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By Jack Coraggio

When she was a girl, Lindsey Knight harbored an open and unrelenting love for horses, as many little girls do. Decades later, her love for horses and commensurate respect for their strength, beauty and talent has never waned nor weakened.

Hers was not a passing childhood fancy, one that time and circumstance eventually diminished. She's now a national champion trainer, instructor and advocate for these stately creatures.

Ms. Knight started young, taking her first ride as a 3-year-old. Some might say she was training.

Six or seven years later, she already had her heart set on a career involving horses. Her father must have seen it, and he certainly encouraged her devotion. When she was 9, he first drove her from their home in Massachusetts to Trowbridge's Ltd., in Bridgewater.

Then he drove her back down again, and again, and again. For Ms. Knight, it soon became a weekly endeavor. In the summers, she essentially lived at the rural horse farm and training facility.

"I wanted to come here, this is the best Arabian and half-Arabian facility in New England, in my opinion," said Ms. Knight, who recently saw one of the horses she trained win an amateur category of the U.S. National Arabian and Half-Arabian Horse Show. "So my dad started driving me here, two and a half hours one way."

Now she's 30, and her determination is something to admire. Early on, she recognized the training and unrelenting dedication a future with horses would require, and, as is evident some 20 years later, she wasn't deterred.

Though it wasn't always the case, Ms. Knight is now a local resident. At the place where she was raised part-time, Trowbridge's, she works full-time for owners Pat and Mary Trowbridge.

"We've known her since she was 9, yes, and she is the most tenacious student we've ever had," said Ms. Trowbridge. "She is very intuitive and focused, but in a quiet way. Lindsey has a lot going on under the surface."

When she was a student of Mrs. Trowbridge's, starting at 9, Ms. Knight enjoyed a reasonably successful junior career in the Arabian circuit. She later studied psychology and business at Skidmore College in upstate New York, where she was part of the polo team and participated in other equestrian sports. After graduation, she worked some show barns in the South, but by 2004 she came home.

"This is what I call home, right here," said Ms. Knight from an office within the massive 50-horse stable.

She does get away, but not often without horses. Trowbridge's and a number of its horses are annually represented in a series of summer-long saddle seat (a Trowbridge's specialty) competitions nationwide, all of which culminate in October's U.S. National Arabian and Half-Arabian Horse Show. This year was the 42nd annual for the championship show, conducted in Tulsa, Okla., and, as it has before, Trowbridge's returned to Connecticut victorious.



Lindsey Knight with Spirit of Santa Fe at
Trowbridge's Ltd. in Bridgewater.

Photo by Laurie Gaboardi.

“We just returned from the National Championships,” Ms. Knight said. “We took 11 horses and had a successful show; had one that was a national champion and a bunch that placed in the Top ten.”

For the second year in a row, Krem dela Krewe won in the Amateur Country Pleasure category.

Country pleasure and English pleasure fall under the saddle seat umbrella, and as such, represent the primary focuses of Trowbridge’s. Basically, when people go to the Bridgewater facility to learn how to ride, it’s pretty well understood that Ms. Knight or Ms. Trowbridge will teach that style of riding.

And Ms. Knight knows how to teach a champion.

“I am pleasantly surprised she decided to put her energy into this,” said Mrs. Trowbridge about her star pupil, before soon rethinking those words. “Actually, not surprised but pleased. And I’m definitely not surprised she is as good at it as she is.”

Whether she knows it or not, Ms. Knight conveys how much riding, particularly saddle seat style, constitutes both an art and a sport.

Country pleasure riding is extremely competitive, and footage of the national competition shows a ring of riders, all finalists dressed primly in traditional English manor riding clothes and hats, circling around as three judges critique their technique.

It’s not uncommon to see equestrians and their horses try to upstage one another in a competition. One sidles up to another to showboat and graciously flaunt trotting skills. It’s the equestrian answer to basketball court trash-talking.

To the untrained eye, the event appears to adhere to a fairly loose structure. Horses don’t follow each other single file, they don’t race and they don’t jump steeplechases. Country pleasure is for gentlemen and gentlewomen. It’s denoted by the natural gaits of the walk, trot and canter, but often may require incorporating a strong trot or hand gallop.

The horses are judged on their manners, performance, quality and conformation, and perhaps most importantly, the horses are to give the impression of being a pleasure to ride.

“Country pleasure is very mannerly, but is still very exciting,” explained Ms. Knight. “It feels like you’re flying. It just feels so fun.”

It is very graceful, reminiscent of a horse ballet. In that way, it is an art.

“It is an interesting sport, both the horse and the rider are athletes,” furthered Ms. Knight. “They have to work together, and their endeavor is one. It’s a shared experience, and there’s nothing else quite like it.”

Anyone interested in learning more may call Trowbridge’s Ltd. at 860-354-8926, or visit www.trowbridgesltd.com.



Ms. Knight aboard one of her charges in a photograph she provided.