

For the Love of (not just) the Horse . . .

Text & Photos by Barbara A. Hall

What is it about eventing that is so powerfully addictive? It really is such a huge amount of work for a chance at just one ribbon for a whole weekend. Rather than go to one of those hunter/jumper or dressage shows for the possibility of taking home a bunch of ribbons, instead we spend an entire weekend competing in three separate sports - dressage, cross-country jumping and stadium jumping - and the scores are added for the final placings. And IF you make it all the way through all three phases, you just might get a ribbon!

And for a long time (forever, in fact), we've had to travel out of state for the opportunity to compete at a United States Eventing Association recognized horse trials, so when Susan Brigham and Dr. Jim McNutt decided to host one here in Iowa, we eventers were filled with utter astonishment and excitement.

Building a horse park is a massive undertaking. First you must have the proper land - and lots of it. People - lots of people - with all types of skill sets, from technical to brute force, are needed for the



Bernard Morauw, from St. Charles, IL. Halt/Salute on "Ksar d'Elvas" (Dressage phase)

project. Not to mention the huge time and financial commitment needed from start to finish. So, for the past couple of years, the McNutt/Brigham homeland has been abuzz with activity, all gearing up for this past weekend's inaugural USEA Recognized Catalpa Corner Charity Horse Trials. About any weekend you could go out and see or

help with the construction of cross-country and stadium jumps, fencing, painting, mowing, and an unending To Do list. A couple of schooling shows, one last year and one this past spring, were successful "trial runs" for the big event. Many of us got to attend schooling days and jumping clinics here in the meantime. But the transformation of this property into a fully-functional and beautiful horse park was a phenomenal example of what people who love horses (and people who love people who love horses) can accomplish.

The facility is extraordinary, with beautiful barns, many permanent stalls, and enough room to fit dressage arenas, warm-up areas, and a stadium course. The cross-country courses, professionally designed by Phil Swain and built to exacting standards by professional builders, feature pastoral, forested and hilly topography and include a multi-level revetted 70' x 70' water complex, a long bank complex suitable for all levels, and solid classic permanent as well as a multitude of portable jumps.

And, "if you build it, they will come." Over 120 riders, many from out of state, signed up

McNutt Equine Veterinary

Established since 1971

3021 White Oak Ave NE
Iowa City, IA 52240

Complete Ambulatory Services

Medicine and Surgery

Reproduction

Lameness

Dental

James E. McNutt DVM

Mobile **319-430-1374**

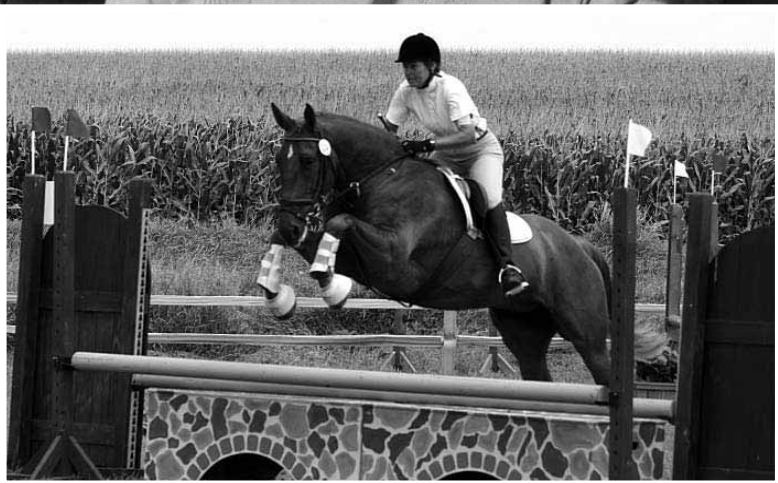
Jim McNutt, Susan Brigham, and Susan's wonderful parents, were all smiles at the end of the day.

Bottom Left Photo:

Alexandra Glenn on "Cale's Surprise" in Open Novice Division (Cross-Country phase)

Bottom Right Photo:

Trish Ringgold on Spontaneous - in Beginner Novice Horse Div. (Stadium phase)



to compete in this first recognized event. Many of the volunteers also came from out of state to help with things like timing and course design.

It was obvious that careful thought was put into the DETAILS. "Lots of the riders that I talked to were SO impressed with the details here. All of the signs by the x-c jumps telling who sponsored them, in fact ALL of the signs... the order-of-go board for the stadium jumping was SO helpful," one of the volunteers told me.

Cross-country jump judges were given little bags (with handles!) filled with snacks and water. Cross-country scores were radioed in to a central control and tabulated on a master sheet so that no one had to wait for

all the sheets to be picked up. "We are a scoring machine!" said one of the control volunteers.

Even the signs were images of classy little red and white barns. The course walks, the snacks and drinks provided to riders, even the music that was played during the victory gallops - all details that were appreciated by all the participants. And the people in charge were constantly thanking the volunteers - lots of volunteers. I was reminded throughout the weekend that we don't all work this hard just because we love horses - it's the people. There isn't room in this article to name all who made this dream a truly successful reality, but let's just say thank you to all of you - and especially to Susan Brigham whose vision was made real,

and whose smile could be seen all the way across the horse park.

The inspiration for this huge undertaking was and still is the loving memory of Madison Brigham, son of Susan Brigham and her late husband Dr. Tom Brigham, and son-at-heart to Dr. Jim McNutt. The Catalpa Corner web site states "Madison was an avid rider and foxhunter, farmer, historian, tennis player and musician. Being with the quiet but fire-hearted Madison was a delight to all who took the time to know this brilliant and gentle young man". I am sorry that I never had the pleasure of meeting Madison Brigham, but I am sure that he would be quite pleased and proud.

