

## Unbeatable Betty: How Bucking Stereotypes Leads to Personal Bests

When Betty Nagle enters the show ring, people watching from a distance may mistake her slim profile for a much younger competitor. It isn't until she nears the grandstand area that a glimpse of white hair peeking out from under her black Stetson gives away her seniority. But assisted living and AARP were probably the last things on this grandmother's mind as she proudly claimed the 2008 MM Training and Consulting Buckle Versatility Award, beating out several top competitors in the Potlatch area, all many years her junior.

Betty's daughter, Marcia Moore-Harrison, owner of MM training and Consulting, founded the award as a tribute to Betty and to keep her mom's competitive juices flowing. The competition also motivated several of the regular riders at MM Training and Consulting to "go for the gold." Ryan Minden, a 16-year old from Potlatch, Idaho, won second place, and Alyssa Virgin, a 17-year old from Moscow, Idaho, placed third.

Betty is such an accomplished rider that she competed with a 10 percent handicap in the Buckle Versatility competition – and still won. But a point bias was not the only obstacle Betty faced. Her hands provide one clue. Knotted by arthritis, Betty's fingers are unable to handle split reins. So, she uses romel reins and puts in extra training time to keep her horse light. A back injury, declining vision and a knee surgery haven't slowed her down either. In fact, her nickname at the barn is "energizer bunny."

Many may think Betty's successful show career has had a lot to do with her daughter, who is a professional horse trainer. But Betty explains having a daughter as a trainer has not always worked to her advantage. "I'm not a natural horsewoman, and I used to feel that no matter what I did, I could never meet the expectation," said Betty. "I had to accept I would never be at the same level as Marcia. And, we both learned that I needed to leave my lesson with a feeling of success and confidence."

Betty admits she had to overcome a perfectionist problem. She says she is like lots of other women who tend to focus on faults rather than accomplishments. "My confidence comes only from hours of practice," she said. "When I'm in reining class, I try to beat my previous score and not make the same mistakes. I tell myself, 'It's only a ribbon!'"

Her perfectionist nature and just plain grit are two attributes which have served her well throughout her life. Married at 17, Betty soon found herself alone and working while her husband, Donny, served in the military overseas after the Korean conflict. She finished high school and worked at Potlatch Mercantile as an accounts payable clerk, but soon learned every job in the office. Her ambition led her to a 32-year career as an accountant and her CPA certification at age 50.

Betty won her first trophy in 1955. Through the years, she rode in many gymkhanas and o-mok-sees and attended many clinics, beginning with Monty Foreman and including local clinician Larry Carson. Betty maintains that by taking lessons and working through her mistakes, rather than having a trainer "fix" everything, really made her a better rider.

“When Donny returned from Japan, he gave me a two-year old horse as my ‘starter’ horse!” said Betty. “I only did trail riding at first, and I didn’t have good balance. I still remember the day when I got my balance. I got ‘the feel’ when I was loping across the pasture about one year after I started riding.”

“When I got Cowboy, my horse for ‘retirement,’ I had to step up and work really hard because he is so laid back, and I was not assertive enough,” said Betty. “When I bought him, the high level of reining training he already had, also forced me to set new goals like executing a balanced stop without pulling on the reins.”

Anyone who rides with Betty can’t help but be inspired by her spunk and willingness to step out of the box. Her legacy of determination has inspired countless friends, family members and MM Training and Consulting clients.

MM Training and Consulting will continue to offer the Buckle Award competition in the 2009 summer show season. It is open to current MM Training and Consulting clients. Registration is \$25, and riders are scored in showmanship, equitation and trail. The highest scores are taken from the top three placings out of the following four open shows: Silver Spurs Open Horse Show at Potlatch (June), the Cayuse Kids Open Horse Show in Princeton (June), the Up River Classic, in Santa (August), and the St. Maries Open Show (August). For more information on the Buckle Versatility Award competition, call Marcia Moore-Harrison at (208) 875-1309; email: [marcia@mm-horsetraining.com](mailto:marcia@mm-horsetraining.com); or visit [www.mm-horsetraining.com](http://www.mm-horsetraining.com).