

Is There Life After Halter?

Of course! And these amazing American Quarter Horses prove it.

By Christine Hamilton

IN OUR MODERN ERA OF SHOW SPECIALIZATION, IT'S TRUE THAT MANY HORSES SUCCESSFUL IN ONE ARENA OFTEN NEVER GO ON to show in others. The perception is especially prevalent with halter horses.

In June 2005, the *Journal* put out a call to members via AQHA's *America's Horse* e-mail newsletter: Tell us about halter horses you've known that have had successful careers in other arenas.

Here are a few of the stories they told us.

HALTER PLUS: HEIR CANTROL

1993 red roan gelding by Can Spicuous and out of Love My Heiress by Son And Heir

Owner: Jay and Julie Cain, Stillwater, Minnesota

Breeder: Mooney Hamlin Quarter Horses, Holstein, Iowa

Halter highlights: 1998 open and amateur halter Registers of Merit, 2002 amateur AQHA Champion, 2004 amateur halter Superior, 2005 open halter Superior.

Current occupation: all-around show horse

"Why should a horse's real career begin after halter?" wrote Jay Cain of Stillwater, Minnesota, in response to the *Journal's* call for stories. "If a horse cannot do other things besides halter, that horse should not be considered suitable for halter."

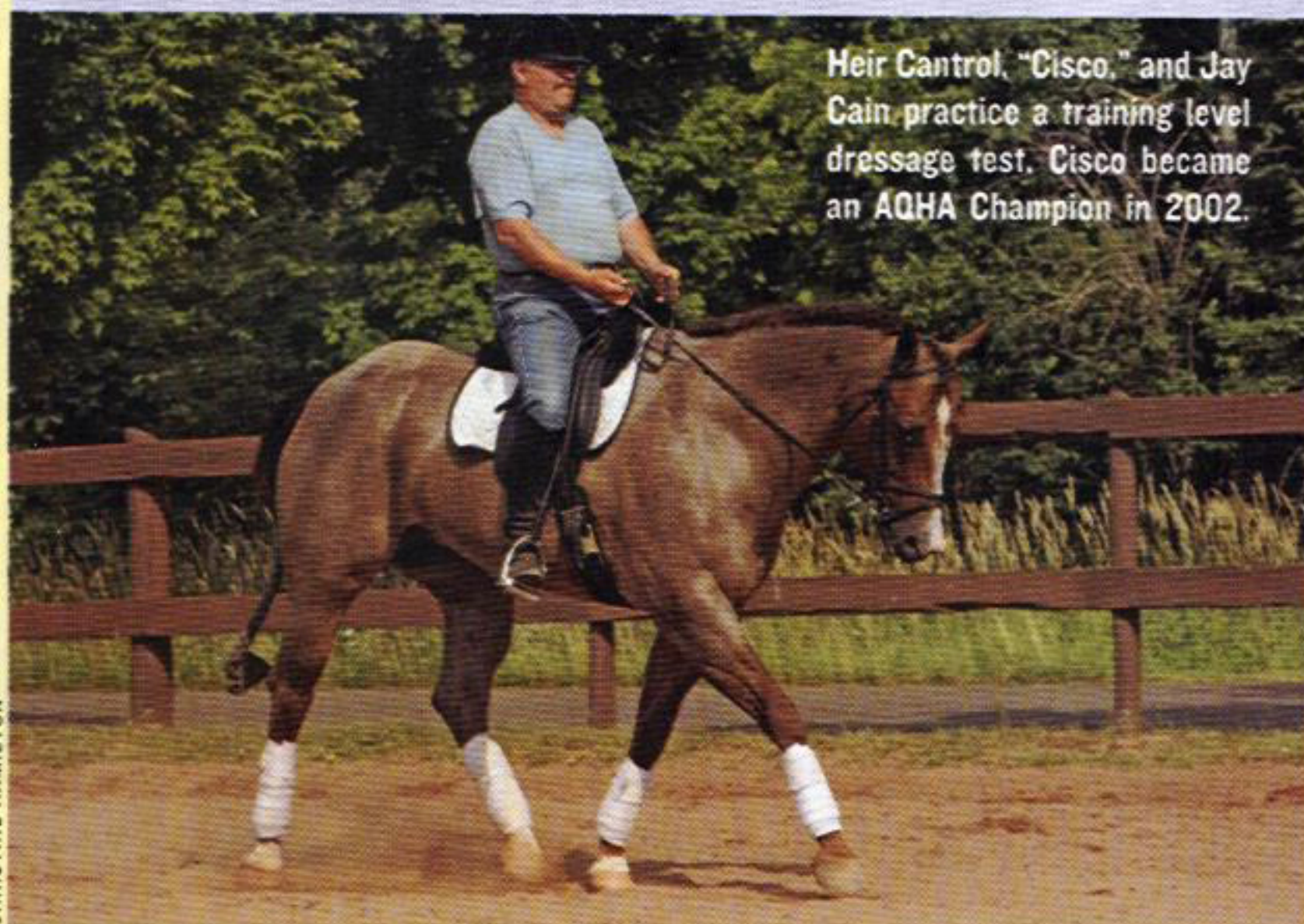
Cain gave his giant red roan gelding, Heir Cantrol, aka "Cisco," as a perfect example.

"In several years of showing, he has accumulated a nearly equal number of performance and halter points," Cain stated.

In fact, Cisco often appears in halter and performance classes at the same show. In addition to 52 halter points, he has 26 trail points and points in western pleasure and hunter under saddle. Cisco and Cain also showed at this year's Bayer Select World Championship Show in hunt seat equitation.

Cisco became an amateur AQHA Champion in 2002. And his and Cain's latest endeavor has been to try United States Dressage Federation competition at Training Level.

"The best part was that this was all accomplished by a Select amateur guy with no trainer!" Cain wrote. He credits his and Cisco's success to the horse's talent, his wife Julie's encouragement and occasional lessons with AQHA Professional Horseman Lynn Palm.



Heir Cantrol, "Cisco," and Jay Cain practice a training level dressage test. Cisco became an AQHA Champion in 2002.

CHRISTINE HAMILTON

TRAIL HORSE: ST TOPAZ

1989 palomino gelding by *Skips Avant* and out of *St Jewel* by *St Limit*

Owner: Margo Lea Ball, Fort Collins, Colorado

Breeder: H.J. "Hank" Wiescamp, Alamosa, Colorado

Halter highlights: earned 55.5 halter points with AQHA, 1995 open and amateur halter Registers of Merit, 1997 open and amateur halter Superiors; earned 348 halter points with Palomino Horse Breeders of America, multiple PHBA world champion.

Current occupation: trail horse

"He was a ham!" said AQHA Professional Horseman Margo Ball of her big palomino gelding, St Topaz, aka "Toby." "He absolutely loved to show. And he was a character, always in the middle of things."

He even developed a taste for margaritas.

"The first time we took him to the (Palomino Horse Breeders of America) world, we celebrated his (amateur reserve world championship) back in the stalls," Ball recalled. Her brother, Wayne, had shown Toby.

"We were having margaritas, and Toby stretched his neck over the stall door to get at them!" she continued. "From then on, whenever he would smell margaritas, he had to have some."

To keep Toby fit for the halter ring, Ball rode him at least three times a week.

"He has a tendency to get a little heavy," Ball said. "After I'd show him, I'd saddle him up at the show grounds and just ride him. He had a tendency to be lazy on the longe line!"

Toby even earned a few western pleasure points in PHBA, and that's what he still does: ride for pleasure.

"He's there if we need something to jump on and ride," Ball said. "We take him for trail rides. If people come out from the city, we let them ride him, or use him as a lesson horse. We pony the youngsters off him. And now we're thinking about using him for AQHA Test Rides."

Ball purchased Toby as a 2-year-old from the late AQHA Hall of Fame member H. J. "Hank" Wiescamp of Alamosa, Colorado. He's a product of Wiescamp's legendary breeding program, linebred to Skipper W with an outcross to Double Dancer, a Walter Merrick bred son of Lena's Bar (TB), Easy Jet's dam.

"Toby's even got his picture in the book 'The Hank Wiescamp Story,'" Ball said proudly. "Hank had (Toby's) picture up in his office."

These days, Toby goes out to pasture when the weather's nice and comes in to the Balls' show barn in the evenings, even though he's no longer showing.

"I said a long time ago that he earned his keep there," Ball said with a smile. "And if you're late letting him in, he's at the back door pawing, like he's saying, 'Do you know what time it is?'"



AQHA Professional Horseman Margo Lea Ball and her multiple PHBA halter world champion St Topaz, "Toby." If she needs a riding horse, Toby is her choice any day of the week.

CHRISTINE HAMILTON

CROWD CONTROL: SECURE THE BAR

1999 chestnut gelding by *Secure For Years* and out of *Bally Slippers* by *Bar Bally*

Owner: Darrell E. Ireland, Owings, Maryland

Breeder: Gary L. and Colleen Miller, Skylane Farm, Dewitt, Michigan

Halter highlights: earned 121 halter points and multiple halter Registers of Merit and Superiors, 2001 eighth amateur year-end halter gelding, multiple World Show qualifier.

Current occupation: United States Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol, Washington, D.C.

"There's something about seeing a whole line of horses coming that people are going to move for," said Officer Ron Markland of the United States Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol. "D.C. has demonstrations just about every day of the week."

That's what makes horses such an important part of crowd control in the U.S. capitol.

But when Darrel Ireland of Owings, Maryland, was looking for a new home for his halter gelding, *Secure The Bar*, aka "Berger," he had no idea that the park police might be the perfect place for him.

"My brother-in-law retired from the park service," Ireland said. "He told me about (donating horses to the park police). He said that it's hard for them to get good horses with good dispositions that are big enough and can handle the duty."

"He also said they'd take excellent care of him."

There was no doubt the big gelding had the size for the job. Although Ireland had only shown the horse at halter, the previous owner had shown him in performance classes.

Ireland contacted the U.S. Park Police, and Berger soon met Officer Markland at the U.S. Park Police Training Center, Edgewater Stables. At the time, Markland was in charge of training horses new to the unit.

"When we get a new horse in, we ask for a 60-day trial to give us at least an educated guess as to whether or not the horse is going to work out for us," Markland said.

"Anything that might scare them, we try to desensitize them to," he explained. "We have them stepping on plastic, walking over bridges, teeter-totters, and get them used to gunshots. We use smoke machines, anything they might come across."

The toughest part of the training for the horses is learning crowd control.

"We have officers act as demonstrators," Markland said. "We throw things at them like empty plastic bottles or foam bricks. We play football with them to get them used to things flying in the air. And they have to get used to protest signs waved in their faces."

"With anything that scares a horse," he continued, "it's easier to get them to chase it than it is to ask them to stand still and have the thing come at them. If they're afraid of a person coming toward them, we have them chase a person. If they're afraid of bikes, we let them run after a bike. Or run after a plastic bag."

According to Markland, it's size along with sense that makes a good police mount.

"We like the horses to be at least 15.3 hands, not because of what the horse can carry, but how the public perceives them," he said. "People are still afraid of getting stepped on by a horse. We don't teach these horses to step on people, but we do teach them to move people."

"Berger was just a natural," Markland added. "I really didn't have to do much with him other than just ride him. All the stuff that normally scares a horse he just plowed through."

Just a few weeks after joining the unit, Berger was on duty for President Bush's inaugural parade, a world away from the halter ring. The unit decided to give him a new nickname: "Custer."

Partnered with Markland, Berger/Custer now spends a few hours every day patrolling The National Mall, monuments such as the Jefferson Memorial, or handling crowds during demonstrations.

His retirement is taken care of, too.

"We find homes for them," Markland said. "The problem with a lot of them is that we keep them until they're no longer sound. It's hard to find a home sometimes for a horse you can't ride."

But when an officer retires from the service, he can take his horse with him. And that's exactly what Markland's planning to do with his Quarter Horse partner.

Secure The Bar is on patrol at the Jefferson Memorial with the United States Park Police Mounted Patrol Unit. His permanent partner is Officer Ron Markland.





AQHA Professional Horseman Jeffrey Pait uses former top-10 World Show halter gelding *Illicit Conclusion* as a pony horse for Cofrancesco Farms. Here they are in the warm-up arena at the 2004 AQHA World Championship Show in Oklahoma City.

PONY HORSE: ILLICIT CONCLUSION

1995 sorrel gelding by *Mr Conclusion* and out of *Exciting Surprise* by *Skipper's Carbon*

Owner: Cofrancesco Farms, Sparta, New Jersey

Breeder: Kimble and Dwayne Lewis, Kearney, Nebraska

Halter highlights: earned 208.5 halter points and multiple halter Registers of Merit, World Show top-10 3-year-old gelding and yearling gelding, 1999 sixth open year-end halter gelding and fourth open year-end junior halter gelding.

Current occupation: exercise pony horse

"He's just a great, all-around horse," said trainer Jeffrey Pait of the 10-year-old gelding, *Illicit Conclusion* (aka "Charlie"). "We can use him for just about whatever we want to."

Pait manages and trains for Charlie's owner, Cofrancesco Farms of Sparta, New Jersey. They first bought Charlie as a yearling in 1996, and he won his first World Show top-10 that year.

"We sold him to some friends of ours for a little while, then bought him back," Pait added. "He was always a really good halter horse. But after a while, we had some other horses

his age that we were showing, so we broke him to ride."

Since then, Charlie has done nothing but more than prove his worth. The farm has used him as a lead-line and walk-trot horse for kids, for trail riding and as a pony horse. To go along with his more than 200 lifetime halter points, he also has 4.5 western pleasure points and even a half point in hunter under saddle.

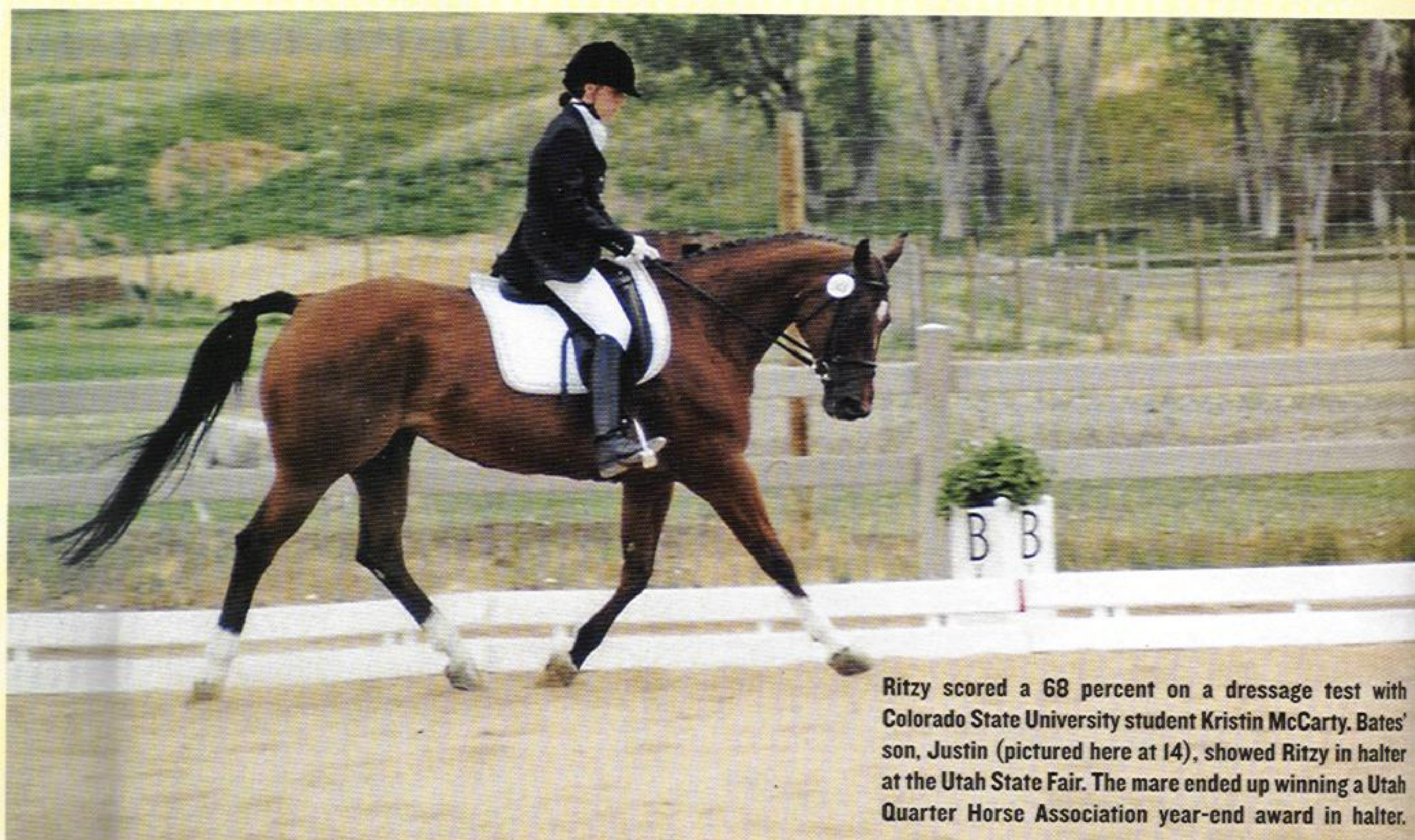
"If somebody comes to the farm that's never ridden," Pait added, "we let them ride him."

Charlie looked so good this past summer the farm showed him again. According to Pait, Charlie was just shy of earning enough halter points to qualify for this year's World Show.

"We took him to the horse shows and were using him as a pony horse," Pait said. "We went ahead and showed him in the halter at the same time. He's a pretty neat horse."

"He's a using horse," Pait continued. "He's had a great show career, and now he does other things for us. He's got a home for life."

"It just goes to show you that they can be a good halter horse and do other things, too. They don't just have to have one job; this horse has several jobs."



Ritzzy scored a 68 percent on a dressage test with Colorado State University student Kristin McCarty. Bates' son, Justin (pictured here at 14), showed Ritzzy in halter at the Utah State Fair. The mare ended up winning a Utah Quarter Horse Association year-end award in halter.

DRESSAGE: IVA RITZY FUTURE

1991 bay mare by *Envistaed Future* and out of *Freeway Mama* by *Mr Freeway Foxy*

Owner: Janice Bates, Riverton, Utah

Breeder: Gary and Denise Werner, Lees Summit, Missouri

Halter highlights: 1993 youth and open halter Registers of Merit; 1994 youth halter Register of Merit; qualified for the AQHYA World Championship Show as a 2-year-old, as a 3-year-old and as an aged mare.

Current occupation: Dressage horse

"We showed her at halter since we didn't know how to do anything else, and even squaring her up was scary," Jan Bates of Riverton, Utah, wrote of her 14-year-old Quarter Horse mare Iva Ritzzy Future, aka "Ritzzy." The mare was one of the first Quarter Horses that Bates bought.

"The year she won several circuit championships we didn't get her qualified for the (AQHYA) Youth World (Championship Show) before the deadline," Bates recalled, "and really didn't know what we were doing since it was our first venture into showing."

Eventually, Ritzzy was broke to ride.

"Unfortunately, when showing in hunter under saddle classes she looked like a halter horse who got in the wrong class," Bates wrote. "Her stride was much too long, and we outpaced everyone."

Ritzzy was retired to be a broodmare and had four foals. Bates quit showing altogether, but she did start taking dressage lessons, which led the ex-halter mare down an entirely different path.

According to Bates, Ritzzy was bored in the pasture. So Bates' German dressage trainer began working with her



and used her as a dressage lesson horse for two years.

"Last year, one of the girls at our barn showed her at a dressage show in Heber City, Utah, and she scored 68 percent at training level the very first time she was ever in a dressage arena!" Bates wrote.

"One of my Quarter Horse friends is still on the show circuit," she continued. "When she tells our acquaintances that I am riding dressage and using Ritzzy, they all say 'Ritzzy, the halter horse? Are you sure?'"

Since then, Bates' trainer has closed the facility, but Bates continues to take the mare trail riding, and, if someone visits who hasn't ridden before, they ride dependable Ritzzy.

Bates still owns one of Ritzzy's foals, a 6-year-old Quarter Horse mare by Park A Jet named Park At The Ritz.

"She is broke to ride, has a great temperament, and guess what we're doing next?" Bates wrote. "Dressage!"

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HUNT SEAT: COLOR ME SKIPSTER

1982 chestnut gelding by Color Me Skip and out of Skipster's V Bar by Skipster

Owner: Janet Jacobson, Saint Marys, Iowa

Breeder: Dr. Fred and Vicki Benker, Morriston, Florida

Halter highlights: 1991 and 1990 AQHA Champion; 1990 eighth all-around year-end horse; 1989 halter Superior, earned multiple performance Registers of Merit.

Current occupation: Youth show horse.

"Is there life after halter? A definite yes!" wrote Lynn Harrison of Kenton, Delaware. "I used to own a wonderful gelding named Color Me Skipster. He's long past his prime now, but, oh, the things he did! I purchased him as a 5-year-old in the late '80s as an all-around prospect. He haltered as a yearling, winning in excess of \$20,000 in futurities. He was broke to ride, then ended up on a breeding farm.

"Life was good until the bottom sort of fell out of his market. His owners decided to geld him and sell him. I happened along and bought him," Harrison wrote.

After she purchased the gelding, he developed a sore that required minor surgery. While she couldn't ride him, she decided to try taking him into the halter ring.

"Lo and behold, by the close of 1989, I was third in the nation in amateur halter geldings and sixth in the nation in open senior geldings. Now the question came, where do I go from here?" Harrison wrote.

Back to the saddle. Color Me Skipster and Harrison went on to earn points in hunter under saddle, hunter hack, hunt seat equitation, pleasure driving and showmanship.

"He was the epitome of a true all-around horse," Harrison wrote.

Now, however, Color Me Skipster has one of the most important jobs of all: He's teaching a 13-year-old girl about riding and show rings.

"He's taught me a lot about English and western," said Amanda Jacobson. "He knew what he was doing, and it has helped me a lot."

Amanda shows "Victor" in halter, showmanship, English pleasure, western horsemanship and equitation.

Oh, yeah, and the 24-year-old horse is teaching Amanda how to jump.

Amanda didn't know Victor had so many halter wins under his belt.

"I just thought he was a jumping horse," she said. The first time she rode him, she liked him. "He was really easy to ride, to go from the walk to the canter and stop when I told him to. He's really responsive."

But the horse's biggest fan might be Amanda's mom, Janet.

"(Amanda) has learned so much from him," Janet said. She bought the horse when he was about 20, but she says he hasn't slowed a step.

"He's in good health and looks good," Janet said. "People have thought he was 11 or 12 years old. He's the king here. He's in charge. He has more energy than the 5-year-old and the 7-year-old. He rules the roost."

Victor got his nickname not from his many wins, but because of his character, Janet said. "He's Victor Newman on 'The Young and the Restless.' I don't think we'll have a nicer horse than this guy."

Victor hasn't forgotten his halter training.

"You can set him up just barely moving the chain. He's been really nice," Janet said. "We just love him."

Christine Hamilton is a field editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal. To comment on this article, write to chamilton@aqha.org.



Amanda Jacobson and Color Me Skipster get along well together in English tack.