

# Spotlight on

# Vicki REED

*Vicki Reed is the epitome of a first-class amateur owner, highly regarded by her fellow competitors and the professionals who support her. Her trainers, AJ and Wendy Bruwer were thrilled when Vicki and Kalarama's New York Lady won the Amateur Fine Harness Championship at Lexington Junior League in 2014.*



By Jennifer Grey

*There is no better example than Vicki Reed as the epitome of a first-class amateur owner, highly regarded by her fellow competitors and the professionals who support her. In a very successful 30 year show career, her kind and generous nature and her concern for the horses who depend on her have made her a popular figure in horse show circles. While she enjoys winning, her passion for the sport and the thrill of a great performance are far more important to her than a blue ribbon. Read on to discover more about why she is so well-regarded in the American Saddlebred world.*

Vicki inherited her love of horses from her mother who owned a quarter horse as a young woman. When the family moved to San Antonio, thirteen-year old Vicki joined the Boots and Saddle Club with her mother and sister where they took lessons and rode the trails. It was to be many years, however, before she entered the show ring with an American Saddlebred. Life intervened and horses were put on the back burner while Vicki attended Rice University with her future husband, Sam. They originally met in junior high school but the relationship developed into something more serious while they were undergraduates. Marrying soon after graduation, they embarked on a series of moves in support of their careers. Vicki worked as both a medical technologist and a teacher before her sons were born. Sam, very successful in the food industry, eventually became CEO of Keebler and is now the President and CEO of TreeHouse, a publicly traded food company.

Knowing how much Vicki loved horses, Sam encouraged her to ride and even to buy a horse but the timing was never quite right. When they moved to Hawaii, Vicki was pregnant with Sam Henry then had another son, Danny. It was not until they moved to Augusta, Ga., that Vicki met Peggy Gillenwater who would set her on a course to horse ownership. "Peggy was responsible for dragging me into it," said Vicki. Now 30 years later it would take a team of wild horses to drag her out of it! When Peggy, whose husband worked with Sam, discovered that Vicki loved horses, she invited her to visit Cleveland Park Stables in Greenville, S.C., where she kept her gaited horse, General Grant, in training with Carol Greenwell. Vicki enjoyed these outings

so much that she began attending shows with Peggy and taking lessons with Midge Cornell at Cleveland Park.

The world's championship show has been an inspiration for a multitude of new Saddlebred owners and in Vicki's case the excitement was multiplied several times over when she witnessed performances of the great WGC CH Imperator, with whom Don Harris won seven five-gaited world's championships and WGC CH Skywatch, working his magic with Michelle Macfarlane. It was also the year in which Carol Greenwell won a world's championship with Black Irish. These could rightly be described as the glory days with Freedom Hall filled to the rafters. Completely captivated, three months later Vicki became the owner of her first Saddlebred, Sh-Boom, who she showed for several years before adding another horse to her show string.

"I didn't tell Sam right away," said Vicki, laughing about the memory. "I thought it was easier to ask for forgiveness than permission! When I finally told him he got very quiet, but he's happy with it now." Very supportive after the initial shock wore off, Sam has become a well-respected spectator and friend to Vicki's many admirers on the horse show circuit. One of Sam's favorite early memories is of taking their young sons to a show near Atlanta where she won the first of five consecutive blue ribbons. While it was a thrill to see Vicki perform so well, Sam made it clear that she is not in it for the ribbons. "She keeps it in context of the love of her horses," he emphasized, explaining that she is just as interested in both the development of her horses and continual honing of her own skills. If the performance results in a blue ribbon, she is very happy but it is the process that motivates



AJ Bruwer and Vicki Reed shared a moment of celebration after she won the Midwest Charity Amateur Three-Gaited Championship with CH Mesmerizing last year.

her. "I have never tried to buy the winner," she stated, gaining great personal satisfaction in working with her trainers to bring a horse to its full potential. "She maximizes their qualities," said Peggy Gillenwater, describing Vicki as the most determined, dedicated and focused rider she has known. "She truly loves the animals and treats each of them as her children."

Vicki remembers the first time she showed Sh-Boom, who she bought sight unseen from Judy Werner on Billy Greenwell's recommendation. "I could barely ride back then, let alone show," said Vicki, whose last riding experiences were back in high school. "The first time I went into the ring I was so nervous that I didn't even hear the announcer, so I had no idea what gait I was supposed to do. In my second class my stable mates posted themselves around the ring with cue cards written with 'walk', 'trot', etc!" Given the sophistication with which Vicki presents her horses today, these early experiences are hard to imagine.

Vicki, Peggy, and a group of friends on the horse show circuit used to take a highly anticipated annual trip to ride with Gayle Lampe in Missouri, spending several days of hard workouts under Gayle's watchful eye. While the riding was serious, there were plenty of fun moments. Peggy Gillenwater remembers an occasion on which they took turns judging the other riders, giving oral reasons after the line-up. When Gayle asked Peggy why she gave a particular rider first place, her response was, "Because he keeps the wine in his room!" This is just one of many examples of the fun, friendship and laughter they have experienced together during the last 30 years.

Sh-Boom was an ideal first show horse for Vicki but when the Reed family moved to California, she was ready for more of a challenge, purchasing her first gaited horse, Moving Time, who had won the junior five-gaited world's championship with Peter Cowart. Bringing this exceptional mare back to train with Frank Buckley at the Menlo Circus Club, Vicki retired Sh-Boom, the first of many horses who earned a lifetime home with the Reed family. Vicki has also acquired some fine broodmares over the years but prefers to concentrate her focus on the show ring. One notable exception was an outstanding colt, CH Harlem's Moving Man, out of Moving Time by Harlem Globetrotter. One of the few horses she bred, he won the Adult Three-Gaited Show Pleasure Division A in 2003, giving Vicki her first World's Championship victory pass on the green shavings in Louisville.

While still living in California, Vicki first saw Callaway's Misha, a very special gaited horse at Kim and Peter Cowart's farm. "Misha was a star," Vicki remembered. "He was so beautiful." Convinced she did not need to own a third horse, Vicki put him out of mind but on her birthday that year, Sam presented her with a Russian box containing Scrabble letters. Her task was to arrange the letters to discover what he had given her. The tiles spelled 'Misha'. Thrilled with this generous birthday present from Sam, Vicki added a great third horse to her show string.

After several more moves, Sam and Vicki finally settled in Hinsdale, Ill., in 1998. They kept their horses with several excellent trainers over the years but Vicki formed a special bond with AJ and Wendy Bruwer who are like-minded people with a mutual concern for the well-being of the horses in their care. Deciding to move all of their horses to Kentucky, she has been a client of Bruwer Stables in Versailles, Ky., for the last 16 years. Famous for rarely selling her horses and even keeping those who did not make it into the show ring, it made sense for Vicki and Sam to buy a farm. Purchasing the old Nelson Green property in Nicholasville, just 10 minutes away from Versailles, Vicki has a home away from home when she commutes from Illinois to work her horses. "As an owner, horses come first as far as their care and health," Wendy stated. "She has a field of retirees to prove it!" AJ and Wendy appreciate Vicki's willingness to allow them to make decisions on her behalf and give them the freedom to always be 'up front' and do what they think is best for both horse and rider. Expert at finding horses that are an excellent match for Vicki's considerable skills, this partnership has produced some wonderful show ring memories.



Vicki Reed felt a special connection with CH Mesmerizing from the beginning. Always at the top of the ribbons, in 2012 and again in 2015 they were the Reserve World's Champions in Three-Gaited Amateur 15.2 and Under. The photo above shows a victory pass at the 2015 Mane Event show where CH Mesmerizing was the undefeated Three-Gaited Ladies Grand Champion with a unanimous choice of the judges.

Vicki is currently showing Ask Me Again in country pleasure driving, Kalarama's New York Lady in the fine harness division and both CH Heir To A Kiss and her personal favorite, CH Mesmerizing, in the amateur three-gaited division. She also has two talented youngsters in the ring. AJ had a very successful 2015 show season with I'm A Sugar Shaker in the junior five-gaited division as did assistant trainer Kelly Lockhart with Nuts About Her in the junior three-gaited division.

"I've loved them all," said Vicki, of the many horses she has owned, but there is something very special to her about CH Mesmerizing. "I felt such a connection with him from the beginning. He's manageably game, he never puts a foot out of place and he really loves what he is doing." In today's fiercely competitive environment, a close rapport with an outstanding horse can sometimes make the subtle difference between a respectable placing and a world championship ride. In 2012 and again last year, Vicki and CH Mesmerizing were the Reserve World's Champions in Three-Gaited Amateur 15.2 and Under. An exceptional 2015 show season also put Vicki and Mesmerizing at the top of the ribbons at the Mid-America Mane Event show, the Kentucky Fall Classic, Shelbyville, Midwest Charity and the Southern Saddlebred Spring Fling. She was also at or near the top of the ribbons with Kalarama's New York Lady, CH Heir To A Kiss and Ask Me Again.

AJ and Wendy Bruwer describe Vicki as a wonderful sportsman, always focusing on the positive in the subjective world of horse showing. "She is competitive; she sees the big picture, places herself well and gives it all she has," said Wendy. AJ and Wendy have many special memories of their long relationship with Vicki but one of their favorite moments was when Vicki's black fine harness mare, Kalarama's New York Lady, won the Amateur Fine Harness Championship on the red shavings at Lexington Junior League in 2014. Expert at matching horse and rider, they also love the pairing and teamwork between Vicki and Mesmerizing and the picture it presents. "They are such a great team," said Wendy of this well-matched duo. "Even down to her blond hair and his blond coloring – she fits him!" AJ and Wendy, of course, deserve a great deal of credit for selecting these outstanding horses for Vicki.

When asked about her own proudest moments, Vicki remembers the thrill of her first blue ribbon at the Pro-Am show in Atlanta, but she takes the greatest pride in the achievement of her sons, Sam and Danny. Sam, a shining star at Prescott College was accepted into the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop. Now married with a two-year old daughter, he recently moved to Santa Fe. Danny, an avid rock climber and snow boarder, lives in Denver where he is re-habilitating old homes.

Both excellent skiers, Sam and Danny join their parents each Christmas at the family's winter home in Deer Valley, Utah. "No warm weather vacations for us!" stated



*Vicki's proudest moment with a horse is when took her first victory pass followed by four consecutive blue ribbons many years ago. She is even more proud of her family and especially of her sons, Sam and Danny. This photo was taken in Arizona where her son, Sam married Abby Durden. L-R Sam K. Reed (Vicki's husband), Ruth Walton Reed (Sam's mother), Sam H. Reed, Vicki Reed and Danny Reed.*

Vicki, telling us about her husband's passion for skiing, which rivals her own passion for horses. Fortunately, Vicki also enjoys winter sports although hip replacement surgery has made her a little more cautious on the slopes. It also necessitated a year away from showing but she was able to come back to the show ring without missing a beat in her level of performance.

Mark Strong, a fellow competitor at Bruwer Stables has become a great friend during the last five years. Along with his partner, Paolo Martini, he celebrated New Year's Eve in Deer Valley with Vicki and Sam. "We adore Vicki," said Mark appreciatively. "She's a riot and so easy to spend time with. We laugh constantly." Mark, who lives in Boston and like Vicki, commutes to Bruwer Stables in Kentucky, enjoys her company so much that he times his monthly trips to coincide with her visits. They spend time watching all the horses work then go to lunch every day,

as they do at shows where they decompress and swap news and stories. "She's a fierce competitor. She loves to win but she's quick to laugh off a bad ride," Mark told us. Like AJ and Wendy, Mark admires Vicki's dedication to her equine charges. When spending time with Vicki at her Nicholasville farm, Mark enjoys watching her walk through the fields, petting and feeding carrots to the many horses in her care.

Traci Massaro met Vicki for the first time at the World's Championship show in the early 2000's then formed a close friendship when she also became a client of Bruwer Stables in 2007. Since that time Vicki and Traci have not only shown together, their families have become very close. "Vicki's love of horses and her gracious, competitive spirit are her best qualities as an exhibitor," Traci told us. "Like all of us she enjoys competing and winning but as a whole, her involvement stems from her love of the



*In training with AJ and Wendy Bruwer for the last 16 years, Vicki commutes frequently to their Versailles, Ky., stable to work her horses. The Bruwers have done an excellent job of selecting the right horses for Vicki and are especially pleased with the partnership with CH Mesmerizing and the beautiful picture it presents. AJ was on hand for the strip last year when Mesmerizing won the Amateur Three-Gaited 15.2 and Under Reserve World's Championship.*



*Vicki is a superb horsewoman, a dedicated owner who keeps her horses for life, and a kind and caring person who has made many close friends on the horse show circuit during a wonderful 30 year career.*

horses, not from the self-gratification that we so often see in our sport." Giving a personal example of her experience with Vicki and Sam, Traci said, "Several years ago Sam Reed expressed an interest in purchasing a filly owned by my family that was not necessarily for sale. AJ approached me and I was reticent. When he said the people interested were the Reeds, it was a no-brainer because I knew she would have a wonderful, forever home and I would get to enjoy her with them. That filly is Kalarama's New York Lady, with whom she continues to have a wonderful show career and I am their biggest fan!" Like Mark Strong, Traci always enjoys Vicki's company saying, "She has a great sense of humor and doesn't take herself too seriously. As long as we don't discuss politics, we have a great time!"

When we asked Sam to describe an event that characterized Vicki's relationship with her horses, there was no hesitation. He referred to a favorite photo they keep in their Utah home stating, "That says it all!" The photo is of Vicki dressed in her show clothes bending over to kiss Callaway's Count On Me who was lying in the shavings. A horse amiable enough to let his caretakers sit on his back while he lay down in his stall, he was very happy to have some attention from Vicki who adored him. Originally purchased to use at home as a practice horse and to go to local shows, Vicki loves him just as much as her Louisville contenders.

"Vicki and Sam Reed are the best kind of people," said Wendy Bruwer, describing them as highly successful but with the ability to relate to people in all walks of life. "Vicki is never boastful. She treats our staff with great appreciation and that means so much. They are like family, for sure." Knowing she is very fortunate in her choice of trainers, Vicki is also grateful to the greater American Saddlebred community that has brought such a rich, added dimension to her life.

Vicki Reed is the best of amateurs. She loves to win and has the skills to back up her ambitions but driven by the thrill of a good ride and not the end result, she will always keep the subjectivity of showing in perspective. The perfect client, she trusts her trainers, AJ and Wendy Bruwer to make good decisions in both the selection of horses and their ongoing care. A dedicated and passionate owner, any horse lucky enough to be owned by Vicki will have a lifetime home. A warm, funny and caring friend, she is one of the most genuine, well-liked people on the horse show circuit. Vicki can look back on an amazing 30-year career secure in the knowledge that there is more to come. A superb horsewoman whose career continues on an upward trajectory, she is grateful to still be doing what she loves saying, "I don't set big goals any more...I'm just happy to still be doing it." Representing the Saddlebred community as the ideal amateur owner, Vicki Reed's star will continue to shine brightly for many years to come.