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Mindy loves the Boxer breed and she is a huge University of Notre Dame fan. Ara is named after Notre Dame coach Ara Parseghian who led the Fighting Irish to two national championships.



Both Linda Lewis and granddaughter Alexis Lewis showed CH The Final Contender with much success. He is pictured with Linda at the UPHA/American Royal in 2011 where they were the Amateur Hackney Pony Reserve National Champions.

MINDY MCINTOSH PRESTON AND MCINTOSH STABLES: Hoosier Hospitality Personified

by Leeann Mione

FORTVILLE, Indiana - Mindy McIntosh Preston, with dad Jim, mom Sandra and husband Mark by her side is looking forward to the Christmas season to celebrate a fantastic 2019 show season and look ahead to 2020.

McIntosh Stables at Flat Rock Creek Farm was established at its present location in 2000 but McIntosh Stables has been putting winners in the ring for much longer than that.

For many years Jim McIntosh supported his young family working for Commercial Motor Freight, Inc., in Louisville, Kentucky. He worked long hours always with the dream of being a horse trainer full time. In

order to make that dream come true, the family moved from Clarksville, Indiana to Sandra's hometown of Orleans, Indiana and purchased the house next to her parents' farm which allowed him to train horses at night after work.

Sandra had dinner on the table when he got home and then she, Jim and sons Mike, Rob and John would go to the barn. The boys would clean stalls and Sandra would groom the horses. At one time they even stood a Morgan stallion and Sandra handled the mares.

The boys would go home around eight o'clock to get ready for bed and several hours later she and Jim would follow. The family lived that life for more than

10 years and while it was hard, it didn't dissuade oldest son Mike from becoming a professional trainer. It also might explain why Rob and John never had much interest in the horses after they left home.

Like stairsteps, Mike, then Rob, then John were born one right after the other but it would be 13 years before daughter Melinda was born. From the time she was little it was clear that Mindy wasn't going to play with baby dolls and wear frilly dresses. She was determined to do everything her brothers did and like her dad and brother Mike the horses captured her heart.

"My mom recently found some of my elementary school work and my answer, even way back then, to

the question 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' was of course that I wanted to be a horse trainer."

One of her favorite memories as a kid was watching Skywatch and Emperor going head to head. "I loved both of them and would cheer for one and then for the other."

She also used to love to hide behind the couch at the age of seven or eight to listen to her dad and Hall of Fame trainer Marty Mueller talk about horses, training and life. She would record their conversations and listen to them over and over.

Growing up in a family of horse trainers can either make you run towards that life or make you run away from it and Mindy tried for a while to choose a different life. "I received a degree in marketing and worked for a time in the corporate world, but I would spend any and all of my vacation time helping my folks at horse shows. When our customer Linda Lewis offered me the opportunity in 2003 to be my dad's assistant trainer I jumped at the chance."

Linda's relationship with the family would prove to be life changing for all of them. When circumstances allowed her the means to build Flat Rock Creek Farm in Fortville, Indiana she hired Jim to train the Saddlebreds, Hackneys and Friesians. Some of the champions she owned and/or showed include Mi Leonardo, CH The Final Contender, Bella Donna Fine, Spirit's Easter Morn, Portrait Of A Lady, Extremely Supreme Star, CH Callaway's Belfast, Wisdom's Splash Of Color, Mirrored Dancer, Shady Creek's Nell, Jonker H, Marko and Aaike Sollenburg. In her time with the McIntosh family, Linda gave Mindy the opportunity to show some of her horses and Mindy relished those rides. "My dad mainly had colts when I was growing up so I never really had a horse to show."

Linda's granddaughter Alexis Lewis watched her show and loved to come to the horse shows to cheer her on. She inherited her love of the animals and being in the show ring from Linda.

Linda and Alexis, as well as Stephanie Wright, Zoe Carpenter, Iris Bolton, Steve and Bill Kildow and Dawn Kendrick have all benefited from the McIntosh way of life and training methods. Mindy strives to uphold her dad's training philosophy that the most important

thing you should know is how to bridle a horse correctly.

"It's important to have that contact with them and if something is wrong in the bridling there is only one person to blame," she said. "I've been told that I am good at explaining to a rider or driver so that they understand and can successfully accomplish what they need to do with their horse or pony."

Mindy and her husband Mark have been married for 20 years and he has jumped in with both feet to help her run the day to day operations of McIntosh Stables. He helps maintain the barn and the farm and helps at horse shows whenever he can. In fact, if you watched him lead a pony and driver back to the stalls after their class you'd think he'd been doing it all his life.

Mindy shares Mark's love of vintage cars and they enjoy going to car shows with their 1954 Chevy which they bought together. Mark still owns his first car, a 1969 Chevy Camaro. He and his dad restored it together when Mark was 15. Jim also loves cars and keeps his race car at home. He's driven it on the famed Indy 500 racetrack in Indianapolis and he loves that car almost as much as he loves his family and his animals.

The family believes in being good citizens and giving back to the industry they love so much. Mindy is the Chair of both the AHHS Youth Medallion Committee and the AHHS Junior Exhibitor Regional Championship Committee. Sandra is the author of the 2004 book L.S. Dickey & The Valley Horseman about the history of the famed horsemen of French Lick and West Baden, Indiana.

This close-knit family is bound by a deep love of family, their animals, the horse show community and the life they've made at McIntosh Stables.

"I tried to talk Mindy out of being a horse trainer," said Sandra. "But Jim and I would go to a horse show and she would go to her job and you could just see it in her eyes. She couldn't stand not going with us. We've put everything we have into helping her purchase this farm and make her business a success. When it's in your soul it's all you can do."

Jim added, "Mindy is a perfectionist and she puts her heart and soul into everything she does. I'm very proud of her."



Retirees Wisdom's Splash Of Color (l) and Mirrored Dancer love to hang out together.



Horses and dogs make Jim happy. Richie is his constant companion.



It was the thrill of a lifetime for Jim to drive his race car on the Indy 500 track.



Mindy, Sandra and Jim McIntosh have a very close relationship and their team effort makes McIntosh Stables a success in the show ring and out of it.