

Remember When?

I have a habit of wondering about the origins of things. For instance, if I could travel back in time, I'd head for 1790's new England to see Justin Morgan and discover his true breeding (taking pictures and video would be nice, too!). I've also often wondered about the beginning of our hobby. All of the "old timers" I talked to could only surmise how it all began.

Linda Walter of Troy, Alabama, who ran the pioneering *Model Horse Shower's Journal* from 1969 to 1980, says the hobby started when neighborhood kids got together for informal live shows. She adds that the late Marney Walerius, and Simone Smiljanic (editor of *Pony Express*, the first hobby publication) had clubs going before the late 1960s (when Linda began showing). Marney also eventually organized the live show, the Model Horse Congress, which went on for over a decade until Marney's ill-health forced her to discontinue it.

Hobby publications have long been a major uniting force in the model horse world, especially in the early days of the 60s and 70s and the advent of live shows with exhibitors from around the country as we have them today. Mini Tack ads (Mini Tack was an early model tack manufacturer) led me to Linda's MHSJ in 1975. The MHSJ was mimeographed, not photocopied. The ads, articles and drawings (photos were way too expensive to reproduce at that time, and at any rate, typing on mimeograph stencils didn't allow for them) were crammed together on its pages—each issue was literally stuffed with hobby information. Linda recalls "The MHSJ was typed over and over by me using typing paper and army surplus tissue carbon paper! It originally was conceived as a place to run all the class lists for people. The MHSJ was self-supporting, but there was no real profit." Linda adds that she wore out three typewriters doing the MHSJ which at one time had a circulation of 700 dedicated model maniacs.

The first model magazine to be professionally typeset and use photos extensively was Marney Walerius' short-lived (1976-77) *International Model Horse Journal*. Shari Struzan's *The Hobby Horse* with its oversized-8 1/2" x 11" format and numerous photos, was also unfortunately of short publishing duration. [Editor's Note: *The Hobby Horse News* came along quite sometime later, and is in no way affiliated with the original magazine. When we named THHN we were not aware that there ever was a "The Hobby Horse."]

When the MHSJ ceased publication in January 1980, there was no immediate heir apparent. Rebecca Herwaldt (now Hileman) began printing *The American Model Horse Collector's Digest* (now the *Equine Miniaturist*) in 1981. Initially its format was similar to the MHSJ's, but as better printing techniques became more available and less expensive, AMHCD/TEM grew into the professional quality magazine it is today.



An old show photo of Linda's. To save money, more than one horse (or dog!) could be in the photo. These models are part of Linda's 1,650 piece collection.

Another interesting publication (with a midwest regional accent!) was Kay Holmes' *The Buckmeer*. It ran from 1983-1984. In 1984 La Gene Millhollin began publishing *The Model Horse Gazette*, the first home computer typeset hobby periodical. The desk top publishing boom had begun. From here on out, most hobby publications took a giant leap in print quality.

The 80s were growing years for the hobby, but in the 90s we have arrived. We now have (since 1988) *The Hobby Horse News* (edited by Paula Hecker), *The Model Trading Post* (Lynn Luther), and the *Model Horse Trader* (Cheryl Leisure), plus TEM, MHG and numerous club newsletters and small general newsletters.

Showing models has really changed. Some of the stories I heard while doing research for this article were highly amusing when considered in today's "enlightened" sense. In fact, Linda tells me that when one showed performance back in the 60s, the model didn't even need tack! "We used our own imaginations, thinking what the horse would look like under tack," she recalls. In a few years though, tack started to become available for various sources. Pressman (who also made models) was one early tack maker, as was Diercks and Algiers (who also did flocked models) and the aforementioned Mini Tack. Many hobbyists (myself included) simply made their own tack. Linda adds that "some people even cut tack pictures out of magazines and carefully taped it onto the models to 'fool the eye' in photographs. It worked too! Today that certainly wouldn't work—back then black and white photos were the norm, as were Instamatic photos. Color was costly and a close-up lens unheard of. Those with color and close-ups won!"

The show models then were mostly OF Breyers and Hartlands. Linda remembers, "When I first started showing some of my HRs, people had no idea what they were! Beswicks were scarce, and folks who showed the different make usually cleaned up." Still true today! This realization eventually left people to first add hair manes and tails to their OFs, then try to repaint and eventually remake them.

Probably one of the first people to repaint and hair a model was Mary Ann Sklar (Black). An early ad (1973) featuring her work shows that not only did she repaint and hair models, she experimented with permanently fired-on colors on HRs! After the success of Mary Ann's horses, other hobbyists followed suit. Sherry Cook MacDonald and friend Jo Maness were next. Sherry raised cocker spaniels at the time, and all three women agreed that cocker spaniel hair would look more realistic and "in scale" on their models than the real horse hair Mary Ann had been using. Jo relates, "Eventually, we used a lot of human hair wigs (bought at garage sales and good will) after Sherry got out of the cocker business."



Marney Walerius and Linda Walter in the "model room" at Linda's house. This photo was taken about a year before Marney passed away.