

PERSONALITY PROFILES

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Imagine being at a live show...in a living room. The showmen sit on the floor in a circle with the judge in the middle. As classes are called the models are placed on boxes while the judge slowly turns 360 degrees to place the entrants. The time is 1966. The place is a home in La Habra, California. Have you been to a recent live show and shaken your head in amazement upon seeing how this hobby has grown to such a point? Perhaps you've wondered who was behind all of this? Although a multitude of people have been responsible during the evolution of the hobby, a participant of perhaps the first live show (mentioned above) can be credited ("partially," she says modestly) with lighting the spark and continuing to feed the fire throughout the years. Her name is Marney Waleries.

You may have met Marney if you've attended the International Model Horse Congress, held every summer in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. She is the sole coordinator of the three-day show, and 1990 will be its 18th anniversary. The IMHC has spawned many other live shows from coast to coast, and 42 year-old Marney can be justly credited with bringing the hobby out of the living rooms into the convention halls. Although Marney is known as the "godmother" of the model hobby, there are four people she credits with influencing her. Ellen Hitchenes and Karen and Sandra Baehr were quite possibly the producers of the first model newsletters. Published in 1968, Ellen's brainchild was *The Hitching Post*; *Plastic Horse World* belonged to the Baehrs. The fourth, Simone Smiljanic, formulated an international model horse showmen's association (possibly known as IMHSA). Together the five women conspired to broaden the potential of the hobby. Marney's involvement intensified in 1969, when she met Pete Stone of Breyer, and was asked to be a color consultant and to set breed standards for the molds. Reinforcing her equine expertise, Marney showed ASBs and TWH's for a number of years, then focused on stock breeds and Morgans. She has owned a few horses in past years, but now only 1/2"-15" horses reside at Rocking MJW Ranch. Paralleling her real life, Marney admits being partial to models that are "the versatile breeds": stock horses, Morgans, and Arabians, as well as drafts, mules, and ponies for specialty and fun.

Being immersed in the hobby for 23 years has given Marney definite insight on certain topics. When asked her opinion of the ever-changing molds, colors, and inflationary prices of today's OFs, solid statistics were provided. Each dye (mold) costs \$18,000-\$22,000 to produce. When Marney was involved in the industry, a mold had to sell 5,000 items per year to keep it in production. If it didn't, a color change was released instead of having a new dye cast, which is a difficult process. "The economy dictates price," Marney asserts, and to stem high costs, she advises collectors to buy through mail order, usually a cheaper method that also offers better service. As for the fluctuating prices of remade models, Marney states firmly, "Right off the bat we knew there was no way that you could remake a horse and put the work into it—the same with tack—as a craftsman, and get minimum wage. There are some that are absolute artisans, that their work is so demanding that they have to go with higher prices because if they don't, they get swamped." When asked about ordering



custom models, Marney pauses before responding, then gives two rules: 1) "You've got to wait until that person can get to that horse and devote the time to it to make it the way you want it. If you rush through it you're not going to get a good finished product." 2) "You are paying, but you're paying for perfection." Marney tells of one remaker who takes her models with her when she travels, even works on them while on the plane! This person took an order from Marney in 1982 and sent the model just last year. But Marney has only enthusiastic praise. "I LOVE my QH mare—She's debuting this year!" However, she knows that this case is more an exception than the rule; she acknowledges there is shoddy work being done, but she also knows that some shoddy early work can produce beauties in two to three years time. Generally, though, she believes the adage "You get what you pay for," in terms of both time and money. Which leads to another controversial topic: quality of RRH's.

Looking back, Marney says that the knowledge of remaking has increased; many more articles have been published in the last few years on the subject, and the variety of products used in remaking has also increased. She is quick to credit and thank Gretchen Haskett of Hollytree for providing such a myriad of colors for model hair, which has led to more lifelike remakes. Furthermore, she believes each remaker has his/her own style, which allows newcomers to choose and draw inspiration. Due to cause and effect, "Quality has improved so much that it's getting really tough to judge today."

Having placed well over a thousand models in showings nationwide, Marney is an old hand at judging. After seeing so many classes, she has stuck to one side of the controversial argument—the side that believes judging is not too picky. However, she offers a reminder that one mustn't judge only the tack, but the suitability of the model to the class. Her method of judging is 1 tack 2 model, and she judges by looking at the event from the horse's point of view, especially where his eyes are directed. Most important, she asks herself, "Does this horse jump off the table?" For those who have found judging to be a tense, frustrating task, Marney offers her word on the process: "The absolute last resort taken when critiquing anything, photo or model, should be *personal*