

Mimi Thorington's Horse Sense

BY SUSAN I. FINKELSTEIN

Anne Thorington (known as “Mimi” to her friends) owns and lives at Maple Leaf Farm, a 96-acre farm in East Fallowfield, Pa., about a 25-minute drive from New Bolton Center. Born in Center City, Philadelphia, she has been moving progressively farther west in a search of disappearing open spaces.

At Mimi's farm are roughly 12 thoroughbred broodmares, their foals, some yearlings waiting to go to sales, Morgan horses for driving, retirees and Pembroke Welsh corgi dogs, which she has bred and raised. Just a mile down the road is the 700-acre Laurels Nature Preserve, under easement with the Brandywine Conservancy. This provides wonderful riding and driving paths in a beautiful nature setting.

Mimi's involvement with race horses began in 1972 when she inherited some from the estate of her father, Graham French. Involvement with horses often leads to New Bolton Center, and **Dr. Mark Allam**, then dean of the Vet School, and Mr. French became friends. Mr. French's interest was sharpened by several pleasure drives with Dr. Allam and his carriage horses.

Three of Mimi's four children were successful show riders and fox hunters. Mimi hunted with the Radnor Hunt for many years and was the typical “horse show mother.” In 1993 she took up driving. This began with a Morgan-Percheron cross, which she purchased from the carriage tours in Cape May, N.J. The interest went from pleasure driving to combined driving. Mimi rode a Morgan, and then for the more advanced driving, she joined with world-class driver Lisa Singer. With Lisa as whip, they have represented the U.S. in Europe at the World Pair Championship, the “Olympics” of driving, for the past 12 years. Lisa and the “Beasties” are instantly recognized here and overseas.

Surprisingly, it was Mimi's love for another animal that first brought her to Penn Vet. One of Mimi's Welsh corgis slipped a disc while she was out of town, and her dog's caretaker, unaware of any local vets, brought the dog to the Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital in Philadelphia. During a Hospital tour, Mimi was introduced to **Dr. Josephine Deubler, V'38**, an associate of professional dog handler Peter Green, who showed Mimi's next corgi for her.

With a smile, Mimi remembers her experiences at the often-hectic Ryan lobby when one of her dogs was undergoing regular cancer treatments. “If I was going to write a book, I would write one about the waiting room



Mimi Thorington and one of her foals at her Maple Leaf Farm.

at the small animal hospital. It was just fascinating to watch the people who came in there. There were big bikers with tears in their eyes holding their little dogs as well as well-dressed ladies with their dogs and cats. Love for one's animals puts everyone on the same level.”

Mimi's contribution to establish the Widener Hospital's Graham French Neonatal Section in 1985 was a tribute to her father, whose love of horses was one of his legacies to her. The decision to make the naming gift was an easy one for her. The School “needed a neonatal intensive care unit, they needed money, and it was going very slowly. That was—and still is—my main interest.” Mimi continues to be a loyal supporter of New Bolton Center in various capacities.

Indeed, Mimi and New Bolton Center have had a long, mutually beneficial relationship. She served on the Board of Overseers for two four-year terms. When asked of her feelings about the support she's given to the Center over the years, Mimi responds without hesitation. “Well, they've given it all back to me. When I need help, they're there. It was always nice to know that Dr. Charles Raker was there and, since his retirement, has passed his legacy on to many younger veterinarians.”