



working adults juggle jobs, horses, and families

Part I • By Heather Bailey

W

hen DeAnna Hines' alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m., most of her co-workers are still sleeping peacefully. She's at her job as technical writer at Metron Aviation's office by 7:00 a.m. and works through her lunch break so she can leave by 3:30 p.m. to make the nearly hour-long drive to the barn where she keeps her horse, Duncan III. After riding, cleaning her tack, helping with any barn chores, and caring for Duncan, she drives home and goes for a run. She has dinner at 9:30 and gets in bed by 10:30—this is her life six days a week.

m a k i n g i t w o r k



Hines, 28, of

Herndon, Virginia, has been eventing for nearly 16 years. In the early part of her career, she was the sort of superstar who gets profiled in magazines—she won an individual medal at the North American Young Riders' Championships and rode at the Radnor CCI**, Rolex Kentucky CCI***, and Fair Hill CCI***. She was the first person in history to win the FEI Global Young Rider and Global Newcomer award in the same year, and the first American to have won either, and she got there on horses of her own making—her father owns a small town restaurant and her mother works for the local school system.

But in 1997 she faced the retirement of her two advanced horses, Champagne Wishes and Gus Costadi, and she didn't see much on the horizon. On the advice of a friend, she went to England and rode for Eddy Stibbe, enjoying some good placings at the advanced level on some of his horses. But, tired of not having her own horse, she decided to hang up her boots and finish college—and hopefully gain the financial freedom to ride on her own terms.

Before leaving for England she had purchased a two-year-old Thoroughbred gelding. She made arrangements for her longtime friend Paul Ebersole, who was also horseless, to ride the horse, and she entered William and Mary College in the fall of 1998. In 2000, pining for her horse and to ride again, she put Duncan up in a local boarding facility and began to ride. She could only manage one preliminary horse trials on her school budget, but she was hooked all over again. When she graduated in the spring of 2001, she looked for work in northern Virginia so she could ride and compete.

Opposite page: DeAnna cools off her horse after running cross-country at Loudoun Hunt Pony Club Horse Trials' open intermediate division where the pair finished in first place.

Inset: DeAnna and Duncan competing at the Radnor Hunt CCI**.

Brant Gamma photo

Sue Beard, 41, also greets the dawn at 5:30, although she's walking out her back door to feed her horses. Beard, of Little Rock, Arkansas, has evented for ten years and has competed at intermediate, but with the birth of her son in March of 2000 and twins due in March, 2002, she has scaled back her plans. She currently competes at training level on By Design, a homebred Paint mare. Her horses live outside, leaving no stalls to clean, so when they've had their breakfast, she goes back inside to start getting her husband and young son up and ready for the day.

After dropping off her son at day-care, Beard works until 5:00 p.m. at Ameron International, Inc. as a purchasing manager. She's home by 5:45 to feed her son and tack up her horse. She rides, does her evening feeding, and puts up her tack. Then she makes dinner, plays with her son, does a few household chores, and collapses by 10:00 p.m. She admits that she usually only rides two nights a week and on weekends, and that depends heavily on the weather.

By comparison Emily Curtis would seem to have it made—she works from home as a web site designer and sets her own schedule. Although she admits that it's nice to be able to ride in the afternoons when it's still sunny out, it's hardly a carefree existence. To work enough to make ends meet, she works from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., then rides until 6:00. However, she then comes home and works again until 9:00 or 10:00 at night. Though she has a flexible schedule, her world is filled with unyielding deadlines that don't understand things like puncture wounds and farrier appointments.

Curtis, 33, came to horses after volunteering for a local equine rescue, eventually adopting a Morgan mare named Discovery or "Disco" who had been confiscated, starving and sick, from her owner. While searching for an appropriate boarding situation for Disco, she ended up at Phyllis Dawson's Windchase Farm in Purcellville, Virginia. It was there she



Sue Beard and By Design competing at the 2001 Mayfest Horse Trials open training division.

first became exposed to eventing. Although she has competed beginner novice on Disco, she is now also leasing Dawson's former advanced mount Half Magic and riding him novice—doubling the requirements on her time and her pocket book.

These aren't famous names like O'Connor, Dutton, or Davidson, but they are representative of the majority of the membership of the USEA. They are working adult amateurs, struggling to fit in eventing careers among the constraints of gainful employment, family, and social concerns. Is it really possible to be a successful competitor without being a professional or having the good fortune to possess family income that negates the need to work? Eight working adult amateurs answer "sort of." There are several ways to make it work (be competitive, hold down a job, and even have some sort of family or social life), but there are sacrifices to be made and obstacles to be overcome. One way or another, they'll change the way you think about "adult amateurs."

Prioritizing A Full Life

"I am not meticulous about my barn during the week," admitted Hilary Miskoe DeAngelis of Concord, New Hampshire. "Stalls are cleaned, and I try to make sure my tack lands somewhere near the hook when I'm done with it, but I don't sweep my aisle on weekdays, and I don't fret if my tack isn't always spotless. My horses are fat and healthy and happy, and they are the priority. The barn gets swept and picked up once a week."

During the generous daylight of the summer, DeAngelis is heading out her back door by 7:00 a.m. She does her morning barn chores (feeding and stall cleaning), leaves for work by 8:00 a.m., runs a few errands and is at work by 8:30 a.m. She leaves work at 5:00 p.m., and her mother or husband has usually fed her horses. She's able to ride, then look after her other horses (a retiree and a yearling). In the darker hours of winter, or when her husband has a shift change, she too will arise at 5:30 to ride in the mornings before work at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation as assistant director of student aid programs.

DeAngelis, 34, has been at this for 20 years. She moved up to preliminary in 1999 on her mare Alison Linsley. But, when the mare turned 20 in 2001, DeAngelis felt the rigors of that level would be too much for her (and her temperament wasn't suited to novice level). DeAngelis retired her, and bought a 12-year-old Thoroughbred gelding named Clarion. Clarion is currently going training level, and DeAngelis hopes to move him to preliminary next year.

"[My] house is clean, but not immaculate," said Tammy Makela, of Dayton, Ohio. She was hooked on eventing the first time she went to see Rolex Kentucky. She was a beginning rider on a semi-broke Thoroughbred mare, but she knew what she wanted to do with her riding. In 2001, she and the mare, Lady Chardinian, competed in their first CCI*.

"If it comes down to time enough to either do that necessary gallop or spend time fixing a great meal, well, the horse will get ridden and the microwave will be used," she said of her life.

Right: Tammy Makela and Lady Chardinian competing in the preliminary division at Champagne Run at the Park Horse Trials in Lexington, Kentucky.

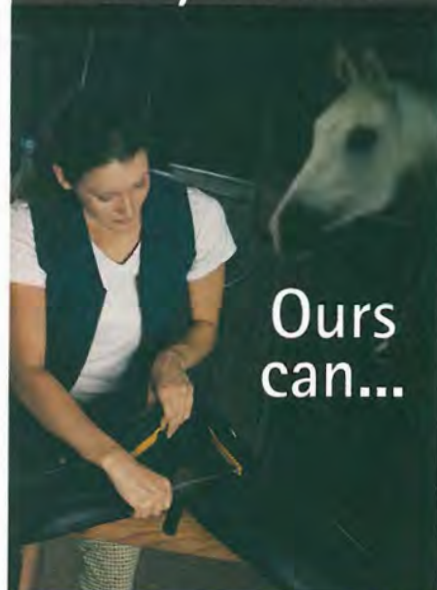
Below: Hilary Miskoe DeAngelis competing at GMHA Horse Trials.

"Friends and family know and accept this. I think their support and understanding is just as important as me accepting it. I really try to keep my priorities straight when it comes to time and money and energy and what I spend it on. I have to work, but I don't have to go out with friends every weekend. Life becomes fairly simple when it's so full and there's a specific goal at the end of it," she said.

Makela, 32, is an Intranet manager for Elder-Beerman Stores Corporation and keeps her horse at a local co-op barn on an Air Force base



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Families Create Different Priorities

Organizing a full-time job and a full-time hobby can be daunting—now drop in some human children, and you've got a fuller plate than can be imagined. Just ask Sue Beard. Beard has a one-and-a-half-year-old son, and is currently expecting twins with husband Sean.

"With a family, now the time constraints are even worse," said Beard. "Since my son is in daycare, I feel like I need to spend time with him in the evenings, and as he is getting older, it is even more important, and, oh yeah, I need to spend time with his Dad too. I can only imagine when he is in school and we have all of the after-school stuff.

"Maybe by then I will have hit the lottery and won't need to work," she added with a laugh. "Not to mention a live-in nanny that I would pay for with my lottery winnings."

"By far the hardest thing is the time it takes away from my family," agreed Bob Gray, who has a wife, a daughter in her freshman year at Johnson and Wales University, and a son who is a senior in high school.

"For me to ride six days a week takes a lot of understanding [from my wife and kids] of the commitment it takes to do this sport," he added. Luckily, both his son and daughter rode for several years before Gray himself took it up, so they do understand.

The realities of motherhood have made Beard re-evaluate both the level she competes (formerly an intermediate level rider, Beard now competes at training level), and the amount of time she dedicates to it.

"The bottom line is that it is hard to be contented at my current level, but I am wise enough to know that it would be dangerous to try and move up if I cannot devote the time to do it right," she said.

But she wouldn't change her life for anything. "Even if I didn't work outside the home, I doubt I would ride a whole lot more than I do now."

And even in the throes of pregnancy, Beard still tries to continue her education. "I am trying to audit any clinics, and I keep a notebook with the specific exercises to try when I'm back in the saddle."

But, Tammy Makela wants it known the lot of the single girl isn't a piece of cake either. "I hear a lot of 'oh you have it so easy' from people who are managing work, riding, and families," she said. "Sure, when it comes to the decision-making process and the fact that I only have to look out for me and my critters, it is easier.

"But when it comes to some of the things, it becomes harder. Single riders like myself don't have anyone else to do the laundry, cook dinner, go to the grocery store, clean the house, pay the bills, or mow the lawn. It's not as easy as some may think," she said. ■



Left: Katherine Saunders and Presto competing at Wayne DuPage Horse Trials in the open training division.

Top: Robby Johnson competing at the LCEC Novice Championships.

Below: Bob Gray believes strongly that competing his Hanoverian gelding, Dailey's Deacon, would not have been possible without the support and extra effort of the Oakridge trainers.



to help cut costs, so she has certain communal barn chores that are part of her everyday life.

"I don't mind the manure stains," shrugs **Katherine Saunders**, 27, a self-proclaimed just-starting-out-litigator with Jenner & Block, LLC in Chicago, Illinois. Saunders tries to ride before work one day a week, after work two days a week, and both days on the weekend. She can have light days, but when getting ready for a big case, she can put in more than 12 hours a day at the office. She's been eventing for 12 years, and currently competes on the colorful Paint/Thoroughbred cross Presto, at training level.

"In order to do what I do, I have to sacrifice some things," she said. "My tack doesn't get cleaned every time I ride, I groom Presto, but I don't always get all the stains off the white parts, and I ask for help when I need it. I'm not sure we're always competitive, but we try to be safe. I think that part of trying to do the balancing act is knowing, or having people who can tell you, when you're pushing too hard or trying to do too much."

Instruction Woes

Most working adults seem unable to find consistent eventing instruction that can fit into their hectic schedules. Usually, they have to rely on local instructors in other disciplines, and clinics with eventing specialists to further their training.

Bob Gray's experience is the exception. Gray, 52, of Sebastopol, California came to eventing after watching his daughter Christina learn to ride and eventually compete at Oakridge Stables in Santa Rosa, California. He wanted to try it, and for his 45th birthday his wife gave him a gift of five lessons at Oakridge. He has been going full throttle ever since. Gray works 52 hours a week as an optical engineer, and moved up to preliminary in 2001 aboard his Hanoverian gelding Dailey's Deacon. He believes strongly that none of this would have been possible without the support and extra effort of Oakridge trainers.

"It's an overall attitude of doing what the customer needs to excel," said Gray of the system of head trainer

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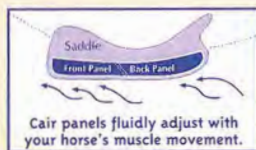
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Yves Sauvignon, and assistant trainer Elizabeth "Zabou" Cullum. Gray takes three lessons a week—a private lesson Tuesday morning at 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. and group or private lessons on Saturday and Sunday. Sauvignon or Cullum will also teach Gray in the evenings as needed. On days when he isn't taking lessons, Gray rides at 8:00 at night utilizing Oakridge's "open-late" policy and lighted indoor arena.

"It's inconvenient for Yves to teach in the morning or at night—it extends his day quite a bit to do that," he said. "But I think it also means a lot to him that I'm committed and that I'm not just doing this to do it. I'm here to try and get better. That he meets me halfway means a lot to me."

When Hines was a pro, she rode with Jim Wofford to prepare for events. Now that she is a working adult, she is no longer able to ride regularly with Wofford, who teaches during regular business hours. Instead, she boards her horse with and gets help from Ebersole, another student of Wofford's. Ebersole had ridden Duncan for several years while Hines was finishing school, and she finds his flexibility and assistance the backbone to her program.

Curtis takes a lesson with Phyllis Dawson once a week during the busy event season, more frequently in the winter. "If I'm coming up on an event, she'll work me in to watch me ride a dressage test or do a quick jump school at odd hours," said Curtis.

DeAngelis works with eventer Nancy Guyotte, but the 50-mile trailer ride limits her lessons to every other week only during the competition season. She rides mainly in the evenings, which for Guyotte is outside of normal hours.

Sometimes, it takes a creative instructor to help working adults. Saunders works with Jim Graham—although she lives several hundred miles away from his Florence, Alabama base. She praises his willingness to help out over the phone with any problems.

"Jim is amazing—he has really helped us out by being available over the phone when I can't get down there, helping us think through training issues or showing plans, and as a general source of wisdom and good

cheer. And of course, he is invariably kind and tolerant of my occasional neurotic owner moments. There's nothing like owning a young horse prone to jumping out of the pasture to create injury paranoia," she said with a laugh.

Another disciple of Graham's is **Robby Johnson** of Little Rock, Arkansas. Johnson came to eventing via a brief career as a hunter/jumper rider in high school. His mare Willow was originally purchased as a broodmare, but he decided he wanted to "see what she could do." Johnson tried eventing her, competing at training level around his job as manager of corporate communications for a health company. In mid-2001 Willow finally took her trip to the breeding shed, but Graham's assistance made an impression.

"Jim has given me a lot of great telephone counsel and is open to some innovative ways to coach me," said Johnson. "He is more willing to put me on a program—even if it entails 12 weeks of riding in between the time we spend together in an arena. As we are approximately six hours hauling distance from each other, this is very nice. I intend to work with him more when I get a new horse."

Due to the difficulty of finding regular eventing instruction, many adult riders get what help they can from local trainers in other disciplines.

Makela works with dressage trainer Mike Ippolito two to four times per month during the season. For jumping and cross-country instruction, she relies primarily on clinics with top professionals, including Jim Graham, Karen O'Connor, Jim Wofford, Cathy Wieschhoff, and Captain Mark Phillips in the past year. In addition, she also gets help from friend Laura Beaver, a trainer and event organizer, although the one-hour driving time prevents this from being a consistent thing.

Saunders also gets dressage and show jumping help locally from Patty Becker and Katie Gerald. "All of the people who help Presto and me are fantastic—they put up with my crazy schedule," she said. "Katie and Patty both get phone calls fairly regularly saying that I'm caught up at work, on trial, in a deposition, etc., and can I reschedule, move my lesson, or ride at

some ridiculous time."

Beard works mainly with Cindy Thaxton, a USDF-licensed dressage instructor who comes in for clinics about every six to eight weeks. This requires some creativity from Thaxton, but Beard is pleased with her progress. "The dressage instructor that I have been using is very good because she gives written feedback and specific things to work on, so you have some guidance for what to do," she said.

Beard also clinics with eventers when possible. "The other thing that I am trying to do is reduce my competing by one horse trials per year and use that money for a clinic, or two if I am lucky. With minimal regular instruction, these are a lifesaver for me," she said.

More than time can restrict an adult rider's interaction with instructors. Sometimes getting the respect is difficult as well. "We're not the up-and-coming 'future of the sport, like the Young Riders,'" said Makela. "And we're not the hardworking professionals who depend on the sport for their living.

"I've come across a few instructors lately that, while they haven't said it out loud, seem to think that a working adult amateur—especially one riding at the upper levels where we are a minority—aren't quite as 'deserving' of their best instruction as the other groups," she finished.

Saunders also feels an additional challenge is finding eventing-friendly boarding facilities. "I think the hardest thing is finding good boarding barns that are well-located, have proper turn-out and facilities, and that have managers or trainers who understand your schedule and need for help with your horse, but still don't think you're crazy for wanting to go cross-country. I've been very lucky for the past few years in finding good places to keep my horses, but [being at the right barn] is always the single biggest challenge to be able to balance work and riding," she said. 

Look for Part II in our next issue to cover the challenges and advantages of the working adult, and more keys to their success.