

A FJORD AT THE DEVON HORSE SHOW



by Wendy Luscombe

Lendon Gray, a long-time pony advocate and member of the 1980 and 1988 United States Olympic Dressage team member, asked me to bring Koriakin to participate in a pony demonstration at Devon Horse Show before the main evening Grand Prix performances. Six ponies of different breeds were to perform while Lendon narrated and talked about the ponies and their breeds. Of course, I said I would go!

We got there at 11:00 in the morning and began to set up. Our pony demonstration was at 6:00 that evening. The format of our demonstration was to show the versatility of ponies in dressage and other disciplines, as well as their suitability for any child or smaller adult rider of any ability. The message was, "Have fun, do lots of things and ride a horse or pony that is suitable for you." There were six of us in the demonstration the first evening. Rachel Chowanec, Mica Mabragana, Mackenzie Kurtz, Jocelyn Weiss, Fern Feldman and myself.

Our first performance was essentially a trial run - we came into the Dixon Oval Arena, (which is the main "Big Kahuna" ring with all the stands and seats thousands - although they were not all jammed packed that evening). We worked our horses (I mean ponies) individually while Lendon read a description of each of us. Included in the demo were: a 13.2hh event pony that did dressage; a pony that was being trained by a professional to help

his owner learn dressage; a home-bred and trained pony working at the FEI level; a pony breeding stallion that was helping to improve breeding stock; an FEI pony competing successfully in open divisions with his amateur adult rider and a pony that kept his owner able to continue successfully in the sport after multiple joint replacements.

Lendon introduced Koriakin of Narnia and me and happened to mention that his nickname was Harrison Fjord. The crowd loved this one and somehow Indiana Jones music played over the speakers. When we had finished, Lendon told us to "Take it off" Well to me that means one thing - I headed off 'round the outside of the ring in a two point as fast as I could get Koriakin to go (which isn't that fast). He did not buck of course but some of the other ponies got quite excited and the crowd loved it. Lendon learned her lesson and had Fern lead us off after that, but I got my flat out victory gallop in the Dixon Oval!

Saturday evening was the even bigger "Kahuna" event and we warmed the crowd up immediately before the show highlight, which is the Grand Prix Freestyle. We had another rider join us that night - Lauren Chumley, an extremely talented young rider (currently working with Silke Rembacz) riding a sport pony. Lauren also rode a Fjord (SNF Maarta) to the US open Preliminary event championship. (see *Fjord Herald* issue #85 - Editor) Definitely a girl after my heart.

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We improved our format, entering in pairs. Lendon introduced us in a similar way to the previous evening however, this time, she asked anyone in the crowd 5' 6' and under to stand up, anyone that height riding dressage to stand up and then asked only those who rode ponies to stay standing. Just about everyone sat down and Lendon said she was sorry for those who had to sit down!

I received a lot of cheers about carrying on riding with one natural joint, and Lendon told the story of Harrison Fjord picking up my crutch and handing it to me, which was also very popular with the crowd. Announcer Brian O' Connor, bless him, played my Indiana Jones music again and had a little negotiation with Lendon about how old we all were. The highlight of the evening was when Lendon had pre-arranged with Mackenzie Kurtz to slip out and have Courtney King-Dye (of the 2008 US Olympic Dressage team) come back riding Mackenzie's 13.2hh pony. Courtney's legs were almost on the ground and the point was that even Olympic riders ride ponies. Well the crowd went wild again. The rest of us were lined up facing the stands and when the applause for Courtney came, I dropped Koriakin's reins and clapped with the audience with both hands - I was making a point about how unruffled Fjords are. Then we were presented with fabulous ribbons and went off to do our victory lap (two victory laps in the space of two days in the Dixon Oval was getting to me). Fern led us, as per Lendon's direction, but I managed to draw abreast with her (she said overtook) after the first lap, then we all took off again for another lap. Lauren's pony dropped on one knee and performed a bow, the crowd went wild.

The third day was Sunday and we were on at 11:30 am. Our ponies were a little tired and we were tired of cleaning muddy tack (Fern taught me how to get the crud out of my boots with a

tooth brush, I was very impressed and am collecting old toothbrushes). Anyway, we rose to the occasion and again it was raining - this time very heavily. Did you realize that white breeches, when they are really wet, are totally transparent?

We did our routine and had perfected our pas de sept - can you imagine seven ponies working in a dressage ring and we never bumped into one another - a few near misses perhaps but never will I listen to anyone complain about small arenas again. After we finished on Sunday, Sam Barrish, the USDF president, came to our barn area to say "hello." He arrived just at the point we were hosing down breeches, changing out of our riding clothes and doing sundry unglamorous things, but I think he has a sense of realism.

Lendon did a fabulous job varying the program and commentary each day and thanked all our individual trainers by name - I think the demonstrations were very popular. 🐾



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