



The Equestrian Community Mourns the Loss of one of our Greatest Contributors

Mrs. Marjorie V. Kittredge, 1924-2010

The USEA published this wonderful tribute:

With the passing of Mrs. Marjorie V. Kittredge on June 23, the USEA has lost one of its dearest friends and one of its longest serving members. Beloved by thousands, Marj, of Boxford Massachusetts, was a truly outstanding example of what a human being can accomplish through dedication, hard work, commitment and above all caring, and she will be missed by everyone fortunate enough to have known her. The USEA extends its deepest condolences to Marj's three children, Lucinda Sullivan and her husband Craig of Roxbury, Vermont, Charles Kittredge and his wife Susan of Shelburne, Vermont, and Ellen Scott and her husband Warren of Chester Springs, Pennsylvania; her 12 grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and four stepchildren.

Services will be held at the Cochran Chapel in Andover, Massachusetts at 1 p.m. on July 6, 2010. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Windrush Farm Therapeutic Equitation, Inc. www.windrushfarm.org.

As a tribute to this great horsewomen the USEA has updated the profile of Marj that was printed in *Eventing USA* (formerly USCTA News) in 1997 and shares the life of this amazing woman below.

Marj Kittredge

By Jo Whitehouse

Imagine a child born with spinabifidia; an accident victim who faces life in a wheelchair; a vision impaired teenager who will never drive a car. Imagine victims of

the drug thalidomide who were born with undeveloped limbs, or the head trauma patient desperately fighting to regain a normal life. Isn't it sad that they will never know the joy of riding and caring for a horse - never know the thrill of equestrian competition, or the simple pleasure of hacking quietly through the countryside-or will they?

Thanks to Mrs. Marjorie Kittredge and her team of dedicated staff and volunteers at Windrush Farm Therapeutic Equitation, Inc. **THEY COULD AND THEY DID!**



Marj, as she was known to everyone, grew up a "cavalry kid" and was taught to ride by cavalry instructors at Fort Riley, Kansas. After high school, she attended Vassar where she majored in zoology and minored in psychology and sociology. Her father firmly believed that if you are privileged to have a good education then you are obliged to use it to educate someone else. The stage was set for

Marj's lifetime career.

The Outward Bound program attracted Marj as its philosophy that everyone can do more than they think they can closely mirrored her own. She became actively involved and served as a trustee of the organization.

In 1950, Marj, her husband and two older children, Lucinda and Charles, moved to Windrush Farm in Boxford, Massachusetts where youngest daughter Ellen was born.

The farm was home to some sheep and chickens, but very soon a few polo ponies arrived and the children were taught to ride. Marj, who cannot live without a horse of her own, bought a Thoroughbred mare off the track and retrained her. Folly became the foundation mare in a program that was to consume Marj's life.

Marj had long understood the benefits that horses and riding could bring to emotionally disturbed children and after Folly was retrained she was used to teach six such children. Around this time, Marj became aware of a disabled riding program started by Lida McCowan at the now famous Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center in Augusta, Michigan. She had found her purpose, her passion and a way to fulfill her father's desire that she use her education to educate others. She went about developing a program that would use horses and riding as therapy for people with physical and psychological problems. In 1964, she established Windrush Farm Therapeutic Equestrian, Inc. which has since grown into one of the most successful handicapped riding programs in the country, servicing more than 300 physically and emotionally challenged riders each year.

In addition, Marj became involved at the national level when she was very active in the creation of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), which now, among many other things, handles accreditation of riding centers and certification of riding instructors. Together with Fran Jostwich, Marj wrote the book *How to Ride: Aspects and Answers* further proof of her enormous versatility and talent.

Horses That Can Do It All

Marj had taken Folly from a racehorse to family pet to riding instructor and therapist. She then turned her into an event horse. Believing that it's not good for a horse to be ridden slowly and incorrectly all the time Marj made certain that the horses in her program were always ridden regularly by good riders to keep them well-balanced and correct. Her horses taught handicapped riders during the week and at the weekend they hunted, evented or were used in Pony Club lessons. Marj knew the horses thrived on being involved in a variety of activities and were mentally and physically better for it.

Marj's children were always a priority and when daughter Ellen expressed an interest in joining a Pony Club Marj went into action with the United States Pony Clubs. She served as Co-District Commissioner of the Myopia Pony Club with Trish Moseley for some years and during that time became involved in the national safety aspect. She also supported the Inter-Pacific Exchange program which arranged for pony clubbers from Pacific Rim countries to compete against each other in a learning environment. Ellen graduated with a "B" rating. "She would have gone on to her "A", but she had to choose and she chose college."

Eventing held a very special place in Marj's life. She was a USEF "R" rated dressage and eventing judge and traveled the country officiating at events.

Winner of the individual Olympic bronze medal in Atlanta, Kerry Millikin, credits her solid start as a horsewoman to Marj. "I learned my basics from Marj which provided the foundation for everything else," she said. "I am very grateful to her for having high standards and not accepting anything that was not correct - I carry that with me today. If you look at a picture of me as a little kid and then look at one today, the basic position hasn't changed that much. What you originally learn is what you often keep and I remember her being very picky about our hands. I had rough hands and she wouldn't let up. I thank her for that to this day."

Marj's concern for the horse's well-being was predominant throughout her life. A few years ago I was standing close to Marj at an event. She had just completed her duties as dressage judge and was watching some of the riders come through the finish on cross-country. One young girl galloped through and pulled up. Her anxious parents were eager to hear how she did and she sat on her horse reliving the course. Marj tactfully and quietly spoke to the youngster. "Your horse has just worked very hard for you. Why not slip off and give his back a rest." And one more rider, in an endless line of riders, learned one more lesson for life.

Under Marj's careful direction, Windrush Farm Therapeutic Equitation thrived. A great judge of character, Marj surrounded herself with a team of staff equally as dedicated to the riding program for disabled riders as she was.

Most of Marj's staff members were with her for many years and almost all have a very strong eventing background. Executive Director, Mandy Hogan, now runs Windrush with Associate Director Josselyn Shaugnessy, both of whom evented in Area I. Christina Fransioli, Instructor and Grant Writer, works daily with the

students teaching horse management skills in addition to riding, how to take care of their horses. In the eighties, Christina, who graduated from Harvard, rode at the advanced level. As an instructor at Windrush she brought a special understanding to her role as teacher of the disabled. Christina suffered a head injury some years ago and became a student of Marj's during her rehabilitation. Completely recovered, Tina became devoted to helping others find fulfillment on the back of a horse. With such an accomplished team behind her, Marj found that she could now think of "retiring". The word "retire" means different things to different people. For Marj it did not mean knitting on the porch. It meant she had time to devote to another equestrian project - The Paralympics.

The International Paralympic Committee needed help. In September of 1995, Marj began working to ensure the success of the equestrian portion of the Paralympic Games scheduled to take place in Atlanta, Georgia following the Olympic Games.

It was only natural that Marj would throw herself into the promotion of the Paralympic program in the United States. Marj's passion for the project soon stimulated others to action.

Dr. Pat Maykuth was attending a seminar for licensed officials as a panelist. Marj approached her and asked her to assist with the Paralympic Games in 1996. "I remember telling Marj that I was swamped and couldn't take on another thing," says Pat. Marj suggested they have dinner together. "By the end of that meal I was asking Marj what I could do to help." What changed her mind? "Marj commanded respect. The stature of who she was and what she had accomplished in her lifetime made me feel privileged to be asked to be a part of her team. She led by example."

Pat and Marj worked together in the area horse management. They were responsible for assessing the pool of loaned horses and matching the profile of the rider to the horse. Riders were given three days to work with the horse with their coach and if they didn't match then the horse went back to the pool and another horse was tried until the match was made.

Pat felt that Marj had given her a gift - the opportunity to participate. "I had no less a part than if I was a rider; I had no less pride than when once owning an international horse. Marj saw the whole picture. Once she had defined the job she stepped back and let you do it. I didn't know - I couldn't have known what I was going to be able to take away from that experience. Marj knew that the greatest reward for each of us would be, quite simply, our participation. She was right!"

Marj's life was one of giving, but she was the first to tell you the rewards she gained far outweighed the effort she put in. If you have any doubts about what horses and Marj's program brought to people who, through no fault of their own, found themselves bound to wheelchairs her favorite poem says everything that needs to be said.

Iron Horse

Adapted from Tena Coker Bastien, 1994

You came to me so softly, Roland
And lowered your head
I couldn't run away
So I reached for you instead

There you stood
Over fifteen hands high
My heart was pounding, I was so scared
I was again afraid I might die

Never could I have imagined
Not even in my wildest dreams
This place, this horse, this moment in time
No matter how real it now seemed

To come face to face with fantasy
To once again feel whole
To look into your eyes and realize
The depth of my own soul.

As I touched your mane, you stole my heart again
And suddenly I understood
If anything were to get me out of this chair
This old polo pony could.

This Iron Horse beneath me
I had come to know too well
The memory of my getting here
My private living hell.

It didn't seem to matter to you
That I could never walk by your side
As you walked to the barn
After a long day as a therapeutic ride.

You stood so still, so patient
As they lifted me out of my chair
I couldn't climb on by myself
But you didn't seem to care.

Priceless is the freedom
God gave back to me that day
As I took your reins
And you so carefully carried me away.

If only for a little while
I could forget what happened to me

**For I had traded in my Iron Horse
For one that could set me free.**

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