

## The Evolution Of An Arabian Horsewoman

# Mary Trowbridge

by Mary Kir kman

When Mary Trowbridge won the 1991 U.S. National Championship in Park with Red Tape, the winner's owner grabbed the microphone from roving announcer Don McCann and blurted, "They told me a woman couldn't do it! Thank you, Mary."

Trowbridge was in her early 30s at the time. She had been working her way up as a professional for more than a decade, learning from talented horsemen and assembling a barn of loyal clients. She knew a glass ceiling when she bounced off one, and finally shattering it—as only the second woman ever to win the park championship—was sweet. She still treasures her tape of the moment when announcer Bill Carrington responded in his trademark Tennessee drawl, "Well, whoever told you that didn't know, now, did they?"

Now, Trowbridge smiles, the leading young women trainers are barely aware that such prejudice existed. That is good news, one supposes, but head-spinning when she remembers the challenges of not-so-long-ago.

Mary Trowbridge came up through the ranks, starting with no money and little instruction and progressing through national championships until she was finally training for one of the legends of the breed. When she looks at the industry now, she has a unique perspective that has never employed rose-colored glasses, despite her naturally optimistic personality. Today, increasingly, she is turning all the force of her experience toward understanding and shaping the future of the Arabian horse in America.



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Born Mary Harrigan, Trowbridge may have been something of a misfit in her family in those early years, but the strength of its influence on her is clear. Her parents and her older siblings were involved in journalism, and although she never seriously eyed a career in the press, she absorbed their sense of purpose and an unflinching editorial eye. Every four years, they were all in the eye of the hurricane that accompanied the country's earliest presidential primary, and the issues of the day were on her doorstep.

"I grew up as far north in New Hampshire as you can get without speaking French," she says wryly. "We were about seven miles from the first primary in the country, so we got them all before they were anybody, and they were desperate for attention."

Her father, Fred Harrigan, was a probate court judge who owned the weekly *Colebrook News and Sentinel*, and her mother, Esther Harrigan, was first a schoolteacher and then a stay-at-home mom. When Mary, the youngest, was 7 or 8, Mrs. Harrigan learned the publishing business and took on managing the company's financial accounts. They lived on a farm, but that, according to Mary, is a misnomer. "My brother has it now and he runs it as a working farm," she says, "but not a farm 'in the ground.' Up there, it's basically soft wood, rock, mud, gravel and black flies." It does, however, support sheep and horses, and when she was growing up, a few horses.

The newspaper, too, remains in family hands. When her parents retired, her brother John assumed its leadership, and recently passed it on to his daughter. So, the image of the small, fiercely-independent New England paper remains intact. The emphasis was on independent. On the one hand, a long relationship with the senior Bush family began when Fred Harrigan was covering George H. W. Bush during a campaign and they discovered that the Bushes had a dog named Fred, while the Harrigans had a dog named George. And there are stories from the other side of the aisle as well: her sister served as press secretary for Edmund Muskie in his 1972 run for the presidency. Various newspaper affiliations abounded; her brothers worked for the Manchester *Union Leader*, the New Hampshire *Sunday News* and the Los Angeles *Times*, while her sister moved on to *Time* and *Newsday*. The lesson Mary takes from it was that in those days,

people could "disagree without being disagreeable." Not only did journalism demand examining all sides of an issue, but the debate was more civil as well.

Trowbridge grew up virtually as an only child. Her brothers and sister, teenagers when she was born, were off to Princeton and Harvard (on scholarship) and points beyond, destinations that she frankly admits were never on her horizon. She had more immediate ambitions from the beginning. She wanted a horse.

"The deal was that I could have a horse as soon as I was old enough to carry a water bucket," she recalls. "I solved that by saving up pennies and going down to the hardware store and buying the smallest bucket I could find."

There was no money to buy her a horse, however, so she solicited locally for a free one. "Finally someone over in Milan called up and said, 'I have a horse for you and he's old enough to vote, so he should be safe.' Of course, that was when the voting age was 21, and nobody thought to ask, 'how long has he been voting?' He was just a fossil. But he was free and he was mine."

He was also patently unsafe, but she learned fast how to hang on. His name was Ahab The Arab, and his name was possibly the most Arabian thing about him. "He'd run away with me every single day until I got old enough and wily enough to replace things—curb chains, leather lip straps on Pelham bridles, something with a little more bite to it," she says. That was her first experience of a concept that is now like a mantra for her: "Evolution is assured, survival is not mandatory. It was survive or die."

Ahab The Arab makes a good story now, though. "He was not only a runaway, but he was feeble," she notes. "In the winter, the snow banks would be really high, and I remember that when he ran along the gravel roads on the way home, it was like a bobsled run. We had borium on him, but that didn't keep the knees from buckling! It was always safe enough because he would skid around the corners against the snow banks."

Riding lessons were few and far between, but Trowbridge improved her riding ability and even showed Rab for several years. She also learned early skills as an instructor. "My mother was my first amateur rider," she recalls.



“She and I grew up together. I was her last child; she had me late in life, in her mid-40s, at a time when women didn’t have late children. She was unusual. In an era when all women did was bring up the family and stay at home—and then once the kids were brought up, play bridge in the afternoon and drink gin—my mother was the only one in her set who wanted to do outdoor sports. She wanted to learn how to ride. And there was no one to teach her except a recalcitrant teenager.”

The difference between then and now amazes her. “Today we’ve gone so far ahead, advancing the cause of any adult that wants to live out their dream, as well as women who want respect in the world place,” she says. “My mother loved to ride, and had to work so hard back then to be accepted because she embraced that passion. When she died, we had her saddle and pictures of her driving her horse on top of her casket, and people thought we and she were all just crazy.”

Looking back, she realizes that horses were a real link between her childhood and her present. “Part of our business is mentoring young kids now,” she says, “and over the years I’ve had lots of parents bring their kid in and the first thing they ask me is, ‘what can horses do for my child?’ I have a tremendous amount of respect for horses and a real passion for them because I wasn’t a very nice teenager, and the horses saved my life. I grew up as the weird kid in a small class, and the only thing I had to do was something that nobody else did except for my mother—in a small and intensely critical northern New England town. People up there are fabulous when the chips are down, but if the chips aren’t down, their pastime is judging you by what you are doing and how you are doing it, and it’s never positive.”

Although money was tight, she and her mother showed their horses, earning enough cash at one event to finance the gasoline to go to the next one (on prize funding that might be a collection of five-dollar awards for third or fourth places). If an overnight was required, they slept in their trailer or an empty horse stall, but they both loved the circuit. Mrs. Harrigan often said to Mary about their equine activities, “Blessed be not quite enough.” Over the years, Trowbridge came to value that assessment: early on, she learned to be focused and creative, habits that would be invaluable later.

High school graduation forced Trowbridge to take a serious look at her future, but she wasn’t sure that her addiction to horses translated into a professional career. “So I went to college at Plymouth State University,” she says, “and I made it about eight months without a horse and said, ‘okay, that’s it; I have to bring a horse down. I don’t like these people well enough.’ You have to remember, my goal in life in my high school yearbook was to work with animals and learn how to get along with people.”

Then she took it a step further, and over spring break of her sophomore year, signed on to help out at Sir William Farm in Hillsdale, N.Y. Bill Bohl, now manager at Quarry Hill Farm, was the longtime and highly-respected manager/trainer. What began as a two-week assignment stretched to eight years, the first four at Sir William, under the ownership of Leon and Doris Rubin, and then into its years as Bridlewood Arabians, under Bohl’s ownership. That launched her career. She laughs that she still hasn’t figured out what she wants to be when she grows up, but then adds reflectively, “I haven’t found anything else I want to do more.”

From Bohl, she learned what she describes as the ABCs of horsemanship. “Bill’s influence was the best,” she says. “He’s a brilliant, intuitive horseman.” Actually, she adds, he was more than that. “If it weren’t for Bill having given me the immense opportunity to grow and expand that he did, I would never have become a horse trainer. There were many, many girls in the industry working for much higher profile farms with, frankly, much more talented horses than the straight Polish \*Etiw and \*Sambor offspring that we had, who never progressed into trainers because they were not allowed an opportunity during those glass-ceiling days.”

Bohl had learned from Bob Hart Sr., and like that older generation, taught more by example than instruction. “He would just say, ‘you’re doing good, keep going,’” Mary remembers. She also remembers her first “project horse” at Sir William, a colt who was known around the barn as Hotdog.

“When I got a halter and lead rope on him, he ran right through a shed,” she says. “He wasn’t hurt, but it was like a cartoon—there was a horse silhouette cut out of



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Mary  
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the shed. I got so frustrated with him because he was a nut, but he could trot!” Hotdog was coming 3 at the time, a mottled grey shedding out his chestnut hair, and he had lost pigment around his eyes and nostrils, so he had a face like a reverse of the Joker in Batman comics. But with Bohl’s tutelage and Hotdog’s challenge, Trowbridge learned perseverance and routine, the step-by-step horsemanship that has been her foundation ever since, and a reliable basis for everything she has since learned from other horsemen.

She credits Bohl also with instilling a real appreciation for the people who come in and out of her barn. “You never know when you’re going to meet someone again,” she says. “He treats everyone with respect. If there is a word that describes Bill Bohl, it is ‘gentleman.’”

A year and a half after she went to Sir William, just as her professional commitment was developing, change came to her personal life when she met a young cattleman named Pat Trowbridge. (The area around Hillsdale was home to many of the country’s top Angus farms, and Mary notes that the ratio of four horse girls to “20 or 30 cow jocks” did not go unappreciated in equine ranks.)

“We will be married 30 years this coming June,” she says. “Describe Pat? In a nutshell: over his desk is a sign that says, ‘To save time, let’s just assume I know everything.’ The annoying part is that he usually does!”

Then she gets serious. “I don’t know how anybody does a business like this alone. The truth is, there’s not a person out there that knows both of us that won’t tell you that I’m a lucky, lucky dog to have him, and that I actually think that he’s about the smartest guy I’ve ever met.” She shrugs that yeah, she knows, that’s gooey. So what. It’s true.

During the early years, Pat managed several major cattle farms, and because the Angus cattle and Arabian horse industries have paralleled each other in some respects, his experience has provided unique insight into the couple’s horse operation. Over the years that they both worked for other people, they also learned more about how they wanted to do business when they were on their own.

After those developmental years, she finds it mildly amusing how quickly young horsemen today expect to

start hauling down ribbons. Like others of her generation, she went through several years (eight, she recalls) in the beginning without bringing home an award from Nationals, hanging on simply by hard work. “I had clients that believed in me,” she says, and cites others whose kind words at critical junctures proved invaluable. “There were people like Gil Chavez and Chuck Siemon and Jim Fisher and Tim Shea, who would walk by and say, ‘I know you didn’t get a prize, but you’re doing good.’ That was enough to get me to the next spring. Harry Cooper was a huge one; God bless him, he didn’t know me from Adam at the time. He just knew that I was working for Bill Bohl so I must be kind of okay, because Bill is one of the best guys in the universe. Harry would watch me ride out of the ring without a prize at Buckeye, and he’d just say, ‘Mary Trowbridge, you had a nice ride,’ and that would be enough for me—just people giving you that ‘come on, girl, keep on keeping on.’”

And then everything came together, ironically—and poignantly—right after she lost her parents. Two weeks after Fred Harrigan died, she and Pat went into business for themselves. Six weeks later, with just four horses, no stall drapes, no flowers, no frills, she went to the U.S. Nationals and won the park championship with Red Tape.

Appropriately, Tim Shea was a part of the triumph. Early in her career, Bill Bohl had arranged for her to spend Januarys with Shea, his former assistant, to further her education, and Shea had become a mentor. “Tim was always there at crucial times when I needed him,” she reflects. One of those times was Red Tape’s 1991 U.S. Nationals. “We weren’t at the top of the pile in the semis. Red Tape was a finals-type horse; we didn’t know it at the time, but he had moon blindness, so he hated a crowd. I remember going and sitting on Tim’s tack trunk in the morning, and when he came in, he said, ‘Do you need a hand?’ And I said, ‘Yep!’ and he was right there. That was very special, because that year, Tim showed Hucklebey Berry to an unanimous win, I showed Red Tape to an unanimous win, and Bill was judging.”

Even so, many of the top men trainers still referred to her as “that girl.” “They’re all friends of mine now,” she laughs, “but back then, you had to be pretty hardheaded when you rode through the gate against them or they’d eat you for lunch.”



Another turning point came three years later when she and Pat rented the farm which is their home now from Broadway producer Mike Nichols. Nichols, one of the industry's premier breeders, was in the process of dispersing his herd; he had sent a few young horses to Trowbridge, who at the time was located in Winsted, Conn., to train for sale. Within a year, he sent the last few mares there as well, and one, Rio Rita, produced a Desperado foal who was so beautiful that he renewed Nichols' interest in breeding Arabians. It was an interest that would last for another dozen years, and when Mary and Pat began looking for another farm to lease, Nichols offered his Bridgewater, Conn., property.

"We had fun," Mary says simply of the time Nichols remained a client. "He was a great guy to work with; we learned a lot and had a very important life friendship that so far has transcended anything business could put in its way." When Nichols finally dispersed his horses in 2004, she and Pat were able to put together a deal to buy the farm.

Through the years, a list of formidable contenders accompanied Mary Trowbridge and her growing stable of amateurs to awards. They couldn't all be listed, so she settles for a few of the best known. After Red Tape, one headliner was Emperor Hadrian, a Nichols-bred Half-Arabian owned by George and Susan Schramm. "I was pretty proud of him," she says. The son of El Ghazi and Northern Empress logged U.S. National Championships in Half-Arabian English Pleasure and the English Pleasure Futurity, a national reserve championship in junior English and three national reserve championships in Half-Arabian English Pleasure Amateur. "He's a pretty great horse that went on for three different owners to be successful for all of us.

"Bluebeard NA was the same way," she continues. "He won the U.S. National Championship in Half-Arabian Country English Pleasure Junior Horse, then the amateur and then the open championship, after being bred and foaled here. Firefly NA was another—won the English Pleasure Futurity, and then went on and was a national reserve champion amateur horse. She was very successful for an older amateur.

"What made it so special was that we bred them here at the farm, as well as shaped their careers for a variety of owners. Some of our clients, like Mike, loved to breed great ones, and many others are interested in owning, developing and showing them on." It is a kind of synergy, she adds, that remains a goal.

In her view, breeding decisions are a joint affair. "I give everybody my best input and then ultimately, as a breeder or an owner, if it's not something that excites you and that you feel responsible for, then it's not worth doing. Then it becomes a passive investment and frankly, too easy to throw the buck on the trainer. My job is to work with people to the best of my ability and give them as much feedback and information as I can."

Hers was a quiet progression through the ranks over the years, and now, as Trowbridges Ltd. carves out its place in the industry of the future, that sort of sustained, consistent growth is just how Mary Trowbridge likes it. "You may not be as glamorous as others, or as famous or sought-after, but if you do your job and keep on keeping on, the wheel will roll," she says. "It may not be as shiny and it might not go as fast, but longevity is a big deal to me. Especially now."



At a time when nearly everyone is discussing how to improve the breed, Mary Trowbridge is one of a growing cadre of Arabian horsemen who are beginning to think out of the box when examining the future. Competition for people's discretionary funds in today's society is too intense, they point out, for individual breeds to go it alone easily, so they address the Arabian's place in the horse world.

"The equine industry as a whole is challenged," she points out. "It's not just the Arabian industry. We're in the 21st century. For the first time, we have a generation of people growing up the majority of whom (in the U.S.) have had no close affinity to equines. We have spent the last 10 or 15 years saying 'look at us versus the Quarter Horse, the Saddlebred, the Thoroughbred.' I think there has never been a time when the equine industry has needed to unite more than it does now; we should be thinking about the



*Art  
Mary  
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end of breed-specific events, and realizing the strengths that we can all play off of together as we compete with other recreational hobbies for people's leisure dollars. We need to recognize the fact that the Arabian is going to draw its own type of personality, just as a Quarter Horse is going to draw its own type of personality—and we need to allow those personalities to co-exist, just as we see in dog shows. There is a horse out there for every personality and type, and people need horses in their lives.”

That involvement in horses, Arabians in particular, is still a formidable draw to the general public is evident, she says; one only has to look at the massive shift in the show ring over the past 15 years, as amateur and junior exhibitor classes have filled the schedules. “I know that horses are going to stay an integral part of people's lives,” she offers. “They are the only animal that willingly has hooked their future and survival on humans, even more so than dogs and cats.”

The trick now, she says, is to figure out what has to change for the breed to survive and grow. “A lot of us are in panic mode right now because our situation is changing,” she concedes. “This is a real situation of ‘survival is not mandatory, but evolution is assured.’”

One challenge, she indicates, is in recognizing that the show ring may not always be the center of the action for the breed of the future—although it will almost certainly still be there and still be important. But what will draw the most new people in? How will they prioritize what they do with their horses? And how can some of that translate to supporting the shows too?

“I don't quite know the answer to that,” Trowbridge admits candidly, “but that's why we've changed our business. While we still aim at the pinnacle of competition with a large number of our barn, we also have made a very conscious decision to embrace the starting market as well. Our motto now is, ‘From start to finish, we're here for the people that want to do it right.’ This to me encompasses the concept that we all begin our journeys somewhere, whether you are talking about your first riding lesson at 4 or 40, or your horse's first biting rig introduction at 2, or your first foal or first horse or first show horse or first national champion.

“Of course, we're still aiming at the top awards,” she clarifies, “and while we're never one of the farms that hangs up gardens of roses (partly because we've always shown fewer numbers than most in order to give as much value to each client as possible), we still have hung up a tricolor at our National events every year since Pat and I have been in business together. Just because people are just starting out in this business, it doesn't mean that they don't want or deserve the opportunity to start out *right*, correctly, so that their journey with this breed is one that begins and ends with positive and professional customer service and training. But certainly, for us, a national championship is not the only measure of success that we live by.”

As part of that philosophy, Pat and Mary Trowbridge and their staff have been aggressively pursuing the leisure riding market since they moved to the farm 17 years ago, and for the past seven or eight years have been increasing their lesson program. Now, Mary says, 50 to 70 percent of their client base is new to the Arabian industry, and most are new to the equine industry. The rewards have been noticeable. “It's about what horses bring to your life,” she says, “and let me tell you, these people are all Arabian horse people and will be for the rest of their lives.”

Perhaps it is that daily awareness of the Arabians' allure that keeps her calm when looking at the future. That today's discussions of the years to come can get as heated as they do is disturbing to her. “Why can't we agree to disagree? We can be passionate about what we are about without it being an insult to those who don't agree with us. We have to be able to hear about each other's areas of importance and expertise and respect that. It's very similar to the political world we live in; in our own Arabian world, if we don't start to appreciate each other's differences and embrace them instead of thinking everyone has to be the same, we're in trouble. We'll wind up having a few people who will spend a ton of money and many more who say, ‘you know what, that's not for me, I'm going elsewhere.’ That's a real shame. That doesn't do the Arabian horse any good.

“Sometimes we seem to forget about the positive,” she reflects. “We are so much like our horses; we flip our tail over our backs and snort and blow and take off in



Sparagowski

a million different directions, but at the same time, ultimately, we're really thoughtful, sensitive people who are really versatile. And we're very talented and we have a real ability to step to the forefront.

"I see that momentum starting," she continues. "I don't have a crystal ball, but I see the momentum changing for the Arabian community right now. I look at what Martha (Murdock) did at the World Equestrian Games—that was *huge*. We were on a world stage, and I mean a *world stage*, with people from all over the world. And Mrs. Tankersley, with the museum and everything she did to support the Arabian presence at the WEG. There were WEG banners on light poles all over Lexington and right next to all of them were banners for the Gift of the Desert Arabian exhibit—in the absolute hub of the horse industry. It got huge publicity, and then you got out to the Horse Park and saw Arabian horses competing in endurance with the sheiks riding them ... " She can go on, listing all the publicity and positive feedback that emerged from the Arabian presence at the World Equestrian Games.

It's time, she says, for Arabian breed professionals to take more of a part in these mass-market promotions, both in large public arenas and at home. "I see a cycle of possibility where we can bring about a whole new appreciation for the Arabian horse, but our outreach is going to have to be industry-wide. It can't just be the one or two or 10 of us who are reaching out communally now. We need to think about where we want to be in 25 years, and it has to be outside of our circle."

Trowbridge has seen firsthand the benefits of home-based promotion. "We started doing one event a year, an annual Christmas open house that is free to the public," she says. "We never advertised it in the breed magazines; we weren't targeting existing Arabian *aficionados* or even existing horse owners at this particular event. We advertised it in the upscale area magazines and put it on the event calendars. We have coffee and hot chocolate, we set up a little display area in the arena, and we have carrots for the horses and cookies for the kids. We have open barn for an hour, and at the end we play music and turn loose about 10 horses and I talk about Arabians. Then we bring out one or two horses wearing Santa hats and poinsettia garlands, and we put every kid

on them who wants to have their picture taken on an Arabian horse. Now we have people email us in August and September for the dates because they want to bring the family. People are happy as soon as they touch the doorknob—and we sell horses through it."

At their latest open house, December 11, 2010, a crowd of 250 to 300 was on hand, and on the following Monday morning, she was responding to those who had expressed interest in owning an Arabian. It has been the same with other programs they have run at the farm over the years.

"Everybody has to do that kind of thing, and if they don't realize it by now, I don't know what to tell them," she concludes. "People say 'you're in a good area' or 'you're set up to do that.' But there is discretionary income everywhere, and if you're not in a great economic area, then your expenses are not as high as mine, so you don't have to charge as much for your services. It all equals out in opportunity. There are potential Arabian enthusiasts everywhere, and if anyone needs a recipe for how to do what we've been doing here, I'll give it to them. I call it a recipe for renewal."



Perhaps one reason Mary Trowbridge focuses so steadily on a positive future for the Arabian industry is that she feels the horses have given her so much; charting a course for the future is part of giving back to the breed. She is already known for her work in founding the Arabian Horsemen's Distress Fund, and her ongoing role in its administration. Participation at the WEG, Equine Affaires and the like is all part of that scenario.

"I know why the cowboys want a great horse," she observes. "It will take you where you want to go. Arabians have taken me all over the world, and I've met great people, across all economic and social levels."

Memories flood in easily, many based on the people she has come to know through horses. There were the unforgettable grooms in South Africa: although they are now equal as citizens, she found it apparent that they had lived underprivileged lives—but their gentleness and horsemanship created a common understanding and



*TOP, LEFT: Pat and Mary Trowbridge with her Arabian Professional & Amateur Horseman's Association (APAHA) Horsewoman Of The Year Award in 2004.*

*TOP, RIGHT: Mary Trowbridge speaking at the APAHA Horsemen's Awards Banquet in 2006.*

*MIDDLE: Members of the APAHA, left to right: Carole Stohmann, Kathie Hart, Michele Betten, Mary Trowbridge, Mary Jane Brown, and Liz Bentley.*

*BOTTOM: Mary Trowbridge, representing the Horsemen's Distress Fund, with Publisher Lara Ames at the Arabian Horse Times Readers' Choice Awards Banquet in 2010.*



appreciation. She can still feel their pride in their horses, and the miracle of their mutual feelings. And then there were the gauchos she met in a remote camp at Gina Pelham's Haras La Catalina in Argentina ("if I disappear, it will be to learn real horsemanship from those guys") ... and the birthday dinner that Marion Richmond cooked for her in Australia ... and the warm friendships that blossomed after her first trip to Poland—all the kindred spirits, courtesy of the Arabian horse. And the many unsung heroes everywhere who are, she says, so passionate about their horses.

Looking back at her nearly 30 years as a professional in the Arabian breed, Mary Trowbridge demurs when asked to cite a particular highlight of her life. "If there is any one thing that brings a smile, it is that Pat and I can own this place," she says. "We take a tremendous amount of pride in it. It's in a beautiful area, although it's not really a beautiful property. It has been made beautiful by the passion of a lot of people, including Mike Nichols and Don DeLongpré when they were here, and now Pat and me and the people who work for us and the people we work for. We think of ourselves as the hub of a wheel with spokes that come out of it, and although they're all different, they all want to go in the same direction."

Some of her satisfaction is the knowledge that other than \$15,000 she received in an inheritance, she and Pat have earned everything themselves. "We've never had backers," she says, and adds dryly, "or, as Pat would say, our backers are our backs."

Another point of pride is the farm's unbroken lifespan of more than 40 years of breeding Arabian horses, a rare achievement in this age. "It has so much history," Mary says. "Sometime I want to put up brass plates on the stalls and paddocks with the names of the famous horses who have lived there. I'll have to get Don DeLongpré and Richard Petty to tell where so many of them were—Barbary, \*Enoss, \*Fantazja, \*Elkana and \*Elkin, \*Eter and others from the Nichols and Nichols-DeLongpré years. And then since we've been here, there's been Red Tape, Santa Fe Style, Emperor Hadrian, Bluebeard NA and scores of others. They've all called this home."

In addition to approximately 40 show horses, the farm now hosts three stallions—Triften, Burning Springs and A Major Fire—and a selection of broodmares. The human family includes, in addition to Mary and Pat, Michele Lomba, assistant office manager, instructor, and barn manager; co-trainer Lindsey Knight; and Matt Conway, who assists Mary and backs up Pat Trowbridge.

"Another thing I learned from Bill Bohl is how important it is for me to pay it forward to other aspiring trainers," Trowbridge says. "The most notable to me is my best friend and training partner now, Lindsey Knight. She used to be a youth rider for us, and today after a formal college education culminating in a degree in psychology and several apprenticeships and training jobs on her own, she has joined us back at the farm as a fellow trainer and the architect of our lesson program. She's one of the most dynamic young horsemen I've ever met (notice I don't dissect that between male and female), and the responsibility for the continuation of this farm is thankfully shared with us by Lindsey, Matt and Michele."

Despite the dedication of a lifetime, Trowbridge admits that for a long time, she sometimes wondered about her career—not because she didn't like what she did, but because when she looked at the serious issues her journalistic family took on, she wondered if somewhere along the line, she had shirked some responsibility. "Before mother died, I apologized to her for not doing something more worthwhile with my life," she says. Esther Harrigan's answer was golden. "She looked at me and said, 'You're bringing people happiness with what you do, and there is nothing better to do than that.'"

Every year, when Trowbridges Ltd. is an annual stop on a day trip of United Nations diplomatic families who visit Bridgewater, Mary is reminded of the real value of what she does. Again and again, she sees the response of people to her horses, but it is always new, always impressive. "If the world wanted to adopt an ambassador animal," she says, "they would adopt the Arabian horse." ■

