American Saddlebred Sport Horse partner even better.

Kim Newell, Trainer and Instructor at Heads Up! Academy in Apex, NC, will help you improve your American Saddlebred Saddle Seat partner.

To have these experts lend you their expertise, please send us some information about what you and your horse are doing, as well as a You Tube video link to: AboveLevelASB@gmail.com

Dr. Christine Uhlinger will share her Veterinary Expertise on Springtime issues of concern for horse owners.

If you have a story to tell about your **Academy Program**, or **Amateur Owner Trainer** experiences, we'd love to hear from you!



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Please email all submissions to: AboveLevelASB@gmail.com

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Above Level

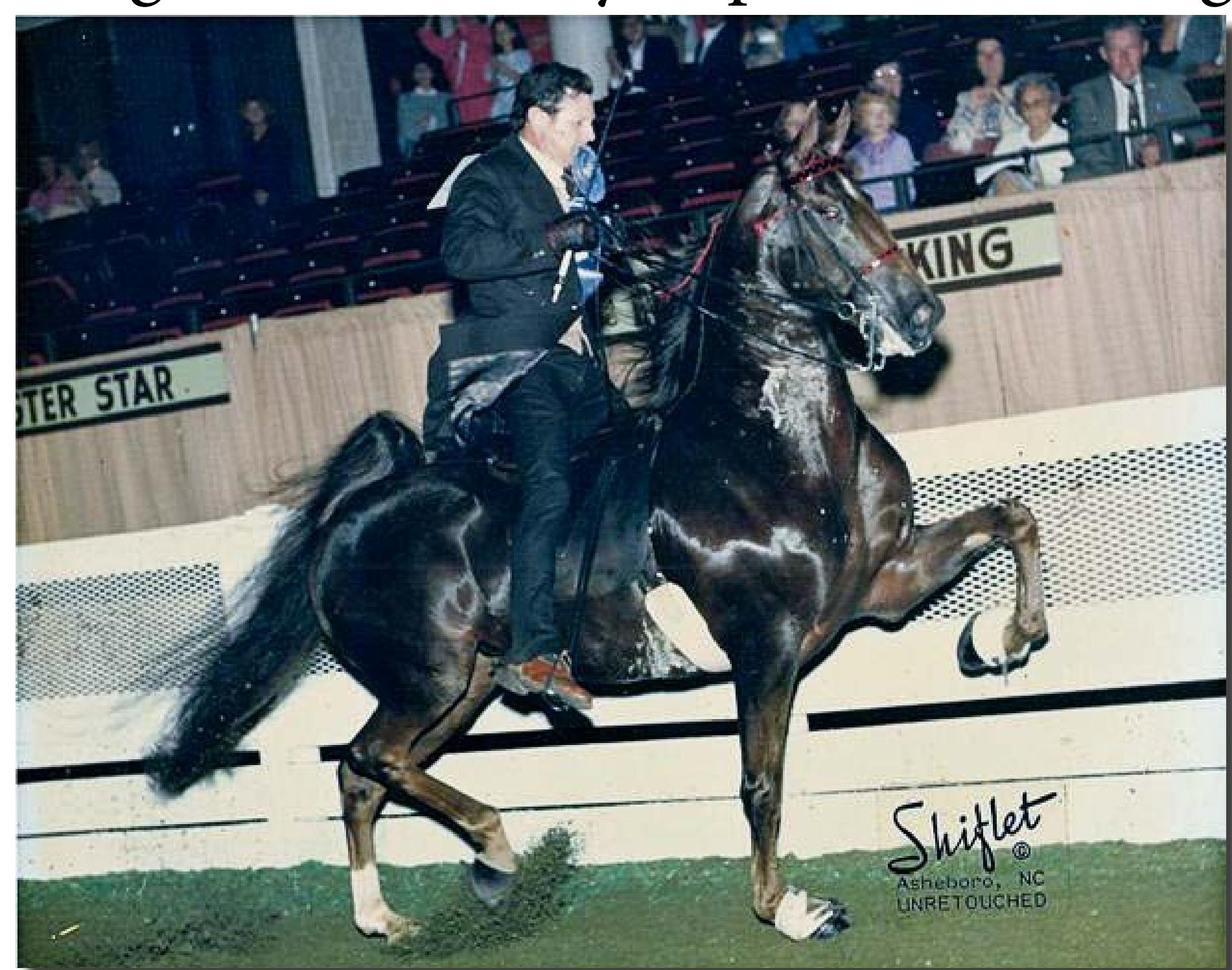
TURNING TOUGH INTO TRICOLOR: MERRILL MURRAY

by Julie Lynn Andrew

Ask Merrill Murray, an American Saddlebred Show Horse trainer at the top of his craft, what the most important ingredient is to winning World's Grand Championships, and he'll tell you, "a happy horse". What do his World's Grand Champions have in common? "Hearts as big as the barn!" he states.

Murray, who came up the ranks in the Canadian horse world, first rubbing Mrs. Solomons horses such as "Wing Again", "Kalarama Count on Me", and "Beautiful Princess" in Montreal for trainer Andy LaSalle, is no stranger to center stage at Louisville, on Saturday night. In fact, he has won the "Big One"—the Five Gaited World's Grand Championship—on three very talented, and quite different horses. Our Golden Duchess, the bridesmaid twice for Merrill, before winning in 1987; SS Genuine, in 2002, and the reigning World Grand Champion; Courageous Lord, who also won in 2009.

Along the way, Merrill Murray has acquired a reputation as the man who can take a horse who others call "tough", and find the best in them. What makes a horse "tough"? In Murray's opinion, the tough ones



Our Golden Duchess

are smart; "dumb horses are not generally tough", he says, "It's your job to teach them the right way from the start."

The Lord of Merlin Farm, Murray was hired at the Canadian Royal, in Toronto, by Mark Dickey, to work under the renowned horseman, Marty Mueller, at the then preeminent Saddlebred nursery and training stable, Grape Tree Farm. Murray honed his craft from the master for 9 years, before moving on. His first World Champion, the then two-year old Rebel Yell, was owned by Tom Galbreath's Castle Hills, then located in Pennsylvania.

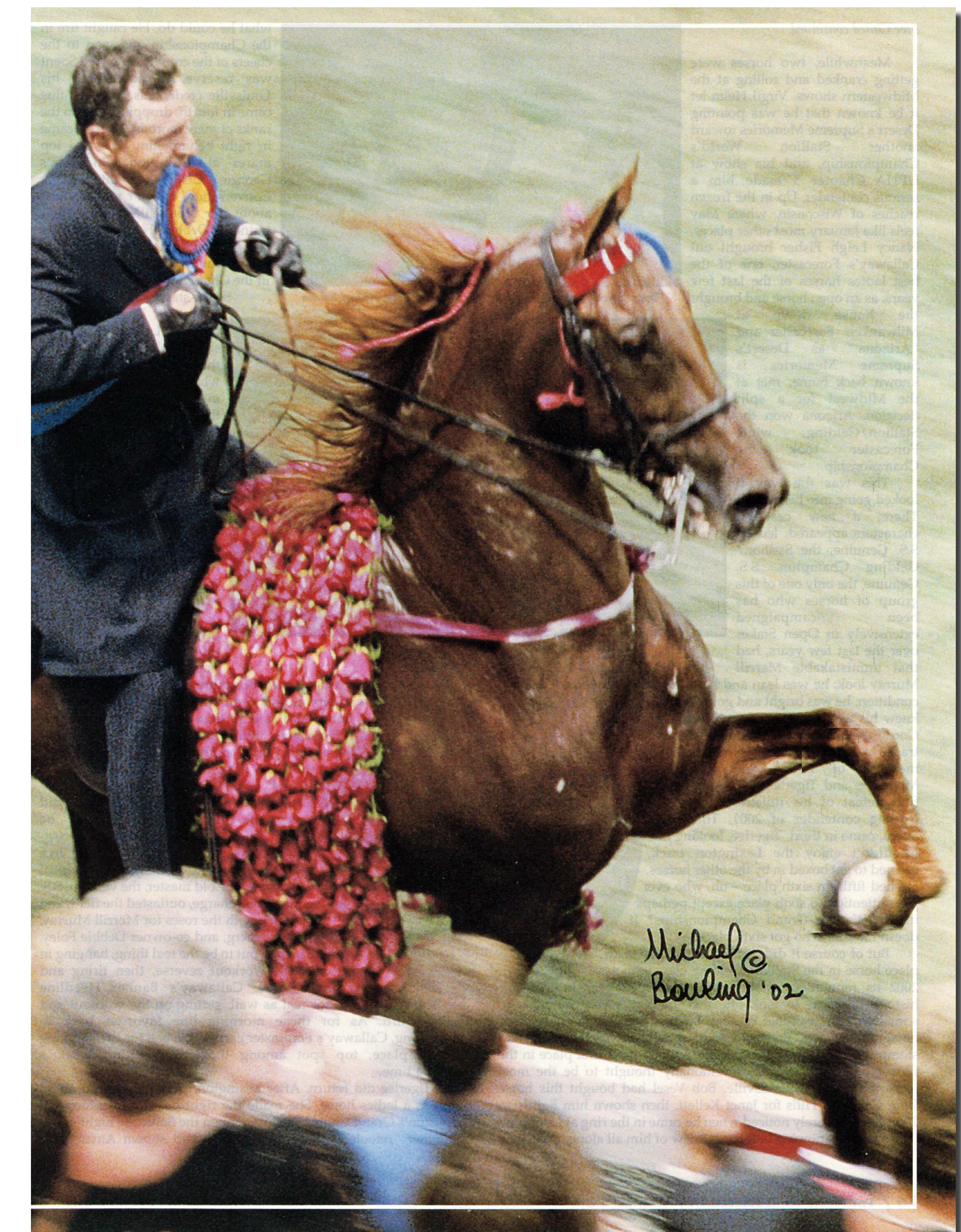
By the time renowned breeder Phil Hamilton sent Murray the horse who would become his first World's Grand Champion, Our Golden Duchess, the respected trainer, Dale Sloat had gaited her. According to Murray, he'd done a darn good job. The addition of working in a jog cart made a world of difference in the mare, getting the petite mare fit enough, when facing the competition, to "grind them into the ground", but teaching her to jog wasn't that simple. Murray took a page from his father, a great horseman with a simple approach; he used an open bridle. As long as the mare knew what was behind her, she was content to put many miles in front of the cart, gaining the strength she would need to beat the best.

The mare had her other quirks, as well. "She'd stand all day long, at home, to get on, but at shows, she was wild," he remembers. It was something he lived with, preferring to allow the mare what he felt was a minor issue. Merrill figures most people do not realize that the mare stood a mere 15.2, but what she lacked in stature, she made up in will. "She'd line up, and I'd think she was done, but she'd draw a deep breath,

and be ready to go, again," he states, still in awe of the depth of her gameness and generosity.

Murray and his veterinarian discovered that the mare's major issue was a hormonal imbalance, which caused her to be generally challenging to work with, and more so at particular times of the month. At that time, drugs such as Regumate were unknown, but Merrill's Veterinarian worked hard to find a solution. His contribution to the team helped the mare become the champion she was.

SS Genuine, Murray's next WGC, had been through a lot by the time he came to Merlin Farm. Never the soundest of horses, he'd come out of the blacksmith



SS Genuine

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shop with a couple of off steps, raise his head, and walk down the barn aisle as if he knew he owned it. But what he lacked in soundness, he made up for in the fact that he simply would not give up, and in finding a trainer who understood him, a combination was created that could be unbeatable.

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Winston Churchill

Murray remembers only one “discussion” that he had with Genuine- but it was a big one. The horse had acquired the habit of raising up above his bridle, and then taking his rider anywhere he wanted to go. This particular day, it was out the door of the work area, and into his stall, with Merrill still aboard. “It was not very pretty”, he remembers, but he rode him back out of the stall, and it was the last time the horse ever took Merrill for that ride. “He was very smart, and run off game. He was also a bull—he’d been wrestled around some in his younger days. But I don’t remember ever hitting that horse with a whip—ever”, Merrill adds.

Only one thing marred the celebration of SS Genuine’s World’s Grand Championship Saturday night- Murray received word that night that Our Golden Duchess had died earlier in the day. It made the glorious evening just a touch bittersweet.

When Murray was approached by Bill Carrington, and Marsha Shepherd, about training their horse, Courageous Lord, he was ambivalent. At this stage, he didn’t require another training horse, and this horse was already in someone else’s barn. By the time the horse arrived, the only recollection he had about the gelding was that he had not been exceptionally cooperative about having his former trainer remount in

center ring, at Louisville.

The horse had a reputation for being a bit tough. As Merrill got to know him, however, he found that he was more insecure than anything, and really required a guiding hand to give him the confidence he needed to blossom into the champion he has become. Courageous Lord had also acquired the habit of being difficult to mount. Merrill spent time simply getting on him at home, and sitting on him, in place. Over time, mounting became a non-event in Courageous Lord’s world.

A story Murray shares is especially telling. Courageous Lords groom, initially, was a fellow named Daniel, as he was the one with an open stall when the horse arrived. At Lexington Junior League Horse Show, Merrill’s first show with the horse, Daniel attended to the Courageous Lord, due to the proximity of the show to Merlin Farms. At Louisville, a month later, two more experienced grooms were scheduled to care for Murray’s string.

Daniel, who was quite fond of the horse, drove over from Versailles, to the show, to cheer the team on. Courageous Lord was standing in cross ties, sweating profusely; in race horse terms, he was washing out. When Daniel arrived, the horse calmed, and immediately dried out, as he relaxed. One of Merrill Murray’s greatest gifts, as a horse trainer, is his ability to observe the simple things, and get them right. Daniel became the horses permanent groom, and one more piece in the puzzle was in place.

At Louisville, Merrill spent time riding the horse up

and down the ramp into the ring in Freedom Hall. He also recognized that the camera corner was going to be an issue for the already shy Courageous Lord, and he spent time working the horse past that area, as well. Merrill likes to spend time teaching his horses to both work off of the riders leg aids, as well as neck reining a bit. As they rounded into the camera corner, in their

qualifying Gelding World’s Championship, Murray felt the gelding start to suck back, but quietly put his inside leg on the horse, and a moment later, the big gelding responded by moving obediently into the rail.

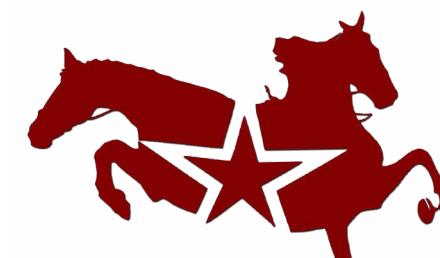
When asked what bloodlines he finds produce the horses he likes to ride and train, Murray has no doubts, “the older lines- Wing Commander, Oman’s Desdamona Denmark, and Stonewall Supreme.” He offers, “Reggie (Ros eridge Heir, sire of Courageous Lord) stamped himself. Usually, you expect to see more of the mare, but Reggie was an ex ceptionally strong breeder.” The trainer wants horses with “more bend to their hind leg”, and would

not be adverse to opening the stud books, to infuse some stronger blood, and rebuild the breed. He feels that breeding became “all about pretty, and we have lost gameness and athleticism.”

Over time, with confidence built from trust, Courageous Lord has become “quite the personality” around Merlin Farm. The trainer feels that a confident, good riding amateur could now take the reins, with success. Making a good horse happier, and a happy horse better seems to be Murray’s gift. And that is a very special gift, indeed.

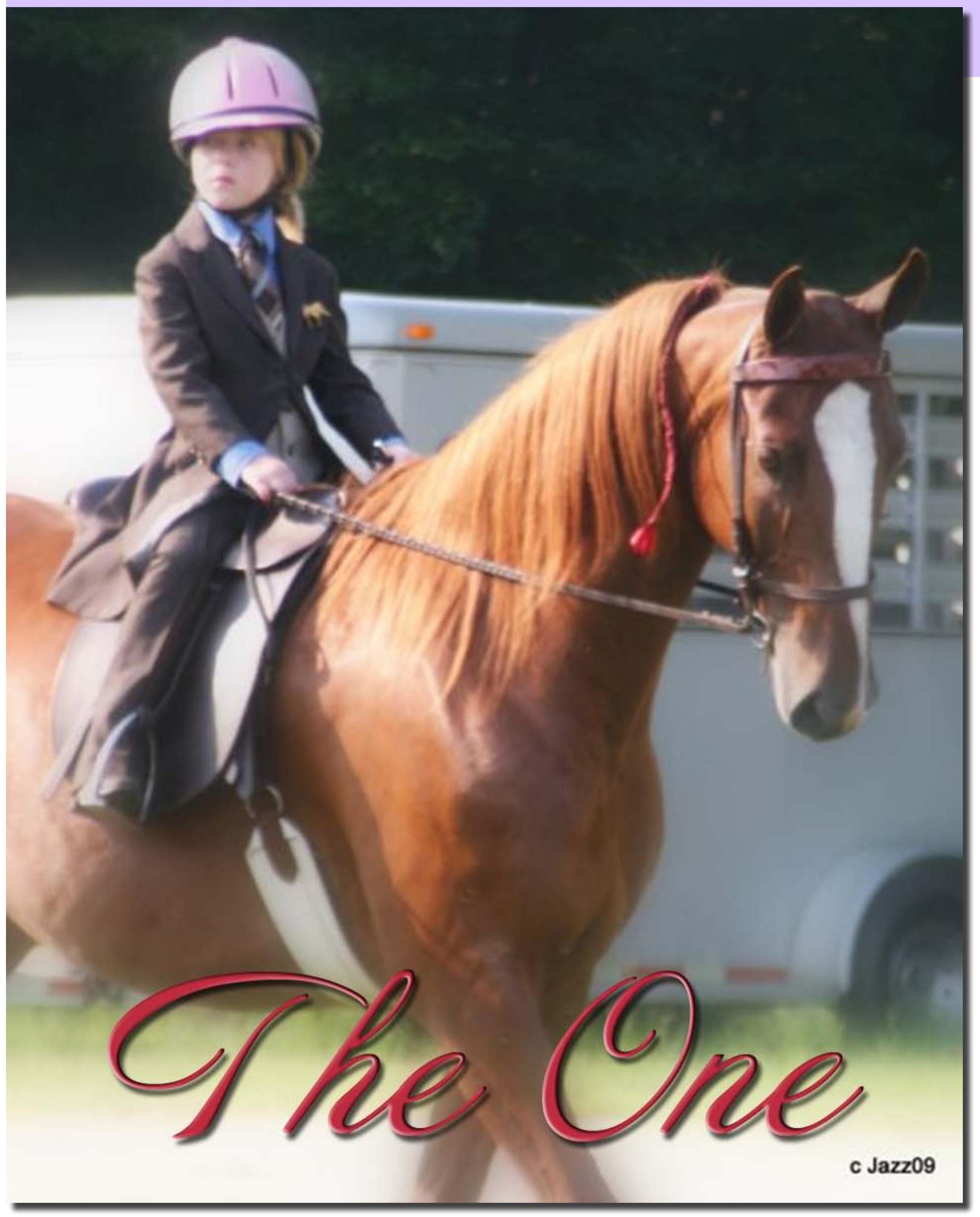


Courageous Lord



AOT CORNER: GOTTA LOVE MOE!

by Julie DeChaine



and inquired about the gangly chestnut gelding, Mr. Sinister. Needless to say, within a few weeks, Mr. Sinister was loaded onto a trailer and making his way from Colorado to California!!

When my new American Saddlebred stepped off the trailer, he was the ugliest, shaggiest, and most

disappointing horse I'd ever seen. He was so small, and even though he had the same facial "bling" as in the photo I'd seen, I questioned my decision to purchase him on a whim.

I'd grown up showing American Saddlebreds. I was familiar with the breed, and thanks to the immortal Charles Isom from

Supreme Acres Stable in Stafford, Texas, I was hooked. Every horse I've owned or leased in my life was a Saddlebred, although I now own an 18-year-old American Quarter Horse who belonged to my mom before her death, and a 29-year-old feisty, naughty, but totally lovable Shetland x Welsh pony.



Over the course of the next few weeks and months, I grew to appreciate my new gelding. He had a lot of attitude, and personality. While humbly, I can say I am a decent rider thanks to years of showing equitation, I was by no stretch of the imagination a trainer. I used the Power of Google, books, and my fellow Amateur Owner Trainers to help guide Mr. Sinister. I spent years on groundwork and desensitizing him.

It wasn't until 2007 when my husband was transferred to Eastern North Carolina, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, that I began the process of training him under saddle. I was fortunate enough to be able to board him with a friend, who has owned and shown American Saddlebreds for years. She was instrumental in helping me learn to utilize the round pen, and it was her that sat on his back for the very first time. The first time I sat on his back, I was a nervous wreck, but when he didn't buck me off, I laughed until I cried. It was a pivotal moment in our lives.



Since then, Mr. Sinister (barn name Moe) and I have logged over 100 miles on the trails. We have camped on the beach. He has toted my children around in the ring and on the trails. He's been jumped. He's ponied frightened horses across gullies with chest deep water. He's navigated ravines safely and without hesitation. He's been shown in the Hunter Country Pleasure division at Raleigh Spring Premier and Bonnie Blue. He's galloped along the Atlantic Ocean. He proudly carried my daughter through her first class, and at that time, she was a beginner and he

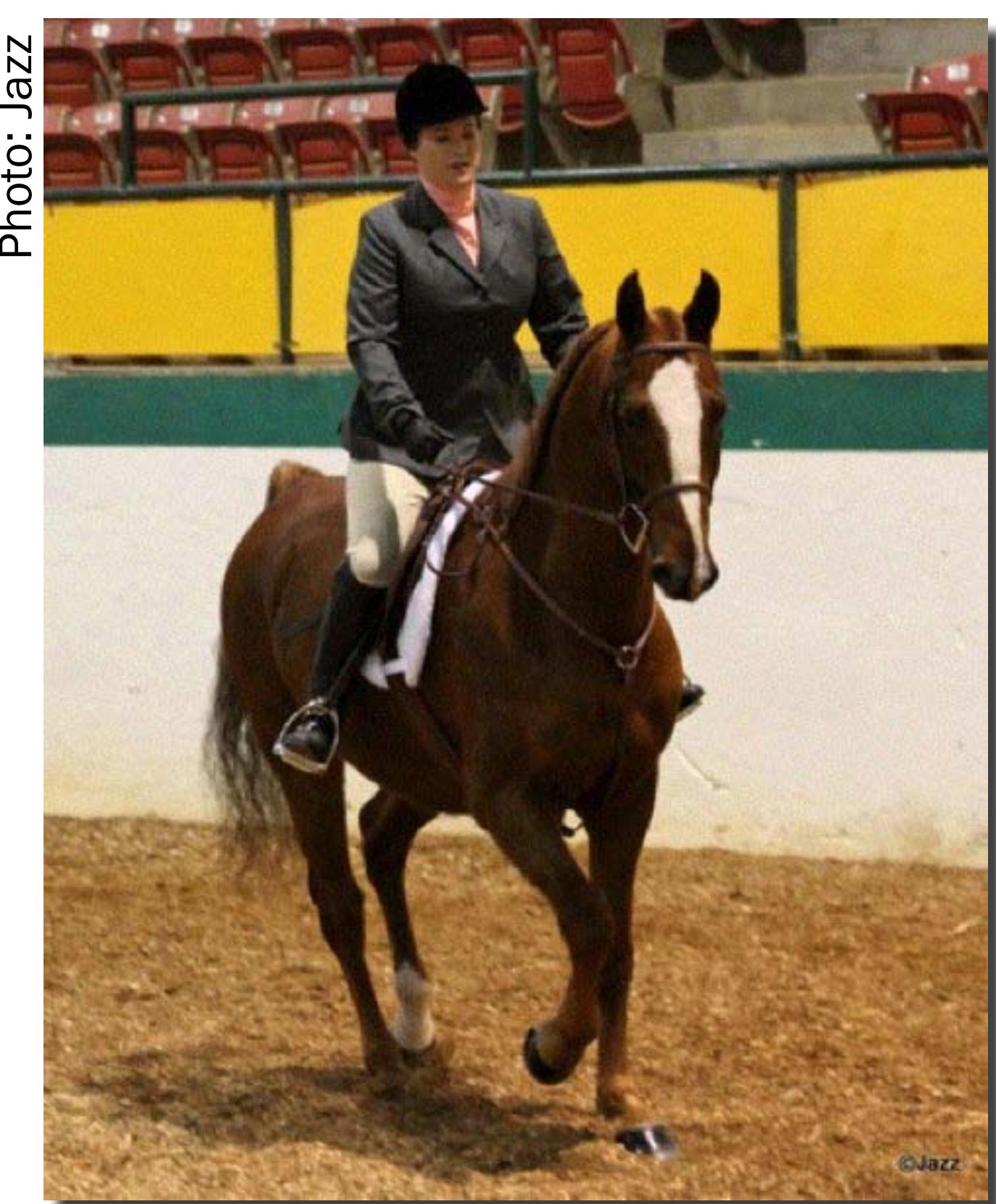


Do you remember the moment that "*The One*" arrived in your life? I do. It was a cool February morning, 2004, and my family and I were living in central California at Naval Air Station, Lemoore. I had just returned from taking the children to school, and sat down at the computer to email my dad. After emailing him, I went to my favorite website to window shop, agdirect.com. I would routinely check out the American Saddlebreds for sale, and dream. On this particular day, I came across an advertisement for a young, unbroke, well bred, gangly coming two-year-old whose asking price was certainly missing a zero!! On a whim, I called his breeder/owner, Rebecca Elkins,

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was a very green horse at his first show.



Moe has had no formal training. He's been worked by Amateur Owner Trainers and ridden by a few local "trainers" but has never been under the direction of a professional American Saddlebred trainer. He's never bucked, reared, or behaved in a manner other than solid, safe, and sane.

He's a pill most days. He's got some bad traits and enjoys pinning his ears at every human and horse that crosses his path. We've dealt with corneal ulcers and pneumonia. He's a jerk with the vet. Ever seen a 1,000 pound horse throw himself on the ground and have a temper tantrum? That's Moe. Getting his Strangles vaccine? A circus!! He fidgets with the farrier. But put your seat on a saddle seat, and he turns into a dream come true. He's a gentleman under saddle, and is so eager to please and do well for me.

I love Moe. He is my once in a lifetime horse. He has made me a better rider, a more knowledgeable horsewoman, and more confident in my abilities to care for all horses.

Every day, seven days a week, I am at the barn two to three times a day. I love cold mornings and burying my face into Moe's thick mane. He's my best friend, my confidant, and my soul mate. He's the American Saddlebred who TOOK ME THERE.



Photo: Jazz

THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF...ASBs IN NEED

by Brook McPherson



Lady, who was purchased by Brook McPherson for \$80, spent twenty-seven years with one owner, only to have a kill buyer be the contending bidder.

At the last horse auction I attended, (among a number of other horses) there was a Saddlebred stallion tied in a pen by himself. There was also a pen of three mares, one obviously Saddlebred, one likely NSH and one Pinto/Arabian. The stallion appeared fairly calm but the mares were agitated. The Pinto was covered in sweat and the Saddlebred was worked up, pacing and scared. I'd gone to the sale hoping to pick up a nice resale horse or two, the "rescue dept" of our farm is full up right now and until we're able to find homes for a few of the needier horses we need to think with our heads and not with our hearts and not take on too many at a time.

But if you're familiar with the breed, you know there's just something about these darn Saddlebreds. And if you're familiar with our type of area, you know it's "stock horse country" and too many nice horses, (Saddlebreds, NSHs, Arabians, Thoroughbreds) are much less popular at the local sale barns. And at this particular sale, not only are we talking about a breed of horse that often doesn't get a fair chance, we're talking an obviously aged mare and a stallion. "Old" or "stallion" doesn't generally do well on its own, add in that the horse is a Saddlebred and you're looking at an almost negative chance of finding a safe spot to land at the auction.

I knew I "shouldn't" bring one of these horses home, but I also knew that if I did, I'd be able to afford their care until safe homes could be found.

And I knew my Mom wouldn't be *too* upset with me, after all she's almost always the softer-hearted and these horses happen to be Saddlebreds, (did I mention we've fallen in love with the breed?). The NSH mare came through with no paperwork and sold to a woman



Lady's halter marks, soon after arriving to McPherson's farm.

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in the crowd. The Pinto mare sold as well, to either a dealer or private party I'm not sure.



Having one, life-long owner and being a successful show horse was not enough to keep NSH Hill Street Blues from the auction ring.

The stallion sold through the ring for \$110. To me, the only other bidder being a dealer who would have gelded him and then shipped him (to slaughter). He sold with his registration papers, which was a bonus. His name is NSH Hill Street Blues, he earned money in halter as a yearling. He's a 1988 model and had belonged to the same owner his entire life. I found out during the sale that the owner had passed away recently, and whomever was given charge of the horses decided to have them hauled to this sale. I don't know why—I don't know if the family couldn't afford horses or had no interest in them, didn't know what to do with them or for what reason they decided to sell them soon after their owner had died, but when I found the obituary of the prior owner and it specifically mentioned her love of her horses and dogs, I can't help but feel that someone let not only her horses, but she down as well.

The mare was sold as "smooth mouthed", her papers were not at the sale. I paid \$80 for her. Thanks to Julie Lynn Andrew's help we now know she's a 1982 mare named Lady of Kilarney. She will be 29 years old this spring. She's down on weight right now but is bright eyed and full of life. This mare is so loving she'll leave whatever she's doing to come get her neck and cheeks scratched. And after having had the same home for 27 years she came with in an inch of soon ending up on a kill buyer's truck.

"Our task must be to free ourselves...by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

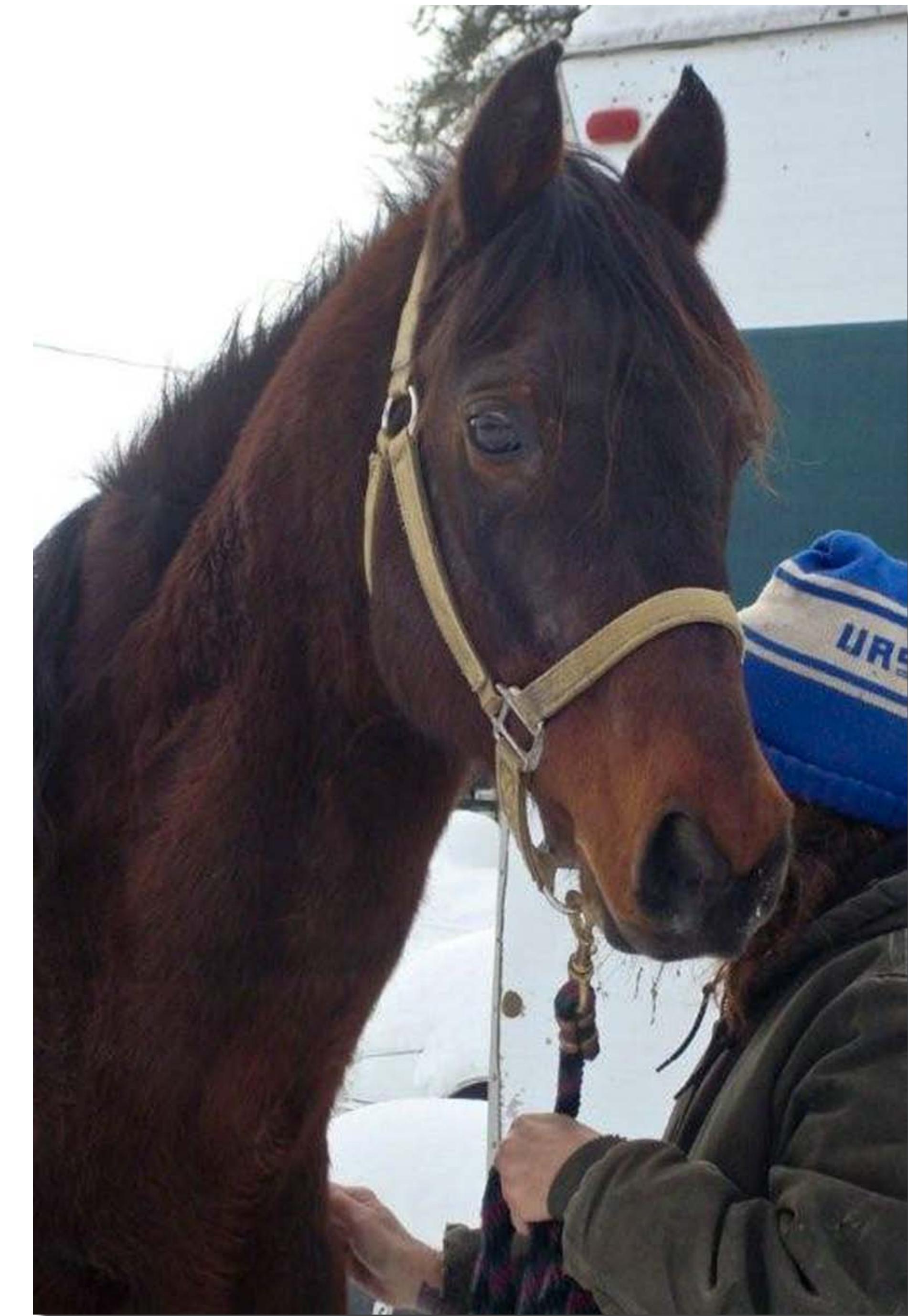
Albert Einstein

As much as we love the breed, we're thankful we don't see large numbers of Saddlebreds at the local auctions. The last horse of this type that I bought was a 10 year old NSH mare at an auction in November. There was no paperwork with the mare and I was told there was no way of getting the papers as the owner was in "trouble", (it was insinuated she was hiding from an abuser and both she and her animals were in danger so the horses had to be moved/sold for their safety). There was no way to contact this owner, the woman that brought the horses to the auction was "sure" of that—she didn't even know the woman's name.

How she actually came to be there infuriates me. Her last own-

er, (who took good care of her) decided that since she wasn't riding the mare, she'd be open to finding a good, safe home for her. Through the grapevine a local woman heard that this mare and another were possibly for sale. She went out to see the horses, professed her admiration of both, talked up her own skills and history and promised a good home. And bought them cheaply. And hauled them to the local sale barn in short order, (less than two weeks). And just let them go—no reserve, no paying attention to who was bidding, not caring one bit where they ended up. With the help of the NSH registry, we were able to get the mare ID'd as Peanut Buster Parfait, a well trained mare with a show record in halter.

My own Saddlebred, Jeffrey, is a sale barn rescue. We'll never know his parents or his bloodlines, but are confident he came from a local Saddlebred breeder whose horses, a few years ago, (due to a death, no one able to take care of the horses, resulting in neglect, and a sheriff's forced auction), ended up at our local sale barn. We ended up with four of those mares too, and two foals. Jeffrey came later, he'd been bought by someone else in the meantime and started under saddle. He was then sold to a woman who needed better than a green broke 4 year old, and who took him back to the auction after a few months of owning him. This is what followed after I spotted him in his stall with his owner at the time, I walked up to ask a few questions. I started with "Hi! He's a Saddlebred, isn't he?" Which earned me a blank stare and the question "A what?". I went on, "I was just asking what breed your horse was", to which she replied, "A gelding". Me: "Huh...um.....what



NSH Hill Street Blues arrives at McPherson's farm.

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breed is he?" and she: "A gelding". It was a bit surreal, so I said "No, sorry, I mean what *BREED* is he? Quarter Horse? Arabian...?" and was then told: "Ohhh! I think he's a Quarter Horse"). Later in the day he was sold through the ring as an Arabian. He cost me a whopping \$125 and is turning out to be a wonderful horse.

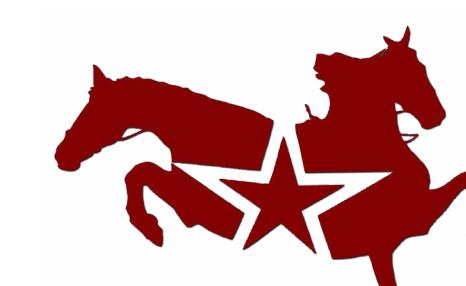
The mares we bought who had been part of the seizure/forced sale were all ID'd, with the help of a MN Saddlebred owner. One went back to her breeders (Calloways Caramella, who my Mom was very attached to and extremely sad to see leave), two went on

to be brood-mares and the last was found to be a successful former show mare who was able to return to the ring with a youth rider after her rehab was completed.



Lady, being saved from a terrible end, underweight but bright-eyed and full of life!

"Blue" and "Lady" have settled in, though I think Blue isn't too impressed with his new home. We're limited on where we can house stallions, so he's currently stuck in a smallish panel pen quite a ways from the other horses. Lady is a complete love. One thing I have to mention about the Saddlebred community is that more than many breeds, they're often willing to step up and help out other Saddlebreds in need. And the registry is helpful as well, (as have been the NSH registry and the AHA). When Blue and Lady are through with quarantine we'll be hoping to find the safe, permanent homes for them, if you know anyone with a little extra room in their heart and on their farm.



AMERICAN SADDLEBREDS IN HISTORY

by Brita Barlow

Last night I was reading *Gone Away with O'Malley*, an autobiographical book written by Martin O'Malley Knott DVM published in 1944 and came across the following excerpt which to me explains divergence from the American style of "english" riding, which evolved into the Saddleseat style we know today, towards the true English style of riding which has evolved into what we Americans call the Hunt-seat style. Remember, this was back in the day when shows did not require breed membership of the horses. American Saddle Horses were supposed to be five gaited, and those who could not demonstrate five gaits were park hacks. It was high fashion from the late 1800's to the early 1900's (both in America and Europe) to dock the tails of riding and driving horses. Only the five gaited show horse did not observe this fashion, with few notable exceptions, such as the great five gaited mare Lou Chief who had her tail docked later in life. In fact, few three gaited show horses were docked. The only one who comes to mind is Poetry of Motion.

O'Malley writes....

"On my own horses that I bought in Virginia or picked up on the horse exchange, I made a good profit. Chiefly I dealt in hunters, for although the high-stepping saddle horse was at the height of his popularity, his place was becoming more and more restricted to the show ring.

The truth was that the market for the old-fashioned road hack which covered good distances along the old dirt roads had been ruined by hard roads and the automobile. He had served his purpose well and was a fine utilitarian horse with his five gaits, the walk, trot and canter, the single-foot and the rack. The rack is faster than the trot. The single-foot, so the legend goes, was developed by the housewife hurrying to market with a basket of eggs. Holding her horse with single reins in a curb bit to keep him from trotting, but urging him to his fastest walk, she taught him to take very short, quick steps. With only one foot on the ground at a time he went so smoothly that she arrived at the market without scrambling the eggs.

But I saw some fine show riding in those years when Durland's was flourishing and Tichnor, Grand & Company, the old American Horse Exchange was enjoying a new elaborate building above Columbus Circle in New York. Tichnor, Grand housed four hundred and fifty horses, built an enormous riding ring on the sixth floor and handsomely appointed clubrooms on the others. The Will Maddisons came over from England to conduct classes, and a very handsome couple they were when they led the drill around the ring, turned out in London's best.

It was during these expansive years that the vogue for the high-stepper reached the absurdity when show horses wore shoes especially weighted to increase their action. I remember how shocked we were, exhibitors and spectators, when Vivian Gooch came over from England to judge at the Madison Square Horse Show and picked horses without high action but with the most Thoroughbred blood in them. And, most outrageous of all, he favored long tails. Everybody grumbled that Gooch had deliberately selected the most wretched entries in the show—"daisy cutters" was the sneering term applied to them—but when the talk died down, the exhibitors did a lot of thinking. Next year Gooch's influence was seen in the awards of almost every class."

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O'Malley Knott emigrated from Ireland to study veterinary medicine, and set up practice in Plainfield, NJ. He was a horse dealer, founding member of the famous Millbrook Hunt, and developer of the equestrian program at the Bennet Girl's School in Millbrook. Not able to date Dr. Knott's lifetime other than mid-1800's to mid-1900's, I Googled when Vivian Gooch judged the National show and found the following NY Times article published September 29, 1918. That would date the event around 1903.

DOCKED HORSES NOW PASSE

No Room for Old Style Equine at National Horse Show

In making up the prize list soon to be issued for the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden on Nov. 11-15 [1918], all classes for docked saddle horses have been eliminated, the type having become so nearly extinct that the few shown hereafter will have to compete with the long tailed horses of the thoroughbred type which now dominate the show rings and the bridle paths of Central Park.

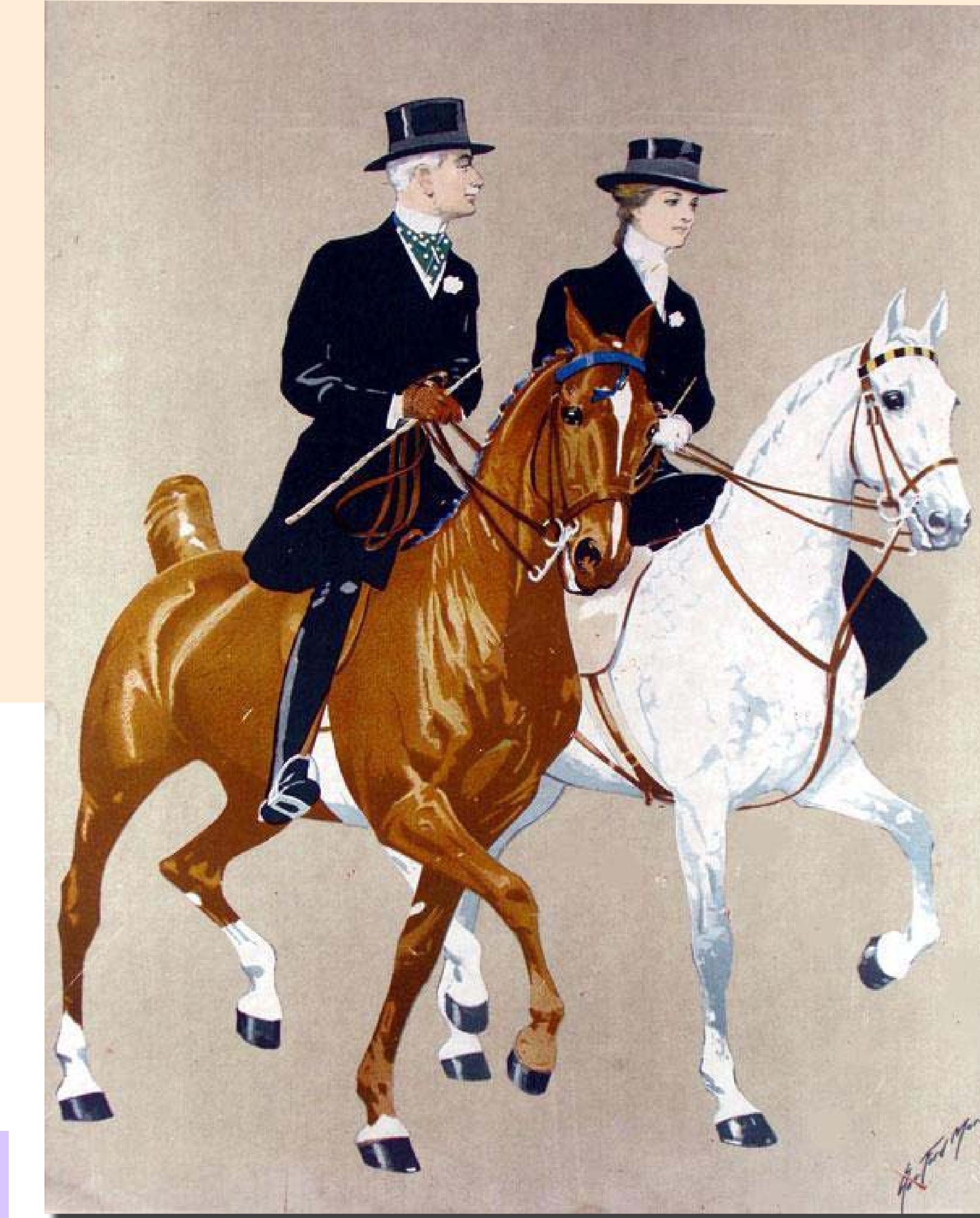
This action of the association is deemed to mark the passing of the oldtime New York type of saddle horse which held undisputed sway in the early days of the [National] horse show, back in 1883, and for many years afterward. The beginning of the end came when Vivian Gooch, of Windsor, England, was engaged to judge at the garden about 15 years ago [1903]. He pronounced the American saddle horses too "harnessy", meaning they looked like harness horses, and in judging he gave the principle prizes to a few long-tailed horses of the Thoroughbred type exhibited by horsemen who knew what the English expert liked. Owners and admirers of the brilliant actioned, high styled, docked horses raised a commotion over Gooch's revolutionary awards, but the association stood behind him, and he came back year after year until the English type was firmly established here.

Exhibitors of docked horses threatened to go on strike when the tide began to run strongly against them, and the National Horse Show Association then poured oil on the troubled waters by making separate classes for docked and undocked saddle horses. Entries in the later increased year after year, while the others fell off steadily until last season they were noticeably few, and now they have been abandoned, probably for good. Experts say that not more than half a dozen docked saddle horses are likely to be shown this season, while there may be hundred of the now fashionable English type.

Right, is a painting done by George Ford Morris for the show poster of the Chicago Horse Show dated 1913 featuring Vivian Gooch and "Madame X" ironically on a docked saddle horse.



To learn more about the author, Brita Barlow, please see page 15.



KILLING WITH KINDNESS INSULIN RESISTANCE AND OTHER

METABOLIC ISSUES

by Brita Barlow

Remember the good ole days when the only times you worried about foundering your horse was if he got into the grain bin, or was accidentally let out on too much spring grass? Can you imagine that it is possible to kill your horse on a diet of plain grass hay? Well, neither did we until it happened in our own barn.



It seems the era of simply feeding your horse generic sweet feed and hay from the farmer down the road are over. As with the rest of America, our horses are more and more often becoming victims of obesity, lack of exercise, and the health problems that go with it. As the incidents of diabetes in America is on the rise, so to is the knowledge about a similar problem in our equine population. Meet Equine Metabolic Syndrome. Equine Metabolic Syndrome or EMS, is actually a collection of similar interrelated issues, including Insulin Resistance, Cushing's Disease, and Hypo Thyroidism.

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While there are many consequences to mismanagement of EMS, the most severe, and incurable result is laminitis.

The horse we know today is a product of thousands of years of evolution into an easy keeping creature who could survive lean times, travel long distances to forage, and perhaps carry a rider or pull a vehicle for miles and miles each day. The life style of the modern show horse, breeding animal or backyard pet is quite the opposite. They rarely want for anything, they work a few hours a day at most, and the walk to their water source generally ranges from a few feet to a few yards instead of miles. Molasses is added to their concentrated feeds so they will gobble it up and not waste it. They feast on sugar and carbohydrate laden snacks like apples, carrots, fancy horse cookies and peppermints. They pick and choose which kind of hay they want to eat, and trample the rest into the ground as we scurry to find a more delectable bale. They may spend hours a day confined to a relatively small stall or paddock, and then they may get the entire winter off, with little change to their diet and calorie intake. Their modern lifestyle is contrary to the conditions they have evolved in and been bred for.

In addition to changes in their lifestyle, there have also been changes in the food they eat. Farmers are now growing grasses chosen for increased weight gain and high milk productivity in cattle. These grasses also grow earlier in spring, can survive draught conditions and severe winters making them more reliable crops. Hay grown for cattle is not always the best choice for horses, often testing at more than 25% carbohydrates, starches and sugars instead of the preferable 12% or less. We do not want to feed large amounts of high carb hay to a stabled horse who not only needs a certain amount of roughage, but may need several meals a day just to keep him mind occupied and help prevent ulcers that can form from their constant production of stomach acids.

Not that hay is strictly to blame. Even in a natural grazing environment on more traditional Timothy or Orchard Grass, sugars can fluctuate not only throughout the season, but during the day as well. Temperatures and humidity can influence the amount of sugars stored in the leaves and stems. Pasture management can have an affect too. Everything from the height the grass is mown to the mix of grasses chosen to provide year round feeding will affect the amount of sugar the horse takes in.

And you may think that if you are not feeding a sticky, molasses coated "sweet feed", you are not packing your horse with sugars, but many pelleted feeds are also laden with sugars and carbs. Molasses is used to bind the finer particulates into the pellets, so even if the molasses is not visible on the outside, there may be a large amount actually used in the feed. There is no standard for "low" carb feed, and feeds that are labeled "low" or have names that imply they are "safe" may not actually be low enough to be safe for a horse on a controlled diet. The crucial Non Soluble Carbs (NSC) are not even part of the labeling requirement, and therefore are not allowed to be included at all. Even the grains themselves are sources of carbohydrates and may not be a necessary part of a horse's dietary requirement based on the activity level.

Probably the most common and easily overlooked component of Equine Metabolic Syndrome is Insulin resistance. Much like Type II diabetes in humans, IR is characterized by elevated glucose and insulin levels in the blood. Rich feed and light exercise results in a prolonged increase in blood sugar. The cells become resistant to the overabundant glucose and since insulin is the key that unlocks the cell to allow the absorption of glucose, the increased blood sugar level triggers the pancreas to produce more and more insulin to clear the blood. But the cells have be-

come resistant to the insulin and so the glucose and insulin levels remain elevated for a prolonged time period. The cells in turn, are not getting the sugar which makes the animal feel hungry and have low energy causing it to eat more and get fatter. The added fat cells developed by the over feeding and lack of exercise also produce additional toxins which interfere with insulin's action.

Lowered thyroid function is seen as a result of the IR condition and contributes to the lower energy levels and weight gain which exacerbate the IR. Additionally, there seems to be a connection between IR and Cushing's Disease, resulting in the IR condition being referred to sometimes as Pre-Cushing's Syndrome. The excess fat and mixed endocrine signals may bring about Cushing's. While there is no cure for Cushing's, the disease can be managed with the drugs Pergolide or cyproheptadine. IR however is much more likely handled with management changes, leading to a horse which may test with properly functioning glucose and insulin levels after careful changes are made to their diet and exercise.

So how do you know if your horse has EMS or is at a high risk of developing it and should be specially managed? First of all, certain breeds are found to be more commonly affected by metabolic issues. Pony breeds, Mustangs, Arabians, Pasos, Morgans, Saddlebreds and Appaloosa breeds are all high on the list. These horses often have a similar body type, often recognizable by a cresty neck, and a more rounded physique.



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(continued from page 10)

The cresty neck is often accompanied by a dip in front of the withers indicating that the crest is more pronounced than normal due to fat. There are often lumpy fat “adipose” pads found over the shoulders and around the tail head and they often have a dimpled appearance similar to cellulite. Overall condition can also be a telltale sign. Is the horse’s coat rough early to grow in and late to shed? Is the energy level low and does he or she seem more susceptible to infection? Some horses also have difficulty dealing with cold weather, and seem more lethargic and even foot sore. In fact, sore feet is just a smaller piece of a much larger problem as EMS horses are much more likely to be plagued by frequent, often severe, hoof abscesses or repetitive bouts of sub-clinical laminitis which may be very difficult to diagnose.

Now that you are concerned, how do you diagnose this problem, and what can be done to manage it? See the article in our next EZine, “Testing and Management of the Metabolic Horse.”

Sources and Further Reading:

www.thehorse.com

www.safergrass.org

[State Labeling Requirements](#)

[Equi-Analytical feed testing](#)

[Equine Medical & Surgical Associates](#)



To learn more about the author, Brita Barlow, please see page 15.



SPORTHORSE

SHOW HORSE

TRANSLATOR

Sporthorse Terms

- 1. Acceptable bits:** the United States Dressage Federation maintains a list of bits which are legal for use in dressage competitions, and dressage phase of eventing. These are snaffle bits with a simple joint, French, or Bristol mouths. The curb bits are generally of lower port and shank style than most show horse bits. Wire snaffles, mule bits, and bicycle chain bits are expressly forbidden.
- 2. Athletic:** demonstrates coordination, range of motion in all joints, and is balanced in movement.
- 3. Bascule:** the correct arc that a horse makes over a fence, using their head, neck and back, and drawing their knees up evenly, and “beneath their chin”. The horses’ entire outline should reflect a curve—like a rainbow.
- 4. Built uphill:** the horses withers are set higher than the highest point of the croup—American Saddlebreds are quite often built this way, as opposed to Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds, that are often “high-hipped”—the reverse of “built uphill”. It is felt that a horse that is built uphill will be more inclined toward self-carriage.
- 5. Clocks:** used to describe jumping rounds, implying that the horse was on autopilot—“that horse just clocks around a course”.
- 6. Correct:** generally refers to legs—straightness and symmetry of front and hind feet and legs—open heels and matching hoof angles.
- 7. Cracks his back:** a horse that uses his head, neck, and back in an extremely athletic manner over a

Showhorse Terms

- 1. Bitting rig:** a surcingle with side reins attached. Used in the stall, loose in the ring or arena, or on a lunge.
- 2. Bounce walk:** three and five gaited horses are expected to execute a two beat gait that is essentially an animated jog, rather than a flat footed walk.
- 3. Canter aids:** for a show horse, the horse is turned toward the rail, from a walk, and the outside leg signals the canter.
- 4. Cold backed or girthy:** these are terms that are not exclusive to show horses. A cold backed horse would be one who is not immediately comfortable when a rider mounts, and might “hump up” in their back—a girthy horse is one who is not comfortable with a tight girth, and the girth either needs to be kept loose, or tightened after the horse warms up.
- 5. Colt bridle:** a bridle with a running martingale and two sets of reins (one above the martingale rein), or German martingale, with a snaffle bit attached.
- 6. Cut tail:** a show horse in most divisions is expected to have their tail up over their back. In order to accomplish this, muscles on the side of the tail are cut, allowing the tail to go up. The tail is kept in a tail set, in order to keep these muscles from growing back in. Tail straightness and length are extremely important to the show horse aficionados.
- 7. Dumb jockey:** a training device with a surcingle which has a pole coming out of the top, allowing reins to be attached at a higher placement than is

(continued on page 12)

Above Level

Sporthorse Terms

- fence—these horses are not easy to sit on over a fence.
- 8. Daisy cutter:** a horse that glides over the ground with a “toe flicking” movement—no motion—preferred in show hunter prospects.
- 9. Fancy:** an attractive horse or pony that is a good mover and good jumper for the show ring.
- 10. Half pass:** is a movement performed in competition in the trot and canter. The horse must maintain a correct bend in the direction that it is traveling, and move forward at a correct pace.
- 11. Hollow:** used to describe a way of moving or a jumping style in which the horse is not rounded.
- 12. “Jerks his knees”:** the ability of a jumper or hunter to pull their forearms up above level (90*) over a jump.
- 13. Impulsion:** the natural tendency of a horse to want to move forward from the leg without undue aids—the horse should not run from the leg either, but rather, wait to be asked to move forward.
- 14. Lateral work:** work which is done on an angle, as opposed to a straight line. In lateral work, the horse must cross their legs, to some extent. In correct work of this kind, a horse is expected to move forward as much as sideways.
- 15. Leg yield:** a basic lateral movement where the horse moves sideways, maintaining a parallel line to the out-

Showhorse Terms

- possible with a plain surcingle.
- 8. Flat shod or in plates:** indicates a horse with a keg shoe on.
- 9. Forward-headed:** A neck set which does not easily allow a horse to carry the underside of their neck perpendicular to the ground when working.
- 10. Full bridle:** a bridle as used on show horses, with a snaffle and curb bit on it, two sets of reins, and a bradoon hanger for the snaffle bit. Usually, a colorful browband and occasionally, a matching caveson are used for showing.
- 11. Game:** a horse with an intense desire to please and go forward. This is very desirable in a high quality show horse.
- 12. Good order:** a horse that is in acceptable weight and condition. High order could be the best type of condition, and “no kind of order” is an example of a phrase describing a horse in poor condition.
- 13. Harness horse:** refers to a fine harness horse—these horses typically must have high collected animated motion. They are judged at the walk, trot and park trot (a slightly stronger trot).
- 14. Hingey:** indicates a horse that has the conformational ability to set his head in a show horse headset. Usually this would include a somewhat “S” shaped neck.
- 15. Hocks:** the ability of a horse to use their hind end. A horse who pulls their legs up, closing the angle on all

Sporthorse Terms

- side of the arena. This is the only lateral work where the horse is not required to bend in the direction that he is going.
- 16. Lengthenings:** the beginning of asking a horse for extended gaits. A lengthening should show a horse making the stride longer—not faster—the highest form of a lengthening is an extension—where the horse should appear to float in the gait.
- 17. Line:** a sequence of fences.
- 18. Mannerly:** For this purpose, refers to a horse that will stand to be mounted from the ground, is not girthy, mouthy, etc.
- 19. Moves from behind:** the horse has an active, driving hind end, and steps up under himself to push forward.
- 20. Moves uphill:** the horse steps up under itself, and transfers weight from the forehand to the hindquarters.
- 21. On the bit:** the horse maintains a consistent and even contact through the reins to the rider.
- 22. On the muscle:** describes a horse that is full of himself, and may play and run through the bridle.
- 23. Over-bent:** refers to a horse that is trying to avoid the bit by over flexing at the poll OR to a horse that is moving his head and neck to the inside of a circle, but keeps his body in a straight line (as opposed to having his entire body reflect the diameter of the circle).
- 24. Over-track:** tracks of the hind feet

Showhorse Terms

- hind end joints would be desirable.
- 16. Hooky or double hinge:** refers to a horse with whose neck has almost an “s” curve to it, allowing them to pick up their head higher, and set their chin closer to their chest. For show horse purposes, the underside of the neck should be perpendicular to the ground.
- 17. Jog:** driving a horse using a jog cart—a sulky like cart usually with bicycle tires. One of the preferred ways of working show horses.
- 18. Long line:** ground driving a horse with two lines—can be done on a circle, or up and down an arena wall. Usually referred to as “lining”—a preferred method of working show horses.
- 19. “March a trot”:** used when a horse has the ability to demonstrate correct motion in front and hind ends, at a correct cadence.
- 20. Motion:** the ability of a horse to lift their legs. “Level” describes motion that has the horses forearm parallel to the ground.
- 21. Necky:** refers to a horse with a longer, more swan-like neck.
- 22. Oily:** describes a horse with seamless, smooth movement.
- 23. Park out:** originally for ease of mounting when ridden, and to exaggerate the desirable flat top line for showing a horse on the line or in photos, the American Saddlebred stance shows the horse with his front legs

Sporthouse Terms

exceed those of the forefeet in the gait.

25. Packer: a horse that know his job well enough, and is honest enough, to take care of his rider.

26. Pirouettes: a turn in place done in the rhythm of the gait. The horses hindquarters should stay as close to the center of the circle that is created as possible. Walk and canter pirouettes are required movements in third and fourth level, respectively.

27. Round: describes the arc that a horse makes over a fence (head and neck stretched forward, good propulsive effort from behind). In dressage, this describes a horse that is tracking up, engaging the hindquarters, and holds its head and neck in the proper arch.

28. School Master: a dressage horse that knows his job well enough to teach it.

29. Self carriage: the ability of a horse to balance themselves, with minimal aids from the rider, in a correct frame.

30. Short girth: many dressage saddles are made with long billets, and therefore require a short girth, as opposed to short billets, and a regular girth. The purpose is mainly to move the buckles down out of the riders way, and allow for greater comfort and contact.

31. Simple change of lead: in dressage, these are executed through

Showhorse Terms

essentially perpendicular to the ground, and his hind legs placed well behind him, and square with one another.

24. Rack: the second of the “man made” gaits—a fast animated four beat gait without a tendency to being lateral or pacey.

25. Shatner horse: refers to a western division designed for horses who are not expected to have a lot of front or hind end action, but with good manners. This division has several classes including obstacle classes, much like trail classes at western shows. These classes take their name and inspiration from William Shatner.

26. Show shoes: usually hand made shoes with toes clips that are put on with one or more leather pads. Each horse is custom shod to best aid them in the desired movement.

27. “Sight” (to behold): a common description for an exceptional horse—“he is a sight.”

28. Slow gait: the first of the “man made” gaits—a slow, animated four beat gait. This gait should not be pacey.

29. Soft or low in the back: a horse who has a sway back. This can be of varying degrees—soft would be the least dramatic of these. Show horses can still be quite talented with a low back. Usually due to the presence of Lordosis.

30. Stretchies: also called “shack-

Sporthouse Terms

the walk, as opposed to Saddle Seat, where the horse is halted before commencing canter on the other lead.

32. Suspension: is most easily understood as “hang time” in a horses movement—much like the movement of a horse that is flagged.

33. “Swaps his leads”: describes a horse that knows how to do flying changes of lead at the appropriate point in a course.

34. Tempi changes: a dressage term, these are flying changes of lead. The horse must complete the change of lead in stride—both front and back—and stay as straight as possible. In competition, they are executed every fourth, third, second and every other stride. These are commonly called “fours, threes, twos and ones”.

35. “Ten” mover: a hunter that moves with a ground covering low stride, often with a bit of suspension.

36. Through: dressage term indicated that a horse is engaging and using its body from hindquarter “through” to the hand.

37. Topline: a horse’s profile from ears to tail.

38. Tracks up: the hind feet drive forward into, or past, the tracks of the forefeet indicating greater hind end activity—not usually possible or desirable for a horse in show shoes.

Showhorse Terms

les” or “do-gooders” or “developers” are ankles straps, usually covered in sheepskin fleece, with dee rings, and a length of surgical tubing tied between them. This training device is used to develop the front end of a horse, causing them to draw their knees up higher and tighter, and move with greater suspension.

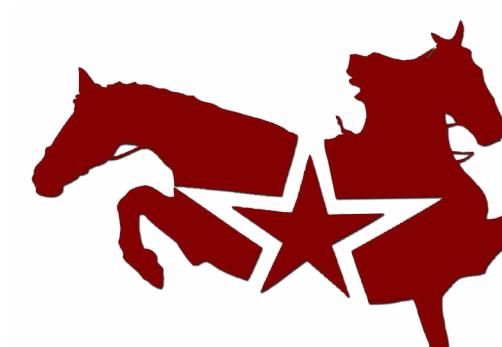
31. “Tie” a class: this is the order that the ribbons are awarded in a class—as in “he tied sixth” or, in the case of not receiving a ribbon “he tied out”.

32. Walk-trot: a three gaited horse—these horses are shown with a roached mane, and a tail with the base trimmed. They should be very refined, and are shown at the walk, trot, and canter. The walk should be animated—the trot high and floating, and the canter slow and rocking.

33. Ways of the ring: show horses are worked and shown on the left rein—the first “way” of the ring when starting a workout, and on the right rein, the second “way” of the ring after this.

34. Wears Himself: indicates a horse that sets his head in the proper frame for show horse work.

35. Wears his ears right: a show horse is expected to have their ears forward at all times in the ring, and while working. A horse that “never backs an ear” or “never turns an ear” would be the equivalent.



GETTING A PIECE OF THE PIE

MARKETING TO THE SPORT HORSE BUYER

by Julie Lynn Andrew

Breeders of American Saddlebred horses know that not every horse born on their farm is going to fit the mould of today's Kentucky State Fair winner. That doesn't mean that they are not breeding beautiful, good thinking athletes; they are! However, sometimes beauty is better found in the eye of a different beholder, or market. Here is where knowing how to appeal to the sport horse crowd can help maximize the benefit of every colt born, for the savvy breeder.

As we all know, sport horse buyers are looking for a different group of qualities than show horse buyers. Sure, there is some overlap; everyone would like straight legs and good feet. But the show horse world begins with a horse who can "raise up in the bridle"—something the sport horse world just doesn't need. American Saddlebreds are uniformly built "uphill"; a requisite quality for the sport horse disciplines—their withers are higher than their croup. This makes them lighter in their forehands, helps them to drive forward to that lift more easily, and creates a more balanced athlete. Our Saddlebreds are, therefore, a natural fit.

"He was so learned that he could name a horse in nine languages; so ignorant that he bought a cow to ride on."

Benjamin Franklin

Sport horses are started in their training with a different group of tools than most show horse barns employ. The usual training aids for young show prospects—action chains, stretchies, running martingales, German martingales, drop lashes and other noise mak-

ers, are not only used differently, some just aren't used, at all. Because of this, they can be instant red flags to the prospective sport horse buyer. These buyers appreciate brilliance, but not generally when, from their frame of reference, it could equate with a horse being spooky or quick. The profile for these buyers is generally age 25-45, female, amateur, and they are looking for a safe and comfortable ride—along with the bonus of having a personable equine partner. The vast majority work with a trainer/instructor regularly, but not necessarily in a training barn setting.

So, where to begin with presenting your horse to this group? First off, advertise your program, or available stock on the internet, in places like [Dreamhorse.com](#), [Equine.com](#), etc. If you have an established website, create a place on the site for this type of buyer, and drive them to it with inexpensive ads on the aforementioned sites. An example of a farm with a website that crosses over very well is Louis Gilliland's, <http://www.winsdown.com/> In addition to very fair representations of her stock, she also uses the term "boarding barn compatible" to let buyers know the horses are just that. Remember, when you write your advertisement that sport horse people do speak a different language, about their horses, than show horse folks (see our "[sport horse to show horse translator](#)" in this issue). Your advertisement needs to tell your buyers what you are offering, with terms that they understand. For example, a flat walk is seldom a deal killer for a show horse buyer, but a sport horse buyer may be looking for a very specific kind of walk—four beat, and longer strided.

So, how should you frame the pictures so that they WOW the sport horse buyer? It's not hard, but you

must remember a few things. First, make sure that you are perpendicular to the horse, and that the picture is mostly horse, not much background. Second, let them stand square—never parked out, with at least one fore and hind leg perpendicular to the ground, and the other legs more under them—not in front of the "straight" leg. Remember, too, that while American Saddlebreds are generally left with their manes long and natural, the sport horse world generally shortens their horses' manes. For this reason, photographing your horse from their left, or "non-mane" side, is the best way to show off their neck. If you do not have a correct sport horse type bridle, use a nice leather halter for your photos. Try and avoid a bridle with a colorful brow band. Your prospective customer needs to see the horse looking like they'd easily fit into the sport horse world, so help them paint that dream. Then ears up, and neck stretched forward a bit—and voila!

Here are a few examples:

1. This is Infuriating. He is an excellent example, in type and conformation, of what makes a sport horse buyer get goose bumps. From their perspective, this horse is very much like the Dutch Warmbloods in appearance. There is more background in this photo than is ideal, and his forelegs are not quite "upright" in his stance.



(continued on page 15)

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2. Aurora Blue is a lighter type, but still uphill, and her stance here is excellent.



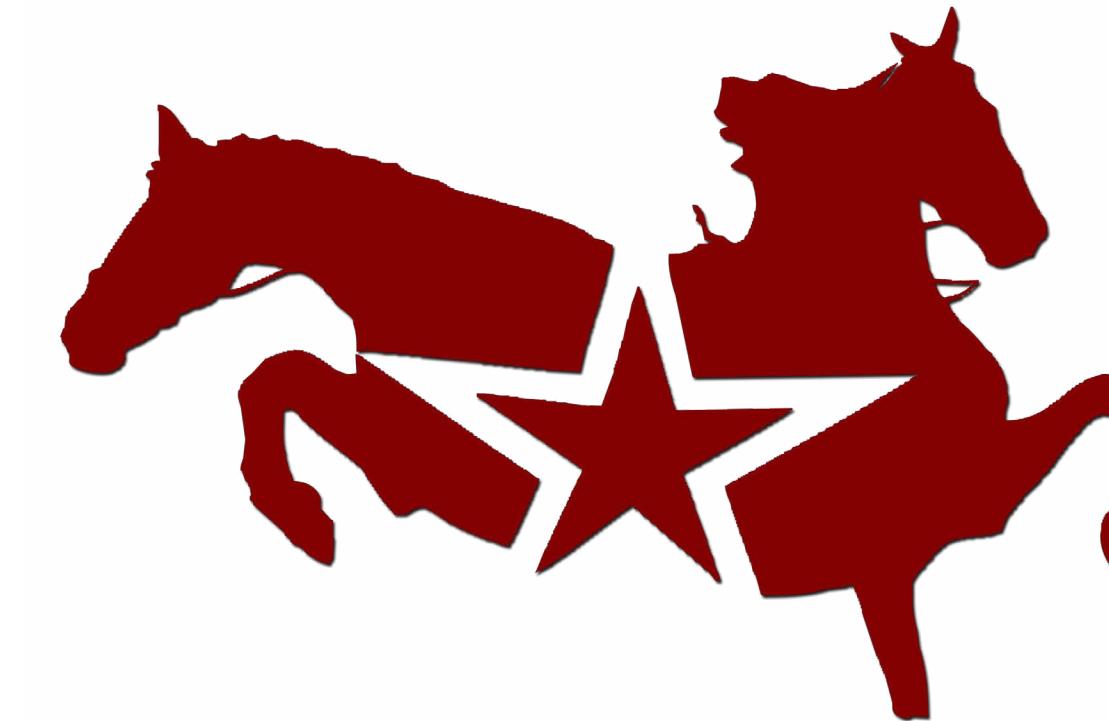
3. Sometimes, a less formal shot can still be flattering, and show off your horse. The gelding in this photo is also very much like a European Warmblood in type. This is Callaway's Associated Press.



Now, if you really want to show the market that you are serious, there is nothing like a well done video. Posting your ad on YouTube, and linking to it is a relatively easy, and very user friendly, way of showing off your horse. This video, done on a very, very fancy warm blood filly, is an excellent example of how to offer your horse to this market in the best possible light. It also demonstrates how sport horses are shown in hand, and what type of handling and movement is desirable, and acceptable to this group. Pay special attention to the walk and trot on this filly, as they will give American Saddlebred breeders some insight into sport horse buyers requirements, especially for the higher levels.

[Click here to view YouTube video.](#)

In challenging economic times, the ability to sell your horses to quality buyers is more problematic than ever. However, building a bridge into this market may help your bottom line, and also help place your horses in high quality, long-term loving homes. If you need any assistance in creating your advertisement, please do not hesitate to email us at *Above Level*. We're happy to help! You can email us at AboveLevelASB@gmail.com.



“For what the horse does under compulsion...is done without understanding; and there is no beauty in it either, any more than if one should whip and spur a dancer.”

Xenophon



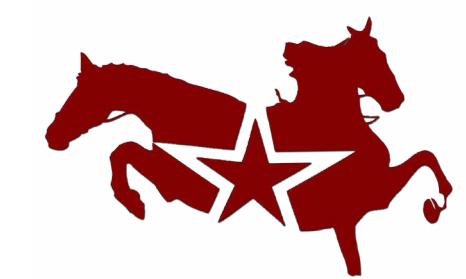
ASB Stallion, Borealis

MEET THE AUTHOR HISTORICAL EDITOR, BRITA BARLOW



My name is Brita Barlow, and I am an amateur owner trainer from New York. I get my love of horses, and Saddlebreds in particular from my grandmother and mother. From my earliest memories, they provided me with horses, and the desire to ride and care for them. My grandmother especially, loved books and we would read together the stories of show horse, great breeding stallions, and interesting personalities from the horse world. We also enjoyed pouring over bloodlines and studying conformation. We spent years training and showing our own horses, even some we'd bred ourselves. It is my hope for this ezine is to celebrate what the American Saddlebred means to me. It is a breed that not only includes the absolutely unique five gaited show horse, but from the very beginnings of its history has been a breed of varied uses encompassing all the horse world has to offer. Each issue I will be bringing to light some of this history and showing you how this wonderful horse that we all know and love became America's horse.

See Brita's two articles, "[Killing with Kindness: Insulin Resistance and other Metabolic Issues](#)" and "[American Saddlebreds in History](#)," in this issue of *Above Level*.



ACADEMY CORNER: TEACHING THE BIGGER PICTURE

RIDING LESSONS AT SORRELSTONE FARM

by Lillian Halvorsen

Many of us can appreciate the beauty and grace of an American Saddlebred competing at the top of their chosen discipline. There are awards and recognition for horses earning show points and magazine spreads for top contenders. But just as beautiful and graceful to me are my American Saddlebreds, who will never be a centerfold in a magazine nor collect many ribbons and rosettes. They are other people's castoffs, whether they had outlived their usefulness or become too wounded to use. Some have lived in a professional show barn sometime. Some have never. But they all have found a home here and a life where they are invaluable. They are a special kind of lesson horse, one that beyond tolerating a beginner's mistakes also teaches students compassion, responsibility, and kindness.

Welcome to my little piece of heaven. It's not big and it's not fancy, but it is home. We call it Sorrelstone Farm, thanks to the large brown stones that compose our aged stone cottage. It is home to our little family, some small old terriers, a few barn cats, and a herd of American Saddlebreds. These are forgotten horses—former show horses that didn't work out for whatever reason and went on to different lives. When they no longer could accomplish that job, they fell through the cracks to low end auctions where their fate was certain. Luckily for me, they found their way here and found a new vocation as a lesson horse. And I am lucky, as each one is a gifted teacher



Amelia and Randy

and trusted partner in sharing the simple joys of riding and spending time with horses.

None of our school horses have ever seen the green shavings of Louisville, and in fact, most have been purchased for a few hundred dollars, but they are priceless partners in the vital task of creating tomorrow's horsemen. While the traditional Academy program was centered on creating polished saddle seat show riders, the academy program at Sorrelstone promotes excellent horsemanship and personal responsibility while encouraging hunt seat, dressage, and western, along with saddle seat riding. Students see a lifelong commitment to school horses, from their initial pur-

chase, to their physical health being restored, to their re-schooling, to their eventual culmination as a finished mount for students to enjoy for many years. Meet some of the cherished academy horses of Sorrelstone...



After-lesson Cool Down (Chaney Golden)

Randy is one of the younger lesson mounts at nine years old. Although well-trained to drive thanks to his years as an Amish horse, he seemed to not have any riding education when he first arrived at Sorrelstone. Training was taken slow, but now Randy is a favorite with some of Sorrelstone's smallest riders—no small accomplishment considering Randy is a lanky 16.2 hands.



Randy

None of our school horses have ever seen the green shavings of Louisville, and in fact, most have been purchased for a few hundred dollars, but they are priceless partners in the vital task of creating tomorrow's horsemen. While the traditional Academy program was centered on creating polished saddle seat show riders, the academy program at Sorrelstone promotes excellent horsemanship and personal responsibility while encouraging hunt seat, dressage, and western, along with saddle seat riding. Students see a lifelong commitment to school horses, from their initial pur-



Rachael Kelly and Emily compete in a Costume Class.

Sorrelstone's matriarch mare, *Miss Emily*, is unquestionably well-trained, accomplished in the show ring, and clever. While patient and slow-moving for her favorite little riders, Miss Emily can require quite a skilled ride from more experienced person. She is one of those rare horses who demands their rider rise to the occasion. Miss Emily is just under twenty years old and came through a stock sale after not working out as a therapy horse. She is petite and dainty, with a beautiful big eye and kind heart.

Always the jokester, thirteen year old *Robbie* is undoubtedly one of the barn favorites for his antics. This gentle giant lives for swiping hats off unsuspecting heads and sharing in anyone's candy. Although he requires an experienced, sensitive ride, he is great fun for more skilled riders. Robbie has a limited show record at some shows in the northeast, and then was sold to the Amish. After a few years on the road, Robbie sold through a regional horse auction where Sorrelstone purchased him. Now fifteen years old, Robbie is home at last.



Cindy Ketterman and Robbie



Sophia and Sammie

Quirky old **Sam** was a treasure found on the local Craig list. Starved and covered in rain rot, Sam was quickly brought to Sorrelstone to recover. After careful rehabilitation, Sam has flourished and proven to be a well-trained old timer with a heart of gold. Sam is the go-to guy for little riders' first attempts at solo trotting. He is careful and steady and knows his job. He has helped one young rider graduate through the ranks from novice walk—trotter to accomplished rider. Despite her ability to ride younger, fancier horses, she favors the old chestnut out back—Sam. Despite his elder age and diminishing eyesight in one eye, Sam knows when his favorite rider hops on—he turns into a snorty, grand show horse of the highest caliber.



Karly Goodling
and Emily

Cohabiting the 'old bachelor's field' with Sammie, is his best pal, **Roger**. Also a twenty-something and also mostly retired, Roger is the stoic, brave hearted Saddlebred that found his way to Sorrelstone with the same gloomy story as many others. However, Roger has an additional factor to his story—a previously dislocated left hip. Fully healed, but with a noticeable shortness

to his stride and an unevenness in his anatomy, Roger is not able to be ridden. However, he is the star of the show when school groups and preschools visit the farm. This kind horse will stand still as a statue for the smallest of visitors to brush, visit, and love on him. So, while not an academy horse in the traditional sense, Roger provides education to our smallest horse lovers on respect for our elder citizens and caring for an animal that may have used up his physical contributions. He is the first horse encounter for many children that might lead them to a lifelong love of horses.

Sorrelstone Farm is more than an occupation to me—it is my home and a dream that came true. I have loved American Saddlebreds since I first saw them

at the Pennsylvania National in the 80s and now can share these same magnificent horses with eager young riders like I once was. It is even more of a joy to know that these sometimes-old, sometimes-unwanted horses of mine are now cherished friends and partners to the children and adults who ride them and me, the trainer who relies on them everyday.

Sorrelstone Farm, established in 2001, is owned by Kurt and Lillian Halvorsen in York, Pennsylvania. Lessons are available to riders young and old, novice and experienced. Limited spaces available for training and re-schooling of outside horses. Please direct inquiries to Lillian Halvorsen (717) 266-8464 or LHalvorsen1@comcast.net.



Student Horse Show (from left): Wendell (Arab pony) and Linnea Prudell; BZ and Chaney Golden;
Sammie and Racheal Kelly.

