

# *The 2016 Year In Review Is Dedicated To* HELEN A. RICH and ALI DeGRAY

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER

Heiress. Gypsy. Mother. Rescuer. Philanthropist. Fighter. Horsewoman Extraordinaire. Friend To Many. The monikers for Helen A. Rich are as endless as the size of her heart.

Dubbed by her local newspaper as the Rebel With A Cause, the first granddaughter of William Wrigley's son, Philip K., Helen and her family enjoyed traveling, spending summers in Wisconsin, fall in Chicago, winters in Arizona and spring on Catalina Island, where her love for equines was formed. Even before walking, climbing aboard a horse was her favorite activity. Today, that love for horses, ponies and pretty much every other animal on earth, still dominates her existence.

"It's always been my life," explained Helen. "My grandparents were the first to import Arabians into this country for breeding purposes. Our family trail rides on our Catalina Island ranch was something I lived for. In town there was a local stable that rented horses. A man named Frenchy Small ran it. I wanted to ride all the time."

When Helen was 10 or 11 her parents divorced and she, her mom Deedie, sister Misdee and brother George settled down in Arizona. Her mom then married a man named Tom Chauncey and she built a world class Arabian operation in Scottsdale. The rebel side of Helen was part of her teenage years and she left her Arizona family and found her way to Florida to live with her dad and finish high school. After a short stint at Stephens College in Missouri she returned to live with her family in Arizona. She and a family friend worked on a cattle ranch one summer and decided to get married. He became a college professor and they moved to Boston but shortly after the birth of their son Erik, they divorced and she returned to Arizona where she again rebelled against her family, not wanting them "to own me."

Her next attempt at marriage would be with Charles Holmes and that lasted 13 years, however, when Helen's father became ill she returned to Palm Beach to help care for him. It was there that she was reunited with her high school beau,



*The dynamic gingers Ali DeGray and Helen Rich live a full life filled with wonderful horses, ponies, dogs and animals of all types.*



*Horses have been a way a life for Helen since she can remember.*





One of the first American Saddlebred world's champions for Helen was the pleasure driving star, CH Santana's Night Moves.



A young Ali DeGray and the great CH Free Willy won three consecutive world's champion of champions titles with Ruth Gimpel.



For her generous support of all things UPHA, Nancy Becker presented the UPHA Associate Member Of The Year to Helen.



In 2015, Ali and Memories Of Cabo wore the roses in the Amateur Five-Gaited Championship, one of three Saturday night classes she won at the World's Championship Horse Show.

William DeGray. They had two children, Will and Ali, however they divorced after 12 years of marriage as she was recovering from her first bout with breast cancer.

Helen's younger sister Misdee had a farm in Ocala where she raised Arabians and National Show Horses, a breed founded by their mother. Deedie Wrigley gave Helen's daughter Ali a three-year-old Arabian mare when Ali was three and another generation of Wrigleys was hooked. Tom and Nancy Scott were working for Misdee at the time and began working with Ali, who like her mom, had started riding Western before she could even walk.

It was also during this time that Helen was introduced to American Saddlebreds. "It was different than an Arabian," she said of her first thought.

Ali was also exposed at that point and loved what she saw. "I remember seeing Nancy Scott on a National Show Horse or Saddlebred. It looked so exciting to me. I thought, 'whatever that is, that is what I want to do,'" she said in an earlier Horse World interview.

Eventually Misdee closed her Florida farm and moved her horses to Kentucky. Before she did she introduced Helen and

Ali to Ruth Gimpel and soon the family became involved with Hackneys and American Saddlebreds. The pleasure driving pony Among The Stars was one of the first for Ali. Her first "forever" Saddlebred show horse was Somersby who lived out his life with the Rich family. He was soon followed by her first gaited horse, CH Tigerlee, with whom she won three consecutive World's Champion of Champions Junior Exhibitor Five-Gaited 14-17 titles and today he is one of several retirees enjoying life on the family's 130-acre estate in Odessa, FL, known as The Fiver.

The whole family became involved and Helen's prowess with driving was very evident with her 1999 reserve world's champion performance with CH Santana's Night Moves followed by a world's champion drive in her 2001 qualifier. That week they also finished as the reserve world's champion of champions.

Fast-forward to today and the mother/daughter duo has come a long ways with many top horses and ponies. The American Saddlebreds are under the direction of Tammy DeVore and the ponies are with Rich and Maureen Campbell.

"I was ready to quit but stayed because of Ali," said Helen. "Both Tammy [DeVore] and Rich and Maureen [Campbell] are like





Assisted with her winning ribbons by Rich Campbell, Ali drove to two world's grand championships (Craycroft's Matador & Twin Willow's McDreamy) in the same night and rode (CH Memories Of Cabo) to another. This picture was from the Hackney Pony World's Grand Championship with The Matador. "Ali's real handy, real quick and she doesn't get rattled," said Rich Campbell. "She has a great attitude and is always fun to put in the ring. These are two different type ponies and I bet she hasn't driven either one more than four times other than the times she shows them. You really appreciate a driver like that."



One of Helen's newest teammates is the great CH Cherished King.

family. They are the most loving and caring people. They would hook a pony and sit beside me. They lifted me up and inspired me to do this again.

"I love my horse show family. I don't show against people, I show with them. When you're down or having a rough time they lift you up. I've never seen so much amazing, loving support from people in this business. Among them, Chuck and Lynn Hutchinson have become family.

"Helen doesn't take winning for granted," said Lynn in an earlier interview. "Like all of us, she likes to win, but she and Ali go in the ring for the sheer joy of it. When Helen shows any of her horses she is so funny. People on the rail will say something like, 'I like your horse,' and she'll turn around say 'thank you' with a big smile on her face. She enjoys other people enjoying her horses. If she or Ali have a bad show they might get upset with themselves, but I've never seen them blame the horse."

These past few seasons have been exceptional for the mother/daughter duo. With the guidance of the Campbell's Majestic Oaks Hackney Farm, Helen enjoyed an unbroken string of 12 victory passes with Heartland Sugar Plum (Heartland Rain And Fire x Heartland Extra Elegant), in the pony's first year in the pleasure division. The world's champion of champions and national champion for 2016 was also voted the UPHA Overall Hackney Pleasure Driving Pony Of The Year and Adult Hackney Pleasure Driving Pony Of The Year. With the beautiful Heartland Copper Illusion (Heartland Head Of The Class x Heartland Dixie) Helen debuted at Louisville winning the Kentucky County Fair Harness Pony Grand Championship and finished the

year as the Amateur Harness Pony National Champions.

"Helen is a great owner and driver," said Maureen Campbell. "The welfare of the horses and ponies comes first and that allows us to do what's best for them. She gets it when they don't work out, she gets it when they are sick, she gets the angles of the business. She adores the ponies and all animals. She goes in the stalls a lot to visit with them. She's also a very giving person, several times helping others be able to have a pony to show. Helen is a unique, special individual and I am proud to have her as a client and a friend.

"Helen is a very talented driver. I know some people didn't believe it but she had never driven [Heartland] Copper Illusion before she showed him at Louisville this past year. We put her in the viceroy and I got on the back for about a half a lap and walked her through what to do and then she went a lap by herself and we went in the ring. Holli [Hayes] and I teach so much alike it makes it easy to put drivers in the ring and we also translate what Rich is asking for.

"We purchased Sugar Plum for the Hackney pony division, but realized she wasn't happy there. So then we took the winter off. Rich and Holli started her back up and thought the pleasure division would be the right thing for her. The mare loved it and Helen gets along great with her. She's definitely found her niche."

Since her junior exhibitor days with Among The Stars and the great CH Free Willy, Ali has also shown the family's genes as a great whip. Her current partner is the four-time World's Grand Champion Road Pony Twin Willow's McDreamy. The son of Twin Willow's McMillan and Twin Willow's Katrina has worn the roses twice



CH Tigerlee was one of Ali's early stars, winning the World's Champion of Champions Junior Exhibitor Five-Gaited title for three consecutive years.





A skilled equestrienne, Helen is a noted driver in a number of breeds. Fell ponies such as Dreamhayven Double Agent have become a passion.



DeVore Stables is home of Helen and Ali's American Saddlebred contenders. They are pictured with Tammy DeVore and her mother Wanda Westbrook.

for Ali and twice for former trainer Dr. Alan Raun. Besides their world's grand champion honors, McDreamy and Ali went seven for seven from River Ridge, Asheville Lions Club, Blue Ridge, and the UPHA/American Royal where they were named National Champions for the third consecutive year. They were honored for their season with the 2016 UPHA Open Road Pony and UPHA Overall Road Pony Of The Year titles.

Ali's face also beams when she is behind two of the greatest cob-tails of this era, the 2015 and 2016 World's Grand Champion Hackney Pony Craycroft Matador (Dun-Haven Crimson Glory x Heartland Red Rose) and Heartland High Tech, her beloved 2016 Amateur Hackney Pony National Champion, Ladies Amateur Hackney Pony World's Champion and Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Hackney Pony. In 2015, High Tech was the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Hackney Pony for Ali.

"Ali is a character," added Maureen. "She's always laughing and keeping things light. We might get upset if something isn't going right but she always lightens the situation, she is one of the happiest people I've ever met. When she comes to the farm to visit we'll look up and can't find her. She'll be out in the field visiting with Kristy Lee. She just loves her animals.

"Ali is a great driver and she gets it. I can put her behind a young pony after telling her a little bit about that pony. She picks up on it and does a great job."

Also in 2015, Ali made history by winning three Saturday night classes at Louisville. After having won the amateur cob-tail championship on Friday night with High Tech she returned on Saturday night to win world's grand championships with Matador and McDreamy and then topped it off with the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Five-Gaited roses with CH Memories Of Cabo (Desert's Supreme Memories x Kalarama's My Heart).

Again voted the UPHA Amateur Five-Gaited Horse Of The Year, CH Memories

Of Cabo is prepared by Tammy DeVore and her crew at DeVore Stables along with Helen and Ali's other Saddlebred stars. Ali and Cabo enjoyed another string of victory passes, which included the Amateur Five-Gaited Stallion/Gelding World's Championship and the amateur stallion/gelding title at the UPHA/American Royal. Also part of her under saddle team are CH Billy Deluxe, the UPHA Adult Five-Gaited Pleasure Horse Of The Year who garnered the Adult Five-Gaited Pleasure National Championship and reserve world's champion of champions honors, among others, for 2016. Northern Asset, winner of the Amateur Three-Gaited 15.2 & Under Stake at the UPHA/American Royal was another member of her string, which includes Callaway's Naughty And Nice, Enchanted Kiss and her beloved hunter, Jolly Mon Sing.

Helen also displays her driving skills with the DeVore trained CH Cherished King and Costa Nostra. The lovely combination of Helen and the grand champion CH Cherished King enjoyed titles from Tampa Charity, Pro-Am, River Ridge, Asheville Lions Club, Chattanooga/Cleveland and Southern Saddlebred Fall Finale, in addition to a top three finish in the Ladies Fine Harness Championship at Louisville. Costa Nostra was added to the string following the World's Championship Horse Show and they debuted with a victory pass at the Southern Saddlebred Fall Finale.

"I've had some really good owners over the years but I have to say they are right at the top," exclaimed Tammy DeVore. "Obviously, she has the means to have nice horses and if for whatever reason one doesn't turn out, it's not the end of the world. The best part about Helen is she understands that it takes time with some of these horses. She understands that sometimes it just doesn't work out. She has the patience to let us do our jobs and find a job for her horses, no matter what that job is. She knows they don't always work out for the job you intended them to have. She's just as happy if they are a



Helen and Ali and their Fiver Farm consist of 130 acres and hundreds of animals in Odessa, FL.





*In 2015, Helen tried her hand in the Morgan world driving CBMF Victory Pass to the Amateur Masters Park Harness World Championship under the direction of Maureen and Rich Campbell.*



*This was quite a year for Helen and UPHA Overall and Adult Hackney Pleasure Driving Pony Of The Year Heartland Sugar Plum. They won world's champion of champions honors and the national championship as part of a perfect 2016 record.*

hunter or western horse. It certainly takes the pressure off of us and let's us do what's best for the horse. She's also great about retiring one when it's time. As a driver Helen is so gutsy for this time of her life; she just wants to drive and have fun.

"Ali was a dear friend for a long time before they were customers. She's a very talented rider and a great listener. She'll keep a horse quiet and once she knows a horse she'll ride the hair off of it. She knows how to make a horse happy. She gets the most out of some of the most irritable horses. She just laughs and has a good time. She does not get nervous or rattled. When something doesn't go our way she understands that. She just wants to be with the horses, take them out to graze, play with them in the stall.

"I want to do right by them. I love them so much and they love the breed. I'm so fortunate to have them as friends and clients. They bring a lot of joy to our whole barn family, as they are the most down to earth people you'll ever meet. I also can't thank them enough for the opportunity they have given me. I've been fortunate to have had several nice gaited horses and have always wanted to win one of the open classes at Louisville. They bought (SA) Kalarama's Ultimate Choice for Ali but let me show him to win the stud stake. It was so kind for them to do that. I didn't know if I would ever have the opportunity to win the Five-Gaited Stallion World's Championship but they made it happen."

We've all seen Helen and Ali in the showring but life at home on The Fiver is a story all in itself. Besides pastures for their beloved retirees, The Fiver houses Helen's Friesians and Fell Ponies that she drives on the property. She is a horsewoman through and through.

"I love to drive and the sportier the better," exclaimed Helen. "I think driving is more thrilling than riding. Riding you have your hands, your legs, your seat. Driving, all you have is your hands. I think of it as being a puppet master, a marionettist. Every movement comes from the hands."

When talking about driving Hackney

ponies she says "it's the difference in driving a VW Bug and a Corvette." Another breed she has fallen in love with is the Fell Pony.

"When I was a little girl I had a laminated poster of horse breeds and I remember always wanting a Fell Pony," said Helen. "They are wildly romantic. Britain was built on the back of the Fell Pony."

"A while back when [Heartland] High Tech was selected as a Breyer model we were at Breyerfest and stabled next to Fell Ponies. I bought one and now I have 18."

Helen spends her mornings driving her Fells and Friesians on the 130-acre estate. There's a lot of fence to check and a lot of livestock to care for. Horses, cats, dogs, rabbits, poultry, goats, pigs, exotic birds, they can all be found at the place that gives them a second chance at life.

"If it has nowhere to go, nothing else can be done, I take it," exclaimed Helen. "I can't save everything but if there is nothing else, I am the last resort."

"Helen is such a caring person," added Maureen. "She is so passionate about the welfare of animals in general. Besides all of the animals she rescues and finds homes for, Helen and Ali are also great for our industry. It wouldn't be the same without them. Ali has such a network of friends in the younger generation and they all look up to her. She sets a great example as a good sport. And Helen is always willing to give. She wants to help, wants to support causes."

What a legacy Helen is building and daughter Ali is right behind. They are two peas in a pod and all of mankind is better off because of the hearts of these two ladies who always have smiles on their faces. Those smiles are just a little brighter when they are with their horse show family and the horses and ponies that don't know just how good they have it. Or maybe they do?



*Twin Willow's McDreamy and Ali have been the winners of two consecutive Road Pony World's Grand Championships.*