

## **ANNE SOMERVILLE, AMHA MASTER**

**Anne Somerville was nominated by the NYSMHS as an AMHA Master. This program recognizes people for their long standing involvement with Morgan horses. Anne was presented her certificate at the Stallion Service Auction on February 18th. in Little Falls.**

Anne Somerville has always ridden good horses and although, she will be 81 year old in April of 1995, it is no surprise she is still riding. Anne inherited her father's love of horses and he taught her to ride and passed on to her his own high standards of horsemanship. She recalled that he was fussy and if she didn't rub her horse down properly before stabling him, she didn't ride for a week. At age five she got her first Morgan, a mare named Katie D.

After completing school she accepted a job offer that brought her to Delhi, NY in 1932. Here her interest in horses brought her friends and she also met Mr & Mrs Main who managed a horse farm. She was first involved with the Walton Fair and her areas of expertise were the Saddlebred and Morgan divisions and she lobbied for the inclusion of a saddleseat division to display these breeds.

She continued to perfect her horsemanship and she showed horses for others as a contract rider. She rode for Meridale Farm from the mid to late 1940's. When the owner of Meridale sold her horses, Anne bought the flashy mare, Betty's Sensation. Betty was no "lesson horse" but a top three gaited mare and gave many successful rides in the show ring. During racing seasons, she was often hired as a parade marshal, escorting race horses to the post before a race begins. Faultlessly tailored and riding a handsome horse from her stable, she worked from the State Fair in Syracuse to Honedale, Pa. and at several local tracks.

In 1937, she married Jack Somerville and they built a house and stable on Secor St, in Sidney in 1941. Although she had no children of her own, many horse loving youngsters found their way to the Somerville stable. When a group of her students performed in Walton one year, she was approached by the late "Chief" Hillman of Camp Hilltop, and was asked to conduct riding classes at the camp. For many years, the Hilltop riders were a large part of the Walton Fair Horseshow.

In an interview with Susan McNee of the Daily Star in Oneonta, NY, Ben Nesbitt spoke of his former instructor and longtime friend with respect and affection. "Mrs. Somerville encouraged us to be our best and to believe in ourselves while teaching us to handle the inevitable disappointments of showing horses," he said. "She was an exacting and empathetic instructor, a professional competitor and an ethical and unbiased

horse show judge. I have many happy memories of experiences I shared with Anne and Jack."

She also trained horses and perfected a method of "long lining" a green horse from horseback. Long-lining teaches a horse direction and commands and is usually done on foot before training under saddle. She drove the horse while riding one of her older horses and found she could do it more easily, it was fun and she had a better trained horse. In the '50s she owned the Morgan mare, Lady Low. That horse caught the attention of E.H. Oles who liked Lady enough to buy her. When he died, he willed the mare back to Mrs. Somerville.

Another memorable horse she owned was Broadwall Sport. A registered Morgan from Broadwall Farm, who had been offered as first prize in a Morgan contest. He was won by a girl who was unable to handle him and he came to Mrs. Somerville. He was 6 years old at the time and hard to train, but finally acquired sense and manners. A bold, big-going horse, Sport was hard to beat when he was in his prime.

When Jack Somerville died in 1983, she made herself keep going. She continued riding and showing and in 1991 at age 78, won the English championship at the Brookfield Fair. In October of 1991 she broke her hip and was grounded for 14 months.

She has had to make compromises with aging and injuries, but not too many. Mounting her horse with the bad hip was a problem. She solved it by stepping from a bench to a picnic table and onto her mare. Glenora's Charisma, a 21 year old Morgan, who seems to understand the situation and stands like a rock.

Anne feels that it's worth enduring the pain of the bad hip for the pleasure of being on her horse again. In 1993, she and Charisma led the July 3 parade for Sidney's Hometown Day. The exercise from riding has been a big help in combating her diabetes. Her horses have also provided solace and a sense of direction for her during the difficult times in her life. Her visits to the stable where she now boards her horse keep her busy, and keep her going. Slim and straight, she handles her mare with the deftness of a person who has always worked around horses. There is a large meadow, ringed with woods, to ride in and she makes the ride, winter and summer, almost every day. Her world has always looked better from the back of a horse and she sees no reason to change her mind.

Anne has been a member of the NYSMHS for many years and is always a strong promoter of Morgan Horses. In 1994 she was in her usual box at the NY Regional, catching up on the news with old friends. She is truly a remarkable woman whose life has centered around horses.

**CONGRATULATIONS, ANNE!**

## **A LIFE WITH HORSES**

### **Sidney woman has taught, trained and shown horses over many decades**

**by Susan McNee, Lifestyles a reprint from the Daily Star, Oneonta, NY**

Anne Somerville has always ridden good horses. Although now 79 years old, it is no surprise she is still riding.

Born in 1914, her father was head horseman on the Hatfield Estate near Utica. Mrs. Somerville inherited her father's love of horses; he taught her to ride and passed on to her his own high standards of horsemanship.

"He was fussy," she recalled. "If I didn't rub my horse down properly before stabling him, I didn't ride for a week."

When her parents divorced when she was five, she lived with her father and was given a Morgan mare, named Katie D. At age 13, her father died and the horses were gone, except her mare. He had written in his will that Katie was never to be sold.

As a girl, she worked before and after school, and after graduation opted for a hairdressing career.

"A job offer in that field brought me to Delhi in 1932," Mrs. Somerville said. "I was 18, alone and homesick; but not for long. My interest in horses brought me friends. I also met Mr. and Mrs. Harry Main."

Harry Main, originally from England, managed the horse farm on the vast Gerry Estate outside Delhi. Mrs. Somerville remembers visiting the Mains and riding horses for Harry in the large glazed brick stable that was the center of the horse farm complex.

"Mr. Main was responsible for introducing hunters and jumpers to the Walton Fair in the 1930's" she said. "He provided classes and appealed to the horse people he knew to bring their show horses. Among these were the Stuarts from Guilderland, near Albany. They were a horse family that could well afford it."

Areas of expertise for Mrs. Somerville were the Saddlebred and Morgan divisions, and she lobbied for the inclusion of a saddleseat division to display these breeds. The fair was closed for a year or two during World War II, but the horse show grew rapidly after that.

She continued to perfect her horsemanship, taking lessons from a Captain Loudon in Utica, a perfectionist who took an interest in her career because he had known her father. Mrs. Somerville also showed horses for owners as a contract rider. She rode for Meridale Farm from the mid-to-late 1940's. The farm was then owned by a Mrs. Bree, an Englishwoman who raised show horses and Jersey cattle. When Bree sold her horses, Mrs. Somerville bought the flashy mare, Betty's Sensation. Betty was no "lesson horse" but a top three gaited mare and gave many successful rides in the show ring.

During racing seasons, Mrs. Somerville was often hired as a parade marshal. Marshals, riding a horse, escort race horses to the post before a race begins. Faultlessly tailored and riding a handsome horse from her stable, she worked from the State Fair in Syracuse to Honedale, Pa. and at several local tracks.

In 1937 she married Jack Somerville. They built a house and stable on Secor Street in Sidney in 1941. Even as a newlywed, Mrs. Somerville focused on horses -- they were too big a part of her life to be given up.

"I raised Dalmations for 28 years, but finally gave it up as I never had a house or car without white hairs," she said. "My constant companion for years now has been a small black poodle named Judy."

The couple had no children of their own, but many horse-loving youngsters found their way to the Somerville stable. Marsha and Linda Landers of Sidney were two of the children she coached. The Landers sisters rode her horses during the 1950s at the Walton Fair and other horse shows.

When a group of Mrs. Somerville's students performed in Walton one year, she was approached by the late "Chief" Hillman of Camp Hilltop, Hancock and asked to conduct riding classes at the camp. For many years after, the Hilltop riders were a large part of the Walton Fair Horseshow.

Ben Nesbitt of Oneonta spoke of his former instructor and longtime friend with respect and affection.

"Mrs. Somerville encouraged us to be our best and to believe in ourselves while teaching us to handle the inevitable disappointments of showing horses," he said. "She was an exacting and empathetic instructor, a professional competitor and an ethical and unbiased horse show judge. I have many happy memories of the experiences I shared with Anne and Jack."

Mrs. Somerville also trained horses and perfected a method of "long lining" a green horse from horseback. Long-lining teaches a horse direction and commands and is usually done on foot before training under saddle. She drove the horse while riding one of her older horses and found she could do it more easily, it was fun and she had a better trained horse. "But the horse behind had to have manners," she said.

Around 1950, Mrs. Somerville spotted a 3 year old gelding at auction. He was thin, unkempt and with the hanging head and running nose that meant distemper. She felt sorry for him and brought him home. Later he blossomed into the beautiful Lucky Genius, a Saddlebred, Thoroughbred cross from Kentucky, with an eye-catching light chestnut coat and a flaxen mane and tail.

"He was the best kids' horse," she said. "you could put children on him and he would take care of them. I broke him to drive and drove him all over Sidney, often picking

## A LIFE WITH HORSES (con't)

up Jack when he finished work at the former Scintilla plant."

She was still riding Lucky in the early '60s when she was parade marshal at the Afton Fair. He was an aging horse then, but continued to display the grace and elegance inherited from his Saddlebred ancestors. Another horse she owned was a Morgan mare, Lady Low, in the '50s. That horse caught the attention of E.H. Oles who liked Lady enough to buy her. When he died, he willed the mare back to Mrs. Somerville.

"She was perfect for children and a frequent mount for the Landers sisters," she said.

Not limiting herself to English pleasure and performance horses, in the mid 1940s, Mrs. Somerville went regularly to the Afton fairgrounds and worked a harness horse for a client. "I remember Alex Spencer well. He was a big horse, a wonderful race horse that won races in several states," she said.

Another memorable horse was Broadwall Sport. A registered Morgan from Broadwall Farm, Breene, Rhode Island, he was offered as first prize in a Morgan contest. He was won by a girl who was a friend of Linda Landers. The girl was unable to handle him and he came to Mrs. Somerville. He was 6 years old at the time and hard to train, but finally acquired sense and manners, she said.

"A bold, big-going horse, Sport was hard to beat when he was in his prime," she said.

Then in 1983, life changed when Jack Somerville died.

"It was very hard, but I made myself keep going," she said. "I continued riding and showing and in 1991, at age 78, won the English championship at the Brookfield Fair. In October of that year, I broke my hip and was grounded for 14 months."

Mrs. Somerville has had to make inevitable compromises with aging and injuries, but not to many. Mounting her horse with the bad hip was a problem. She solved it by stepping from a bench to a picnic table and onto her mare. Glenora's Charisma, a 21 year old Morgan, seems to understand the situation and stands like a rock.

For Mrs. Somerville, it's worth enduring the pain of the bad hip for the pleasure of being on her horse again. Last summer, she and Charisma led the July 3 parade for Sidney's Hometown Day. Mrs Somerville has also been a diabetic for 31 years.

"I feel the exercise from riding has been a big help in combating the disease," she said. "My horses have also provided solace and a sense of direction for me during the difficult times in my life. My visits to the stable where I now board my horse keep me busy, keep me going."

At the horse barn she is greeted by the stable cats and a smiling dog. they have acquired a taste for Italian bread which Mrs. Somerville hands out all around.

There are apples for the horses. Slim and straight, Mrs. Somerville handles her mare with the deftness of a person who has always worked around horses.

There is a large meadow, ringed with woods, to ride in and she makes the ride, winter and summer, almost every day. Her world has always looked better from the back of a horse. As he 80th birthday approaches, Anne Somerville sees no reason to change her mind.

The writer, Susan McNee is a free-lance writer living in DeLancey.

Article submitted to the Trader by, Mary Arnold