

Five Questions for Nancy Later

By Jan Westmark

Nancy Later started riding as a young child and has a great story about her first venture into the winner's circle aboard a pony named Chief Snooks. "I rode in a leadline class at Devon when I was only seven months old," Nancy said. "I rode in a basket saddle and won fifth place."

Nancy dabbled in a variety of riding disciplines while growing up, everything from fox hunting to competitive trail riding. She discovered dressage while in high school, and after graduating took her Appaloosa/Quarter Horse mare and became a working student for Lendon Gray. "I still feel like a working student!" Nancy said.

Thanks to the support of her parents, Nancy has a farm in Florida where she spends eight months of the year. She spends the summer months in Massachusetts with her new husband Matt Lavoie. "Matt is extremely dedicated to my sport and travels between Massachusetts and Florida over the winter. I am very lucky to have such a great family."

In addition to staying busy with her farm and husband, Nancy also spends time fundraising for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society's Equestrian of the Year Competition.

Sidelines: Both you and your working student, Ariel Matisse, were named the Lymphoma Society's Equestrians of the Year. Tell us more about this great charity.

NL: I have been doing this for five years and it is a fantastic group of people who are so down to earth and helpful for the people affected by this horrible disease. Mary Ann Grant started this fundraising idea, to get equestrians together for this cause. She invites fellow equestrians to compete against each other to raise the most money over the winter season.

This year, Ariel and I had a fundraising party in Massachusetts. We got together with Mark and Linda Spengler, the owners of Oak Hill Farm, and had an afternoon of riding and driving demonstrations, free food and a silent auction. It was so much fun. The whole community came out to help us. We also took internet donations, collected silent auction items for Mary Anne's party and of course invited everyone to the fundraising party at Grant Farm.

Sidelines: How does it feel being involved with the Leukemia Lymphoma Society?

NL: Being involved in something like this really puts our life with horses in perspective, and makes us realize how truly lucky we all are. If there is some small thing such as fundraising that I can do to make the lives of these people more comfortable. I am so happy to do it. I only wish I had time to do more.

Sidelines: Tell us about your farm and the horses you are competing?

NL: Heartwood Farm is on 10 acres of heaven in Loxahatchee Groves. We have 15 stalls and a super training arena with mirrors. There is quite a bit of turnout, and although lots of people do not believe in turn out for dressage horses, we try to get everyone out as much as possible. It is a relaxed haven for the horses to have a happy life, and the working atmosphere is positive and thoughtful. I am the trainer, but I invite clients that rent stalls to bring their



Nancy Later competes Latamanda EHT

Photo by Matthew Lavoie

own trainers if they wish. We also have clinics and I take lessons, which my students are welcome to observe.

Right now I have two Grand Prix mares, Alexis-D, who I have had for many years, and Latamanda EHT, who is new to me. Latamanda is older and has already competed in the Grand Prix in Europe. She is a super mare with lots of character. I showed her for the first time recently and I look forward to riding her in some Grand Prix in the future.

Sidelines: What are some of your goals?

NL: One of my major goals is to promote positive riding through my articles, website and clinics. In addition I want to compete on a higher level. I also have a wonderful husband who has some fantastic ideas for GREEN businesses, recycling, solar, air power and wood. I am hoping that together we can work to make those a reality. I would also love to go on safari to Africa and spend time with the elephants.

Sidelines: What is something people don't know about you?

NL: I am a vegetarian. I do not eat meat for many reasons, including what they put in it and how they raise the animals. I encourage everyone to buy organic and free range everything. Every time you make an organic choice you increase the possibility that one day everything will be grown without cancer causing pesticides and fertilizers.