

WORD PORTRAIT

Jane Simmons

Kit Glenn McKinley :

Owner of Fennell's

By Jane E. Simmons © 2007

With deep appreciation, I thank Charles Cook of Lexington, Ky., who co-authored this column with me. We first teamed up for the Word Portrait in Saddle & Bridle's October 2003 issue about his role in his father's induction into the Kentucky State Fair Hall of Fame.

Will there be a sequel to the PUTTIN' ON THE FEED BAG cookbook that was so successful in the late 1970s? Kit Glenn McKinley says her "instant answer to that question is: 'no, thank you.'"

She, "Mary Anne Ogden, and Dorothy Dutel gathered recipes from Saddlebred Horse people, like Roz Harris, Mary Anne Teater, Carol Bartz, Sally Jackson, Gayle Lampe, Judie Lester and Dudley Abbott, to name a few. Our First Edition in August 1977 was an instant success. We had published 2,000 copies. In November 1977, we put out the Second Edition."



Photo courtesy of Charles Glenn, Jr.
Kathryn "Kit" Brinton
Glenn McKinley

Kathryn "Kit" Brinton, known to horse owners and trainers in multiple breeds throughout the horse world, has "not ever been a horse owner, rider, or exhibitor." Her entrance into the Saddlebred Horse world came in the late 1950s when she "met Charles W. Glenn on a blind date going to a horse show at the Fairgrounds" in New Orleans.

"Charlie was born in 1925 in Princeton, Ky. He always had a horse of some kind to show in the local circuits" in the western part of The Blue Grass State. "His only desire was to train and ride show horses, which he did with great enthusiasm," Kit said. "When we began dating, I went to several shows when he was showing for customers," Kit told me in early February. "At that time, Charlie was running the Southern Hills Stable in Tulsa, Okla."

Then, "Charlie was offered a job running the stable for William Mills of St. Petersburg, Fla. He accepted and was trainer for the family's three daughters — Susie, Mary, and Bridget." At Pineview Stables, "some of its best known horses were Glory Kalarama, Royal Jester, Sir Richard, Miss Mary, Night Patrol, and Honeysuckle. Charlie showed them successfully at many shows," including "the Sunshine Circuit, the Lexington Junior League show, and the Kentucky State Fair."

After moving to Florida, Charlie Glenn went back to New Orleans to marry William and Evelyn Brinton's daughter Kit in September 1959. "My dear friends Mary Anne and Chuck Ogden were in attendance." Green-eyed, ash blonde, 5'6" bride Kit Glenn "moved to St. Petersburg. We lived at Pineview Stables. It was fun living there, as all the snowbirds would drop by and visit during their trips to Florida in the winter. One was never lonesome," Kit noted, "because there was always activity

of some kind."

Homemaker Kit and horseman Charlie Glenn became parents with the birth of Elizabeth Ann "Libby," born "in June 1961." Son Charles W. Jr. was "born in October 1962."

Kit remembers their life then as "very happy and routine." They also operated a small business: selling equestrian tack and other horse supplies from a trailer they named Charlie's Saddlery Shop. "Everybody knew and loved Charlie. He was so liked. Only good things were said about him," Kit said.

"Our life changed when Charlie had a heart attack" in the summer of 1962. "Because of this, Charlie was unable to train horses any longer." Bill Mills "decided to sell his stables and



Photo by Kit Glenn

Charlie Glenn holds daughter Libby and son Charles, Jr., circa 1964.

horses," when he learned Charlie Glenn was retiring "from the rigors" of horse training.

"We suddenly found ourselves trying to find another occupation. Charlie very wisely moved us to Lexington, the heart of horse country. Growing up in New Orleans, where the horse industry was virtually non-existent then, I never saw a horse trailer going down a street. In Lexington, I saw horse trailers everywhere, and just about every other person was a horse person."

A friend, "Ed Sims told us of a tack shop for sale on the Red Mile grounds. We purchased it in August 1963. We continued to go to horse shows with the trailer, renamed Fennell's Horse Supplies." Today, a tack trailer is still a part of Kit's life for selling horse supplies. However, the current lovely "hardwood-floored custom-built trailer is used only once a year, when it becomes Fennell's store-on-site at the Kentucky State Fair in Louisville. The remainder of the year, the trailer is parked near the company's separate manufacturing building behind the shop." Kit "moved the store to its present location in 1968," adjacent to the Red Mile Trotting Track.

"Charlie and I, along with Charlie's brother Tommy Glenn, operated Fennell's, and went to local and out-of-state horse shows and sales. During this time, "things went quite well, as Charlie successfully recovered from his 1962 heart attack. We were very busy with both our tack and our horse hauling businesses. Jim B. Robertson was one of our good customers, having us haul many great horses to the shows," Kit told me.

"Charlie also took horses to Art Simmons' Heart of America sale in Kansas City, and served as a bid spotter under Walter Botkins and Kenny Larue. Your father was very kind to me after Charlie died in 1966," Kit told me. "Art helped me dispose of the horses we had, selling them at the sale with no commission, which I greatly appreciated and needed."

It "was a Sunday night in early October 1966 that Charlie suffered his fatal heart attack, while playing with our children. With the help of family and friends, the children and I started a new phase in our lives."

Newly widowed Kit Glenn found herself at a crossroads. "I had to make a decision concerning the store. I was well aware at that time women labored under many limitations in trying to run a business in their own right. The feeling then was a woman didn't know anything about running a company. However, having two children to raise meant needing income." Kit said, "it was decided to continue to operate the store," with the help of her auctioneer "brother-in-law Tommy Glenn." Even with his male presence, it still "wasn't easy dealing within the business world, because of my being a female." Most helpful for us "was the Catalog which helped create new customer outlets for us."

By the time "Tommy retired in 2004," Kit had developed some 45 years of business acumen "in the horse products marketplace," and earned her place as a role model for other women who want to be leaders in their commercial communities and grow their own entrepreneurial enterprises to success.

Currently, Kit is downsizing her role in Fennell's, handing over the reins (pardon the pun) of her business to her son Charles Jr.,



Photo courtesy of Charles Glenn, Jr. Horseman Charles W. Glenn's son Charles Jr., and his widow Kit Brinton Glenn, in Lexington, Ky., in January 2007.

who "has taken over the day-to-day operation of the company. When the children were small, I made sure they were part of the business. If I had to work, I decided they should also. I feel this was a good decision because my children have a great work ethic, and a good understanding of what it takes to run a business where everyone feels they are important," she said.

Businesswoman Kit's #1 rule for serving her "especially discriminating customers: offer quality products at a fair price with excellent service." If a customer wants a certain item, she "will find it," or her company "will have it made to exact specifications."

Other activities, which hold Kit's attention, time and effort, include volunteering in the world of show horses and in the racing industry.

"From 2000 to 2006, I served on the Board of Directors of the American Saddlebred Horse Museum. I also am very involved with the Stable of Memories here at the Red Mile. I have been on its Board since 1982."

Kit said: "We have raised money to restore the historic Round Barn, built in the 1880s. At one time, it was known as the Women's Exhibit Hall, where quilts, food, flowers, and clothing were displayed. When the Kentucky Trotting Horse Breeders Association bought the Red Mile property in 1893, the Round Barn was converted to a stable, with horses on the first floor and grooms' quarters and tack storage on the second and third floors. Also known as Floral Hall, in later years it became stabling for horses racing at The Red Mile. The octagonal Round Barn's being in serious disrepair in the 1950s prompted Kentucky breeders Katherine and H. Willis Nichols of Walnut Hall Farm to spearhead the charter of Stable of Memories Inc. to preserve the building. In 1971, the building officially became the Standardbred Stable of Memories."

Kit also has "been instrumental in having the American Road Horse Association establish their museum headquarters in the Round Barn, bringing together all of their memorabilia."

In 1991, Kit married again. Her "husband Thomas McKinley raced thoroughbreds. He sold real estate with Buddy Parker in Lexington. His father was at one-time the owner of the local Dixie-McKinley Cadillac automobile business." Kit and her husband "support the restoration of local downtown properties."

Gracing the walls of her shop is horse art, including Kit's collection of "the Kentucky State Fair's Five-Gaited World Grand Champions. My collection started with help from Eddie Guthridge, and has been added to each year. It's taken me a lot of years to collect them," she told me.

When co-author Charles first saw the collection, he told me, he immediately



Photo by Charles Glenn, Jr. This Civil War-inspired boot founded a horse supplies retail business in Lexington, Ky., nearly 100 years ago.

noticed his father, Charles L. Cook, Sr., riding 1922 winner Easter Star. Then, Charles told me this anecdote about that visit: "I told the lady working there that on my last visit, when she walked out with her purse, and another lady walked out with her purse, and the dog Miss Otis went to sleep, I couldn't tell anyone that I found my father's picture on the wall. Turns out I was talking to Bonnie Murray," Charles noted. "She's the wife of Versailles horseman Merrill Murray, a recent World Grand Championship winner. She has worked there for the past five years," he said.

Kit's store walls are graced "with many historical items pertaining to the horse industry: a signed letter from President Ronald Reagan, thanking Fennell's for sending him a halter for his Lipizzaner Horse; a sidesaddle stirrup iron stamped 1812; poster pictures from Big Ben tobacco tins, with American Saddlebred Jeb Stuart, Charmin Camellia and Midnight Star; a print of Dan Patch, and Greyhound, just to name a few. It's like walking back in time."

History permeates her company, which was founded in 1909 by Robert Emmett Fennell following the success of his father's "shin/ankle and tendon boot" invented in 1872. The original idea came to saddle maker Joseph Fennel during his cavalry days in the Army of Northern Virginia, when he and his fellow troops were assigned Trotters. The horses frequently became lame or incapacitated by self-inflicted leg wounds. Cavalryman Fennell devised a lightweight leather sleeve to cover the lower legs of the horses. These proved of limited use because speed was hampered, even though the sleeves protected the horses' legs. After the Civil War, he improved on his design by giving the shin boot a flexible joint.

Kit, of course, makes time to enjoy her grandchildren. Elizabeth "Libby" Glenn Fisher "lives in Cincinnati with her husband Charles and their two children — Wil Fisher, age 15, and Mary Kathryn Fisher, age 12. Charlie and Margaret have two children — Gordon, age 12, and Julia, age 7." Margaret also "works every day in our family business, assisting her husband," Kit noted.

This Lexington businesswoman "was born in April in Lewistown, Penn.," before her family "moved to New Orleans, where she grew up." Kit Glenn McKinley attended the Eleanor McMain High School for Girls in New Orleans. She had no sisters, and has one brother, Bill Brinton, who lives in Leawood, Kan.

This past January 21, guess which football team she rooted for in the playoffs for Super Bowl XLI. You're right: the New Orleans Saints. Even without her team competing in the Miami Dolphins' Stadium on February 4, she "watched the game. It was exciting," said Kit Glenn McKinley, one of Lexington, Kentucky's longtime business women, who brings her enthusiasm to all she does.

You may contact her by mail: Kit McKinley, President, R.E. Fennell Co., Inc., P.O. Box 8043, Lexington KY 40533-8042 or by phone: Toll Free 800-765-9087 and (859) 254-2814 and (859) 252-0934, or by Fax: (859) 255-9244, or visit with her at the store at 1200 Red Mile Road, located next to the famous Round Barn.

You may contact Charles L. Cook, Jr. via his e-mail: Cookstuff@aol.com.

You can contact Jane Simmons, who lives in Eustis, Fla., where she is completing a book about her parents, Art and Ollie Simmons, via her e-mail: jane@simmonsbook.com. Her first-person Word Portraits qualify as primary historical documents. Her new website is: www.SimmonsBook.com.

GOLDEN AMERICAN SADDLEBREDS

David Swindler

The new year has brought many changes, and GASHA is no exception. Several months ago a letter was sent to all members and others listed as interested people in golden Saddlebreds, to address issues related to membership, events, and so on. Only approximately 10% sent in replies of mixed interest on whether to go forward or not.

On February 4, 2007 the executive board met to go over letters and vote. Of the eight members of the executive board, one was not present nor did he send written information on how to vote on his behalf. Three sent written letters giving another ex-board member the right to cast their vote. Four were present, along with several other interested people in golden Saddlebreds.

After much discussion, the vote was to dissolve GASHA at this time. A letter has been filed with the proper authority. The executive board agreed that any debts would be paid and that the remaining funds be held until February 4, 2008. If another group is formed prior to February 4, 2008 to promote the golden Saddlebred horse and it's a nonprofit group, the funds will be given to them. If not, the funds will be given to a nonprofit Saddlebred horse rescue group.

I regret that after over 30 years as a member to see this happen, but lack of involvement by members at shows, meetings, elections, etc., have brought this to the current end. My personal hope is that enough golden Saddlebred horse loving people will be able to come up with a more modern group with strong ideas and leadership to keep the golden Saddlebred out there.

Several members, including myself, have shown in many open shows and I for one will continue as long as I can, when I can. To me there is nothing like the golden Saddlebred. Should a new group come forward I will help to support them. You may ask why them and yet GASHA gone? As a past president and longtime member I have seen many changes in the industry, but the most important is that it takes more than a few members to keep something alive and growing. When there is lack of growth or even worse, a lack of interested members to come forward to do jobs, what else can you do?

We will still be getting the 2006 GASHA High Point of the Year awards for adults, youths and horses figured out and it will appear in the next article.

I will still be submitting articles to *Saddle & Bridle*, and for the most part providing owners of golden horses a venue for their news. It truly is my hope that I can write about golden horses in shows and how they are doing.

For those interested, Sheila Barker in Kentucky has strong interest in our golden horses, I ask all of you to contact her by e-mail amsadbred@yahoo.com or call her (270) 531-6225. She wants to hear from you and organize owners together if possible.