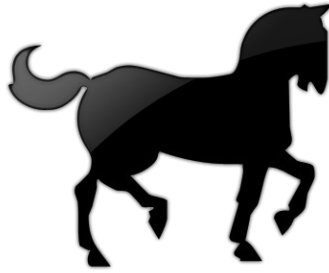


A Brief Sketch of
The Life and Work
of Marietta Gambrell,
South Carolina Horseman



**Cover photo: 1993 Supreme Versatility Champion,
Whip's Wayward Lass, bred, raised, trained and shown
by Marietta Gambrell.**

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I sat in the presence of quiet greatness, a vessel of knowledge and talent beyond what the average horseman could take in. I periodically glanced into sky blue eyes and listened to modest statements about beginnings and endings over 75 years in which horses and the people who owned and rode them crowded every hour of her consciousness. Before me was a book of knowledge of horses and horsemanship with a modest and humble cover, but with a content so amazing I knew I could only sense yet never know more than a small portion of it. What follows in this brief text is a listing of only a few of the highlights in the life of well-known, warmly loved and highly respected Marietta Gambrell, South Carolina Horseman.

On September 9, 1939, a third child was born to textile-worker parents, Frank and Claudia Gambrell, in Anderson County, South Carolina. An unremarkable event, except in the case of this baby girl, the mysteries of life had imbued her with a special gift. She would be able to reach deeply into the mind of a horse, know the animal inside and out and have an insatiable hunger to develop



Marietta (center) as a 3 year old with brother Paul and sister Joy

that gift to its fullest. As a toddler and young school child, the gifts she sought were not dolls and associated toys but statues of horses that mesmerized her imaginations of what might be.

In Marietta's family, horse ownership was an unaffordable luxury. So by age eight years she was riding the neighbors' horses, half the time barebacked and half the time with a saddle as availability allowed. She spent six years learning in this school of hard knocks and then at age 14, likely motivated by a sense of empathy and a sense of something special about Marietta, a cousin gave her that first horse – *Lady Lightning*, a Saddlebred/Standardbred cross. As Marietta describes the mare today, "Lady was never broken. The two of us just came to an understanding."



Marietta with Lady Lightning being a typical teen

Marietta's parents allowed her to accept *Lady Lightning* with the understanding that the horse would not be a financial responsibility of the family. Bearing up under that agreement, this horse crazy kid scavenged hay from the roadsides of mowed county roads. And built fences with pine saplings she could manage to cut while unaware of their short durability. These endeavors were no small feat, but within Marietta Gambrell burned a passion that totally engulfed her heart and mind.

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In her teenage years, Marietta rode in local shows showing everything from pleasure horses to barrel racers to reiners. The reputation of her special abilities grew quickly and she took her first horse in for training at age 16. At age 17, the same cousin that had given her *Lady Lightning* gave her *Flicker*, her first Tennessee Walking Horse (TWH). At this time she was also working a TWH stallion for Mr. Calvin McAllister. She later bred *Flicker* to the McAllister stud, *Tennessee Robin*, to produce *Robin's Jubilee*, her first TWH show horse.

Marietta graduated from Anderson College, Anderson, SC in 1957 and then attended Clemson University. At 21 years of age, she began teaching physical education at McCants Junior High School in Anderson and



Hayfield at Shady Acres Farm, home of Marietta Gambrell in Pendleton, SC

leased a barn and pasture also in Anderson where she set to giving riding lessons to 25 students, training four horses for other people and working four horses of her own.

In 1961, Marietta left Anderson to manage a 34-stall barn in Mauldin, SC where she worked with Quarter Horses, Morgans, Saddlebreds (3- and 5-gaited), fine harness for Saddlebreds, and Standardbred race horses. While at this barn, Marietta once showed 26 horses in one three-day show. In 1965, she began training walking horses for Ms. Eunice Major and her daughter Lady, who were among the foremost pioneers of the TWH in South Carolina.

In 1967, the Major family built a 20-stall barn on Long Hill Farm in Anderson and hired Marietta to assist Lady Major, who stood four stallions and had 30 brood

mares. Lady was in charge of breeding operations while training was Marietta's responsibility. At this point, Marietta's time became almost totally devoted to the TWH. The Major family established her in the TWH business.

Following the passing of Ms. Eunice Major, Long Hill Farm was divided among her heirs and Lady and Marietta established their operations in the Lebanon Community of Anderson County where both owned property. Being close friends as well as business partners, Lady and Marietta agreed that if one passed before the other, all land, facilities and horses would go to the survivor. Lady passed in 1989. The now 197-acre Shady Acres Farm is where Marietta has made history in the flat-shod TWH world and where she continues to live today.



Haying time at Shady Acres Farm

Any life lived with high acclaim for accomplishments, contributions and commitment to high ideals in human endeavor should be honored and celebrated, especially by those who have directly benefitted from those strivings. Such has been the life of Marietta Gambrell whose talents, quiet strength, patience and passion not only for horses, but also for the relationship between horses and the people who ride them, have been of national and international renown. The horse industry has benefitted greatly from Marietta's work in breeding and training horses for a wide array of uses ranging from show rings, including pleasure classes, reining and carriage driving, to track and trails.



*Marietta and John Duke with Whirl's Girl, 1990
Supreme Versatility Champion at the National
Celebration*



Whips' Wayward Lass winning Reserve Champion at Murfreesboro, TN completing her points for Supreme Champion in 1993

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Whips' Wayward Lass showing at Lexington, SC Horse Show in 1999



Marietta and Whirl's Girl winning Driving Class at Quinto

While working for the Major family, they bred and raised a World Champion Walking Pony, *The Dancing Duke*. Among her many accomplishments after opening her own barn, Marietta bred, raised, trained and showed two Tennessee Walking Horse Supreme Versatility champions (*Whirl's Girl* in 1990 and *Whip's Wayward Lass* in 1993) and bred and raised *Angel's Apollo Dust* who went on to become Supreme Versatility Champion in 1994. She also bred, raised, trained and showed a Reserve World Champion Model Horse, *Beauty's Dream*.



Marietta showing Beauty's Dream to Reserve World Champion Model Horse at the National Celebration Shelbyville, TN



Marietta riding Fol-De-Rol owned by Sarah McCurly in the 1987 Kentucky Derby Parade

In 1987, Marietta was chosen to be one of the riders representing the Tennessee Walking Horse breed in the Kentucky Derby Pegasus Parade. As described in *The Voice of the Tennessee Walking Horse* (July 1987), "Fol De Rol, a chestnut/sorrel mare [was] beautifully presented in western tack by Marietta Gambrell of Pendleton, South Carolina for Sarah McCurley of Anderson, South Carolina."

In 1996, Marietta was chosen to be a representative of the equine industry in the 1996 Olympics Parade where she rode *Whip's Wayward Lass*. She also received the first Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association Pleasure Horse Ambassador Award in that year.



Marietta riding Whip's Wayward Lass at the 1996 Olympic Parade, Ocoee, GA

Marietta's reputation for knowledge and skills in horsemanship, as well as her high ideals, integrity and personality have caused numerous organizations to seek her involvement and council. In the April 1996 Issue of *The Voice of the Tennessee Walking Horse*, an article lauding Marietta's championing of the TWHBEA youth program, the author, Liz Nutter, wrote:

"Consider, for a moment, her current [1996] commitments. In addition to her TWHBEA board responsibilities, she serves on the TWHBEA executive committee as member at large/youth division, chairman of the personnel committee of the National Horse Show Commission (NHSC), a member of the NHSC rules committee, and vice chairman of the NHSC judges committee."

Marietta is an icon in the history of the pleasure horse division of TWHBEA. She was an important member of the pleasure horse division committee for many years. It was during her tenure that the division committee grew to great popularity and seats became highly coveted.



Marietta chairing the Pleasure Horse Committee at the National Convention

She was active in organizing and a charter member of both the South Carolina Horsemen's Council and the South Carolina Upstate Equine Council. She served on the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association (TWHBEA) Board of Directors for 26 years, and the Executive Committee for eight years. In addition, she once represented TWHBEA at the Equine Horse Fair in Berlin, Germany. She has judged horse shows and conducted judging and training clinics across the United States and in Canada.

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Marietta on the Executive Board of Directors of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association

Marietta served on the Board of Directors of the Horse Show Commission for three years and as Vice-Chairperson of the Judges Committee for one year. She served on the South Carolina Walking Horse Association Board of Directors for several years and is currently President of the Southern Plantation Walking Horse Association.

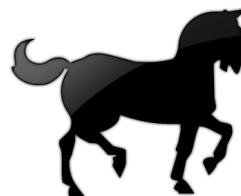
In support of advanced education institutions in South Carolina, Marietta has served as the equine representative on the Advisory Committee for the Clemson University Dept. of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, building committee for the Bishop Barn at the Clemson University T. Ed Garrison Livestock Arena

and on the Equine Advisory Committee for Tri-County Technical College in Pendleton, South Carolina. She also taught Equine Psychology and Reproduction at Tri-County Tech for one year.

The Celebration of the Life and Work of Marietta Gambrell, South Carolina Horseman at the T. Ed Garrison Livestock Arena, Clemson University, Clemson, SC on September 20, 2014 is a highly deserved honor for a life that has been intensively lived and graciously given to the development and well-being of horses and the people who own, care for and ride them.



Marietta at the podium, Ms. Deborah Bishop Clark (right) and Ms. George Bishop (far right) at the dedication of the Bishop Barn, T. Ed Garrison Livestock Arena at Clemson University



*Financial Support for the Celebration of the Life and Work of
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