

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Tempt Me

The People's Choice Amateur Fine Harness Horse Of The Year

By Jenny Grey

Tempt Me (Dorian Wild Temper x Marty Jones), newly paired with Susan Bartlett for the 2016 show season, is a brilliant performer in the amateur fine harness division. Elegant and beautiful, she rarely puts a foot wrong and her bright personality sets her apart. A perfect match for Susan, this lovely pair enjoyed an undefeated season ending with the proverbial jewel in the crown as the Amateur Fine Harness World's Champion of Champions under the direction of her long time trainer, Chuck Herbert.

Strangely, it was not Susan who grew up with horses, it was her husband, Jeff, whose mother showed Saddlebreds in the fine harness division for over 40 years. He would often accompany her to local shows, cheering her on from the rail. When his own family began to compete, he was their strongest supporter. Susan had very little exposure to the sport until their daughter, Katie, began taking lessons when she was six years old.

Katie began riding locally at a farm close to their Owensboro, Kentucky home where both she and Susan took lessons with Jennifer Mishell, Ellen Beard's instructor. When the barn closed and Ellen moved, Jennifer went to work for Chuck Herbert at Cedarwood Farm in Evansville, Indiana. The Bartlett family, who loved working with Jennifer, followed her to Cedarwood in October 1994, where they have remained in training with Chuck for over 22 years.

After the move to Cedarwood Farm, Susan continued with her riding lessons but had no desire to show (or canter), preferring the comfort and safety of jogging in a western saddle. With some encouragement from Chuck, she discovered she loved to drive. Just a short time later, in February of 1995, she became the proud owner of Preferred American, her first fine harness horse. "She took to it fast," Chuck remembered. "Preferred American wasn't easy but she was very successful early on." Considering the brief time Susan was driving before showing a horse the caliber of Preferred American, the results were nothing short of remarkable.

When Susan discovers the right horse, she will show it for several years. Such was the case with Preferred American and later, the wonderful CH Harlem's Santa Fe (Ellie) with whom she was incredibly successful until 2012 when Ellie retired. There followed two good years with WS Call Me Catty whom Katie showed in Adult Country Pleasure last



In an undefeated season last year, Tempt Me and Susan Bartlett were the World's Champions in Ladies Amateur Fine Harness and the World's Champion of Champions in Amateur Fine Harness.

year but it was a long search before Susan and Chuck found that next, perfect fine harness horse.

Chuck had admired Tempt Me for some time but she was never for sale. When he later saw an ad indicating she was available and knowing she was not likely to be on the market long, Chuck, Susan and Jeff immediately went to Steve and Tiffany Wheeler's farm to see her. Tiffany showed this lovely mare as a junior horse, winning the 2013 Reserve World's Champion of Champion title in Junior Fine Harness, the Ladies Fine Harness World's Championship and the Ladies Fine Harness Reserve World's Champion of Champion's title again in 2014. When Susan tried her out, it proved to be an immediate and perfect match. "This could work," thought Chuck while Tiffany declared they looked great together. "She drives a lot like Ellie," said Susan, thinking

about why they 'clicked' right away. Tempt Me (aka Mimi), has all of Ellie's wonderful qualities but in some ways is a little easier to show. All show horse but still light in the bridle, she loves her job, never drops an ear and always stands quietly in a line up. "I love the mare!" Susan declared. "She's so much fun to drive."

At home, Mimi lets her opinions be known. "She's a princess and she knows what she likes," Susan said laughing. Mimi is not only a princess, she requires just one caretaker. She chose Danelle Howser, Chuck Herbert's assistant, for the job. Danelle has no problem with this because she adores the mare. When the vet comes to the barn, Danelle has to be present to catch her. Also particular about her treats, Mimi has rules for peppermints. "One is just an appetizer," Susan reported. "The second is dessert." Mimi, however, can be forgiven

for her particular personality because it is part of what makes her a great show horse.

Chuck remembers working Mimi during the winter after they purchased her. He really liked her but it was not until the first show that he had an appreciation for the kind of horse she would be. When Susan drove her for the first time at the IAHSA Spring Warm-Up in Cloverdale, Indiana he was ecstatic, remembering "She was such a different horse. I was so excited I couldn't stand still. It blew me away how cool she was!" Also recognizing this wonderful mare's star quality, the judges placed Tempt Me and Susan first in every class they entered this year. They continued the season winning all of their fine harness classes at Indianapolis Charity, Midwest Charity and the Blue Ridge Classic before moving on to the biggest test of all at the Kentucky State Fair.

For Susan, every class is a new challenge. She never assumes she will win. The depth and quality of the amateur fine harness horses at Louisville last year was remarkable. Thrilled with her victory in the Ladies Amateur Fine Harness World's Championship earlier in the week, she still had no expectations for the finale. Chuck said "I thought we had a good shot but the amateur championship was such a great class I just didn't know." It was a wonderful surprise for both of them when Tempt Me was called to take that most coveted victory pass on the Louisville green shavings in her last performance of the year and her first title as the Amateur Fine Harness World's Champion of Champions. Remembering her mind went blank when her number was called, Susan's only memory was of her daughter, Katie, and her four-year old granddaughter, Shelby, chanting 'Go Mimi!' "I was pretty excited they won!" Chuck told us in something of an understatement. "I've really enjoyed the opportunity to put this mare in the ring."

The pleasure of showing is infinitely better when shared with a family who also loves horses and having a trainer who has become part of the extended family. Chuck, who has trained the Bartlett family almost from the beginning, sees them as both valued clients and very good friends. "Susan and Jeff have believed in me forever and supported the choices I've made," he said appreciatively. "They have always trusted me... Susan is competitive. She loves to drive and she loves to win but she never gets upset if she doesn't. They are really good people." Susan not only loves driving, she has the added enjoyment of showing with Katie (now Katie Bartlett Pagan) and watching Shelby joining the fold as a third generation competitor, taking lessons and already posting at age four.



Tempt Me and Susan Bartlett along with trainer Chuck Herbert and assistant trainer Danelle Howser enjoyed a well-deserved moment of celebration after a trip on the green shavings as the Amateur Fine Harness World's Champion of Champions.

A long-term relationship with one's trainer is certainly a key factor in a successful show career. Not only has Chuck Herbert done an incredible job of selecting and training outstanding horses for Susan, they enjoy each other's company. Susan loves Chuck's sense of humor and the fun they sometimes have while teasing each other. Remembering an occasion at the barn when she was driving Preferred American she said "I was giving him a hard time about not dragging the ring and giving me a bumpy ride, then I bounced right out of the cart. When he was sure I was okay he started laughing so hard I thought he was never going to stop." Chuck remembers the occasion well, saying, "We have lots of laughs. That was the funniest thing you ever saw!"

There is nothing like the grace of a beautiful fine harness horse in front of the four-wheeled cart and, of course, the elegant clothing required for the event. When Katie told her mom, "You can't wear the same clothes you had when you were driving a black horse," it was a great opportunity for the two of them to go shopping. Jeff, the family's biggest supporter, is incredibly proud of what Susan has achieved as well as being reminded of the good times he spent watching his mother show so many years ago. "This is especially satisfying for the Bartlett name in as much as my mother showed in fine harness for about 40 years

beginning in the 1930's and never won the Amateur Fine Harness class at Louisville."

Driving to Cedarwood once a week to train, attending shows, enjoying time with her family, teaching French part time, following her interests in needlework and crochet, sponsoring a knitting club, meeting with her book club and watching football, all keep Susan very busy. She enjoys traveling with Katie and takes school groups to Europe but horses are her first love. Realistic and pragmatic, Susan Bartlett takes each class as it comes, never expecting the victory but thrilled when it happens.

After a long and successful history with Preferred American and CH Harlem's Santa Fe, Susan has found another outstanding horse in Tempt Me with whom she formed a partnership the first time she drove her. Perfectly matched, they are likely to be at the top of the fine harness division for many years to come. Win or lose, Susan is a gracious competitor with a deep love for her equine partners. Winning is great but the pleasure of sharing the sport she loves with family and friends is the key to making memories that last for a lifetime. There is no more worthy choice than Tempt Me as the People's Choice Amateur Fine Harness Champion of the Year so we congratulate Susan Bartlett along with Chuck Herbert, who has done a superb job as trainer of this outstanding pair, as they get ready for the excitement and challenge of a new show season.