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Sixty years of rich history

By: Dr. Billy Wiltshire,
President, MHJA 2007.

When Linda Hazelwood, Editor of Horse Country asked me to write an article for Horse Country celebrating 60 years of the Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association (MHJA), I did not realize just how rich and diverse the history of horse jumping in Manitoba was.

I was talking to Margaret Teske about “days gone by” and “way back when”, when Margaret proceeded to bring out and dust off some old annuals and yellowing newspaper clippings. And so the story unfolded. Margaret also produced Bronze medals she “inherited” dating back as far as 1912, two years before World War I.

Yes, 95 years ago, there was in fact an active organization in Winnipeg known as the “Winnipeg Horse Show Association Limited” and a beautifully engraved bronze medal was awarded to a certain *Lady Pat*. (Margaret and I presume it was the horse's name.) In later years, prior to the start of an official hunter-jumper organization in Manitoba, history reveals that quite elegant shows were already being held. The “Winnipeg Livestock Show

Limited” for instance, held their first “Winnipeg Charity Horse Show” in Winnipeg’s Amphitheatre Winnipeg September 15-18, 1937, two years before the start of World War II. A beautifully printed 104 page program was produced and there were both hunter and jumper competitions with prize money of \$500 for the hunter championship and \$500 for the Jumper championship. Music for the event was provided by the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry Band. They certainly knew how to do it in style way back then.

Sixty years ago a group of gentlemen from many walks of life met regularly and eventually evolved and decided to apply to be incorporated into “The Winnipeg Horseman’s Club”. Members included a Grain broker, Salesman, Insurance Company Manager, Furniture Distributor and even a sales manager of the City of New York, in the State of New York. The organization was constituted at a meeting held on November 15, 1946 and held its first shows in 1947, only two years after the end

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of World War II. It was originally named the "Winnipeg Horseman's Club" and counted amongst its founding Charter Members F. Brooke Armstrong, W.J. Brooking, L.J. Hancox, Walter J. Kane, Paul Kelpin, H. MacDonald, R.W. McKerchar, J.R. Owen, George Saunders, Harold A. Smith, Graham Travers, W.C. Tullis, and A. Doug Walker (Margaret Teske's uncle). In the application for registration dated January 6, 1947, the President was listed as Kenneth Gifford Sale, however, in the original constitution and by-laws dated November 15, 1946, the President is listed as Walter J. Kane. Membership was allowed only for males. It was written in the constitution that "members be confined to male adults and shall be limited in number to a figure set from time to time by the Executive Board." Women were not allowed to be members until the bylaw was amended in March 1949 with the words "and female" inserted after the word male. There were still restrictions in place that allowed only three members of the executive to be women.

Times have changed a great deal in 60 years! Margaret Teske also remembers a time in the history of the Winnipeg Horseman's Club when shows were not being held, so a group of disillusioned young riders, aged 21 years and younger, started the "Winnipeg Junior Horseman's Club". In discussions with Mike and Charlene McMullan, these young equestrian enthusiasts were, among others, Dennis Stephens, Connie MacDonald, Susan Picard, Barbara Love and Charlene McMullan. These energetic young riders hosted several horse shows and many other events without any help from adults, for several years. The Winnipeg Horseman's Club had quite a sum of money in

the bank at the time and a deal was forged with the new club that if they changed their name to the "Winnipeg Horseman's Club" and dropped the "Junior" in the name, that they would turn their funds over for use to the "new club," if, and only if, they would continue operating under the original name and thus the deal was sealed and the Winnipeg Horseman's Club survived and prospered.

The Winnipeg Horseman's Club eventually did change its name to the "**Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association**" (MHJA), on April 24, 1995, to be more provincially inclusive and thus be eligible for provincial and national sporting grants available at that time. The present constitution of the MHJA replaces the previous constitution of the Winnipeg Horseman's Club which was in effect from November 15, 1946 until April 23, 1995. The constitution was subsequently updated and ratified on January 14, 2003 and serves as the working document of the present day.

Sixty years later, during its Diamond Jubilee Year, the MHJA no longer has restrictions on how many members are allowed to join. Membership is open to all. It currently has a membership of approximately 220 members and the present Board of Directors certainly does not restrict the number of women who can serve on the Board, in fact, the present day Board has a large majority of women. The 2007 Board of Directors includes Billy Wiltshire, Clare Harris, Sandra Klinck, Carol Lavallee, April Keedian, Rebecca Myers, Johan Schalkwyk, Robyn Johnson, Janice van Dassel, Emily Johnson, Leslie Bachynski, Dave Myers, Patty Alfonso, Michelle Lepp and Cristen Parks. Certainly well in excess of the three women limit of the past. (See the table of Past Presidents, overleaf.)



From the Winnipeg Free Press, Saturday March 15, 1958: Executive members of the newly organized Winnipeg Junior Horsemen shown left to right are: Linda McMillan of Charleswood Riding Club, secretary and Judith Macdonald of Tuxedo Riding Club, president - both holding reins of Moody Maid from Tuxedo. Bradstock dressed in western attire from Glenmore Riding Club, treasurer, with horse Pat, and Lorna Young, of Hugh MacDonald Stable, first vice-president with High Noon. Missing from the picture is second vice-president, Lloyd Pritchard of Horseshoe Riding Club.

During the days of the Winnipeg Horseman's Club, shows were held in the Winnipeg Arena, the old Bird's Hill Park facility, Assiniboia Downs, "Wireless Field" on Shaftesbury Boulevard just north of the old Goldstream Stables and at town fairs throughout the province. Some people may recall the show jumping in Carman in the early 1980's where riders from other provinces and the United States came to compete. Mike McMullan recalls how members of the Winnipeg Horseman's Club would drive out to Carman two or three days ahead of the show to put up the stalls for the horses and take them down again after the show. What hard work it was! Mike also reminisces that the Winnipeg Horseman's Club purchased a tract of land on Wilkes Road in South West Winnipeg and then

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bought an old Winnipeg Free Press Paper Boy's shelter and moved it to the land on Wilkes as the "new" club house.

Due to its irregular use, the club house was eventually sold to Walter Kane, the inaugural President, for an apparent bargain price and Walter then raised Hereford cattle on the land. The property was purchased from the estate of Walter Kane by the Hooker family and today houses the residence of Patty Hooker and her barn. The property still has the original club house of the Winnipeg Horseman's Club. Today MHJA shows are held at the Bird's Hill Park Equestrian facility and the Red River Exhibition Equestrian Site, adjacent to the Assiniboia Downs. Both of these facilities were used during the 1999 Pan American Games in Winnipeg and are a lasting legacy which our athletes still enjoy. Winnipeg, as host city of the Pan American Games, can boast that it has been used twice as the international venue of the Americas At Play. During the 1967 games in Winnipeg, Mike McMullan was President of the then "Winnipeg Horseman's Club" and the show jumping events were held at the Winnipeg Stadium. Mike laughs as he relays how concerned and upset the football players were as the hole was being dug for the water jump, right in the centre of the stadium!

Over the years Manitoba riders and horses have made their mark in the national arena. Counted amongst those successful riders at the Spruce Meadows shows in Calgary, Alberta are Valerie Matheson, Shanda Osborne, Jennifer Perron, Herman Schweizer, Patricia Ball, Patty Alfonso, Carla Matheson, Hayley Alfonso, Deanna Metcalfe, Cynthia Stock, Cameron, Catherine and Kalynn Stewart, Currie McNicol and Charlene McMullan.

In 1988 Rebecca Myers on *Set T'Go* won the Pony Champion at Spruce Meadows, as did Jamie Lee in 1998 on *Wind Dancer*.

Certainly, one of the Manitoban greats was "*Branch County*" owned by Teske Farms. He won silver at the 1976 Olympic Games. *Branch County* (racing name Traffic Sub) was purchased in July 1972 as the lesser horse in a two horse deal off the track. Suffering from a bone chip in the ankle and knee, "*Branch County*" was unable to pass the vet check at Assiniboia Downs race track and that ended his racing career and he was sold on as the "add on horse" for "meat price". When the lame ex-race horse stepped off the trailer at Teske's, his life changed forever and he was given a second chance in life. "*George*" as he was known at the barn, was a faithful Thoroughbred who felt compelled to give everything he had to accomplish the job. He was a willing partner and a true athlete. With love and care he became sound and was soon competing in the local "A" jumper circuit in Winnipeg. He went on to compete in numerous Grand Prix's across Canada and was eventually loaned to the Canadian Equestrian Team for the 1976 Olympics in Bromont where he was partnered with



From an unidentified publication, late 1960s:
AWARD WINNERS: The Winnipeg Horseman's Club presented its annual awards recently. Winners were, left to right, back row: Tom Morris, champion jumper on Mr. Marker; Jim Jones, reserve champion jumper on Bos'n; Jack Hammond, champion equitation; Mike McMullan, champion hunter hack on Indian Summer. Front row: Sheila Penner, reserve champion equitation; Barbara Love, reserve champion hunter on April Lea; Charlene Lembke, reserve champion hack on Early Autumn.

Presidents of the "Winnipeg Horseman's Club" and "Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association" (as far as could be ascertained)

Years	President
Inaugural President:	Kenneth Gifford Sale?
1948 – 1955	Walter J. Kane F. Brooke Armstrong
1956 – 1959	Walter J. Kane Hugh Mac Donald
1960's	George Keates John Sifton
1967 – 1969	Mike McMullan
1970 – 1971	Craig Macdonald
1972	Lloyd Hammond
1973 – 1974	Dennis Stephens
Mid 1970's	Charlene McMullan Gus Da Roza
During the 1980s	Harvey Warner
Early 1980's	Burton Stewart
1984	Dave Sanders
Mid 1980's	Rita Stock
Late 1980's	Maurice Tailleau
1990	Jeff Hunter
1991	Maurice Tailleau
1992	Barb Bennett
1993 – 1994	Jeff Bagg
1995	Cathy Treloar
1996 – 1998	Norma Myers
1999 – 2000	Eileen Bosma
2001 – 2002	Bob Thiessen
2003 – 2006	Clare Harris
2007	Billy Wiltshire

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Michael Vaillencourt, winning individual silver, following which the press referred to him as the “Cinderella Horse”.

Other notable horses were *Bouncing Buster* ridden by Lil Williamson from Brandon and *Ace High* ridden by Marlene Robertson. *Ace High* later became known as *Jack or Better* and was ridden on the USA Olympic team. When the jumps got to be 5’6”, he was unbeatable! *Thrilling* was a Manitoba bred thoroughbred named *Doonhill Duke* that Clare Harris sold off the track and started over fences and was later sold on to Todd Minikus of the USA where he went

on to become one of the top Grand Prix horses in the United States. Minikus rode *Thrilling* to four Grand Prix wins in 1989 and then took the show jumping world by storm in 1990 with an unprecedented sweep of all open jumper classes at the Washington International Horse Show, including the President’s Cup. His record-setting performance earned him Washington’s Ennis Jenkins Award as Leading Rider (he was both Leading Gentleman and Leading National Rider) to go with that year’s Midwest Grand Prix Rider of the Year award. *Thrilling* also earned the honors of the Midwest Horse of the Year. *Thrilling* was particularly known for his speed. A noteworthy hunter from Manitoba

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Maryon Ellis at a Winnipeg Show, way back when. Maryon was a local rider who ran a tack shop out of her home in Charleswood Road.



Patricia Ball is featured on the cover and in this issue’s Spotlight along with her horse Rudy.

Times . . . and styles . . . change . . .

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was *By Design*, Monica Phelps' horse who was sold to Stagne McClellan and went on to achieve the honour of Champion Open Hunter at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

Manitoba riders who have made their mark internationally include Jack Hammond, originally a Winnipegger who represented Canada in show jumping at the Pony Club games in Japan as a junior rider and went on to become one of the leading hunter riders in North America. Jack also won several Grand Prix events on the McMullan's jumper *True Colours*. Mac McQuaker also hailed from Brandon and in 1985 had the honour of being part of a 3-man Canadian Student Riders team who competed in Holland and won the Bronze Medal against 15 competing countries. Mac then went on to win the show jumping individual gold medal.

Stealing the limelight at present is young Hayley Alfonso who is continuously carrying the Manitoba flag to victory at jumper shows across the country. She was the Equine Canada Talent Squad Western Champion in 2006 and she has been chosen to compete at Young Riders in Virginia, USA, this summer.

The modern day Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association strives to provide events for all levels of its membership offering Schooling shows, Primary shows and an Equine Canada (EC) sanctioned passport show annually. The larger MHJA Primary shows attract anywhere between 90 and 150 horses per show. Our shows also feature an active social calendar with BBQ's, fun theme parties, volleyball, golf cart sponsor's relays and a formal Awards Banquet at the end of the show season every year. We support various charities such as Greyhound Rescue and Cancer Care.

In most other provinces shows are run by companies. Manitoba is unique in offering shows run by a club, but our shows would never be possible without the interest and continued commitment from our many volunteers, from the hardworking Board of Directors who meet every month, to the volunteers who come out to help build new jumps, repair existing ones, help with a fresh coat of paint at the painting parties, help at shows as in-gate people, timers, runners, announcers, office duties and many other important jobs too numerous to mention. The MHJA is also extremely fortunate to be able to rely on the ongoing support of its sponsors who help through their generosity to keep the shows affordable and assist by supporting and making possible the attainment of the objectives of hunter-jumper equestrian sport in Manitoba.

The modern day MHJA also boasts an interactive website which can be found at www.mhja.ca thanks to the hard work of Sandra Klinck. An electronic newsletter is also produced several times a year by Board member Johan Schalkwyk and all the newsletters, as well as all future back issues, will also be available in the public domain on the MHJA website. The website also offers a wealth of information about upcoming shows, announcements, hunter-jumper show results and much more.

"The Derby" EC sanctioned show (presently sponsored by Westgates/Horse & Co.), is the signature



Some members of the 2007 MHJA Board of Directors

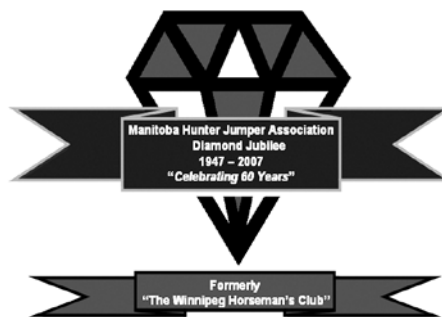
show held by the MHJA in late July/early August and attracts competitors from across Canada and the USA.

2007 represents the MHJA's 60th birthday, or Diamond Jubilee. In honour of this milestone in the history of the association, the MHJA held a special Diamond Jubilee celebratory event on Sunday August 5, 2007, to coincide with the Westgates/Horse and Co. Derby show in the McNaught, Pontiac, Buick, Cadillac GMC Sponsor tent for MHJA sponsors and special invited guests.

There have seen many positive changes during the last 60 years. We are well positioned for the future and we can all look forward in our vision to continue to strive to build the sport we love here in Manitoba.

I've always said: "A life without horses would be one big mistake" and I'm sure no one can imagine Manitoba, Canada or the world without our wonderful sport and that most noble creature of them all, THE HORSE, gracing our lives. We truly are his heirs, he our inheritance!! Long live the Manitoba Hunter Jumper Association, long live THE HORSE!

Billy Wiltshire, President, MHJA



The specially commissioned MHJA Diamond Jubilee logo.

Acknowledgements

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