



CORBITs

Loyalty, character, sportsmanship

Central Ontario Region
Pony Club Newsletter

May, 2013

Editor's Desk Katie Stephenson

I was all excited at the beginning of April. I thought I would have a great opportunity to write something for CORBITs about my mom's first trip to watch the Rolex 4 star event. As it turns out, my fellow CORians had other plans and proceeded to send me a plethora of articles ... and let's face it, no one really wants to hear from me. However, this issue will not escape entirely Rolex free, as instead of the links section, I have included a number of pictures at the end of this issue. Selfishly, there is a family one, because it was a fun trip, but mostly they are pictures of Kendal and Ed. Kendal Lehari was a member of Pony Club several years ago. She and her horse Daily Edition competed at the Rolex Kentucky Three Day event, marking both of their 4 star debuts. The pair showed themselves in fine style, finishing 19th. One of my favorite parts of watching them kick some butt over the weekend, aside from being very happy to see all of Kendal's hard work pay off, was the little voice in the back of my mind saying, "You rode that horse as your alternate ride in your B ... and see, you didn't mess him up."

Some Gifts Don't Come in a Box Anita Barnes – TNY Pony Club

One of our younger TNY Pony Clubbers, Madison Vanstone, was excited and looking forward to meeting Amber Marshall, from the CBC TV series Heartland, at this years Can Am. Madi has Cystic Fibrosis (CF), a genetic disorder that particularly affects the lungs and digestive system and makes kids who have it, more vulnerable to repeated lung infections. A few days before Can Am, Madison was admitted to Sick Kids Hospital. She was devastated at not having the chance to see and talk to her idol.

After much tweeting and Facebooking to Amber, emailing every producer, marketer and director of Heartland, contacting friends and the Marshall family, Amber paid a surprise visit to Madi. Amber's father took precious time from their family Easter to drive her down to Toronto and she spent some time making Madi's dreams come true.

Restoration of faith in humankind.....



Jumping Clinic with Kevin Sweeney

Teri Lindsay – Rising Star Pony Club

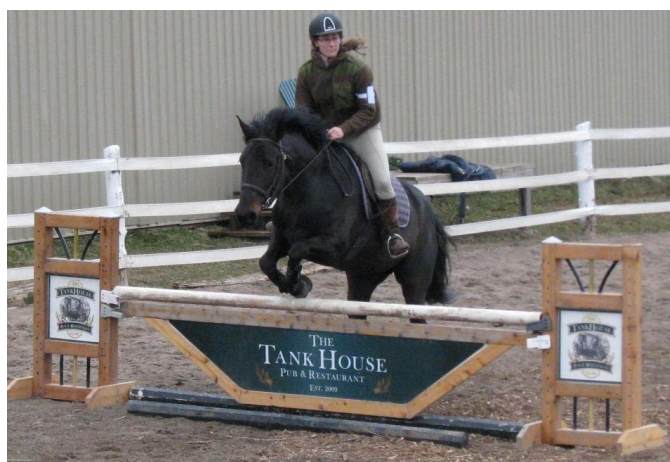
I am excited to say we had 35 riders brave a chilly, windy day to attend our jumping clinic with Kevin Sweeney in Peterborough on April 7 at Kildare Stables. Kevin is the coach for the Trent Equestrian Team, he also shows with his students on the trillium and A circuits.

This is our 3rd year having this clinic and it was our most successful yet. Kevin offers the opportunity for members to “lease” one of his horses for the day, which provides an opportunity for our members who are barn based and use lesson horses that they cannot take off property or those that don’t have access to affordable trailering options to participate.

We are thrilled that Kevin continues to make his time and his horses available to us for this clinic each year.

With a forecast of rain for the day, we were very fortunate to be able to ride all lessons in the outdoor ring, with only the first group getting a little damp. After that the rain was replaced by high winds strong enough that it took a number of people in the ring just to hold the standards up.

I have heard lots of great feedback from our members and their parents about their lessons. This is a great way to get everyone back into the swing of riding on a more regular basis and get ready for show season.



Musical Ride

Kineta Cousins - Manitoulin and North Shore Pony Club

On Sunday March 3rd, 2013 our Pony Club put on our musical ride for our friends and families at Black Creek Equestrian Center. It was a huge success. Everyone loved watching it, and more importantly we loved putting it on. Even though we are just a small group, we still put a lot of hard work into it. From the comments we were getting afterwards, you would have thought that we had outdone even the RCMP. Ok, I confess, we weren't quite the RCMP, but we were a pretty close second.

You would think that it would be easy to organize a musical ride for four girls and their horses. However, we learned very quickly just how much work it really is. Until we got started I didn't realize just how much had to go into preparing it. It didn't just involve us girls getting together and magically creating a musical ride. We had to get used to riding in sync, to create cool moves that worked for us, to pick music, to choose outfits and of course pray that it would all come together in the end! The RCMP makes it look easy! All of our hard work was worth it though. It turned out to be a great way to show our friends and families just what we can do when we put our minds to it.

This was such a great activity for our branch because everyone was able to take part. Everyone was able to participate from our new 4 year old thoroughbred babies, Richie and Charlie, to their older role model Solo, and smaller pony friend Ripley. Oh, and of course all of us girls too. Everyone had a blast!

This was a great experience for our Pony Club. If you haven't ever taken part in a musical ride or watched one, I highly suggest it. It was great fun and I look forward to taking part in more great projects like this with our Pony Club branch.

Check out our musical ride at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4q09ZYaH44&feature=youtu.be>



What Facebook had to say about: The Guelph Mini Meet

Nancy Simpson-Codlin

Wow, what a weekend!! Mini Meet was a blast!! Thank you WOR for hosting as all the COR riders who went loved it!! For the riders who did not go, we missed you as it was so much fun and imagine your Regional chair tried her hand at fencing.. video to follow..

Marni Morton

Guelph Mini-Meet....thank you for having us all!
Was a great weekend!

Visit COR's Facebook page for LOTS of pictures,
posts important information

Mini Meet

Kyle Morton – Uxbridge/Scugog

Dear COR;

My name is Kyle Morton. I'm 10 years old and I've only been with the Uxbridge Pony Club a few months. I did my first event with Pony Club on this past weekend, April 20-21, at the mini-meet in Guelph. My weekend started at the University of Guelph in the Mitchell Athletic Centre in the Gold pool. I had to wait a little while because I was in the novice group, which swam second last for the morning. So, I spent my time cheering for my friends while I waited for my swim. I had to do 4 lengths. It was fun!!!!

From there, I went to the Optimist Recreation Centre and I did the shooting event. You got five targets, one was a practice and the other four were your competition sheets. Each competitor got five pellets to shoot at each sheet - I had a great time! I had never held a gun before, not even had a practice day before the event. There were people there who kindly helped me learn how to load and shoot the air guns. It was a great experience!!!!

Then I did my running- it was snowing up until I had to run. It was a chilly day! I ran through fields and a horse paddock and in a baseball field. There were lots of volunteers there to help direct you around the course and they would always cheer you on! Near the end of the run, my friend Bryson caught up to me and he yelled "Keep going Kyle! You can do it!" It helped with keeping me going to the finish line.



Then we went back inside and we had food. When everybody was done eating they did awards. I was really excited to see what place I was in so far. I was happily surprised to be awarded a red ribbon for novice men-running, swimming and shooting. Wow! A red ribbon for my first Pony Club event - so happy!

The next day I came back to the Optimist Recreation Centre and I had a fencing clinic. I'd always wanted to sword fight. I loved the experience!!!! We all learned so much, but laughed a lot as well.

After the fencing, everyone headed to Old Orchard Farms for the riding part of the event. We picked our ponies, warmed them up and waited our turns. I picked a crazy pony named Oakley....who I loved. He was small, white....and fiery! I loved his spunk and how he jumped.

Everyone did really well and it was great to watch the older riders also.

I got 3rd overall for the weekend, and I was most proud of myself.

But, more than the ribbons I had fun & gained so many new friends along the way.

Pony Club rocks.....!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you Guelph Pony Club and everyone who helped run the mini-meet. Can't wait for next year!

Sincerely;

Kyle Morton



This installment of Bob's Corner is longer than usual – then again, the subject of his article is quite unusual. Those readers who do not know what D-Day is, I encourage you to ask your parents or your teachers. An understanding of that event and all that is remembered every year on June 6th makes this story that much more incredible.

Are you interested in heroes? If so, you should read on.

The Legend of Michal Gutowski

In my lifetime I have had the privilege of knowing two extraordinary octogenarians – people still doing things in their eighties that most of us could not do at any age. One was Mme Jéhane Benoit, the famous chef, author and broadcaster, who, on top of all her other activities, was running the biggest sheep ranch in Quebec – 5,000 head – well into her eighties, with the help of her husband and children. (She taught me how to cook gourmet scrambled eggs. It takes 40 minutes and involves chopped fresh chives, fresh-ground sea salt and black pepper, oregano and/or thyme, butter in the pan bubbling but not brown, sour cream in the mix, cottage cheese added at just the right time, so a good sense of timing and quite a bit of work. Are they worth the effort? Oh yeah.) The other was the subject of this article, Michal Gutowski.

Some of this may indeed be legend. I have not been able to confirm some of the information here. Much of it has been drawn from an obituary by Robert Woronowicz, found on a website called “Polish Prestige” (the only thing on the website not written in Polish), and from another obituary in the “Caledon Citizen” – he lived in Caledon for something like 40 years. The rest comes from other sources, some of which disagree, from research done by my wife Liz when we were trying to get him onto the CPC Wall of Fame (we never could get in touch with his family to obtain their permission), from talking to people who knew him, and from what he told me himself. I have no reason to think anybody was fibbing, but I have been unable to confirm everything. If even half of what follows is accurate, he was the luckiest man I ever met. If you can supply more information, I would be grateful to hear from you.

As a young cavalry officer, Michal Gutowski was Captain of the Polish Eventing Team at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 – Hitler's Olympics. They won Team Silver. Barely three years later, he and his comrades found themselves trying to stop the Nazi invasion of Poland. His squadron actually retook a town that had been captured by the Germans. For his leadership role in this action he won the Virtuti Militari Cross, the highest Polish military award for valour, equivalent to the Victoria Cross. The Poles fought bravely, but with outdated equipment and not nearly enough troops to stop the blitzkrieg. Poland was overrun and occupied by the Germans. Some say the Polish cavalry ended up charging German tanks, some say they didn't. What he told me is that they really intended to charge German foot soldiers (itself not a very hopeful idea since they had machine guns),

and then the tanks came out of the woods behind the infantrymen. “Bob,” he told me, “That will spoil your shorts.” Somehow he wasn't killed, injured or captured. That was Lucky Escape Number One.

During the occupation he joined the Polish underground and acted as a secret military courier. But the Gestapo found him out, and he was captured and actually put in front of a firing squad. He told the Caledon paper that he had said his prayers and was preparing to die when, by coincidence, one of the German officers recognized him from the Olympics, and told him to go, just leave quietly. How was that for Lucky Escape Number Two? Is “miraculous” too strong a word? He just walked away from the firing squad, and he kept on walking until he reached France. And, when that country also fell to the Nazis, he somehow got to England. That was Lucky Escape Number Three. I can't know for sure, but I'll bet he vowed to return some day. And return he did – in a tank.

Once in England, he joined the Free Polish Army, switched from horses to tanks, and led the Cromwell Tank Squadron ashore in Normandy on D-day. He spent the rest of the war exacting some measure of revenge on those who had occupied his beloved homeland, taking part in the liberations of France, Belgium and Holland, then the invasion of Germany itself. He was promoted to Colonel of the Second Polish Panzer Regiment, and heading this unit, he helped capture a major German navy base. He was universally referred to as “Colonel Gutowski” for the next 50 years or so.

Without getting bogged down in World War II history, I do need to tell you about one crucial battle, the Battle of the Falaise Gap. This was important for three reasons. First, it was a key Allied victory following the invasion of Normandy, with some estimates of German losses reaching 50,000 men killed, wounded or captured, plus uncounted tanks, artillery pieces etc. Two days after the battle ended, Paris was liberated, and within ten days all German forces had retreated beyond the Seine and were being pushed back towards Germany itself. Second, it was important because of Colonel Gutowski's role in it. Here is what happened. An Allied force consisting of British, American, Canadian and Polish contingents had surrounded the German Seventh and Fifth Armies and put them basically in a “Surrender or die” position. The Germans fought bitterly to keep a gap open so that at least some of them could escape, and some of them did – through the Polish sector.

This only happened because, due to a monumental snafu, the Poles' urgent request for a resupply of ammunition had been ignored. By the time the Germans made their big push, the Poles had almost none left, except for their heavy artillery – and heavy artillery isn't very useful when the enemy is really close. Essentially they were defenseless except for their bayonets. If the Germans had known this, they could have turned aside briefly and wiped out all the Poles. But they didn't know, and getting out of the trap remained their only priority. For Colonel Gutowski, this was Lucky Escape Number Four. Third, it was important – to us – because the Poles were stationed with Canadian units on either side, and it seems likely that conversations with Canadian comrades in arms first sparked his interest in living here.

In recognition of his outstanding wartime service, he was made a member of the French Légion d'Honneur, and was awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm, the American Legion of Merit (citation signed by President Roosevelt), the Polish Cross of Valour (five times!) and the Commander's Cross of the Polonia Restituta, to go with the Virtuti Militari Cross mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately, Poland itself was "liberated" by Soviet forces. This turned out to be just a change of occupiers. In fact, one of the first things the Russians did was round up as many Polish officers as they could, and shoot them. Colonel Gutowski was out of their reach, having been stationed at Wilhelmshaven, the former German naval base his regiment had helped capture. This was Lucky Escape Number Five.

When the war was over, he immigrated to Canada (spelled "Kanada" on the Polish website), and began a career as a riding instructor and coach, from Pony Club on up. And when I say "up", I mean UP. He eventually became the coach of the Canadian National Eventing Team, and in that role went to Mexico City for his second Olympics, in 1968. Although our Eventing Team did not make the podium, he watched proudly as our Canadian Show Jumping Team – including riders he had trained as Pony Clubbers – won Team Gold.

Colonel Gutowski evented himself, and competed until he reached the age of 83! He continued coaching well into the 1990s, and he also qualified as an FEI level dressage judge. All his career in Canada he continued to support Pony Club. Mind you, he could be a crusty old cuss. I recall scribing for him one time at National Rally. The first dressage test of the day was, well, let's be kind and call it disastrous. For his final Judge's Comment, he dictated to me, "I don't know whether to blame the horse, the rider or the coach, but one of you should be shot! At least one of you!" Considering that the kids were riding borrowed horses, I thought at the time that this was a bit rough, but it was early in the morning, still pretty chilly, his arthritis was kicking up and we had just been told we couldn't have any cognac in our coffee.

In 2000, Colonel Gutowski's wife died. One of her last wishes was to be laid to rest in the soil of Poland, so he flew back with her body.

When he got there, however, he was told by the military authorities that he had never been formally discharged, and as far as they were concerned he really was still – legally – Colonel Gutowski of the Polish army, and, having been AWOL for more than 50 years, could be tried for desertion. (I don't know whether this spoiled his shorts; mine would have been done for.) But they also told him that, rather than trying him for desertion, they were promoting him to General, and that his orders were to re-establish the Cavalry Parade Squadron with horses, not tanks, and to organize an annual Great Cavalry Parade. Talk about an offer he couldn't refuse! (Could you count this as Lucky Escape Number Six?) He was appointed Aide de Camp to the President of Poland, and I have heard that the Polish equivalent of the CEF also made him Honorary Coach of the Polish Eventing Team, though this is one of the things I could never confirm.

He not only revived the Cavalry Parade Squadron, but when it came time for the ceremonial cavalry charge at the first Great Cavalry Parade, he jolly well led it, at a full gallop, with 120 troopers thundering along behind him – this at the age of 92! After that he had to content himself with reviewing the troops, but they had great difficulty persuading him that he should do that from a restored 1930s-era convertible limousine, rather than on horseback. Shortly before he turned 94 he got on a horse and cleared a few obstacles, then toddled off to hospital for spinal surgery the next day.

General Michal Gutowski died in August, 2006, three weeks short of his 96th birthday. He was given a state funeral with full military honours. Among many foreign dignitaries, the Canadian Ambassador attended, and read aloud a letter of condolence from Prime Minister Harper. The tone of the obituary headlining the "Polish Prestige" website makes it clear that General Gutowski was seen as no less than a national hero and treasure. It was titled "The General has Passed Away" – no further identification was needed for Polish readers. To them, he was simply THE General.

I seem to remember reading somewhere that he had been struggling with Alzheimer's for a year or so before he died, so I do not know whether he was still the Honorary Coach of the Polish Eventing Team. I hope he was. If so, for him to be the Coach of that team, even in an honorary capacity, 70 years after he served as its Captain, would be an accomplishment without parallel in our sport – and I daresay without parallel in any other sport. Even if he wasn't still the Eventing Team Coach, I am sure you will agree that his was an extraordinary career and a remarkable life.

It is the stuff of legend.

As promised above ... COR at Rolex!!!!!!

