



THE HUNTSMAN STORY

Huntsman was the most unique horse I ever had the pleasure to ride. He was my best friend. He came into my life from the generosity of Zella Kunhardt, a well known rider in East Coast circles and at Foxcroft. It was love at first sight. A beautiful bay standing 16 hands with a white star across his wide head and a stripe running down. He carried me through thick and thin. He knew when I was sad . . . sitting in his stall crying he would lay his head on my shoulder. He knew when I was happy and carried me to many blue ribbons and championships. He knew when I was naughty and dumped me. I remember distinctly, some sixty years later, when we returning from an almost full day of foxhunting, Bobbie Wahl and a few of us stopped at the Round Hill Store and jumped off our horses to grab a snack on our way back to the stable. Relieved by the respite, we were all being silly and giggly coming out of the store. As I was climbing back into the saddle munching on ice cream, Huntsman gave a little buck that dumped me in the parking lot, and took off down Round Hill Road toward the barn where he knew he had hot bran mash waiting for him. Teddy Wahl always gave his horses that had been hunting on a winter's day a hot bran mash. The barn was filled with the delicious aroma. While I was still sitting stunned on the tarmac, Bobbie took of after Huntsman, gathered him up and brought him back laughing as if saying "that'll teach you".

An unbelievable incident happened at Golden Hills Farm in Bedford. We were in a Junior Hunter class jumping an outside course with a rather large stone wall which on the down side led to a rarely used dirt road on the estate. Unbeknownst to me, Huntsman intuitively knew a car was coming down the road. He refused and he never refused a jump . . . then I saw the car. The judges saw it as well as they were on a stand near the wall. He jumped the second go perfectly. He was awarded first prize.

Another classic Huntsman day was at the Hunter Trials in Greenwich put on by the Fairfield and Westchester Hounds. Teddy entered him in all classes he qualified for. He had won every class when a very prestigious lady in the riding circles came up and said, "Don't you think you

have won enough and wouldn't it be nice if you gave others a chance." Needless to say I was speechless. I wasn't thinking of me winning . . . this was Huntsman's day and I was so proud of him. He just loved what he was doing. Every photo shows his ears forward and eager and ready. Who was I to remove him from what he loved to do.

Out foxhunting again he was a star. . . always ready and eager. Eventually we were taken from the back of the field where I was privileged to be a junior whipper-in and put in a position of just going for it rather than holding him back in the field. The only person one never passed was the Master who at this time was Mr. John Howland. Bobbie Wahl and Bill Howland were whipper-ins and always kept an eye on me. These were very spectacular fun riding days.

Huntsman helped me to qualify for two Maclay National Equitation finals in Madison Square Garden. Huntsman was not thrilled with New York City the first time he saw it. We had a very sticky round which was not normal for him. I had butterflies like never before which probably contributed to us not making the final 10. However we made up for it when we qualified again the next year. I made the final 10 competing with the likes of George Morris and Victor Hugo Vidal. George went on to become the Chef d'Equipe of the United States Equestrian Team and Victor became a famous horse show announcer. We had to switch horses and ride of with no stirrups. Try trotting a strange horse with no stirrups on a forward seat saddle that became popular at the same time of the equitation riders. Anyway it was exciting and we ended up 7th place. I'll never forget that because 7th place was a brown ribbon. I had never seen a brown ribbon before. I still have the metal center piece which I made into a belt buckle.

When I think back on our career together . . . foxhunting, showing, hacking out on the Greenwich trails and around the Round Hill Club golf course . . . we never had a fall, rarely rubbed a fence much less take down a rail, buckets full of ribbons and trophies . . . it was a great time of joy. I still have two trophies that we retired after winning them three times in a row. One is the Bobbie Acker Trophy for the Champion Girl or Boy of the Greenwich Riding Trails Association . . . first presented in 1928. Among the names engraved on this beautiful silver cup are: Carol Gimbel, Hope Gimbel, Phoebe Knapp, Patricia Bolling, Peggy Klipstien, William Steinkraus (later a member of the United States Equestrian team), Zella Kunardt, Kathleen Jennings, Ethel Skakel, Tinta Howland and Susan Metcalf. We all came from schools around Greenwich: Greenwich Academy (my school for 13 years), Rosemary Hall, Greenwich Country Day, Brunswick and Rye Country Day.

~ Frances "Frannie" Pryor Haws