

## Boldly Carrying On an Indelible Legacy

April 18, 2016



By ML Ball

Bob Smith, a professional horseman for more than seven decades, established Netherwood Acres in Hyde Park in 1949. One of the most beloved riders and trainers in the Hudson Valley, Bob was universally considered a New York institution. He trained race horses at Belmont Park, rode to hounds with the Roosevelts and leased a hunt horse to Jacqueline Bouvier while she was a student at Vassar College (before she became Jackie Kennedy).

Born in Saugerties in 1927, Bob Smith grew up around horses, leading tourists on trail rides through the Catskill Mountains at age ten. As an adult, Bob filled a rare niche in the Hudson Valley, providing top-class Irish sport horses for fox hunting, trail rides and riding lessons. Sadly, Bob passed away in February 2015.

Now Bob's daughter, Kristen Smith, has quite literally taken over the reins of Netherwood Acres. Remaining fiercely loyal to her father's legacy but adding her own personal imprint, "Krissy" is preserving the family farm's roots while equipping it for the future.

Regularly placed in the saddle in front of her father while still in diapers, Krissy rode before she could walk. Growing up, she experienced the family business firsthand. "I saw all the hard work that running a riding stable and foxhunting barn entails," she explains. "You eat, breathe and sleep it. There are no office hours; you're always open."

To make sure she really wanted working with horses to be her profession, Krissy left home after graduating from Cazenovia College and worked at barns in Pennsylvania, Ireland, England and Canada, returning for good to Netherwood Acres in 2006. "I knew at that point I loved Dutchess County," she says. "I've seen the 'horsey' countries of the world, but I particularly like this area. Our terrain is difficult to cross on a horse and requires the kind of full-bodied, versatile horse that we specialize in. Plus it's beautiful countryside, there's a lot of great food, and being near the city brings us weekend riders."

After committing to the family business full time, Krissy made one particular improvement that expanded the farm's clientele substantially. "I could see right away that eventing [a multispecialty equestrian competition] was going to take off in this area," she says. "So we added a dressage ring and converted the field across the street to a cross-country course. It did take off—scores of event trainers have come to the area now, and adding eventing has enabled us to attract the type of rider who wants to jump outside of a ring."

Is Krissy Smith glad she settled back in Hyde Park to run the family business? Without a doubt. Is it worth it? "All of this work, all the years it takes to train a horse, is for people to enjoy riding. It's awesome to put them on a nice, safe horse and afterward have them say, 'Wow, that was fun.' I couldn't imagine being anywhere else."

For more information about the roots of Netherwood Acres or Bob Smith, call 845.266.3774 or visit their website at [www.netherwoodacres.net](http://www.netherwoodacres.net).