

July 2011

# Above Level

*Celebrating all that the American Saddlebred can do!*

Volume I, Issue 2







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# WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

## EDITORIAL BY JULIE LYNN ANDREW

**I**t was Abraham Lincoln, who famously said, “A house divided against itself, cannot stand.” As I write this, the American Saddlebred Horse Association is embroiled in a legal dispute with a group who calls themselves “Concerned Senior Members,” or CSMs. Although I consider myself to be a concerned member, and I have migrated into a senior status, I am not a part of this. Many ASHA members of my acquaintance are also concerned, and senior members, and they are not part of the lawsuit.



Except that we all are. Every member of the ASHA is. It is to our good fortune that we can get on the internet, and see some of the documents that have been posted, allowing us some view of what is going on. However, I wonder if – even after this is settled – we will ever really know what it was about. One side claims to be looking out for our ability to see into the ASHA; the other argues that we can see – just as much as we should be able to. One thing is for sure. Thousands

of dollars have been spent by both sides.

For me, it is hard to get on the bandwagon, and say that we should be able to view certain, more sensitive, and private documents, such as those pertaining to the ASHA employees. And, harder still for me to support any group who does not support the diversity of the breed. This ezine’s purpose is to support every American Saddlebred; not just those who can and do grace the green shavings of Louisville. One group is definitely not on board with this; the other only marginally.

Sites such as Trot.org have allowed unprecedented access to information on as close to a real time basis as possible. During Alan Balch’s tenure as Executive Secretary of the ASHA, he spent an enormous amount of time sharing information, and, ultimately, defending decisions that had been made. When Balch resigned, near the beginning of the friction between the two factions, an absolute void was left. No one from the ASHA, before, or since, has been able to articulate the issues, or been willing to face the challenges of responding to each and every query.

In the place of direct answers, there have been messages to the membership, as well as those on the internet sites, that have left me wondering about the particular spin of the content.

We live in uncertain times, with registrations at an all time low, and the economy effecting the lives of people, as well as horses. And through this, we are living in our own sort of Civil War. Our breed survived one War between groups with different agendas. Of course, that was back when they were valued as mounts for Officers, leading the charge outside of the show ring. If both sides truly only see this amazing breeds value within the confines of the show ring, we may have lost, already. I certainly hope not, however, if they can’t agree about a stack of documents, the reality of how challenging our horses situation actually is may simply be lost on these combatants.

The next time you see your horses, think long and hard about where they came from. They were battle tested. Perhaps we will need to be, also, to ensure their future. Understanding the real intent of each side is essential, and challenging. Every diversion that the ASHA suffers directly affects their ability to support the breed, both from loss of focus, as well the drain of the legal expenses. Change is ultimately what may be needed, and just perhaps, the foxes have been watching the henhouse too long. But I’m not ready to enable a new group of foxes to inhabit that same henhouse, especially when there is no reason to believe that they will be any more trustworthy, or proactive.

But, I sure hope we come out of this Civil War unified, in some fashion. The horses – the first ones to suffer, and the last often thought of – are counting on a better future. That is our job, as owners, breeders, and lovers of the horses. To keep the focus where it needs to be. On the horses.

*Julie Lynn Andrew*



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## THE WIZARD OF PREMIER STABLES: ROBERT CROSS BYERS

by Julie Lynn Andrew



Robert Cross Byers

**I**t may just be that Robert Cross Byers' real genius lies in his ability to create, and sustain, partnerships. Those with other people, people with their horses, and, of course, Rob's own relationships with horses, especially with one particularly brilliant, but wayward, gelding named Boucheron.

Perhaps it is his zen-like focus, wisdom, and endless supply of patience that seem to elevate his game. Sarah, Rob's wife, and partner, of thirty years puts it this way, "He has the patience of a saint, and he takes joy in putting something together." Rob knows how their clients ride, "and he takes the time to gear them (their horses) that way."

In Virginia, as a boy, Rob's father had harness ponies that they "messed around with", but it wasn't until he reached boarding school that he really got to riding, and he started with hunters. Largely self-taught, Rob moved on to Tennessee Walking Horses, and

his big lick horse, "War Cry", wasn't just successful, he was Reserve World Champion two year old, and three year old. In the Amateur ranks, War Cry and Byers were seventh, out of seventy-five horses. In one particularly grueling class, there were three workouts – starting with ten horses, and then coming down to two – War Cry, and "Miss T-Bird". War Cry and Rob prevailed. In one year, he competed the big roan gelding twenty-nine times, with a resulting twenty-two blues. The time came for Rob to move on with his career, and he needed to sell his big friend, but it broke his heart to do so. Fortunately, War Cry went on to be the first Tennessee walking horse for the Hillebrand family, in New Providence, Pennsylvania.

Byers worked with Patty Kent, at Symbol Acre Farm, in Pennsylvania, and River Ridge Riding Club, in Ohio, before landing at Rock Creek, as Assistant to then Trainer, Frank McConnell. McConnell wasn't held to the common training method of starting of the week long-lining a horse, moving through jogging, and perhaps finishing up the week in a full bridle. He was extremely focused on mouthing a horse, the practice of working with a horse to gain correct acceptance of the bit, and this was an essential part of his program. It was Frank, according to Rob, who taught him the real importance of bridling a horse. "He thought outside the box. Most trainers don't use a full bridle very much. Frank would come in on Monday, and work in a full bridle, and maybe go through the whole week."

Frank also educated his assistant about the importance of making sure that a horse was first, and foremost, comfortable in their bridle. Using nickle bits, primarily Tom Basses, McConnell bent shanks, and ground down, and rounded off mouth

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(Byers continued from page 3)

pieces, looking to create bits that did not put pressure on the bars of a horse's mouth. He studied horses' mouths, and did not use harsh cavesson. Rob learned that it was essential to make a horse comfortable through their entire body.

*"Persistent people begin their success where others end in failure."*

Edward Eggleston

His fascination with creating the best possible athletes caused him to read books on dressage, watch movies, videos, and absorb everything he could find, which would help him to make his horses better. He looked at the similarities. "In dressage, they want the horse up in their bridle, and on the bit, just like we do," he explains, "we're all doing the same thing." In the early 90's noted dressage rider, instructor, and author, Jane Savoy, noted Byers' talent for working horses across customary disciplines, and included him in her book "Cross Training Your Horse." Occasionally, a horse has come along in Rob's career that needed to be something other than a show horse. One such gelding, Asgard, by Supreme Sultan, was a "good mover, and smart," and Rob worked him as a dressage horse, and then sold him to a gentleman in Haiti. Another such opportunity came with a gelding that Rob traded for, sight unseen. When the gelding was unloaded, it was apparent a show horse wasn't necessarily Midnight Caller's best career choice. However, Rob reached back to his foxhunting days, and determined that the gelding could jump. Along came a buyer, from Switzerland, looking for a jumper, and Rob remembers the gelding jumping poles held up shoulder high, and the geld-

ing effortlessly clearing them, after being pulled in from some time on turnout. Off he went to Switzerland. He was ultimately sold to another buyer in Germany.

A graduate of William Woods College, Sarah Ledford had arrived at Rock Creek about a year before Rob arrived, as the Riding Instructor for the facility. However, she credits Rob with teaching her to, "really, really ride." Sarah started out riding "back yard horses", and her Saddle Seat show suits were sewn by her mother. In fact, her first custom suit was purchased for her fortieth birthday, in honor of her competing the wonderful mare, "My Front Page Lady", owned by Amy Dix-Rock, to a Three Gaited Ladies World Champion title, in 2000.

Rob and Sarah married in 1980, creating what is probably Byers' most legendary partnership, and the nucleus of their venture, Premier Stables, in Simpsonville, KY. While Rob's amazing talent with working with the horses gave them the ability to offer top notch training, it was Sarah's gifts as an instructor, and as a savvy business woman, that helped make the venture a financial success. "My Dad was a very good businessman, and very smart," Sarah shares. Her focus on the bottom line allowed the couple to eventually own both their farm, and their home in

Grand Cayman, free and clear. Truly an achievement in any profession.

One of Rob's early champions was a mare named "Face Card", owned by Sally Groub-Gayeski. A game mare, who could be "over the top", Rob trail rode her in the park, between shows. When pre-



Sarah Byers

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paring the mare for a show, Rob would long line her, allowing her to “stretch to the ground – sniffing the ground,” with his outside line situated “behind the mare’s butt,” to help bend, and supple her, in the same manner as dressage horses are worked. They campaigned the mare from the Fall of 1987, to Fall of 1996, winning numerous titles including World Champion Five-Gaited mare, with Rob showing, and as a World Champion Ladies Five Gaited mare, with Gayeski in the irons.

Mary Gaylord-McClean had been watching Rob and Sarah at horses shows, for awhile, before deciding she might like the team to work with her, and her horses. “At the Tampa Horse Show, I watched them work. I liked the way they handled themselves,” she states. “I liked the way Rob would spend a lot of time with one.” At the time, McClean was living in Virginia. Her ponies were with renowned trainer, John Shea. She tasked Shea with approaching the Byers’ about moving her horses to them. Her gelding, Cajun Magic, who, according to Mary was “too hot”, flourished, and she came on to win a Three Gaited Show Pleasure World’s Championship with the gelding. It was just the beginning.

The Oak Hill’s Dear Sir mare, Ch Swept Away, was, by Byer’s standards “tricky to start with.” Rob put her “in a jog cart, with a side check, and long lines – loose” and taught her to “guide, and stay straight. She was doing five gaits, in the cart.” As with all of the horses he works with, Rob was building the mare up, from all perspectives. She had been worked with her mouth “locked shut,” and by opening her up, he found a bigger stride, and a mare who would slobber happily in her bridle. Asking her to “stretch laterally, vertically, bend

off of your leg, do renvers, and shoulder-in, leg yield,” created a better athlete, one who McClean rode to multiple World Championships in the Five Gaited division.

Next for Byers, and McClean, was the marvelous five gaited stallion, and wonderful breeding horse, Top Spool. “We had both wanted him for awhile,” Rob remembers, speaking of building another partnership. Rob took his time bringing the horse around to the standard that he and McClean expected; it would be over a year before Mary climbed into the irons, and hit the ring with Spool. By the time the stallion retired, he had won at major shows across the country, and had been crowned World’s Champion Amateur Five-Gaited Stallion, as well as winning the Amateur Five Gaited Grand Championship.

*“We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence, then, is not an act,  
but a habit.”*

Aristotle

For Mary, Rob is able to create successful partnerships for her, with her horses; both those that she has purchased, and now, those that she has bred. “He knows how I ride, and who I am. Rob is patient,” and while Mary, “likes a challenge” she also appreciates that Rob “doesn’t rush things.” He gives her horses “a good mouth, and they are ready to win.” Interestingly enough however, for all of their successes, and Mary’s competitive nature, Byers has never mentioned “going in to win” in the entire time that he has been working horses for McClean. But, win they do. Mary feels that Rob

instills a confidence in her, as a rider, and a competitor, “There is no pressure, it is low key.” Along with the incredibly successful homebred Reserve World Grand Champion Five Gaited According to Lynn, Mary has bred her half sister, WC Lynn Williams, and will be competing this mare in the Ladies Five Gaited division this year. However, Mary gives credit to Rob for getting them there, “the Lynn’s have been tough,” she mentions, “Rob gives me confidence.”

Riders like Mary Gaylord-McClean are kept at the top of their game through riding lessons offered by Sarah, at Premier Stables. In fact, Mary rides there daily, and clients like Theresa Vonderschmitt ride as much as twice daily, when in town. Premier keeps seventeen lesson horses, for riders of varying abilities. Included in the string are horses like WC CH Mr. Snuffleupagus, allowing for riders to truly step up their game. Sarah teaches as many as 70 lessons weekly, passing along her love of the horse, along with technical expertise. “We want people to enjoy and love their horses, to feel comfortable grooming and bridling them, and taking them outside, and grazing them.”

Perhaps the best time of the day, after teaching a full schedule and handling a barn full of clients with the highest of aspirations, is later in the evening, when Sarah confides that she loves to finish her paperwork, in the office, and just listen to the quiet music of the horses, in their stalls. One of Premiers newer clients offered that they had wanted to join the Premier team for some time, but that they were really under the impression that the Byers planned on retiring soon – what, with their visits down to their home in the Caymans, after Louisville each year, and for six weeks, in the Winter. This,

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(Byers continued from page 5)

Sarah shares, is what keeps the pair sane, and going forward in the high velocity show horse world. The ability to leave a top notch staff in charge, and disappear, and decompress, has revitalized them year after year, and keeps them coming back.

In the Spring of 1996, Rob began a partnership with a three year old gelding named Boucheron, which resulted in a World's Championship in the Three Year Old Five Gaited later that year. "Bouch", ever erratic, often brilliant, went on to win the UPHA Three Year Old Championship at The Royal, that Fall. However, the next year, at Ashville, in the Five Gaited Stallion Gelding class, Boucheron "grabbed the bit and was gone. He didn't even know you were there." Over the years, Byers tried everything from psychics, to MRIs, to try and explain the gelding's issues. As Carl Fischer, who owned the gelding's dam, "Whatta Jewel, Whatta Jewel" states, "Boucheron was just peculiar." Rob describes it another way, "he was a paranoid schizophrenic." Several years of frustration followed, with Boucheron going to shows, only to melt down. Rob worked the gelding at both Lexington, and Louisville, only to send him home without showing.

Rob tried to do more with Boucheron, working him off of his leg, taking him out on trails, but nothing seemed to be able to defeat the gelding's demons. Finally, Byers turned the horse out for the Winter, with a Welsh pony, hoping he'd become a horse, and fend for himself. When he brought him in, in the Spring, the gelding was a bit the worse for wear, but ready to work. He took him to the Shelby County Fair, and in the warm up, Sarah expressed concern, "Are you nervous?", she asked her husband. "No," replied Rob, "he either is, or he isn't."

After several years of "He isn't," Bouch came back with a vengeance. Entering the ring, on Grand Championship night at Louisville, 2004, after winning the qualifier, three days earlier, Boucheron put in a performance for the ages. Not a soul in Freedom Hall could have doubted the outcome—unanimous on all three cards; no workout necessary.

Sadly, Boucheron died the following year, the victim of a freak accident in his stall. Rob mourns him still, "I felt sorry for him, he never understood how great he was. He loved people. He'd follow you around like a dog."

These days, Premier Stables is preparing to bring out a string of horses, and their partners, that Sarah feels might be their deepest, ever. And Rob? He has a new partner, a big, game, bold going gaited horse named "Bravo Blue," owned by B & T Vonderschmitt, LLC. "We are thrilled with this opportunity," enthuses Sarah, "he is a grand gelding." After over three decades together, Rob and Sarah are still building partnerships, and Rob is working on another of his own. And who knows? Maybe there is another World's Grand Championship in his future. But, what we do know is that this will be a great partnership to watch. After all, it is what Rob Byers does best.



## *PEDIGREE: YOUR GREATEST TOOL FOR BREEDING SUCCESS*

*by Kathleen Hiney Kirsan*

You may not have considered your horse's pedigree as a tool, but it can provide valuable information to assist your breeding goals. If your pedigree is accurate, then it is a 'blue-print' of your horse's genetics. Once you are able to read this ancestor map you will know where you are genetically and where you need to go. Armed with the knowledge you have gained you will be equipped to design your matings with a much greater chance of success.



Accuracy however is not as simple a issue as it may seem. First, all people make mistakes, so your pedigree info may have some unintentional mistake, such as an incorrectly spelled name, a wrong breed identification or wrong date of birth. Also you will find many horses carry the same name,

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## (Pedigree continued from page 6)

and many times a horse – male or female – is given the same name as one of their parents. These are easy enough to fix, you just have to double check your entries and use a little time and patience.

But there is a much more serious threat to our using our lineages with confidence and effectiveness. Over the years people have submitted fallacious parentage for their own horses or the ancestors of their horses in order to make them more commercially viable. This is not something new and every breed register had to wade through mountains of miss-information both at the inception of the record and with future entries. To-day with DNA testing this becomes a harder thing to do, but all of our breeds have suffered from this. For instance, even I.B. Nall

when he was initiating the American Saddle Horse registry in 1891 complained about this problem, and when Castleman revised it in 1908 he also was still working on that same issue.

Your best insurance is to know what the names in your lineages represent, who those horses were, what they did, where they did it and when they did it—that way you can spot a stallion (or mare) that could not be the sire or mare of record because of dates or location.

When gathering your pedigree information you will want to go beyond the typical 3 generations that is the common wisdom in our industry. How often have you heard that anything beyond 3 generations to far out to make a difference? The statistical evidence has shown however that is not the case, in fact the experts say to build out at least 6 or 7 generations so that you may gain an under-

standing of the full genetic value you have to work with. (For an illustration of this visit [‘Understanding Pedigrees’](#).)

Once you have verified your data as best as you can, and learned about the horses listed, then you can start to decipher the genetic map. To do this you will need to know how to spot

potency and evaluate the lineage as a whole. There are certain elements in pedigrees that have been proven statistically to indicate potency and dominance. These are called “Tesio methods,” they are practices which have been proven to produce more champions than the typical practice of just breeding the best to the best. You can read more about them on [my website](#). You will find learning to evaluate a lineage this way will be useful in two ways: first for reading the genetic structure of a pedigree, and second in designing a breeding.



Here is Callaway's Associated Press – a superb example of the high quality sport horses that the American Saddlebred breed can produce. He is by Callaway's Blue Norther, a son of WHC CH Will Shriver, and out of a daughter of Will Shriver – line breeding at it's best!

There is some complexity to all this and it will take some practice to get really good at it. But for now just let me give you the basics and then we will apply those methods to a known sire so you can see it for yourself.

The researchers determined that inbred or line-bred horses are more potent. For breeders this is a no-brainer – if you want your foal to resemble a certain ancestor you build up lines of that ancestor. But here is the twist that makes all the difference, the line has to be sex balanced to continue the full potency, so even if you have 6 lines of Gaines Denmark in your horse – if they are all by sons then you lose some of the benefit, because it has been proven that the x chromosome material is needed to perpetuate the strength of the bloodline. All male lines also hamper the potential of the daughters especially in performance and breeding. A male performance horse can still do well with all male bloodlines, but he will not be a great sire; they found to be a great stallion he will need a strong female element as well.

Second is the importance of siblings. If you have a presence of full siblings in the lineage, then that will nearly always will show you where the real dominance is. Genes travel in clusters – so when we build up close siblings we multiply the clusters so we have created a super-mass of potency that will travel unchanged through the generations. Full siblings are fairly easy to spot, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  related siblings are nearly as potent, so make it a practice to search for those as well. A full or  $\frac{3}{4}$  brother presence can also provide a needed sex balance in an otherwise all male design if one of the brothers is a daughter line. There is more detail to this and variations but let's take a look at our example to see these basics in action.

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## (Pedigree continued from page 7)

We will use the wonderful Saddlebred sire Will Shriver as an example. ([Please click here](#) to view Will Shriver's pedigree.) Will Shriver has proven to be a great sport type Saddlebred sire producing foals with substance and good conformation. His pedigree is a good picture of how to create extreme potency with complexity. We can look at the pedigrees of the horses we admire to learn how to structure our own.

While looking at this pedigree remember that close inbreeding and linebreeding is a tool for us to use, but will only be beneficial if the individuals doubled up on are superior specimens—close breeding concentrates what is there, and if it is a sound and talented bloodline than you have improved your stock. It can also go the other way, so that if you have duplicated bloodlines in a so-so sire and his relatives than this will downgrade your gene pool to mediocrity – or worse it can bring in unwanted recessives.

Full or close siblings are the single most powerful design you can put into your lineages and the super sire Will Shriver does not disappoint us. [Look at his pedigree](#) – Bourbon King and his Full brother Montgomery Chief are 5x5x7x6x4x4x6—this is a huge amount of full brother lines. This pattern is the flavor of Will Shriver and what he will transmit faithfully to his descendants. Notice also that the lines of Montgomery Chief bring in the needed sex balance. Further, in nearly every instance these lines are combined with Rex Peavine – this is significant.

The experts state that the background is just as important as the front of the pedigree. And we see that Bourbon King/Montgomery Chief are themselves complexly bred, with a double of the trotter Harrison Chief and also of Indian Chief,



Will Shriver

horses with quite a bit of Morgan in them. [Please click here](#) to view their combined pedigree. Don't miss the strong transmitters of gaitedness arriving through the dam of Harrison Chief who carries a double of the pacer Cockspur, multiple lines of the pacing Running Horse Tom Hal through his daughter Queen and his son Kittrells Tom Hal and a line of the great pacer Blackburn's Whip. There is also a strong sex balanced presence of the great Morgan trotting sire Black Hawk behind both of these lines. All these lines give great movement, suppleness and tremendous athleticism. The Running Horse (Cockspur, Tom Hal, Blackburns Whip) was our pre-Thoroughbred racehorse breed – it raced at the pace and the gallop at all race lengths from ¼ mile to 4 mile heat races. It is a source of athleticism, soundness and gaits.

Rex Peavine brings in additional lines of Queen and her brother Kittrells Tom Hal, another line of Blackburns Whip mare, more Black Hawk and another line of Gaines Denmark's best son Washington Denmark who adds a sex balanced double of the great pacing Running Horse Cockspur. So Rex Peavine builds on these same lines – he adds to them. This is the potency that they build together. Notice also how closely related Latham's Denmark, Criglers Denmark and Stonewall Jackson are – all three out of Queen mares or a mare by her brother Kittrells Tom Hal. All these lines go back to the base of what made up our greatest saddle horses bloodlines. Rex Peavine with Bourbon King/Montgomery Chief can be considered a "nick" or a 'golden cross'.

The potency continues to build in Will Shriver as a few of those offspring of this golden cross are also full siblings: Edna May and King Vine 5x5x4.

Further we find that the 2nd dam Reveriers Desdemonna is a ¾ genetic sister to Flirtation Walk – powerful broodmares who combined like this 3x2 provide a strong filly factor – which stallions and mares need to succeed. Plus the 3rd dam Spirit of Kentucky is ¾ sibling to Kalarama Rex. Can you see how the potency builds generation after generation? These close up combinations in Will Shriver act as a funnel for the full sibling power behind. This is the pedigree of a stallion of immense potency – who can deliver the genetic benefits from generations of top horses straight to his progeny in full power. It is one thing to have great horses in the background of our pedigrees – most all horses have some famous bloodlines if you go far enough back, however the effect of that great horse will not reach the foal unless it is magnified and engaged in the closer generations – instead it will dissipate. If you needed to see how to preserve the background genetic gold, then Will Shriver's lineages is a shining example of this.

Here is another thing – because Will Shriver has such a strong background of premier Running Horse sires and dams – Queen/Kittrells Tom Hal, Blackburns Whip and Cockspur and faithfully delivers it to the front of the pedigree this sire should be a good choice for those of you who are designing sport horses as he has all the 'go' and the athleticism to do it all.



Will Shriver



To learn more about Kathleen Hiney Kirsan, see ["Meet the Author..."](#) on page 24 in this issue of *Above Level*.



# MAGICAL FATE: DR. MARY JENSEN'S ASB JOURNEY

by Dr. Mary Jensen



Dr. Mary Jensen

of all time. In tiny little Macomb, IL I met the late Mr. Pres Oder.

Pres invited me out to his training barn to see the horses. I have never been a horse person; never actually even thought much about horses at all. I thought it would be fun, so I did go over to see the horses and visit at the barn. We walked up and down the aisle and Pres told me the names and a little bit about the horses.

## *Catch Me*

Pres put a halter on one of the horses and brought him out into the aisle. This was Catch Me, a Worlds Grand Champion Road Horse. Remember how I never really thought about horses before, never was a horse crazy kid, and never had even been this close to a horse before? Well... I reached out my hand, put it on Catch Me's shoulder, and he turned his beautiful head toward me and gazed right into my eyes.

**I**t must have been fate. About eleven years ago on a snowy Saturday morning in February, I chanced to meet one of the most famous and successful Saddlebred/Standardbred showhorse trainers

I was mesmerized. After a minute, I looked at Pres and said, "I think I'd like a horse like this." Pres chuckled and said a lot of people would like a horse like Catch Me. That's when he told me that this horse was a 2-time worlds champion show horse – AND that he would be QUITE expensive to buy. I was not discouraged.

When I was leaving to go home that morning Pres told me to come on back any time. I said, "How about tomorrow?" I started going to the barn every morning, seven days a week around 6:00 AM to clean Catch Me's stall, brush and groom him, and kiss him on the nose about 12 times.

## *Horse Hunting*

By mid-summer after attending several horse shows with Pres and Catch Me, I was absolutely sure I wanted a horse. Actually, I just wanted to buy Catch Me, but he wasn't for sale. Pres started looking around for me. We looked at three or four horses and every time we went, I thought we were going to BUY my horse. One time we drove about four and half hours up to southern Wisconsin where Pres looked at the horse for about five seconds and said, "No, you don't want that one." So we turned around and drove four and a half hours back home.

## *Magic*

Then one day in mid-November, Pres told me his trainer friend, Bill Sutton, from Kirksville, Missouri had a 2-year-old Saddlebred who had never



Harlem's C My Radiance ("Magic")

been shown, but he looked promising. We drove over to Kirksville and met Bill and his very nice wife, Joanne. They showed us the 2-year-old horse, Harlem's C My Radiance. He was in the cross ties in his stall in the barn. Bill said I could go on in to say hello to him. I walked up and crooned, "hello baby horse" in a low quiet voice. He looked at me with these huge gorgeous eyes and put his nose up to my neck and just breathed in. "This feels like magic" flashed through my mind.

Bill harnessed up the colt, hitched him up to a jog cart, and took him out for a drive around the ring. Pres drove him a few times around the ring, then stopped near where I was standing and watching. Pres' eyes about lit up and he said, "This is the one." HOORAY! I called him "Magic"!

I am a special education teacher, so now I was going seven days a week and cleaning two horse stalls and kissing them on the nose every day before school started. Pres would try to schedule Magic's training for a time each day when I could be there. I was fascinated with this tall, elegant colt. I groomed him and talked to him every day, seven days a week. I arranged my life around getting to the barn to see Magic.

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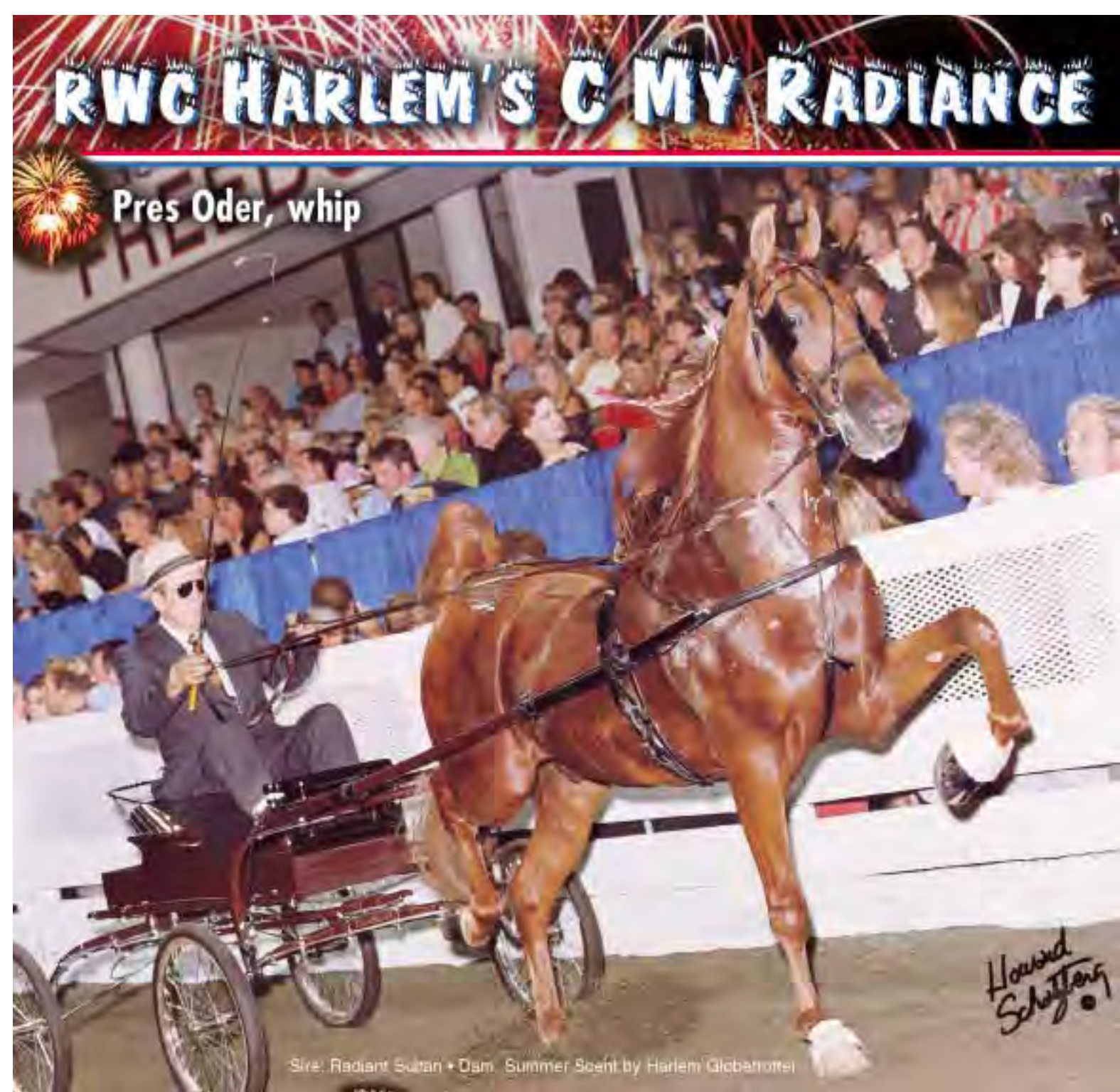
(Magical Fate continued from page 9)

As many of you may know, Pres Oder was quite a character. He yelled. A LOT. If I had a dollar for every time PRES hollered down the aisle, “MARY, ARE YOU IN THERE SPOILING THAT HORSE AGAIN?”, I’d be really, really rich! Whenever Pres said that, I used to whisper to Magic, “It’s WAY too late to worry about that.”

### *Magic Won! WOWIEE!*

The show season started. We went to the Midwest Charity in June of 2001 and much to my amazement, Magic and Pres won the 3-year-old Fine Harness Class. Then we went to Lexington in July and Magic won there too. He ended up being the Reserve Worlds Champion in Louisville and Kansas City that year.

It was very fun and wildly exciting to be having such good luck at the horse shows with Magic. What I had not been prepared for was that when you have a Saddlebred who is winning at that level of competition, a lot of other people would want to buy him.



Magic

As time went on, Pres kept trying to convince me to sell Magic. The fun was kind of going out of the horse show business. Then Pres was diagnosed with cancer and became too ill to keep on training.

### *Learning to Drive and Ride*

I had to move Magic. We ended up in Carlock, IL at Peter Archer’s training barn. Pete’s personality was the polar opposite of Pres. He was calm. He didn’t yell – usually. He was very willing to teach me anything I wanted to learn about the horses. I liked doing the work and getting to help with everything at the horse shows.

Pete taught me to drive Magic myself. I was in heaven. Then Pete started teaching me to ride. I had NEVER ridden a horse before and there were no school horses in Pete’s barn. Pete taught me to ride and drive on show horses. “WHOA!” It became my favorite new word. Pete said I had a lot of natural talent. I was thrilled. It was 100 miles from my driveway to Pete’s. I drove it once or twice a week every week for about three years. I never missed a week. EVER.

Eventually Pete taught me to ride Magic. I felt like I was riding the wind. It was such a big thrill! Then I wanted a horse to ride in the shows and bought another 2-year-old, The Wild Blue. Pete was riding Blue in the shows – and I had another winner! YIKES!

Once when I was at the barn Pete said to me, “It’s OK to get attached to your first horse, but DO NOT get attached to your second horse.” You know what I said to him? ? “Too late.” But, Pete had become my friend and he was nice and understanding about the fact that I didn’t want to sell either of my horses. I was learning to ride Blue, too. I could not imagine giving up either of my beauti-

ful horses – no matter what price I was offered.

This horse business becomes addicting! I got one more colt, Phinalist (Billie). He was sort of never supposed to be my horse. He was *supposed* to be an investment. Billie showed one time at the Illinois State Fair in the 2-Year-Old In Hand class and won. That was his only show so now I say Billie was undefeated in his show career. Billie doesn’t have a lot of motion up front but he has the most beautiful, graceful floating trot!



Dr. Mary Jensen and Magic

A lasting friendship has grown from my time at Pete’s with Florence Merkin, his mother. We still talk every few weeks on the phone. Florence keeps me informed about the horse show business and news. Florence just got a new colt named Perilous. He is a very promising 3-year-old who will make his show ring debut this

summer in the Park Pleasure Classics. We still sit together and compare notes when we can both get to the Illinois State Fair Horseshow. I greatly value the continuing support and friendship Florence has extended to me over the years.

Unexpectedly in May 2008, tragedy struck. Pete who was diabetic, died very suddenly and unexpectedly from



Florence Merkin and her son, Bob Merkin

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## (Magical Fate continued from page 10)

a severe insulin reaction. I was stunned. We had left the Madison, WI Classic Horse Show on a Sunday morning and talked by phone on the way home about going to the Oshkosh, WI show in July. It had been one of our favorite horse show venues. My horses had always done very well there and it was always a really fun show. Pete died that Sunday evening after he got home and unloaded all the precious horses.

It was a terrible time. I didn't know what to do or where to go. I knew I had to move the horses somewhere. Pete's family suggested I leave Billie behind for them to sell. I couldn't do it. I couldn't stand the thought of not knowing where he would end up or who would be taking care of him. He was barely three at the time. I could not leave Billie behind.

Three trainers were very helpful at the time. Mike Macintosh (the breeder/early trainer for Blue) in Indiana, Annie Thibo in northern Illinois, and Ryan Rongers in southern Wisconsin. I debated about moving my horses to all three of their stables but ultimately decided they were all too far away from Macomb.

### *Building My Barn*

I decided I wanted to build a barn and keep my horses at home. I had 90 acres of land north of Macomb so I had plenty of space. It was kind of peculiar; except for my friend, Florence, I didn't get a single encouraging word from any of the horse show acquaintances I had made over the previous years. Anyone who said anything was negative and discouraging and told me flat out that either I was *wasting* those horses – or – I'd ...*never be able to manage those horses* by myself. I decided I had



Blue at Oshkosh

to try. I wanted the horses at home so I could take care of them myself. What I actually wanted to do was *live in the barn* with my horses and dogs!

I moved the horses to a boarding barn near Macomb, commenced going there every single day to clean stalls, exercise, and groom the horses. I then learned what a “7-day a week no matter what” job livestock are. I was determined to learn and determined to take the absolute best care of my horse boys.

Living at the boarding barn was quite an adjustment for the horses and for me. I ended up getting my own bedding, hay, and oats for my horses. I wasn't happy with the quality of what was being provided. I learned A LOT! I learned how to tell what *good* hay was. I learned the difference between the really good northern oats and the not so good local central Illinois oats. I bought a truckload (28 pallets with 45 bags per pallet) of bags of pine shavings from [Guarding Horse Bedding](#) in Rockford, Illinois. It was an investment, but the good quality bedding with literally no dust was really worth it.

One rather difficult lesson I learned was how to speak tactfully to the Quarter Horse people in the boarding barn who frequently tried to give me *Quarter Horse* advice. There seems to be a BIG difference between quarter horse methods and Saddlebred methods. I totally admit that

my horses are high strung and flighty; inborn traits for Saddlebreds. There were a lot of times when one of my horses was being a little uppity and I was calmly and quietly trying to figure out exactly what the problem was and what the horse was afraid of, so I could then figure out how to work around the problem to get the horse to do what I wanted him to do. I wish I had a dollar for each time one of those Quarter Horse people came up to me and said in a disparaging voice, “We just MAKE out horses do that”. I'd be rich...

One quote I thought about over and over during this time was from a Saddlebred trainer. I read it in one of the Saddlebred magazines years ago. She said “Just because you feed that horse carrots, don't think he won't try to buck you off.” I wish I could remember who said it. It is always on my mind. The quote has always made me conscious of *safety first* and just *ALWAYS THINK* before I do anything with my horses.

Construction is **STRESSFUL!** OH. MY. GOSH. It took about two years and I thought it was never going to end. It is still not quite over. On July 2, 2010 my horses finally moved home into their own barn. I'll never forget the day the boarding barn owner loaded up Magic, Blue, and Billie. I led the way home practically crying my eyes out I was so excited for them to move into my barn; their new and forever home. I called my dad to tell him Magic was on his way home. He was so excited.

My dad used to come to all the horse shows and LOVED Magic. He used to kiss Magic on the nose at the horseshows. My dad had Alzheimer's



Blue and Magic

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Sensation's Rising Sun with Mary J. Anderson

## The Beginning

**A**s I sit here at my computer writing my story I am also gazing out at my gang of American Saddlebred horses. They have lent me a lifetime of bittersweet joy and sometimes agonizing sorrow. This is the story of our journey together.

I believe I was born with the horse addiction gene. I was drawing horses before I could read or write. My sister and I received a pony STALLION when I was but 4 years old. He was a totally inappropriate gift for small children. However I was crazy for him. I often had a distinct yellowed tooth pattern somewhere on my tiny body. My grandmother was horrified. I was undeterred and now thoroughly hooked.

Eight years later, clamoring the whole time for a real horse, our Dad bought us each a real horse. A grade QH for me and a huge bay grade for my sister. As it turned out she was part American Saddlebred and Tennessee Walking Horse. She was gor-

geous and my Dad was mesmerized by her beauty and strength. So began the search.

We started out looking at TWH's but they didn't have "the look," so then he started looking for ASB's. They weren't hard to find in those days. They were literally everywhere. He and I found a breeder nearby then went to have a look. In a garage with horse stall, stood the most beautiful horse I had ever seen! Standing before us was a glorious Golden stallion, shimmering in the light; he definitely had "the look" and aptly named Sensation's Rising Sun. Oh my, did he ever have the look. I'll never forget it. He stood in front of us so excited to see us bouncy and bubbly, his white forelock softly bouncing off his forehead. My Dad asked, "Should we get him?" Nodding madly I replied, "Yes! Yes!"



Sensation's Rising Sun with Mary J. Anderson's father

So began the journey of the 53 year old father, his 13 year old daughter and the shared love of horses.

# MY JOURNEY WITH THE AMERICAN SADDLEBRED: PART I

*by Mary J. Anderson*

Dad showed Sunny at the then popular Palomino shows winning every model class he was ever in, much like his sire Stonewall Sensation who was also a Model Champ. Stonewall Sensation stood at stud at the most northern edge of Wisconsin in the little town of Ashland that borders the Great Lake Superior Gitche Gume. Sonny was his last son

Before long we had several American Saddlebred horses. Dad had purchased a few mares and off we into the breeding business. By the time I was in high school I had a show filly Supreme's Dancing Lady, a yearling Dad had purchased out of his favorite mare, Northland's Queen.



Northland's Queen with foal

Queen was a giant of a mare, all 17 hands of her! She was a Beautiful Golden color with a peculiar snorting quirk when nervous. I remember my dad clipping his fingernails while we were sitting on the front porch and soon we could hear Queen doing her alarming snort, trotting around with her tail up over her back. We determined that she mistook the clipping sound to be the electric fence shorting out which meant danger in her gentle eyes.

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Mary J. Anderson and  
Supreme's Dancing Lady ("Dancer")

After our own initial training process, this had allowed me to take "Dancer" to our local county fair as my 4H project and then some local open shows. Dad decided we should begin attending breed shows. We did not have the experience to train for that venue so employed Monty Wallen as our

trainer. At that time I also became employed by him and worked as a groom in his training facility. As my horse began her training so I began mine.

This was when the Pleasure divisions were in their infancy; my mare was to be a 3-gaited Pleasure horse. We traveled the Minnesota American Saddlebred Circuit and had some extraordinary adventures. We participated in every class that we were eligible, from Duluth to Eau Claire. In retro-

*"We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something."*

Sandra Day O'Connor

spect we all were really just a bunch of kids having a good time, with my Dad as the chaperone. This was Monty's first training barn and we were among his first customers.

Dancer and I did okay even though she was not a fit for me. She was also a giant of a mare and quite wide for my short little legs. However we often did place high in the ribbons but the Blue eluded us in those years. I graduated from high school and started college in the fall of 1977. The next year I left the farm.

### The Catalyst

Through the 80's I was busy being "my own person" horses were far from my mind. During that time my Dad dispersed the remaining horses and euthanized those that had issues. It was a sad time for me and we didn't discuss it at the time.

When my Mom died I was going to technical school in Minnesota. The horses were long gone by this time and I was leading a suburban life with hope of owning my own land someday. During this time after Mom's death I spent a huge amount of quality time with my Dad. We fished, we talked, and we vacationed together. During those last couple years we eventually did talk about horses even though they had become a taboo subject.

One night after a week-end of fishing and mass quantities of coffee Dad asked, "So do you think you will have horses at your new place?"

I replied. "Oh yes, but not Saddlebreds, they're just too hot. I think I will look into other breeds."

Dad says with reverence that is uncommon amongst Norsk types, "Oh but there is nothing like them. Such class and intelligence, I don't believe you would stand for anything less."

Not long after our conversation Dad died from the complications of Pancreatic cancer. I was completely devastated. My father, my mentor, my rock, my best friend was gone. I then moved to Northern Wisconsin to an area that was special to our family as a vacation spot. My search for the perfect horse had begun.

Well he was right! I tried every breed at my disposal. Paso Finos, Arabians, Morgans, other gaited breeds but not a one was the IT I was looking for, they didn't have the personality that was beloved by me.

Then one serendipitous day I was browsing the classifieds and came across a hauler. Since I was new to the area, I thought it advantageous to look into horse hauling for purchase. I called the number listed. As it happens the woman formerly showed Golden ASB's and against my Dad! She remembered Sonny well, because she was beaten every time he showed!



Mary J. Anderson and G.K. Houston

(continued on page 14)



(My Journey continued from page 13)

We got to talking and I decided to pay her a visit. I arrived at her farm and was pleasantly surprised by the accommodation of the trainer and owner. They put me up on a young Walk-Trot prospect that thoroughly intimidated me. However that was not the clincher, which happened when I was led into her broodmare band and I found myself surrounded by curious, friendly horses. That was what I was looking for, the Saddlebred IT, their unusual proclivity to human affection. I was hooked once again, hook, line and sinker.



Mary J. Anderson and G.K. Houston

I ran an ad in the local paper; WANTED: American Saddlebred. Well mannered. Prefer mare under 10 years old. After 2 weeks I never received any calls and had nearly forgotten about it, the phone rings. "I'm calling about your ad for the American Saddlebred, we have one for sale." As these things go, the horse, G.K. Houston, was a gelding and had zero manners, but he was beautiful and the price was right. So I bought him and so entered into a second journey with no understanding of the fever that would soon grab ahold changing my life forever.



Look for Part II of "My Journey with the American Saddlebred" in the upcoming issue of Above Level!

## BUILDING WITH LOVE: OLIVIA DOUTT PLATT'S CHAMPION HILL

by Brita Barlow-Johnson

According to Olivia Doult Piatt's mother, her first word was some form of "horsey." "I guess I was obsessed at birth," she says. "I think that I was just born with a love of horses. I did have other interests growing up but nothing was near the passion that I had for horses and showing." This passion is evident if you ever see Olivia at a show. No one else on the



show grounds puts in as many miles on foot as she does as she runs to and fro putting horses and riders in the ring. And yet she always looks perfectly happy and raring to go.

Originally from Venango, Olivia started into horses because her mother had a Morgan and her sister had a pony that they kept at her Uncle's farm. "My dad's cousin had mentioned that she was going to be getting riding lessons for her daughter. We were both the same age and we started together and it just so happened that it was at a Saddlebred stable in Edinboro, PA."

"I graduated college and began working in a law

firm and knew that the love I had for horses was where my passion was. I enjoyed taking project horses and turning them into something special. It didn't matter what kind of horse it was, I would fall in love with it regardless and want to make it the best horse it could be!"

Olivia was married in 2010 and her husband also comes from a horsey background. He worked at Jim and Jenny Taylor's Memory Lane Farm for several years and his family had Morgan horses in training with them. Olivia and Josh have recently purchased their first place together, a facility in Akron, NY which was once LedgeWood Morgan farm and will now bear the name of [Champion Hill](#).

Champion Hill currently has 12 training customers with 28 horses in training. The four lesson



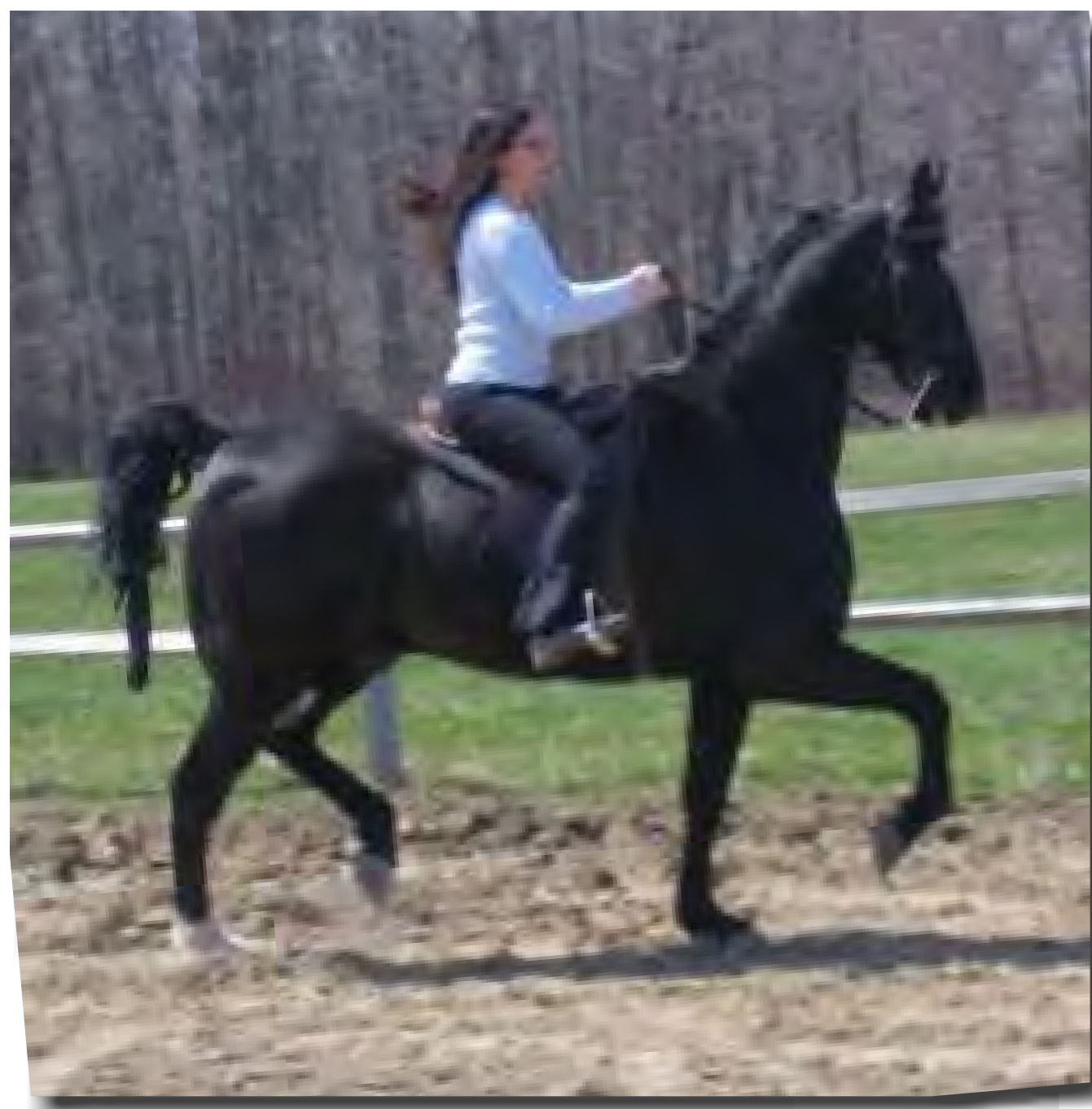
horses are host to about 30 lessons per week but that may soon be on the rise. Over the winter, Olivia posted an offer for reduced rate riding lessons on the website Living Social. This nationwide website hosts one day discount deals for local businesses with links for Facebook and Twitter. By the end of the 24 hour listing, 152 people had signed up for the One-Hour Horseback Grooming and Riding Experience, and now that Spring has come to Western NY, they are beginning to schedule their lessons.

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(Olivia continued from page 14)

Olivia says “I market a lot locally by word of mouth, flyers, specials in local papers and advertisement of open houses, in barn horse shows, etc. Facebook, Living Social, and my personal website are ways that I always try to keep the word out on what is going on at Champion Hill!”



“I am proud to say that I have a large demographic of people coming into the farm. Many of them are children or young adults that have begun their career at Champion Hill. Others are parents who want to ride once a week as an

activity and free time for themselves. Some of my customers are adults who haven’t ridden or shown in a while and are just getting back into it. I am so blessed because I have a great group of customers and clients that are all like family! A very supportive group!” About 3/4 of her customers own or lease their own horse.

“I try to keep the kids interested by having in barn parties and shows to keep the idea of fun and team work approach. It’s important that the kids are there to support each other. Each lesson I generally discuss with them a goal for each ride regardless of how small or large it is. If a child felt that in a lesson they were able to keep the horse on the rail all by themselves that is a huge accomplishment to them!”

“All of my lesson horses have their own personality. One is my own past show horse, Repeat



the System. It took him some time to get used to having new riders on him because he was so used to me for so many years. He now can pack around the littlest rider! All of our lesson horses were past show horses and seem to enjoy teaching the young kids.”

“My horse Roy has to be the biggest character of them all. He was given to me from my in-laws and my sister Jessica won a world championship back on him when he was a walk and trot horse. He is 25 years old now and still comes out each day like he’s a 3 year old. When he’s turned out he still flags his tail, snorts, and has big bug eyes. I know the day that he will stop acting like “Roy” will be his last!”

Champion Hill goes to between 10-12 shows a season taking an average of 8 horses but has taken as many as 20 to the local show at the Cattaraugus County Fair in Little Valley, NY. “Everyone loves the fair!” They show both the A and B circuits, enjoying the horse shows at the smallest and highest level of competition because “we have people in our program that are at every level and it needs to be fun regardless!”

“Our biggest successes have been that every year we have taken a rider to the Morgan Grand National and World Championship they have come home with a National or Reserve National Title. These include Theresa Van Dusen with



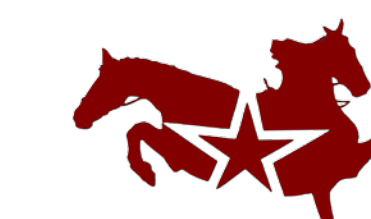
MLF Blaze of Glory, Jenna Preston with her horses Pomp & Circumstance and Reuben Ide Celebrates and I personally showed Donna Fox’s Heritage Direct Current.”

“I love my job! What is most rewarding to me is seeing a person or horse achieve a goal. I was that kid who was working two jobs to help pay to support my horses and go to horse shows because I wanted it so bad. I think we all get into the sport at first because there is a general love or fascination with horses; I try to embrace that with each person. The horses and students are my best teachers. It’s exciting to learn new ways to teach both horse and humans. There is nothing that thrills me more than putting a horse and rider combination together, especially one that I broke the horse myself and put the student with it. Very rewarding!”



Each year we are blessed to have new horse and rider combinations. Krista Bull purchased a new Shatner mount called Mr. Joe Cool. Paige Lunghino has a new mare called Fancy Schmancy. Nikki Whitehead purchased a game gelding called Northbound. Jordan Preston will be debuting this year with her 5 year old gelding Bay Be Blue for the walk and trot division.

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





(Magical Fate continued from page 11)

and didn't always remember Blue very well. Billie either. He did understand we were moving home to the new barn and wanted me to call him back after the horses got settled in.

## Finally Home – The Second Half of the Story

### *Living in the Barn*

After almost 24 months of construction misery and boarding barn life, Magic, Blue, Billie, and I along with all of the dogs and assorted cats finally moved into our new home. I had three stalls built downstairs, a dog room, a riding arena, a garage and hay storage building. I now live upstairs in this little piece of paradise. All of the buildings are connected, so we never have to go outside in bad weather. It is hard to describe how lucky I feel every single day. We are right on the lake, Spring Lake, just north of Macomb. We hear the geese and ducks out on the lake. There are Blue Herons along the shoreline. This spring a big flock of huge white Pelicans migrated through. The ground is rolling and wooded. We have Barred Owls who make the most amazing owls hoots and caws as they communicate back and forth up in the trees.

I had purchased 90 acres of land 21 years ago when it had been caught up in a bankruptcy sale.



At the time I had just started teaching at Western Illinois University in the Special Education Department. Having grown up in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, I was a little hesitant about moving “that far south” after completing my PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1990. As my dad said when he came down to look around the area with me, “This land is not your typical central Illinois soybean and corn flat, flat, flat farm ground.” This was rolling wooded timber with an amazing ten running acres of lake frontage included. Again, *FATE* had played a role in providing the great teaching job and the unbelievable piece of land. Who would have ever thought I'd end up out there with three flighty, high-strung show horses. And cats. And so *many* dogs.

### *Fourth of July Jitters*

It was hotter than heck on July 2, 2010. It felt like a jungle outside. The first night in our new home we were all a little tired and worn out. The horses were kind of wild. The dogs were wildly excited. I was thrilled beyond belief to be at home with my little family of animals...until it started getting dark.

Remember, it was July 2nd. Two days before the Fourth of July. The neighbors, across the little lake inlet were excited, too – about the Fourth of July. They began shooting off fireworks at dusk and didn't quit for the next two hours. FOR THE NEXT FOUR NIGHTS!!!!

You know how sound carries across water? It seemed like



the fireworks were going off right outside the barn door – which I had to close despite the heat. Then I had to close and black out the window in Magic's stall because he was on the lakeside and kept seeing the flashing lights and hearing the thunder booms of the fireworks exploding. Magic was frantic; whirling and rearing up in his stall. Magic's extreme level of agitation got all the other horses worked up. Now I had three whirling, snorting horses in 14X14 foot stalls that seemed WAY too small for these huge horses. I was afraid they were going to colic. I was terrified they weren't going to survive the first week in their new home. All I kept thinking was, “What have I done? I should have just taken them to another trainer. I should have known I couldn't do this on my own.”

Billie, the baby, who was only two at the time we moved from the trainer's barn, had grown into a huge 17 hands plus horse. He has a sweet personality. Billie will gaze into my eyes when I talk to him and loves to be kissed on the nose. At one particularly loud series of bangs (BANG... BANG...BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG... BANG,BANG, BANG – you get the idea), he crashed into his stall door, broke the latch and knocked it wide open, and charged out of his stall into the aisle. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. YIKES!

(continued on page 17)



## (Magical Fate continued from page 16)

I had been sleeping on the aisle floor during these seemingly unending nights of fireworks. The dogs were all in their crates across the aisle from the horse stalls. They erupted into frenzied barking when Billie broke through his stall door. I jumped up from the pile of winter horse blankets I'd been sleeping on in the aisle. Billie was frozen, staring off into space, snorting every time he heard a noise. Luckily, the herd instinct kicked in. Billie walked over in front of Blue's stall and started sniffing noses.



Billy

I remembered at one show in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Magic walked right out of his stall after figuring out how to reach around and flip the gate latch. Mayo Montezuma, a very nice trainer who was on the same aisle, calmly walked

over to Magic with a lead line, slung it around his neck, and gently led Magic back to his stall. Mayo then turned to me and said with a smile, "They really don't want to go anywhere." Thank you to Mayo, that incident flashed through my mind and I walked up to Billie – but with his halter in hand. He was happy to put on the halter and go back to his stall which I closed up with a bungee cord. I was proud of myself for figuring that out and we got through another night

### *Getting Used to Our New Home*

The fence was up around the perimeter of the 12 or so acres of pasture area, but the gates were not.

The arena had great big sliding doors on both ends but no gates. This is one of the many mysteries of construction timelines that I'll never understand. The fence had been up for nine months. The arena had been up for almost 11 months. With no gates anywhere.

At first I wasn't too worried about the lack of gates because the horses had never really been outside. Pretty much the only time they went outside was to walk from the barn to the trailer to go to a show. I had asked the trainer if he could let my horses outside to play around late in the fall after the shows were over. His response was "NO." His reason was that they'd probably pull a shoe playing around out there. I suggested the shoes be taken off. His response was "NO" because the hooves might get *scuffed* up. So goes the life of a show horse. Not much fun time at all.

### *Daily Schedule*

Living with and being the sole caretaker for three horses, eight big dogs, and assorted cats required some good organization, structure, and time management. I figured out a schedule that worked along with my school schedule. I get up seven days a week around 4:00 AM. Luckily, I am a total morning person. After I eat breakfast, I run downstairs and feed the horses, dogs, and cats. While the dogs all eat in their crates, I clean the three stalls.

I had a good idea for the stall floors that has saved a lot of time. The floor is concrete. I bought 55 4X6 foot rubber mats. The stall and aisle floors are covered with the mats. I bought a huge roll of commercial

grade rubber roofing material. I cut that about 15X15 feet for the 14X14 foot stalls. After laying each piece out in the stalls over the rubber mats, I screwed in continuous long metal strips tight along the horizontal line of the floor. Then I attached another line of the metal strips about six inches up the wall. The two continuous lines of horizontal metal strips hold the roofing material very securely. In effect, the rubber mats are sealed. No bedding, urine, or manure can get through the cracks or under the mats. I thought it was a brilliant idea!

After I get the stalls cleaned, I take the dogs for a walk and then get them settled back in their crates or the dog room. I make my lunch and get going to school by about 6:45 AM. I have my first class at 7:30 AM. (I am definitely an early bird.) Around noon I eat my lunch while I drive back home. During my lunch break, I take the horses out to the arena where they get to play around. I take the dogs out for another walk and get back to school for the afternoon.

When I get home around 6:00 PM or so, I feed the dogs in their crates. While they are eating, I bring the horses in and feed them. Then, the dogs and I go out and clean up any horse manure in the arena before we go for another walk. During the week the horses play out in the arena every afternoon while I'm at school. They seem to enjoy their time out there all together.

I ride the horses on the weekends and more during the weekdays if there is a break from school. I love riding the horses! I feel like my riding has improved a lot with the increased amount



(continued on page 18)



(Magical Fate continued from page 17)

of time I get to ride them now compared to when they were at the training barn. I used to get to ride maybe 8-10 minutes once a week because they were *show horses* and they [supposedly] couldn't tolerate any more than that. It was a 2-hour drive from my house to the training barn. I went once or twice a week. It is fun to ride without having a trainer hollering about my feet, knees, elbows, back, hands, etc., every second I'm on the horse. I do try to keep all the important points in mind all the time. I pretend I am in a show most of the time I ride around the arena. There is one big difference compared to before; this is so much FUN! I hope to be able to attend one of the adult riding camps in this coming winter to polish my riding skills.

### *Stocks*

Another thing I did which turned out to be a lifesaver was having stocks built. The vet who takes care of my horses has them at his clinic. The man who made his, made mine. They are very sturdy and completely indestructible. They were placed in the barn and then the concrete floor was poured. They are totally safe and permanent. I do have to blindfold the horses to walk them into the stocks for baths or when the vet needs to give a shot or work on their teeth. It is funny how all three horses willingly submit to being blindfolded, but absolutely do not want to walk into the stocks. The vet thinks it might have something to do with the ring mats on the floor in that area. The stocks are another very worthwhile safety investment.

### *Ursa Wagons*

I invested in two [Ursa wagons](#). I pull one right into the stalls for cleaning. The cart can easily be dumped into the tractor bucket to be dumped into the spreader. I use the other cart for hay. One bale fits perfectly into the cart. I use about one bale of hay each day. After placing one bale in the cart, I take out the flakes at feeding time to throw in the

stalls. That way there is not hay all over the floor and little waste.

### *The Early Weeks*

The first few weeks at home, I tried riding and walking the horses outside the barn. There was still construction debris outside around the barn and arena perimeter. That frightened the horses. With no gates on the fence yet, I was hesitant to try to go far. At the first sign of agitation, I'd take whatever horse I had and immediately go back inside. I actually spent quite a bit of time walking the horses up and down the mats in the aisle of the barn in front of their stalls. They seemed much happier doing that than going outside. I tell you, that was that tedious exercise! Fifty feet up and fifty feet back, over and over, times three horses. I was determined to exercise them. So up and down we went, listening to the oldies station on the radio. The dogs watched from their crates. They were intrigued by the horses. Some of the dogs had been to horse shows. All the dogs treated the horses with respect. Billie and Blue are particularly friendly with the dogs. Since we are all living under the same roof, that was one small, easy adjustment for the animals I am very grateful for.

### *Wild Horses*

I really wanted to put the horses out into the arena to play – but weeks after moving in, there were still no gates. ANYWHERE! I tried closing the big doors and putting the horses out in the arena. During July and August, the arena with the doors closed felt like an overheated oven.

A well-meaning acquaintance who has docile, trail riding Quarter Horses, set up a *temporary fence* (in Quarter Horse terms) across my arena doors. This fence was made of step-in posts with a small diameter rope strung between. I was assured that this fence was safe. Their Quarter Horses

grazed in a temporary corral of this type during all their trail rides. Foolishly, I agreed to try it.

All three horses were out in the arena with the big doors open and the *temporary* fence up. They did enjoy playing around together. In their former show horse lives, they had never had opportunities to indulge in much real horse behavior. Every moment out of their stalls back then was focused on work and training. Their feet never even got a rest from the big heavy wedges and pads of show shoes.

As I was standing and watching them with a feeling of contentment, my puppy Quinn went bouncing out into the arena with an exuberant bark sounding like, "Hey Guys! Can I play"? As I was walking out to retrieve Quinn, Billie bolted – right through the "safe" fence. Magic and Blue followed.

I suddenly felt like my feet were made of concrete and brain was made of mush. I didn't know



Blue

(continued on page 19)



**(Magical Fate continued from page 18)**

which way to go first – whether to go after the horses or the puppy. I whistled to Quinn, and luckily he made a beeline straight to me. I shoved him into a crate and ran outside just in time to see all three horses leap down what I called the “cliff” – a hillside of dirt that just dropped off because the dirt work had not yet been completed all around the outside of the barn. I was afraid they were all going to end up with broken necks and broken legs.

Sometimes when I ride my horses I feel like “whoa” is their favorite word. Blue seems to know a lot of language. Pete Archer said Blue is the smartest horse he has ever had in 30 some years of horse training.

I remembered another bit of advice a trainer gave to me, “Look them in the eye and say “Whoa” like you really mean it. They will follow your directions”.

I roared, “WHOA “ at the top of my lungs. Like a miracle, Magic stopped in his tracks. I walked up to him saying “whoa, whoa, whoa”, with practically every step. He just stood there, staring at me as I walked towards, him, trembling with fear – actually, both of us were trembling with fear. My hands were shaking like crazy but I attached the lead line, practically ran Magic into the barn, shoved him into his stall, slammed the door shut, and ran back outside to find my other two runaway horses.

In the back of my mind I kept hearing all those people who said, “... you can’t take those horses home, those horses aren’t pets, Billie is too young, he doesn’t have enough training, you don’t know what you are doing...” YIKES! I had to get Blue and Billie back into their stalls before I proved all those naysayers to be correct.

Blue and Billie acted like wild bunnies. Did you ever try to catch them when you were young? They will freeze, watching you out of the corner of their eye, and just as your are within one inch of touching them, they bunny hop off to a safe distance. That is exactly what Billie and Blue did – all around the pasture, then, “OH NO!!!” They trotted right out the gateless gap in the fence. Up the driveway (all 1500 feet of it). And out to the subdivision. I was pathetically running after them in my flip flops with an apple in one hand a lead line in the other, yelling “WHOA” at the top of my lungs every couple of seconds. As Billie and Blue galloped across an open field between some of the houses, and I marveled at how gorgeously beautiful they looked out in the sunshine and open grassy field.

I was praying one of the neighbors would come out and help me. My cell phone was back at the barn plugged into the charger. A car did go by with horn tooting and occupants waving like the horses and I were part of a parade. A man riding his lawn mower waved and just kept right on mowing.

Why was I the only one who seemed to think that two stunningly beautiful American Saddle-



Blue

bred Horses should not be running wild through a residential neighborhood!?!)

When we were in an area where the backyards of a couple houses met, a little mix breed Beagle/Basset Hound named Princess came racing around the corner of her house on her stubby little legs barking her little lungs out. Two teenage girls bounded after Princess, trying to ask me if those were my horses and could they come over and ride. I just yelled, “Catch Princess -- Don’t let her chase them! “

I was afraid the horses would race away from the barking dog and I’d lose sight of them. So far, I had been able to keep them in sight, even though I was pursuing them in my flip flops, pitifully holding out the apple I still had clutched in one hand, trying to lure them in. I know, I know...DON’T WEAR FLIP FLOPS IN THE BARN! Now I know.

After the girls caught Princess, the horses stopped on the driveway of a house with its’ garage door open. Billie and Blue were standing in front of the open door inquisitively looking into the garage. I thought, “Here is my chance. Please, please, please keep looking into the garage long enough for me to grab you! PUH-LEASE!” I was really out of breath from all that running in my flip flops. It was hotter than heck outside that day.

Just as I was tiptoeing up to the horses, someone inside the house pushed the electric garage door button that started closing the door. My brain screamed, “OH NO!” thinking they were going to bolt again in fear of the automatic door. But they just continued to stand and stare as if in a trance. I walked up to Blue, attached the lead line and bit off a chunk of the apple and gave it to him. As Blue calmly chewed, I turned to Billie, holding out the newly bitten apple. Billie ambled over enticed

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# KILLING WITH KINDNESS PART II

## INSULIN RESISTANCE AND OTHER METABOLIC ISSUES

by Brita Barlow-Johnson

So now that you are aware of Equine Metabolic Syndrome, how do you find out if your horse has it and what do you do to manage it or prevent it? After having had first hand experience struggling to keep an EMS horse sound and healthy, I will probably always run baseline blood tests on my horses and keep their diets as low in Non Soluble Carbohydrates and Sugars as possible. Certainly if the horse shows any tendencies towards being overweight or footsore, seeking a veterinarian's guidance is wise. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Once you have a horse diagnosed with EMS, it is best to retest on a regular schedule to monitor the success of your control measures.

Tests performed and interpretation of results is best left to a qualified vet but here are the basics. Blood tests can be performed for Insulin Resistance, Thyroid Function and Cushing's disease. It is often best to test for more than one component of the syndrome at the same time to get the big picture as to what factors you need to control. On one end of the scale, Combined Glucose Insulin Tolerance (CGIT) testing requires multiple blood draws throughout the entire day and is done in a clinic setting which can stress the horse and your pocketbook. More often, a single blood sample will



be drawn in the morning before the horse has had any concentrated feed. Some tests require fasting; some require feeding grain to see what the levels are when the horse's system has been challenged. There seems to be a wide spectrum of what people consider to be normal results. Your laboratory results should include a key to help you decipher the results with the range the laboratory has determined indicates a "normal" result.

Even if your horse's test results do not indicate that he is currently Insulin Resistant, Hypothyroid, or Cushingoid, there is much to be said for eating healthy and keeping the horse in a condition and lifestyle to reduce the chances of one of these complications arising. One of the most important control factors is weight. It is important to know what the ideal weight/body condition of your horse is. First, determine where on [the Henneke Body Condition Scoring System](#) your horse falls. [Scoring Body Condition by Anna McKelvy and Kirsty Husby](#). Yes, it's nice to have a horse with a healthy bloom, and that is often rewarded in the show ring but are you going too far? Work with your veterinarian to determine if your horse is overweight, and if so, what the ideal weight? If at all possible, the horse should be weighed on a

scale, but weight tapes provide a reasonable estimation and are good for tracking progress when a scale is unavailable. [Estimating Body Weight](#) If you are interested in the actual weight of your horse, there is no need to head off to a large animal clinic. Ask around town and find if there is a trucking service or agricultural service which has a truck scale. Take your horse trailer down empty for a tare weight, then come back later with your horse.

A horse should consume between 1.5% to 2% of its ideal weight in forage (hay or other high fiber roughage) depending on individual metabolism. This means, if your horse weighs 1250 and the vet recommends that he weigh 1000, you should be feeding him around 15# and no more than 20# of hay a day. What does 20# of hay look like? The range is staggering. The only way to tell is to actually weigh it. You might be surprised how much you are over feeding your horse.

The easiest way to weigh hay is on a hanging scale. And the easiest way to get hay on a hanging scale is to put it in a hay net. This will have an added benefit, as placing hay in a hay net with small



A hay net with small holes will slow a fast eater

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Final Report

EUTHYROIDISM: Concentration of T4 in serum or plasma is within the reference value above for healthy animals.

HYPOTHYROIDISM: Serum or plasma concentration of T4 is low or undetectable. Clinically hypothyroid dogs with unexpectedly high T4 concentrations may have autoantibodies against thyroid hormones. The thyroglobulin autoantibody test is suggested. Horses on medications such as bute and Trimethoprim sulfa, with chronic illness such as Cushing's Disease, or in racing shape may have falsely decreased total T4. Treatment is best monitored with a 4 to 6 hour post treatment T4 level, except for dogs with positive autoantibody tests (those should be monitored using free T4).

HYPERTHYROIDISM: Concentration of T4 is high normal or elevated.

COMMENTS: Reproductive state, age, chronic illness, and certain drugs can affect basal and TSH- or TRH-stimulated concentrations of T3 and T4.

Thyroid Panel: FT4 by dial, T4 T328-APR-09

ANIMAL ITEM	ANIMAL ID	SPECIES	SAMPLE DATE
1		Equine	04/23/2009
Total T4	0.68 ug/dL		Reference Range 1.5 - 4.5
Total T3	0.92 ng/mL		.3 - .8
Free T4	0.74 ng/dL		1.2 - 1.8

INTERPRETATION OF THE THYROID PANEL

Measurement of free-T4 may be useful in differentiating dogs with true hypothyroidism from dogs with reduced thyroid function due to other chronic illness (e.g., hyperadrenocorticism, liver disease, diabetes), drug administration (e.g., glucocorticoids), and malnutrition. The free-T4 test may be a useful additional test in cats that are clinically hyperthyroid, but have normal total T3 and/or total T4 concentrations.

Horses on medications such as bute or Trimethoprim sulfa, with chronic illness such as Cushing's disease, or in racing shape may have falsely decreased total T4. Horses on thyroid supplementation may have decreased free-T4 concentrations for a prolonged period following initiation of treatment. Treatment T4 levels are ideally taken at 4 to 6 hours post-medication.

Because we feel that the canine TSH test alone may be difficult to interpret, we recommend measuring it only in combination with other thyroid function tests. Taking into consideration the animal's history and results of the physical examination and other laboratory tests, possible interpretations are as follows.

Results of Thyroid Test

holes will slow down a fast eater, making the hay last longer and preventing waste. There are many product available to slow down eating such as [The Nibble Net](#). Slowing down hay consumption not only keeps the horse occupied longer, but slows the release of glucose into the system and lasts over a longer period which avoids spikes in blood sugar levels. Always be sure that any hay net or rack that you use is safe and your horse cannot get tangled in it.

Addition to the amount of hay you are feeding, the sugar and carbohydrate level of hay varies greatly. Do not guess, test. Hay should be no more than 10%-12% Non Soluble Carbs (NSC) for an IR horse. This is not always the hay the horses

that he was humanely euthanized. When we tested it, the total sugars and carbs were almost 28%. That was a hard lesson to learn. Sometimes what makes the horse happiest isn't what is best for him.

When testing hay, choose a reliable commercial lab, or check to see if your local Cooperative Extension office offers the service. Some of them will rent or loan a hay probe for gathering the samples. It is important to get a reliable sample indicative of what the average levels are for that entire batch of hay. Levels can vary by field and by day depending on how the hay was put up, and a very tiny sample has to be an accurate picture of many hundreds or thousands of pounds of variable material. Simply

would prefer to eat. We had a horse who was very discriminating about what hay he wanted. Hairy is no longer with us. He foundered so badly on free choice high carb hay alone

Results of Thyroid Test

opening up a few bales and snipping off some hay will not suffice. In this document, Dan Putnam of UC Davis lays out the most appropriate methods for gathering an accurate sample [Forage Testing Article](#). With ease of testing available from labs such as [Equi-Analytical](#) there is no reason anyone should be ignorant of the nutritional values of a batch of hay.

If your hay results come back as too high in sugar and carbs, do not despair. There is no need to throw out a barn full of new hay. Soaking hay in water will leach out the dangerous sugars leaving you with hay that is at a safer level. This is a more involved process than simply wetting or

Soaking hay in water lowers sugar levels

Final Report

ENDOCRINOLOGY RESULTS

Insulin baseline28-APR-09

ANIMAL ITEM	ANIMAL ID	SPECIES	SAMPLE DATE
1		Equine	04/23/2009
Insulin	41.08 uIU/mL		Reference Range 10 - 40
2		Equine	04/23/2009
Insulin	104.53 uIU/mL		Reference Range 10 - 40
3		Equine	04/23/2009
Insulin	118.86 uIU/mL		Reference Range 10 - 40

INTERPRETATION OF THE INSULIN TEST

Quantification of insulin in a single serum sample to diagnose diabetes mellitus is of little value; glucose tolerance testing in which glucose and/or insulin are measured is recommended. Quantification of insulin and glucose in a single sample is very useful for diagnosing a pancreatic beta-cell tumor in dogs and ferrets. A high serum insulin concentration is a moderately sensitive indication of a pituitary adenoma or metabolic syndrome in the horse. Pregnancy, grain meals, and certain drugs can also affect insulin levels, so interpret high levels with caution.

Insulin is very unstable in hemolyzed whole blood of dogs, even if the sample is refrigerated. If the sample is hemolyzed, discard and collect another for testing.

Above Level

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steaming hay for horses with respiratory problems, but can be done with a little set up and planning. Soaking for half an hour in hot water, or an hour in cold water will reduce sugars by up to 30%. The downside, besides inconvenience, is that this will also remove important nutrients which must be replaced by supplements, but if appropriate hay cannot be found, and the horse is compromised, there may be no other options. The ideal situation is having a range of hay choices and being able to test the batch before you purchase it. Bermuda Hay and Timothy Hay both have consistently lower sugar levels. Alfalfa and Alfalfa cubes are also viable options of forage for horses with EMS.

What else should you be feeding besides hay? Well that depends on your horse's activity level and metabolism. Your horse may not even need a concentrated feed. A good supplement or ration balancer might be enough to meet his nutritional needs. Whatever you choose, it is important that you make the educated choice. Don't just take the recommendations of the feed store or blindly follow colorful advertising. Do some research. Feed labels do not even carry sugar and carb levels, but some companies will provide this information if you call them directly. When in doubt, don't guess, test. Here is further reading regarding labeling of Non-Soluble Carbs in feeds. [Carb Labels](#)

Another excellent source of forage is beet pulp. Farmers have been feeding beet pulp to livestock for many years. The pulp is a by product left over after the sugars are removed from sugar beets to



Beet Pulp

be an excellent source of calories. In the event that suitable hay cannot be found, up to 1/3 of the required dry weight of forage can be replaced with beet pulp.

Beet pulp also does a good job of sweeping sand particles out of the gut, sometimes even better than psyllium products which is an added benefit to prevent sand colic in horses that have to be on a dry lot to control their EMS. Beet pulp is dried for



Grazing Muzzle

storage, and the irregular shape of the shreds make it a choking hazard, so the shreds should always be soaked in water for a few minutes before feeding which will also improve it's palatability.

Of course, the most natural environment for a horse is to be turned out on

be refined for human consumption. What is left is a dried shred that contains quite a bit of caloric energy without the levels of sugar in a highly digestible fiber. Beet pulp has earned a reputation as a weight building supplement, so if a horse is eating less nutritional hay, adding beet pulp to the diet can

% Moisture	77.9			
% Dry Matter	22.1			
	As Sampled		Dry Matter	
Digestible Energy (DE), Mcal/lb	.21		.94	
	%	g/lb.	%	g/lb.
Crude Protein	3.4	15.3	15.3	69.4
Estimated Lysine	.13	.6	.60	2.7
Lignin	1.2	5.5	5.5	25.1
Acid Detergent Fiber (ADF)	7.1	32.3	32.3	146.4
Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF)	12.9	58.7	58.6	265.8
WSC (Water Sol. Carbs.)	1.4	6.3	6.3	28.8
ESC (Simple Sugars)	1.4	6.4	6.4	28.8
Starch	1.2	5.4	5.4	24.5
Non Fiber Carb. (NFC)	2.8	12.9	12.9	58.6
Crude Fat	.8	3.5	3.5	16.0
Ash	2.1	9.7	9.7	43.8
	%	g/lb.	%	g/lb.
Calcium	.08	.35	.35	1.58
Phosphorus	.09	.40	.40	1.82
Magnesium	.07	.30	.30	1.35
Potassium	.52	2.35	2.34	10.64
Sodium	.003	.016	.016	.071
	ppm	mg/lb.	ppm	mg/lb.
Iron	63	29	287	130
Zinc	9	4	39	18
Copper	2	1	11	5
Manganese	64	29	290	131
Molybdenum	.2	.1	1.0	.4
	As Fed		100% Dry	
RFV			101	

Results of Hay Test

grass as much as possible, but that can complicate weight and nutrition control. How do you regulate the grass intake of a horse on constant turn out? The answer is grazing muzzles and dry lots. Dry lots allow for a horse to move around all day long but remove any available forage. [Grazing muzzles](#) still allow a horse to graze all day, but cut down the volume and speed the horse can consume it. Grazing muzzles have small openings that grass can poke through. Most horses learn quickly how to optimize their grass intake even through the tiny hole. A percentage of the equine population also becomes quite adept at removing, destroying or permanently losing the offending equipment, so steps must be taken to ensure that the muzzle stays in place and the horse is not accidentally left out on lush grass.

In addition to the larger food groups of hay, grain and grass, the minerals and fats in the horse's diet can also help control the EMS. Vitamin E,





Exercise is a key component in managing a horse with Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)

Magnesium, adequate Protein and Fat are very important as they aid in the processing of glucose. Magnesium and Vitamin E need to be added with supplements. Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids can be gotten through more natural means such as black oil sunflower seeds and flax. These can even be added as a tasty dressing to what little low carb feed the horse gets, consoling him through his dieting. Apples, carrots and sugary snacks are to be avoided, but that doesn't mean that all snacks are off limits. Celery, roasted peanuts in the shell, strawberries and sugar-free peppermints are good choices. There are even some sugar free horse snacks on the market. My own horse was ecstatic to find that Uncle Jimmy now makes his Hangin' Balls in a [sugar free version](#).

There are also some drug options. Thyrol-L can be given to increase thyroid function and aid in weight loss. If the EMS progresses to the point of Cushings, Pergolide or Cyproheptadine can be used to manage it, although many times diet and exercise are enough to manage the condition and this pricey route can be avoided.

Another key component in managing a horse with EMS is exercise. This not only helps regulate weight, but muscle uses glucose more efficiently than fat cells do. Exercise helps with circulation

and overall health. This can be tricky with a severely laminitic horse. Even hand walking helps. The important thing is to take steps to avoid severe lameness.

If you are concerned about EMS, and your horse seems to be going into a laminitic episode, indicated by foot soreness, a digital pulse, heat in the hooves and a stance where the horse stands with his weight shifted back towards the hind legs, an Emergency Diet as outlined by Eleanor Kellon should be started right away to eliminate excess sugars and hopefully stabilize the horse until a vet can test and treat the condition. The Emergency Diet includes soaking hay and removing all concentrated feeds and treats. Sometimes Beet Pulp can completely replace a portion of the hay, especially in the winter when it may not be easy to soak the hay. Keep your horse on the emergency diet until he is feeling better, and you have had your feed and hay analyzed. But keep in mind, no matter what the numbers say, your horse will tell you when you have reached a satisfactory diet. When your horse is happy and active and has that gleam back in his eye, you will know your careful study has reached a satisfactory outcome.

Equine Metabolic Syndrome can lurk under the surface virtually unnoticed. Take the time to examine your feeding plan and make educated choices, with blood testing and forage testing if action is indicated. You will be rewarded with a healthier happier horse, and reduce the likelihood of complications down the road.

*Further Reading:*

<http://www.safergrass.org/>

<http://foragetesting.org/index.php>



## TOUCH STONES IN TIME

by Barbara Molland

**E**arly each year the American Saddlebred Horse Association celebrates the start of every Saddlebred breeder's year with the publication of this reference and breeder's guide. It is a fitting time to think about our roles as stewards of the breed. What does it mean to be a steward? From the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* of the English language, we are given this definition of stewardship: "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; *especially*: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."

In virtually every way, anyone who chooses to breed a horse, or to breed any animal, is taking on the responsibility of stewardship of that animal. Those of us who have been involved with horses and the American Saddlebred breed for several years concern ourselves with not just the breeding of one horse, but the welfare and future of many horses, sometimes even those that don't belong to us. This, in turn, forms the vision and future of the breed, a road map, so to speak, of where we have been and where we are going.



Paul Revere in Lexington in 1775 on what is widely speculated to be a Narragansett Pacer, which was used to create the Kentucky Saddle Horse.

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(Magical Fate continued from page 19)

by the apple's aroma. I bit off another piece and fed it to Billie as soon as he was within reach and grabbed his halter. THANK HEAVENS! HALLELUJAH!

That was when I noticed I only had one lead line. I was now about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from home and I only had one lead line for my two wild horses...Being a special education teacher, I am used to having to think on my feet and be resourceful and flexible. I took the long leather end of the lead line that was snapped to Blue's halter and threaded it through the ring on Billie's halter. Soooo, I now had both horses under control. I thought.

For the majority of my special education teacher life I taught at a residential treatment center with adolescent boys who had learning disabilities and serious behavioral disorders. During that time, I learned to totally refrain from using any type of swear words or inappropriate language in my own daily conversation in order to be the best role model possible for the boys I taught. I got to the point where I didn't even think swear words when I got upset about something.

I got over that in a hurry as I tried to lead Billie and Blue home. I try to be very calm and very consistent with the horses. I am always conscious of safety. But, as I walked down the middle of the paved road between the two huge horses on one single lead line, looming over me, an abundant supply of swear words came flying back into my head and out my mouth, I mumbled a continuous litany of, "you @#%\*&\* &%\$#@ horses... I could have sold you and paid for our new house in cash... You @#%\$% \*&^%\$#@ horses... I don't even know what I'm doing here, thinking I know enough about how to take care of you..."

Billie and Blue were drenched; dripping with sweat and probably exhausted from their adven-

ture. They walked along with me in a docile manner until we got to the top of my new driveway. That was still not entirely finished either. It was a very steep down hill, then up hill, then a sharp left turn that led to the new barn. The two horses wanted to run down the hill. NO WAY THAT WAS GOING TO WORK! I was not about to let go of them and hope I could herd them back to the barn. Seven times I started down the hill a couple steps and then seven times I got them turned around and back up to the top of the hill when they acted like they wanted to run. It seemed like hours went by as I tried to figure out how to get them down the hill and prayed that a car would come by so I'd get some help.

A car did eventually come, but stopped and backed up when they saw us. As I frantically tried to wave them over without letting go of either horse, the driver of the car waved back, but turned around and drove away. At that point I tried another tactic, figuring I wasn't going to get any help.

I led the horses to the top of the hill, then turned my back to the hill, and faced the horses with each hand clutching a portion of the lead line, and pressed hard on each horse's chest. I took one step backward down the hill and said, "WALK" in the most commanding voice I could muster at that point. We made our way down the hill, up the hill, and out to the barn with my voice saying, "Walk... WALK...WALK..." and my brain praying, "Please God, let me get these horses safely back to their stalls. Please do not let all those people who said I could never do this on my own be right. Please do not let any thing happen to my precious horses... PLEASE!" And, finally, finally, FINALLY, Thank you God, we made it back to the stalls! HOORAY!

I didn't take those @#%\*&\* &%\$#@ horses out of their stalls for two days after that. ?

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## MEET THE AUTHOR...

KATHLEEN HINEY KIRSAN

I am a sport horse breeder who has become a Tesio methods expert in sport horse breeding application. I have had a continuous website about these proven methods on the air since 2003 (the most recent being: [www.sport-horse-breeder.com](http://www.sport-horse-breeder.com)). And I have published several articles in various Equine magazines. Even being just a backyard breeder I already have had 3 national champions of my own using these practices. One by-product of my years of study and building up a huge database was the discovery of the true origins of our wonderful sport horse breeds in America – the Saddlebred being one of them. Finding that the most successful of our domestic horse strains all originate in our Colonial racehorse, some of these strains the Saddlebred breeders will be aware of – such as Blackburns Whip, Cockspur and Tom Hal – a Maryland bred – not Canadian as is so often published and Copperbottom – a Vermont bred who raced in Canada – not a Canadian bred: all examples of our pacing Running Horse breed that made a large footprint on our Saddlebred (plus Tennessee Walker, Standardbred and others). You may read more about these topics on my website and in a book that is coming out later this year; "The North American Sport Horse Breeder". I am truly excited about the genetic potential that is resident in our domestic sport and light horse breeds and intend to continue to explore and write about them in the future.

Kathleen Hiney Kirsan

See Kathleen's article "[Pedigree: Your Tool for Breeding Success](#)" in this issue of *Above Level*.





(Magical Fate continued from page 24)

### *We Settled in and I Learned a Lot!*

During the intervening ten months I have learned a lot. I've learned that having livestock is a 7-day a week job no matter what. The horses and dogs have become my number one priority. My teaching job is a co-priority because it supports the animals. It hasn't been easy to manage everything.

Billie, my big baby, has stepped on my foot, the same foot, three times. One of the days I was trying to ride Billie a little bit outside, a crop dust-er plane flew over about 15 feet over the tops of our heads. Billie bolted. Luckily, I stayed on, got him calmed down, and was almost back to the area doors when that stupid plane came back. Billie wheeled and bolted again. My Guardian Angel must have been on duty that day. Once more I stayed on and that time got Billie safely back inside the area. I don't know if it was that single terrifying incident, but Billie continues to startle very easily. I always have to be hyper-aware of what is going on around us when we ride.



Magic nailed my cheekbone with his cement block nose one day while I was putting on his halter. I had a shiner for two weeks. Magic has to wear the driving bridle with the blinders when I

ride him. Otherwise he seems to be scared of everything in the arena. I got kicked once when I walked up behind Blue when he was in the cross ties in his stall. I was shaking a container of tail conditioner and the noise must have scared him. Blue still has a very show horsey attitude and is sometimes difficult for me to ride well. Magic and Billie were not trained to canter and I am having trouble figuring out how to teach them. All three horses continue to be terrified during thunder/lighting storms.

If there was a trainer within a reasonable distance from Macomb who I could hire to come over and work with me twice a month or so, I'd like to hire someone. That person would have to be knowledgeable and experienced with Saddlebreds.

I haven't had luck with animal/barn care during the two times I had to be away twice; once for a professional conference speaking engagement and once for my niece's wedding. I am currently thinking that I can never leave the barn again. I don't feel like I can totally trust my precious animals to anyone I know so far.

My Quarter Horse acquaintance has volunteered to be caretaker in my absence, but she also has suggested I tether the horses out to eat grass, BY ONE LEG, the way she does her Quarter Horses. I don't think so.

But – on the plus side, I do get to run downstairs and feed the horses a carrot or peppermint for a night-time treat in my pajamas. In the mornings, I love to hear the nickering that sounds like they are saying, “Ooohhh, she's here – time for hay... time for oats... YUM!” Someone should make one of those serenity recordings of the barn sounds of horses munching their oats and hay. I love living upstairs from the horses. The dogs sleep in their

crates just across the aisle. It is comforting to know we are all under the same roof every night. I have figured out how to make sure the horses get 7-day a week exercise divided between riding, lunging, and having free play in the arena. It is hard physical work, but I'm more fit and stronger than I was before. I even got hay by myself. Once. 74 bales. It is the hardest hard work I have ever done.

The gates finally got put up along with a hot wire rope at the top and bottom of the fence. The dogs have been having fun out in the 12-acre fenced pasture, but the horses still really haven't been out there. I have tried walking them a little and riding them a little outside. They don't like the flies or the uneven, unpredictable footing. They are just not used to it yet. They seem to be happier riding, lunging, or just playing around together in the arena. I'm still working on getting them outside more. This summer I am going to have some smaller sections of fence put in. Each stall has a door that opens to the outside. I'd like the horses to have a smaller area enclosed by fence so I can open the doors to let them learn to walk in and out on their own.

### *The Standard Poodles*

During the past four years I have acquired seven Standard Poodle rescue dogs in addition to Haley, my 12-year-old Blue Tic Hound/Dalmatian mix. All the Poodles are from a rescue in Missouri called **Heart of America** in Moscow Mills, MO expertly run by Melissa Bass and her husband, Paul. After I looked at Petfinder and typed in Standard Poodle...just on a whim...I adopted Sam and Cody, who were 7-month-old brothers from Melissa's rescue.

Then came Bailey... then Quinn, then Riley and Rory, also brothers. I was sure I was done after Riley and Rory. I told myself that seven dogs was to-

(continued on page 26)



(Magical Fate continued from page 25)

tally enough. I had three puppies under a year old; a 2-year old, and two 4-year-olds...and Haley, who is the only girl dog – and a very bossy girl dog – among my little pack. YIKES!

This is precisely why I only built three stalls in my barn. If I had another stall, I'd fill it with another horse. In This past September, Melissa contacted me about Bama. He is a 6-year-old big, powerful, black Standard Poodle who had a hard life and needed a good break. Settling Bama into my little pack of Poodles is a work in progress. Bama has become my devoted protector. He is gorgeously beautiful and is learning to play with the other dogs. Bama especially likes to play with Rory and Quinn.

If anyone is interested in adopting Standard Poodles, I highly recommend [www.heartofamerica.petfinder.com](http://www.heartofamerica.petfinder.com) The site can also be accessed through Petfinder. Be aware, Melissa scrutinizes potential



Bama

adopters very thoroughly and has an iron clad requirement for a fenced yard. I wish I had the opportunity to talk to Melissa every day. She is the greatest source of information. She is compassionate and caring about all the Poodles she places in adoptive homes.

### *The Vet and the Farrier*

I have the great benefit of having the best vets and farrier in the state of Illinois. Dr. Raymond Huston and his associate Dr. Luke Deverell at the Huston Vet Clinic in Roseville, IL have been an incredible source of veterinary advice and care for my horses, dogs, and cats. It turned out all my horses were sick when I moved them from the trainer's barn with hoof, sheath, and teeth infections. I am extremely grateful for Dr. Huston's expertise in treating the horses for these infections. They are always prepared to answer the multitude of questions I have with expertise and patience.

Mr. Roy Evans, former owner of the Mid-West Horseshoeing School has taught practically every successful and well known farrier in the country. Ray expertly treated Blue's feet and hooves, healing them from the effects of two straight years of quarter cracks. Ray continues to trim and care for my horses' feet and answer questions about hoof care, arena footing, hay...you name it, Ray can answer it.

### *Summary*

I know that American Saddlebred horses are primarily thought of as show horses. I understand why some of the horse show acquaintances I made consider that

I am "wasting" my very talented horses. Most of the time I showed my horses, it was very fun. My horses were successful. My favorite shows were in Kansas City, Oshkosh, WI, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Magic and Blue won a lot. It was an exciting time.

I do miss the shows sometimes. But I felt like it was hard on the horses. It was sometimes hard for me to deal with the politics and attitudes of high level Saddlebred competition. The American Saddlebred Horse Association is making an effort to publicize the *versatility* of the Saddlebred Horse. I think that is an extremely important concept for the breed. The general public, knowledgeable about horses, will continue to think of them *only* as show horses until more people try having their Saddlebreds at home. It is hard work, especially for a beginner like me. But, it is totally and completely 100% worthwhile. I think my horses are happier and more calm at home. I know they are healthier.

Will I ever show my horses again? I get that question from just about every person who comes out to the barn to see it and all the animals. I think so. Maybe. My next goal is to buy a small trailer and learn how to drive it. I'll have to learn how to load the horses, too. And drive with horses in the trailer... And back up the trailer....YIKES! ?



Dr. Mary Jensen







New York Public Library Picture Collection

Gaines' Denmark, foundation stallion of the breed, spent years with the Confederate raiders of General John Hunt Morgan after being requisitioned by his troops passing through Bourbon County, Kentucky. This photo of Morgan and his men was originally published in 1863.

In today's world, we are all too aware that life changes quickly. Even among horse breeders, where the 11-month gestation period of a mare sometimes seems to slow life to a snail's pace, trends of horse ownership and use evolve ever more rapidly. New disciplines form, equestrian fashions emerge, and imports as well as creations of new horse breeds appear, some to last and gain an enthusiastic following, while others become that proverbial flash in the pan (or paddock).

We live in a rather unique time in the chronology of horses and their use. Nearly lost to equestrian memory, for example, is the fact that for most of the history of riding, for hundreds and hundreds of years, saddle horses or those used for riding exclusively, were amblers, not trotters. A trotting horse was a driving or harness horse, not one to be ridden. Using England as an example, in the work of the noted early English writer Geoffrey Chaucer, he refers to the English Palfrey – the most common riding horse for royalty and people of means in England in the 1300s and the same

ambling horse that is the ancestor of our American Saddlebreds today. The Palfrey was, during Chaucer's time, a common part of the English landscape and found from one part of the British Isles to the other. Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales* before the invention of the printing press, so it is not hard to imagine that communication was slow in the 1300s; life hadn't changed appreciably in generations, but it was going to change rapidly in ways that people could scarcely imagine at that time.

In continental Europe and in the British Isles, the 1600s brought improved roads, which in turn led to more use of the harness and cart horse. At the same time, British colonialism brought increased maritime trade which encouraged imports of horses from other areas; this was accompanied by a growing interest in horse racing and English royalty's passion for fox hunting and sport. The saddle or riding horse as utilitarian transportation decreased in use.

Horse breeding at this time was often subject to the way that horses were kept, usually in extensive public common areas, unfenced, with stallions running freely with mares. Palfreys were generally small horses, rarely standing over 15 hands.



London, British Library

The English Palfrey, ambling horse of the Middle Ages. In 1660, when Charles II ascended the throne, he and his advisor, the Duke of Newcastle, began the serious work of eliminating the native British ambling stock and replacing it with imported Turks and Barbs.

When King Henry VIII declared a law demanding the castration of all small native British stallions – two years of age, standing under 14 hands and running freely in common areas – he was sounding the death knell for the English Palfrey. In 1660, when Charles II ascended the throne, he and his advisor, the Duke of Newcastle, began the serious Touch Stones work of eliminating the native British ambling stock and replacing it with imported Turks and Barbs. To quote the writer John Wallace, respected author of *Wallace's Monthly*, who wrote in 1895: "Of all the facts that are known and established in the history of the English horse, the wiping out of the pacer is the most striking and significant ... The little English pacers, that had been the favorites of kings and princes and nobles for so many centuries were submerged in the streams of Saracenic blood that flowed in upon them, and their only legitimate descendants left upon the face of the earth found homes in the American colonies."

In England itself, herds of native British ambling horses contracted so dramatically that their only significant presence for a time was in southwest Scotland and in the Galway area of Ireland. They there became known as Scottish Galloways

"Of all the facts that are known and established in the history of the English horse, the wiping out of the pacer is the most striking and significant ... The little English pacers, that had been the favorites of kings and princes and nobles for so many centuries were submerged in the streams of Saracenic blood that flowed in upon them, and their only legitimate descendants left upon the face of the earth found homes in the American colonies." – John Wallace, 1895, author of *Wallace's Monthly*.



and Irish Hobbies, ancestors familiar to the historians of the American Saddlebred breed and to all gaited American horses. An example of how quickly these horses disappeared from common use in England can be found in the statement of an English traveler to colonial America in 1796, in which he wrote about the horses and horsemanship of Virginia: "The horses in common use in Virginia are all of a light description ... some of them are handsome but all for the most part spoiled by the false gaits which they are taught ... a pace and a 'wrack.' We should call this an unnatural gait, as none of our horses would ever move in that manner without a rider; but the Americans insist upon it that it is otherwise because many of their colts pace as soon as born."

Clearly, this English traveler had no personal memory nor had he heard other of his countrymen speak of ambling horses. Within a generation or two these horses had fundamentally disappeared from the British landscape and British memory.



At approximately the same time, political and economic conditions in England encouraged the settlement of America. Religious dissent drove a small group of English Puritan settlers to the shore of Massachusetts where they found a wilderness of trails and rugged terrain, a perfect setting for their small ambling horses to regain an equine foothold of utility and a way to survive.

Americans being Americans, our early settlers soon rebelled against English conventional wisdom in both equestrian and political matters, and when

Paul Revere rode in Boston to give the alarm that the British were coming he rode, it is said, a Narragansett Pacer – a small fleet horse from Rhode Island whose ambling forebears had been discarded by the British but which were already being used by Americans to create the Kentucky Saddle Horse and Tennessee Walker on the other side of the Allegheny Mountains. We find literary reference to the Narragansett Pacers in the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, when in the early 1800s he describes their gait in *The Last of The Mohicans*, "Tis the merit of the animal. They come from the shores of the Narraganset Bay, in the small province of Providence Plantation and are celebrated for their hardihood and ease of their movement." The Americans took the qualities they most valued in the ambling horses, crossed those horses on the larger, finer Thoroughbreds being imported to America and developed a more stylish but still thoroughly comfortable riding horse, the Kentucky Saddler.

By the time the American Revolutionary War was old news and the Civil War was threatening to destroy the Union, the renown of Kentucky Saddle Horses had spread from one end of the new country to the other. With its limestone soils, the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky had become the cradle of the best horses in the nation. Even in the mid-1800s, Kentucky Saddle Horses were comparatively expensive. It is said that it was due to the superiority of its horses that the Southern Cavalry dominated in the early skirmishes of the War Between the States. Even Gaines' Denmark, foundation stallion of the breed, spent years with the Confederate raiders of John Hunt Morgan after being requisitioned by his troops passing through Bourbon County.

Yet with all this acclaim as the epitome of a true Saddle Horse, the Civil War was hard on the Kentucky Saddler. Many Saddle Horses were lost dur-

ing the Civil War battles. The victory of Union forces was also a victory for Northern horses, Morgans and Thoroughbreds. Yet, the sterling qualities of the ambling descendants of the British Palfrey prevailed and contributed, sometimes anonymously, in significant ways to the settling of the Western United States. Important events such as the establishment of the Pony Express in 1860 called for small fleet horses, standing no more than 15 hands, a common size for the amblers who were also very fast. Many were purchased from Kentucky and Missouri, the owners of this endeavor sparing no expense to carry the mail swiftly from coast to coast, financing the establishment of a competing route to California and the dream of the West far more than they were the delivery of mail. These ambitious men were willing to purchase good horses for good money at a time when the Civil War and the development of the West were looming largely on the horizon. The Pony Express lasted for a year and a half before the telegraph made it obsolete, but the romance of this adventure played enormously to the American imagination, and this, as much as anything, led to the droves of pioneers who headed west for land and gold and adventure. The American Saddlebred breed, yet unnamed, helped to take them there.

Last year, I was reminded of the Saddler's early presence in the West when I began an email conversation with Dr. Gus Cothran, equine genetic researcher formerly at the University of Kentucky Gluck Research Center but now with Texas A&M University. Dr. Cothran has blood-typed most of the wild horse herds in the state of Nevada. I recalled that I had read that there was evidence of American gaited blood, or what Dr. Cothran calls American Saddle or American Gaited Horses, in several herds in Nevada. Because most breeders and owners did not maintain breeding records or pedigrees on their horses during the years of the



1800s, we cannot technically designate horses from that time period as one breed distinct from another, but they were the horses that provided that same mix of blood which produced Saddlebreds and later, Walkers. DNA testing on herds of mustangs reveals that several herds there carry the genetic markers indicating they are descendants of that genetic pool.

In the fall of 2006, my husband and I took a road trip to Nevada to do some exploration of our own. We chose to explore the area along Highway 50, stretching from east to west, known as the loneliest highway in America. Highway 50 parallels the route of the old Pony Express Trail. After stopping at the Cold Springs Café and Gas Station, site of the former Cold Springs Pony Express Station, we spoke with a local hunting guide and outfitter about the wild horse herds in that area. He directed us to three, one of which was in the nearby Clan Alpine Mountains. We explored all day. After no luck sighting any horses, but seeing lots of “stud piles,” a reliable indicator of mustang presence, we had come to the end of our journey, tired and disappointed. We were 30 miles from the nearest paved road and had decided to turn back at the next possible widening of the sage-covered track we were driving, when we came up over a rise, and there in the darkening light, silhouetted against the mountain, was a small herd of wild horses.

They stood, alert and surprised at our approaching vehicle. A band of five, typical of a mustang

herd, included a young stud, three mares of various ages and a lead mare, the boss of the group. It was this lead mare that took my breath away. In her color, her neck length, her conformation and movement, she strongly resembled a Saddlebred. Using the zoom lens on my camera, I took as many shots as I could before they fled up the canyon. In subsequent trips and in visits to the large wild horse handling center known as Palomino Valley,



This mare was one in a herd of five wild mustangs spotted by Barbara Molland in the Clan Alpine Mountains in Nevada. Molland says the horse displayed some very noticeable similarities to the modern Saddlebred.

we have seen and photographed others, but with some notable exceptions, few have impressed us as much as this mare in her similarity to the modern Saddlebred. Without the confirmation of blood typing, this story is anecdotal, and yet there were and are other documented examples of Saddlebreds being used in the West, escaping or being released when no longer needed; and certainly Dr. Cotheran's work tells us that horses carrying Saddle Horse blood – tough, wiry, and intelligent enough to avoid capture – are now living wild and free in remote parts of the West.

Other notable uses of the Kentucky and Missouri Saddle Horses were found in the Remount Stallions stationed in widely dispersed areas across the country for use as breeding stallions to produce horses for the United States Cavalry, and additionally to improve the horse herds of pioneer ranching families. There were more Thoroughbred stallions used than Saddle Horses, but Edna May's Choice, Lindbergh Peavine, Richmond's Choice, and Sandford's Dare, among others, were found on Remount lists dating from the early 1900s.

In Kentucky itself, the establishment in 1925 of the Kentucky Frontier Nursing Service formed in Hyden, Leslie County, Kentucky, by Mary Breckinridge, daughter of a prosperous Kentucky family, attracted women from America and Great Britain, who, armed with a nursing education in midwifery and a strong sense of adventure, traveled to Kentucky to serve the women and families of the Kentucky mountains who were in dire need of medical care. Often through stormy weather, flooding streams and in the middle of a dark night, these midwives – mounted on American Saddlebred horses – braved daunting circumstances to reach the people waiting anxiously for their arrival in remote mountain cabins. All this occurred as recently as the 1930s. In the book, *Babies In Her Saddlebags*, Joyce Hopp writes of Betty Lester, one of the first women to sign on as a nurse midwife. Betty describes the horses they were given for their duties: “Most of them come from down in the Bluegrass, especially chosen for our needs. They have to have a good gait, or they will break all the bottles.” To this day, according to local mountain baby lore, Kentucky and Tennessee babies arrived by way of horseback, in saddlebags, not by stork.

Another example of the utilitarian use of American Saddlebreds was the selection by the United States Forest Service in 1936 of a registered Saddlebred stallion named Grand Menard to stand at the head of a breeding program to produce horses for



Women of the Kentucky Frontier Nursing Service rode American Saddlebreds to reach remote mountain cabins. These midwives often braved daunting circumstances such as stormy weather and flooding streams in the middle of a dark night.



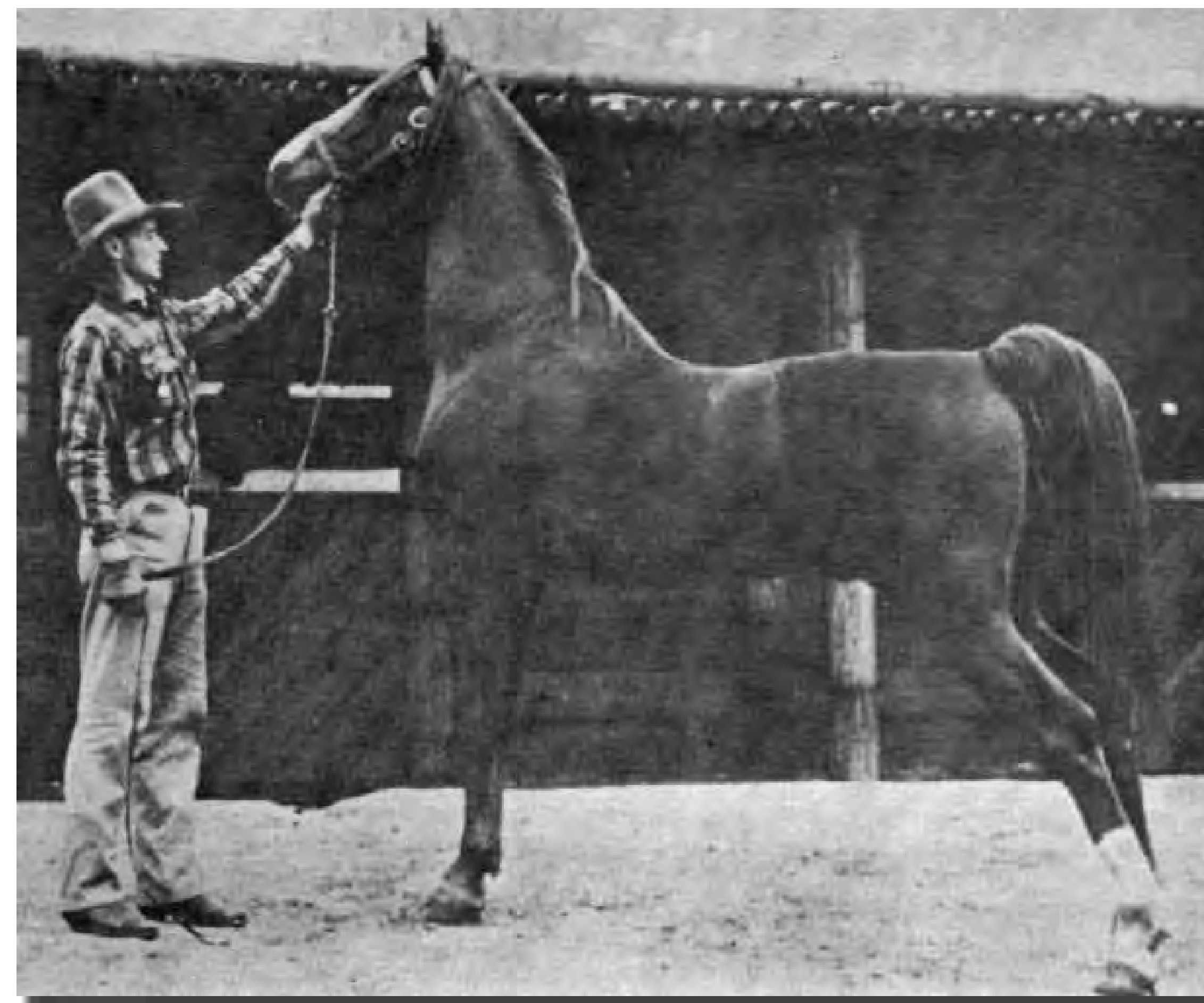
use in fighting wildfires in the mountains of western Montana. This was before the use of smoke jumpers and airplanes to control fire. To quote Lynn Weatherman in the 1986 *American Saddlebred* magazine, "A Saddlebred stallion, Grand Menard 11765, was bought by the Forest Service at a sale in Grand Island, Nebraska. This horse was bred by U.L. Bounds, Paris, Missouri. He was sired by Menard Lee, by Menard King, a grandson of Emerald Chief who was a winner at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 and reserve champion to Montgomery Chief. His dam was a daughter of Grand McDonald, one of the most sensational showing sons of Rex McDonald. Grand McDonald beat both Edna May and Golden Glow in the show ring and was the winner of numerous titles." Lynn goes on to quote *Western Horseman* magazine, in the September/October 1944 issue: "This horse, out of Menard Lee and Gypsy Rose, enjoyed some reputation among horse breeders, and the purchase focused considerable attention on the work being done in improving saddle horse stock in western Montana... slowly but surely the grade of saddle horses produced in the locality is improving as a result of the infusion of new and better blood ... The American Saddler has proved a good traveler on mountain trails, tractable and easily handled and the studs seem able to transmit the desirable characteristics of the breed to even cold-blooded mares."

Grand Menard made quite a name for himself in western Montana. There is now a campground and picnic area named for the old horse at the Nine Mile Station, near Lolo, Montana. Two months ago, when I interviewed Bob Hoverson, head of the packing and outfitting portion of the Nine Mile Station and a forest ranger for more than 35 years, he told me that he still has Grand Menard's stall name plate displayed in a corner of his office,

something just as important to him as the trophies and ribbons are to me in mine.

Although it can be said with great pride that the American Saddlebred has been used as a show horse since the mid-1800s, it and its ambling ancestors have been used for many more years as horses of utility. Circumstance drove its development and its continued use to give us today a sterling example of a well conformed horse, a strong horse, a horse with stamina, great legs and feet, straight backs, and an intelligent, kind, and trainable mind. The show ring use has given us beauty, elegance and refinement, not to mention a way for breeders and trainers to make a decent living in creating them.

With all these attributes, we have a treasure worth keeping. The trail of history, these touch stones over time that remind us from whence the breed came and the value of its contribution to the American past, show us that it would be a mistake to forget the honest utility of our horses, the way that hard use over and through the generations of the partnership of Saddlebred horses and the American people has provided us this finely chiseled gift of the equine world for safe keeping. The American Saddlebred horse is to this country the equine counterpart of a national treasure, its winding trail across this country braiding itself intimately into our most anguishing political moments as it also paralleled the development and western expansion of the American people.



In 1936, the U.S. Forest Service chose registered Saddlebred stallion Grand Menard to head its breeding program to produce horses for use in fighting wildfires in the mountains of western Montana, another utilitarian use of the American Saddlebred.

We must be ever vigilant to protect its reputation, its soundness, its correct and strong conformation, genetic health, intelligent and kind disposition ... and I will add, lest we forget, its inherent ambling ability. We members of the American Saddlebred Horse Association, who every year fill out our stal-

lion reports and foal registrations, are in fact the stewards of this breed. It is up to us to honor the best qualities of the American Saddlebred and to have the wisdom to look into the future and provide a place for this horse in the generations to come, no matter what the discipline. If we don't, we may find ourselves like the English traveler of the 1700s, no longer recognizing or valuing what was once so much a part of our landscape. The American Saddlebred is a horse to celebrate. Let's not lose sight of that at a time when, unlike the Englishman, we

have both the communication technology and the awareness of history to allow us to make intelligent choices. Let us, as we often say, rack on!

Sources used in the writing of this article include: *Famous Saddle Horses* by Susanne (Emily Ellen Scharf), 1936; *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, 1826; *The Pony Express* by William Lightfoot Visscher, 1946; *The Horse of America* by John H. Wallace, 1897; *War Horse, Mounting the Cavalry with American's Finest Horses* by Livingston and Roberts, 2003; *Babies In Her Saddlebags* by Joyce W. Hopp, 1986; *Saddlebreds In Big Sky Country* by Lynn Weatherman, *The American Saddlebred* magazine.





# FOR THE LOVE OF THE SPORT

## AMATEURS IN HISTORY

by Brita Barlow-Johnson

Amateurs have been a part of the Saddlebred World from the very beginning. In fact, some of our most illustrious personages have been amateurs, and their horses have been top notch. The type of person has run the full gamut from celebrities, to business men and farmers, and from heiresses to housewives. Murray Cason, a farmer and owner of the great breeding stallion Stonewall King, kept a painted sign on the stall door reading “*Here Stonewall King lived and moved and had his being. Murray and Sallie Cason loved Stonewall King.*” (Gilbert p 467) Hundreds if not thousands of amateurs and their love of the Saddlebred has given us many historically great horses who have shaped and influenced our breed and made it what it is today.

There are many aspects of the horse world where amateurs may excel. They may show horses, train them at home, and run breeding establishments both large and small. Amateurs have been judges, horse show organizers and simply the Saddlebred’s biggest fan. There is a place for everyone who loves this great breed.

Amy Freeman Lee, owner of 1938 World’s Grand Champion Five Gaited Horse Midnight Star, named her farm “Leisure Time Stables” and wrote a book, *Hobby Horses*, about her passion for show horses. She spoke of the hard work, expense and the horse show nerves. But as she says “all an amateur has to do is win one blue ribbon to be converted to the tanbark for life.” (Lee p 45)

Frances Dodge Van Lennep (daughter of John Frances Dodge, automotive pioneer and co-founder of the Dodge Brothers Company) is one such amateur whose dedication to winning that elusive blue ribbon put her at the top of the industry. Although her family had provided her with horses and instruction from a young age, and she was an accomplished young rider, her first appearance at the Kentucky State Fair did not even result in a ribbon.

### Am\*a\*teur (noun)

1: devotee; admirer

2: one who engages in a pursuit, study, science, or sport as a pastime rather than as a profession

*From Old French “lover of”*

“The records show that she showed Lady Devine in the Junior Championship Stake (1930) and the Kentucky State Fair and is listed 19th of a class of 20 horses in Susanne’s Famous Saddle Horses. That would discourage many less stout hearted exhibitors but not Frances Dodge.” (Ransom p 223)

“It began to look like she would never win a big stake even though she kept coming back trying and never complaining, where many had quit in disgust, believing the judges were crooked, that they were showing favoritism or that they would never have a chance unless you were from Kentucky. The

plucky girl from Detroit kept spending her money buying more horses and better horses.” (Ransom p 222)

“She jokingly referred to her stable (Dodge Stable) as ‘the greatest red ribbon stable in America’ but she was having fun, enjoying every minute of it and refusing to believe the croakers who told her she was robbed and the game was crooked.” (Ransom p 223)

In 1941, she purchased Anacacho Shamrock, a good son of Edna May’s King, and after a successful show career, he went to Dodge Stables to stand at stud. One homegrown colt, named [CH Wing Commander](#) went on to win the World’s Grand Champion 6 years in a row (1948-1953). The only other horse to equal this feat was CH My-My (1963-1968). Dodge Stables owned CH Wing Commander for his entire life and stood him at stud where he left an indelible impression on our breed. Where would the Saddlebred be today if Frances Dodge had given up?

Besides owning Saddlebreds, Frances Dodge Van Lennep was influential in the Standardbred breed. At one time she owed the second largest Standardbred breeding stable in America, winning the Hambletonian with Hoot Man in 1947. At age 23 was the lucky gal aboard [the great trotter Greyhound](#) when he set the trotting record (2:01¾) under saddle.

Revel English, an opera star and professional boxer, who had established a large Saddlebred operation on the west coast, became the first Amateur rider to win the Five Gaited Stake at Louisville when he did so in 1926 aboard his stallion Edna May’s King (sire of Anacacho Shamrock and grand-sire of CH Wing Commander). No other amateur rider would win until Michele MacFarlane (also the first woman to win) rode CH Sky Watch, a grand-

(continued on page 32)



## (Amateurs In Sport continued from page 31)

son of CH Wing Commander, to victory in 1988. Ms. Macfarlane went on to repeat her feat in 1996 aboard CH Memories' Citation and again in 2007 aboard (SA) CCV Casey's Final Countdown.

And speaking of firsts, Jean McLean Davis, owner of Oak Hill Farm was the first female athlete inducted into the [Virginia Sports Hall of Fame](#). She was inducted in 1976 for her achievements in horsemanship. A life long amateur exhibitor, Davis captured the Ladies Three-Gaited Stake seven times with four different horses. In 1989, Jean McLean Davis became first woman to win the three gaited stake aboard her homegrown gelding Gimcrack, a great grandson of CH Wing Commander.

The Virginia Sports Hall of Fame states that she was "only the second woman to win the Three-Gaited Stake — the first having done so in the 1930's". A review of R.W. Paulette's book "Kentucky State Fair Horse Show Blue Ribbon Winners" shows that the first Three Gaited World's Grand Championship was held in 1936. That same year, Miss Mary Fisher won the Under 15.2 stake with Royal Irish in 1936. So, according to those facts, Jean McLean Davis would have been the first lady and the first Amateur to win the actual World's Grand Championship in the three gaited division.

Jean McLean Davis' Oak Hill Farm won simultaneous World's Grand Championships in 1945 and 1946 with Oak Hill Chief as the Five Gaited Grand Champion and Edith Fable as the Three Gaited Grand Champion. She enjoyed as repeat of this accomplishment in 1989 with her home grown CH Man on the Town and Gimcrack, both horses, incidentally, descended from CH Wing Commander through her three times World's Five Gaited Grand Champion CH Yorktown.

No article on Saddlebred loving amateurs would be complete without further mention of Michele

MacFarlane, and her mother Ellen (Brownie) Scripps Davis whose great love of the Saddlebred, and the pinto Saddlebred in particular, is without equal. It has led the Scripps Miramar pintos as far as the Olympic ceremonies in Nagano Japan. It has brought out such wonderful spectacles as silver clad parade horses in the Tournament of Roses parade year after year, or most recently the unparalleled Circus exhibition which opened the World Equestrian Games in 2010. It put a stallion, Chubasco (great grandson of CH Wing Commander through CH Yorktown), at the top of the Saddle and Bridle sire ratings in 1986 and until his death over a decade later. And it has brought countless champions to the show rings of America.

Among these champions was the incomparable CH Sky Watch whose duels with CH Imperator are the stuff of legend. CH Sky Watch was ridden to his three consecutive wins in 1982-84 by trainer Mitch Clark. In 1988 Michele MacFarlane rode Sky Watch to victory in the big stake. Ms. Macfarlane went on to repeat her feat in 1996 aboard CH Memories' Citation and again in 2007 aboard (SA) CCV Casey's Final Countdown

Her horse CH Memories' Citation (great, great-grandson of Anacacho Shamrock), also made the record books as the only horse to have won both the Five Gaited World's Grand Championship and the Three Gaited World's Grand Championship. CH Memories' Citation won the three gaited title in 1993 under Mitch Clark. After several years as a successful three gaited campaigner, Michele MacFarlane doing much of the work herself to gait him, debuted him in the five gaited division in 1995. He won the Five Gaited Stake at Louisville in 1996 with Michele in the irons.

Not that no amateurs ever came close to winning the big one. Randi Stuart Wightman was Reserve Grand Champion on Admiral's Mark in 1987

and Mary Gaylord was Reserve Grand Champion on Santana Lass 1991. Nancy Leigh Fisher did win the big stake in 2003 on CH Callaway's Forecaster. Elizabeth Goth won the three gaited WGC in 1997, 1998 and 2000 with CH Hollywood Excellence (BHF) and Michele MacFarlane was Reserve in 1998 with CH Memories' Citation, the same horse she won the Five Gaited WGC with which made them quite the combination for the record books. As for the Fine Harness Division, Mrs. Urban Palmer, an amateur, won the WCG with CH Duke of Daylight in 1967 and was Reserve in 1969. All of these horses are descended from Anacacho Shamrock, and CH Wing Commander.

Not only has that great family of horses, from Edna May's King, through Anacacho Shamrock, CH Wing Commander, CH Yorktown, CH Man on the Town, Chubasco and CH Sky Watch, among others, shaped this breed, but their amateur breeders, owners and riders, who shared the common love of the breed, a passion for the show ring and the dedication to success has made it what it is today. Indeed, without these men and women, where would we be today?

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