

A VOICE FROM THE WOODS

Alexandra Layos

The summer flew by for most William Woods students, probably because they were so busy. Summer internships provided them experience in every aspect of the Saddlebred world, a good starting place for someone who may want to spend his or her life in this industry.



(Top) One of the many green buttons sported by Gayle Lampe's students at Louisville the night she received the Audrey Guttridge Award. (Right) Sandy Backer spends time with the Saddle Seat Teaching Techniques class, after speaking to them about her experiences in the horse industry.

As part of their summer internships, most of these students found their way to Louisville for the World's Championships. Along with their already busy schedules, they found time to support their WWU riding instructor, Gayle Lampe, as she received the Audrey Guttridge award for lifetime achievement as a professional horsewoman. All across the show grounds on that night, people could be seen sporting small green buttons with white lettering that read, "I've ridden with Lampe." This sea of green buttons showed just how many people have benefited from her teaching and invaluable advice through the years, and Sandy Backer, the woman distributing the buttons, only reached some of her many students. The students, past and present, must have been as proud to wear them as she was to see them.

For the moment however, these "horse trainers of tomorrow" are all back together again under the roof of the Gayle Lampe Saddle Seat Stable, working hard to learn all they can before being sent out to make their mark in this world of horse showing. It has already

been a busy few months.

On Saturday, September 1, the Saddle Seat Training Methods class took a trip to Callaway Hills to visit the legendary breeding farm, and see a few William Woods graduates in action. Jimmy Buschard and Eric Antman, now the head trainers at Callaway, as well as Brandi Foster, who just began working there full-time, and Austin Eversman, who works there part-time while she is still in school at William Woods, showed the group around.

Erica Mundt, a junior from Urbandale,

World Championships to our own World's Championships in Louisville. She has so much experience behind her and had great advice for the Teaching Techniques class. And though it could be applied to horses, most of the advice was simply about...life.

"Know the different ways people learn so you can communicate with more people, better," said Backer.

"Learn from your mistakes; be honest with your students. Be open-minded."

Backer went on to tell the story of how she ended up working at the United



Iowa, had the time of her life.

"We saw the young, talented training horses. Callaway's future still looks bright with these young prospects. We got to see Callaway's Claudette, Agatha Christie, Blue Norther, and Caramac," Mundt said.

Seeing Caramac was especially exciting for Mundt, the owner of Caraman, a Caramac baby.

"I've always wanted to see my horse's sire, so that was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me," she explained.

"It was also neat to see Eric and Jimmy working hard with Callaway. As Ms. Lampe said, it was a good way for us to see WWU students in their after-college careers," said Mundt.

Three days later, on September 4, WWU was visited by Sandy Backer, whose talks are always enjoyed by the saddle seat students. Backer is another WWU graduate, and she has gone on to become a well-known horse show secretary. She has worked in show offices of all kinds, from the United Mountain Horse

Mountain Horse World Championships in Harrodsburg, Ky.

"When I was first asked, my first reaction was 'United what?' But I decided to be open-minded and try it out, and it was a great experience," she explained.

She ended up working at the show tabulating scores with the MOS system on a computer.

"I learned a lot; it was really eye-opening," Backer said. "There were horses from all over the country. This really was their World's Championships. Their shows are a lot more family oriented than ours."

Backer spent time explaining to the class what it's like to work in the horse show office during our World's Championships. The show secretaries are often the first people an exhibitor or trainer will go to with a problem, whether or not they are the correct person. This means that not only do they have to be good at their job, but they have to know a lot

continued on page 269

without an escort and if the group was large enough, two escorts — one in front and one behind, I can remember one large group which required use of every hack horse in the barn; for that, a third escort was added at the middle of the group.

"Most of the lesson horses and even a few of the hack horses were Saddlebreds — not world champions but decent horses. There were private and group lessons. Weather permitting, lessons were conducted in the ring up on the hill behind the stable, otherwise in the aisle of the stable. On Friday nights, Glen had what he called 'Stable Students' where outside of show season, everyone came and rode together in the aisle, sort of a blend of a group lesson and a gymkhana.

"That first summer, someone else groomed at the horse shows and I remained at home at the stable, rubbing horses, mucking stalls, feeding. Week-ends when there was a show, we'd bandage legs of the horses that were going, pack up tack; then one of Chester Sayre's horse vans would pull up and we'd load tack trunks and horses and off they'd go."

The main shows that Glen's kids went to were on "the interstate circuit," overseen by The Interstate Horse Show Association. That circuit, then, was comprised (in no particular order) of the Wheeling show (still held at Oglebay at that time and, so, the one show I got to see that summer); Moundsville, W.V.; Waynesburg, Penn.; Washington, Penn.; Bedford, Penn.; Johnstown, Penn.; maybe Butler, Penn.; Canfield, Oh.; (technically, the Youngstown Charity Horse Show); Berea, Oh.

"There probably were a few others that I'm forgetting," Charlie says, "although I suppose that's not an unreasonable number of shows for a summer. These were not, in those days, small shows. They had a full complement of classes and classes were usually very well filled with good horses.

"That was before the Saddlebred classes exploded into the variety that exists now. There were, of course, Three-Gaited, Five-Gaited, (my two favorites) and Fine Harness classes as well as Roadsters (usually to bike; I can't recall if under saddle). There were classes for Equitation, English Pleasure, Walking Horses, Hunters, Open Jumpers, often Western Pleasure and Parade Horses."

Charlie explains that his time of being an actual employee of the Oglebay stable was only about a year and a half — spring 1955 through late summer 1956.

"From then through the early '60s, I rode there, hung out there a lot, lent a hand, went to horse shows with them and, helped there, all that at weekends." He kept the tie with Oglebay intact for several years, as he went into his career with electronics, traveling about to shows as his work allowed, sometimes with friends, sometimes alone. He managed to see — at least once — some of the most important ones: Louisville, Lexington and Shelbyville.

At shows closer to home, Charlie sought out the Oglebay stalls, borrowed a couple of coolers ("Remember those nice wool coolers?" he asks) and sacked out in an empty stall. "Then, because Glen and his students and grooms were my friends, I'd lend a hand in the morning and when they had classes," he says.

Were there but world and editorial word allowances enough, a great deal more could be gleaned from the experience and feelings of one man who a few decades ago might have become a trainer and has never lost his youthful compulsion to be around horses, "Especially Saddlebreds." Those words recurred often in his conversation with us. Charlie is reluctant to say a lot about people and horses he knew, lest he leave out someone or get details wrong, after so many years in another world. But here is his answer to one specific question:

Are you riding Saddlebreds in your lessons?

"No. I ride with a trainer named Liz Sanchez, northwest of Albuquerque. She began with Saddlebreds in Chicago, but when she came here, she found that New Mexico doesn't have many of them or much demand, since they are not well known here. She switched to Arabians."

Charlie took the opportunity at one point in the interview to say that he never considered being a groom menial work. He does not go so far as some of our interviewees have, to say he always knew how important he was to the horses he rubbed, whom he regarded as friends and fellow employees. He doesn't say he found it very gratifying to make them comfortable after work, and to see to their ongoing needs all the time. He says "it was just work that I liked. I just liked working with horses. I like horses and I like horse people." And, apparently, he likes *Saddle & Bridle*.



Voice From the Woods cont. from pg. 257

about everyone else's, and know a lot of random information in general.

She encouraged the students to remember how hard-working and stressed out the show secretaries are when approaching them with a problem, or even a simple entry. If they go on to become trainers, she encouraged them to make scratches early and to be kind to the people in the office, who probably have had as little sleep as the trainers on the grounds. Manners should not go out the window just because you're at Louisville.

"I think when people drive through the Kentucky State Fair they lose their common sense. They leave their brains at the East or West and priorities change..." Backer thought out loud. She's seen it many times, and she encouraged the students to remember, it really is "just" a horse show.

Backer also stressed being involved in other activities besides horses.

"[If you're going to make this your career] you have to have other interests. Don't let this industry suck all the life out of you. We tend to all go to a horse shows and lose track of the outside world."

Backer introduced a new idea being put into action during this year's American Royal: the Pink Ribbon class. The Pink Ribbon class is the Ladies Five-Gaited Championship on Friday night, held to raise money for breast cancer awareness. It is exactly what Backer means when she talks about "letting real life come into horse show life."

People who are participating pledge a certain amount of money per horse entered, so if you say ten dollars a horse and ten horses enter, your total pledge would be a hundred dollars.

Whether the class is an absolute success or even if it is a total flop, Backer is proud of the horse show management and its supporters for daring to try it. Something tells me at least, that it will be a success. Though often scared of change, horse people tend to come through for good causes, and this is certainly a good cause.

It is a daring move, probably scary for some, but "you have to throw yourself into situations you're scared of, or you won't grow." At least that's what Sandy Backer told our class.

Well, that's it for this month. Next month look forward to hearing about our trip to Mike Robert's new barn. Until next time, "May all your days be blue ribbon ones!"