

## The MIDDLE TENNESSEE PONY CLUB

### Its Background and Origin

by Margaret Lindsley Warden

As a result of Cynthia (Mrs. Fred) Schell's horsemanship instruction in Franklin, some of my interest in horses was transferred from the horses themselves to the improvement of the way they should be ridden and handled, especially by young people. Qualified riding instructors were strangers to the Nashville area and much of the South. Riders learned from the people from whom their horses were acquired and by experience.

To help stimulate keenness on better riding and offer incentives to improving horsemanship, I conceived the idea of persuading The Nashville Tennessean, for which I had written a horse news column since 1939, to sponsor a "Horse Sense Riding Tournament" for this purpose. "Horse Sense" was the title of my weekly column. The newspaper was at the time. My request was granted with some enthusiasm by Coleman Harwell, editor, who had hired me.

The initial Horse Sense Riding Tournament, "The All Horsemanship-Pleasure Mount Show" took place August 30, 1952, in Edwin Warner Park.

The results of this were so encouraging that I figured that if one incentive to better riding in the standard tradition was very effective, then really good results would come from a number of incentives a year in the form of well judged competitions. So, the season of 1953 saw the first "Horse Sense" Balanced seat horsemanship classes at several Nashville area shows. In a year or so, the number of area night horse shows subscribing to these afternoon horsemanship and pleasure mount classes had grown to ten.

Incidentally, it was at this 1952 Horse Sense Riding Tournament that Major Jonathan R. Burton (Now Maj. Gen. J.R. Burton), on this Thoroughbred mare, June Lilly, demonstrated what is believed to be the first authentic dressage in these parts.

By this time we were reading in The Chronicle (now the Chronicle of the Horse) about the planned formation of a United States Pony Club. Cynthia Schell and myself were subscribers to one or more English horse periodicals and thus knew of the original Pony Club in England dating from 1928.

The organizers of the United States Pony Clubs, Inc. were Louise Lott (Mrs. Dean) Bedford, Alexander Mackay-Smith, and Col. Howard C. Fair.

As the Horse Sense Riding Tournament and the circuit of Horse Sense Horsemanship programs at area shows were highly successful, I was encouraged to go further. A local Pony Club would be even more effective and far reaching than the horsemanship competitions, as more children could be attracted and taught.

So, In July, 1953, I wrote Mrs. Dean Bedford of Fallston, Md, the chief promoter of a U.S. Pony Club, then in the process of formation, for information and for permission to organize a Pony Club here that would be recognized as a member of the U.S.P.C. Following necessary communications, etc., permission was granted.

The Pony Club idea got in the air and I chatted with Col. Campbell H. Brown about it at one of the late summer horse shows. He said that he thought Ruth (Mrs. Claiborne) Kinnard was already organizing a pony club.

I think it was at the Gallatin show, the Sumner County Fair, that I asked her about this. She said that she was not organizing a pony club but was keen on somebody doing it. Ruth was an active parent of a pupil of Cynthia Sc hell.

I told Ruth that I had received permission to organize an affiliate of the U.S. Pony Clubs, Inc, so we agreed to combine forces and set a time to get started.

The time we chose was the occasion of the Grassland School Fall Horse Show to be held this particular year at the County Center at Franklin. That was Saturday, 10 October, 1953. We knew that many children who already knew what The Pony Club movement was and would be there and would join..

We set up a table at this show with a sign thereon that The Tennessean art department had prepared. It read "Join The Pony Club." A Tennessean newspaper photo showed Ruth Kinnard and myself signing up applicants. One of these in the picture was Boyce Magli who became a star member.

If memory serves, 32 signed the application forms and 23 paid the \$1.00 membership fee. So these 23 could be considered charter members. The first to sign and pay was Eleanor Ann Pewitt who became an active and long time member.

Adelyn Nabors, in the picture, asked "What will I get out of The Pony Club? Col. Brown, who was helping, said, "We'll teach you to ride." "I know how to ride." was her reply. Col. Brown responded, "How do you back a horse?" This convinced Adelyn that there were skills to be learned here, so she joined and learned much.

The new Middle Tennessee Pony Club started meetings in neighborhoods almost immediately, that is mounted meetings with instructor.

We did not know until years later that MTPC was the first club chartered by the USPC. The parent body was itself not chartered until February?, 1954. The Baltimore-Harford Pony Club and another club in the U.S. preceded MTPC, but were affiliated to the original Pony Club in England. Louise and Dean Bedford were ardent Anglophiles. So Middle Tennessee was the first U.S. club to join the USPC.

There was much about The Pony Club program with which I was unfamiliar. When in doubt about what was permissible or not, I would write or telephone the Executive Secretary of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America. This was Joe Jones, as I recall. At that time he was feeling his way uncertainly about the new P.C. duties, but we usually guessed the answers correctly.

The connection between the MFAA and the USPC was inherited from The Pony Club in England. The U.S. organization, like the British model, expected new clubs applying for membership in USPC to have the sanction of the local Hunt. Mason Houghland, MFH of the Hillsboro Hounds, sanctioned the MTPC application for membership. If there was no Hunt in the area, a new P.C. could be approved and accepted by the USPC.

Early meeting places of the Middle Tennessee Pony Club were: Guilford Dudley's Northumberland Stud, the Martin ring on Lynwood, parentw of Mary Glen Martin, George Schwab's farm, Brentwood where Polly Peach's father had charge of horses and farm, the L.C. Tiller place in Lealand, where Jean Tiller Dycus was in charge, the Kinnard farm, Franklin.

In a few years meeting places were added at Ravenwood club grounds, Donelson, the Lebanon fairgrounds, as there were chapters in Donelson and Lebanon.

Early instructors included Paul Choate and Ben Juhan who had cavalry training, Cynthia Schell, Eleanor (Mrs. Allen) Sullivan, Ann and Sally H Hines, Caro Woolwine a few times, and, probably, Sam Moran.

All pupils, except those taught by Cynthia Schell, were about on the beginner level for some time.

When Col. Earl Thompson settled in Nashville, he was our ace instructor during the relatively brief time he was here. He instructed and coached the Rally Teams that went to the first Regional Rally in Atlanta. He appeared to take these green riders and mounts as seriously as if they were the U.S. teams material of his acquaintance.

Soon after the dust of MTPC organization had settled, I suggested to the USPC that their records show Ruth Kinnard as co-organizer and co-D.C., as I had asked her to help me organize and she had been extremely helpful. As I was the person who had done all the communicating with the USPC, mine was the name they knew.

As Ruth Kinnard was expecting the birth of Jon Kinnard, she served as co-D.C. only about a couple of months.

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According to memory, the Middle Tennessee Pony Club went into action within a very few weeks following our member signing. We had neighborhood instruction meetings. Among the first were those at Guilford Dudley's Northumberland Stud on Harding Place, the Martins" on Lynwood, the George Shwab farm, Brentwood, and the Tiller Place in Lealand.

We signed up a number of members at the Henry Hines Place on Franklin Road, Brentwood. Jean Tiller Dycus helped me with the membership applications and the \$1.00 dues.

We held a Rally, Nov. 6, 1954, at Guilford Dudley's , 21st and Harding Place.

I never had a car and do not remember how I reached the meeting places.

Cynthia (Mrs. Fred) Schell was our mainstay instructor and really the only one with practical knowledge of how to start teaching. She had received excellent instruction in "forward seat" horsemanship "up east."

A typed page letter to instructors and sponsors, dated 17 March, 1954 and signed Margaret Lindsley Warden, co-chairman, advised against disparaging other styles of riding, other kinds of tack, other types of horses, walking,, gaited, etc. Such criticism will scare off members and parents and hurt feelings of children who love their ponies. They must enjoy The Pony Club, therefore beware of too many lessons and testing.

Our first fund raiser was a horse show at Moreau (M.P.) Estes home' on Granny White Pike <sup>At Tyne Blvd.</sup> ~~and =Bessie = Lane?~~ When the USPC requested \$1.00 dues for each member, MTPC was broke. We learned that Noel Anderson had made something like \$60.00 on a show at her home.

My newspaper report on "The Pony Club Horse Show" was Monday, August 9, 1954, describing the show as having taken place "yesterday."

The duplicated class sheet on yellow paper stated a 2:30 start, gate fee \$0,25, entry fee 10¢ a class, a trophy and 5 ribbons in each class.

The trophies were donated by L.C. Tiller and Robert L. Fudge and may have cost \$1 or \$2.00 each. Competition was open to "the world."

The 11 classes included pleasure ponies, pleasure mounts with riders 9-12, 13-18, and 19 and up, 3 balanced seat horsemanship classes, parent and child, small pony jumping, 2 ft., large pony jumping jumping, 3 ft., and open jumping, rider any age, jumps 3" 6".

Pleasure mounts were divided into running walk and trotting variety, 3 classes for each.

Judges were Mrs. Allen Sullivan, Ben Juhan, Col. Campbell H. Brown. Ringmasters were Sam Moran and Barton Pope. Announcers: Felix Polston and Roy Yearwood.

Free seats for spectators. Refreshments for sale.

There were 3 horse shows at "Reau" Estes place. The others were in 1955 and 1956.

The 19 55 show rated abundant newspaper publicity with photos and fancy programs.

One hundred and three riders participated in the 1955 show, Sunday, Sept. 4, and about \$700 was raised. There were challenge trophies for the chapters whose riders earned the most points. Hillsboro won with 279½ points, Lealand 124½ points.

In 1954 Franklin was first. In 1955, 3rd with 117½ points.

Jean Tiller Dycus and Grace (Mrs. Ed) Null, daughters of Mr. Tiller conceived the idea of rewarding the children who sold the most tickets. Merchants contributed boot and other horsey items. The child who sold the most tickets had the first choice, and so on down the line.

The winning ticket sellers were Pam Gordon of Lealand chapter, 101 tickets; Cecilie Puryear of Hillsboro, 127 tickets; Margaret Puryear, Hillsboro, 124 tickets, Martha Weesner, Hillsboro, 100; Hardy Hudson, Brentwood, 50, add Ann Hart, Franklin, 45 tickets.

There were nearly 500 spectators. Tickets were 25¢ in advance, 50¢ at the gate. Entry-fees, 50¢ and \$1.00. Sterling trophies.

The 1956 show took place Sept. 3, Labor Day at 10 a.m. DST(Daylight Saving time). Null and Dycus were managers. Entry fees still 50¢ and \$1.00 Judges were Col. Earl F. Thomson and Harry C. Pearson.

May 22, 1954, marked the beginning of a number of lively events at Martlesham Heath, the Claiborne Kinnard home in Franklin.

A 9 class horse show was the event that day. Ponies, novice hunters, a trick class, jumping, were some of the features for entry fees of 10¢ per class. The invitation was signed by Kernan Regen.

April 14, 1956, was the occasion for the Horse Show and Animal Fair sponsored by the Franklin Chapter of the Middle Tennessee Pony Club. There were 5 classes for pets and 5 for ponies with riders 12 and under. Pet classes specified dogs, cats, most unusual, trick animal, and championship. This event rated 5 pictures in the society section of The Nashville Tennessean of April 13. The program read that admission was 25¢.

Press releases were sent to two papers and two radio stations. Judges were Col. Eearl F. Thomson and Mrs. Thomas P. Belford. Thomson was a retired U.S. Army man who had represented the United States at one of the Olympics. The Belfords were important in the American Kennel Club. Barton Dope was announcer, Jack Hinkle ringmaster, and Dr. DeWitt Owen, veterinarian.

Another Animal Fair took place at the Kinnards' July 17, 1958. Again The Nashville Tennessean responded with 5 pictures, Sunday, July 13. Most unusual pet award went to Mike Weesner with Herman, a two foot long Iguana. There were 5 pony and equitation classes judged by Mrs. Frank Berry, Jr.

At one of the Pony Club events at Martlesham Heath, Sally Hines (Mrs. Jack) Hinkle was judging. "Everybody" entered the bareback class. The judging problem was solved when riders were asked to dismount. Half were on tall horses and could not

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Paul M. Davis, Jr. was general chairman of a major event of 1954. This was the Middle Tennessee Pony Club Inter-Chapter Rally at Guilford Dudley's Northumberland Stud, Harding Place just west of Hillsboro Road. The date was Nov. 6.

The schedule:

9:30 Inspection of Teams

10:00 Quadrille and general instruction from "top instructors."

11:30 Cool out, water, and tie up mounts, with lead rope, etc.

11:45 Quiz, oral, by teams, on points of horse, tack, etc.

12:15 Lunch. Nickels and dimes for hot dogs and cold or hot drinks from the Pepsi-Cola wagon. Note. Pam Gordon's father was Pepsi-Cola representative here.

1:00 Equitation over Jumps. An extra game for non-jumpers.

1:30 Games. A list of possible ones appeared on the program,

Excellent press coverage on this also. In addition, practically our local P.C. events were reported in The Chronicle.

At a meeting of the Committee of MTPC, 29 September, 1954, it was agreed that annual dues would be \$3.00.

The MAJOR EVENT of 1955 was the first U.S. PONY CLUB National RALLY. It was at Fox Hill Farm, Unionville, Chester County, Pa. The team coming the farthest, 800 miles, was that of Middle Tennessee, thanks in great part to Cynthia (Mrs. Fred) Schell who coached the team, attended to trucking the horses, and drove up in a pickup truck with the saddles and other equipment.

There were 11 teams in the "C" division. MTPC placed 5th. MTPC was first in dressage, tied for first in jumping, was 6th in cross-country, 5th in stable management, 5th (tie) in horsemanship and fox-hunting knowledge, and 9th in veterinary lore.

The team: Captain, Frances Rice, Judy Kinnard, Polly Peach, riders, and Jane Andrews, "helper" as the non-rider was termed originally.

(The term, "stable manager", a more dignified title, was suggested by MTPC.)

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Winner of the "C" division was Cheshire Hunt, 1327.9 points to Middle Tennessee's 1266.1. It was not clear to us that the Helper would not take part in the un-mounted tests. Jaae Andrews was an "equestrian Minerva" as I called her and we did not understand that she would contribute only to the horse-stable management scores. Cynthia said we would have placed quite a bit higher if she could have scored in the other un-mounted tests.

As usual, our home press was excellent. Bob Witt of the Nashville Banner, in his column, Speaking of Horses, wrote. "It certainly was not their riding that held them back," remarked Col Howard C. Fair, president of the U.S. Pony Clubs, Inc., "They were by far the best riding team in the meeting. They were certainly well coached."

Judges were: Gen. and Mrs. C.C. Mann, Toronto, Canada, Mrs. George Jacobsen, Montreal, Can., and Mr. Stewart Treviranus, Boyce, Va.

The dates of the Rally were June 19, 20, 21, so there was little time for team selection and coaching. Our team was picked by formal tryouts. Rice and Andrews, and Kinnard were pupils of Cynthia. Polly Peach was a Pony Club pupil only. Col. Thomson coached dressage in late afternoon several times.

A sizeable group of members and friends turned out for a P.C. Coke Party at the airport, Friday June 17, at 10 a.m. to see the team off. The Tennessean made a picture showing the 4 team members and Harold Hagewood standing in front of the huge banner Harold had made "Welcome Home and Congratulations".

Mrs. E.D. Null and Mrs. Jean Dycus were hostesses of the going away party., and they composed the words to the song welcoming the return party.