

# Local equestrians compete for honors at Pa.'s biggest horse show

BY SHEILA MILLER

**HARRISBURG** — The exciting display of horsemanship that's always an inspiration for young equestrians each year at the Penn National Horse Show is drawing to a grand finale today.

For the 36th year, this grand horse show has drawn top riders from all across the United States, each year with more exhibitors and horses competing for prizes. This year there were nearly 1,000 horses and riders galloping around the tanbark of the Farm Show Complex's large arena.

Among the internationally acclaimed riders were a number of local Pennsylvania equestrians, some competing for their first time and others who are veteran showmen at Penn National.

Patti and Richard Nucci of Lebanon were making their debut at the show. This couple purchased their first horse a few years ago — a Christmas present from Dick to Patti.

"Patti always wanted a horse," says Dick, "so I bought her a Saddlebred from Dan LeFever of Manheim in 1978. We used her mostly for driving our antique carriages."

"I decided I'd better learn how to ride," Patti adds, "so I started taking lessons last spring."

For being relatively new in the horse show world, the Nuccis have done rather well. Dick does the driving and Patti rides their Saddlebred beauties that now number three (the original Christmas-present mare was traded on their most recent mount, a gray gelding from Kentucky that stands 16 hands high).

At Penn National this week, their liver chestnut gelding, Wild Commander, was pinned with a fifth place ribbon in the fine harness class. According to Dick, this is only the third show for the flashy 8-year-old. In his first class at a show in Syracuse, N.Y., Wild Commander placed second.

It's been a busy first year of

showing for the enthusiastic horsemen — traveling to shows at Devon, Richmond, Va., Louisville, Ky, Quentin, two shows in New Jersey, and Eastern States in Springfield, Mass.

It was at the Louisville show that they purchased their latest Saddlebred, the 7-year-old gray, Mountain Highland Legend. He was shown in the American Pleasure Three-Gaited classes.

Another Lebanon County rider, who is a veteran at Penn National, following in her mother's footsteps, is Melanie Lipensky. The 18-year-old daughter of equestrienne Ann Lipensky took time off from her college classes at Cedar Crest College in Allentown to compete this week.

Astride her trusty mount, A Lovely Decision, a 7-year-old American Saddlebred mare, Melanie took the reserve championship in the Eastern Saddle Horse Association Three-Gaited Pleasure class. She also showed her 8-year-old five-gaited gelding, Wings Shamrock, to a ribbon in today's competition.

Lancaster's Susan Wise has been returning to Penn National competition for the past five years. She explained she competed in the big show as a child but took some "time off". In that break, Susan switched her style of showing, too — trading Saddlebred mounts for a cart and Hackney ponies.

One of Susan's ponies has already won world-wide acclaim. Diamond Lil, a 5-year-old mare, was named world champion Hackney in-hand (shown at halter) as a weanling and yearling, and was reserve world champion as a 2-year-old. This week at Penn National, the champion pony placed fourth in her Harness class.

This is Susan's first year of showing with her latest Hackney, Mt. View's Masquerader, a 7-year-old gelding she purchased from Bob and Mary Lou Hess of Manheim. "It's taking us some



Life at the horse show is hustle, bustle and hard work, but there is a glamour in the beauty of the horses, the smell of leather, and the fabulous stable displays, complete with farm pictures, flowers, lamps, and tack. Phyllis Zuber of Manor-View Acres in Lancaster County has been showing at Penn National for 26 years.

time to get to know each other," confesses Susan.

Of course, the show road isn't the only place Susan has fun with her ponies. She also takes Masquerader out for pleasure drives in the winter after the show season is over.

"Having the ponies is just a hobby for me," said Susan. "I always liked them better than horses — their smarter, flashier, and have more vitality."

Since her pony purchase three years ago, Susan has proven showing ponies to ribbons is like "falling off a horse."

Stabled right beside Susan's ponies was an American Saddlebred owned and shown by Lancaster's Jean Ramsay. As a matter of fact, it is at Jean's Windridge Farm that Susan stables one of her Hackney ponies.

Jean, too, is a veteran showman at Penn National. Last year she rode her American Saddlebred gelding, Grand Larceny, to the championship of the Amateur Five-Gaited Saddle Horse class.

This year Jean is aboard another Saddlebred gelding, Stonewalls Premier's Genius. This is the three-gaited 6-year-old's first show season. Since she began showing him last July, Jean says Genius has "done pretty well." He took two blue ribbons, one red ribbon, and five whites. One of his third place ribbons was earned here at Penn National.

Jean, who is always on the move, either cleaning tack or tending horses, says she hasn't had much time for showing lately. She also points out it keeps getting more and more expensive to take the horses out on the show road each year. Since it's tough to live horse show purses, Jean works as a secretary in Lancaster General Hospital's Drug and Alcohol Clinic.

This marks the twenty-sixth year Phyllis Zuber, owner of Manor-View Acres, R1 Washington Boro, has been competing at Penn National. Phyllis, who says she's been riding horses ever since she was a child, began showing her mounts at the age of 15. She currently runs a 24-stall training stable where she boards and schools American Saddlebreds, Arabians, and Morgan horses.

Phyllis is coaching a number of young equestriennes at the show. Always hustling from one thing to another, Phyllis remarks that

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Phyllis describes horse shows as "a lot of work," as she wraps the bit of a bridle with a padding to make it more comfortable for the horse.



Susan Wise of Lancaster brought her world champion Hackney mare, Diamond Lil, to Penn National for the Harness Pony competition.



Lancaster's Jean Ramsay takes some time off from her work at Lancaster General Hospital to show her American Saddlebred gelding, Stonewalls Premier's Genius.