

Matthew & Winkie Mackay-Smith

By Virginia Kelsall

Matthew Mackay-Smith was a veterinarian with many interest and accomplishments. His wife of 60 years, Wingate (Winkie), shared them both. Matthew grew up in Virginia on a farm that raised shorthorn cattle and Welsh ponies. By the age of eight, he knew that he wanted to be a veterinarian. Winkie, on the other hand, was born into a navy family. When her father, who later became an admiral, was stationed in Annapolis, she was in third grade. One of her classmates was Mary (Tizzie) Iliff, whose mother raised Welsh ponies. The girls became close lifelong friends. Winkie says that after she met Tizzie and the ponies, she didn't spend much time at home. In 1949, Tizzie's mother was showing Severn Welsh ponies, and Matthew's mother was showing Farnley Welsh ponies at the Maryland State Fair. That is where Matthew and Winkie met.

After going to school in Warrenton, VA and Concord, NH, Matthew went to Harvard and then to the University of Georgia earning his DVM in 1958. In 1960, he earned a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in orthopedics and epidemiology. Winkie and Tizzie continued on together with their schooling, but after her second year at Wellesley, Winkie interrupted her education to marry Matthew.

Matthew owned thoroughbreds and loved fox hunting. Winkie had a mare from the U.S. Calvary's 1960 World Pentathlon. Black Mariah was a nervous mare with boundless energy. Winkie wanted Mariah to learn that when the saddle went on, she had no idea how long or how far they might be going, so she had better save some energy. The pair started going to distance events. She and Tizzie decided to do the Vermont 100 Mile Ride. It was so enjoyable and they were so

enthusiastic that Matthew chose to enter the following year on his thoroughbred Goodspeed. He also enjoyed the challenge.

Alexander Mackay-Smith, Matthew's father and editor of the *Chronicle of the Horse* had ridden the Western States 100 Mile Ride – better known as the “Tevis Cup”. His tales of the adventure so inspired Winkie, that in 1964 she decided to take Black Mariah. Matthew was all for it, but said, “If we are going to drive 3000 miles all the way to California, I want to ride too.” Knowing that Goodspeed would not be up to the rocks, Wendle Robie found a “Moyle” horse named Copper for Matthew to ride.

Sadly, at 70 miles, Black Mariah was too tired to finish.

Matthew stayed with them for about 40 minutes until Winkie and Mariah had a trailer ride back to Auburn. This gave Copper a nice long break so he was ready to get going. The pair finished fourth. In 1966, both Mackay-Smiths, riding “Moyle” horses earned their buckles, and finished in the top ten. While there were no plans to return every year, they knew that someday they would be back.

The Mackays-Smiths supported the Old Dominion 100 Mile Endurance Ride in Virginia right from its start in 1974. Winkie was the first person to win a 1000 mile buckle at the Old Dominion. She accomplished this on nine different horses. In June of 1978, Winkie won the Old Dominion trophy and then in August she and Matthew did the Tevis and finished 29th and 30th. Because Winkie was riding the same horse that she rode in June on the Old Dominion, they demonstrated that the same rider/horse team could do both rides the same year.



Matthew & Jameel Zyara
Cougar Rock

In 1995, Matthew rode the Anglo Arab WC Freiheit (Fred) in the cavalry division of the Old Dominion, finishing just behind the first horse. Because that horse was lame after the post ride vet check Matthew and WC Freiheit were officially named the winners. It had been a blistering hot day. Only 10 of the 40 starters finished. Fred was given a month off, and just nine weeks later, they won the Tevis. That was the first time that the same horse and rider team won both rides in the same year.

In 1982 Matthew up-dated and revised the AERC veterinary handbook. Lori Oleson, in her book *Enduring Memories*, wrote, “With his veterinary background in equine exercise physiology, he helped to develop the sport to allow horses to go faster more safely. Matthew considered this to be his greatest accomplishment.”

After teaching for seven years at New Bolton Center, he with partners Lawrence Cushing and Daniel Marks founded the Delaware Equine Center, which later moved to Cochranville, PA. At the center, he and Dr. Marks developed many surgical and diagnostic procedures that are still in use today. In 1977, starting with its first issue, and continuing until 2007, he was the medical editor for *Equus* magazine. Upon accepting the position, he commented that in his practice he helped one horse at a time, this would let him help many simultaneously. In 1972, he started the Cheshire Competitive Trail Ride with one 50 mile and two 25 mile divisions. More than 40 years later a Cheshire 25 mile ride (actually it was 26 miles) is ECTRA’s longest surviving limited distance CTR. In his memory, the 2019 ride presented a Mackay-Smith Horsemanship Award. It was a framed certificate. It reads as follows:

In recognition of the competitor showing the highest regard for their horse and their fellow competitors and the sport embodying the philosophies valued by the founder of the Cheshire CTR, Dr. Matthew Mackay-Smith, DVM.

- *Ride your horse to his capabilities
- *It is most important to think about finishing a ride before thinking about placing well
- *Ride one mile at a time
- *Never hurry, never tarry
- *Don’t ride against another rider, instead ride against the trail
- *If you must force a horse, then you are not experiencing a good relationship

Aside from endurance training, conditioning, competing, and raising three lovely daughters to be competent horsewomen, Winkie has had an active other life. She bred, raised and showed champion English Bull Terriers. Academically, she had a strong interest in psychology. In addition to taking courses, she volunteered to work with special needs students at the Unionville Elementary School. To further her education she earned a Master’s degree in medieval history from the University of Delaware.

To mention but a few, she has served on the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals and chaired the Conservation Easement Authority for Clarke County, VA. She has also served on the boards of Grafton School, Piedmont Environmental Council, the Clark County Historical Association, the Bull Terrier Club of America and the Bethel Memorial Church. At present she has no horses of her own, but enjoys having daughter Emily’s in the barn.

Winkie and Matthew were both a remarkable and a delightful couple. Knowing and being in their company is a lifetime treasure.

I would like to thank Lori Oleson for allowing us to use many facts and the endurance ride photos from Chapter 4, “Matthew Mackay-Smith DVM” in her book *Enduring Memories*.

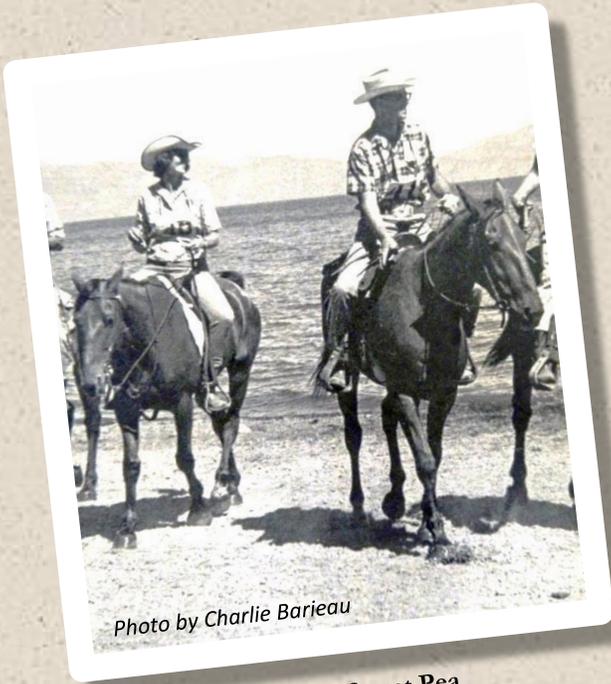


Photo by Charlie Barieau

Winkie on Sweet Pea
& Matthew on Copper
before the 1965 Tevis

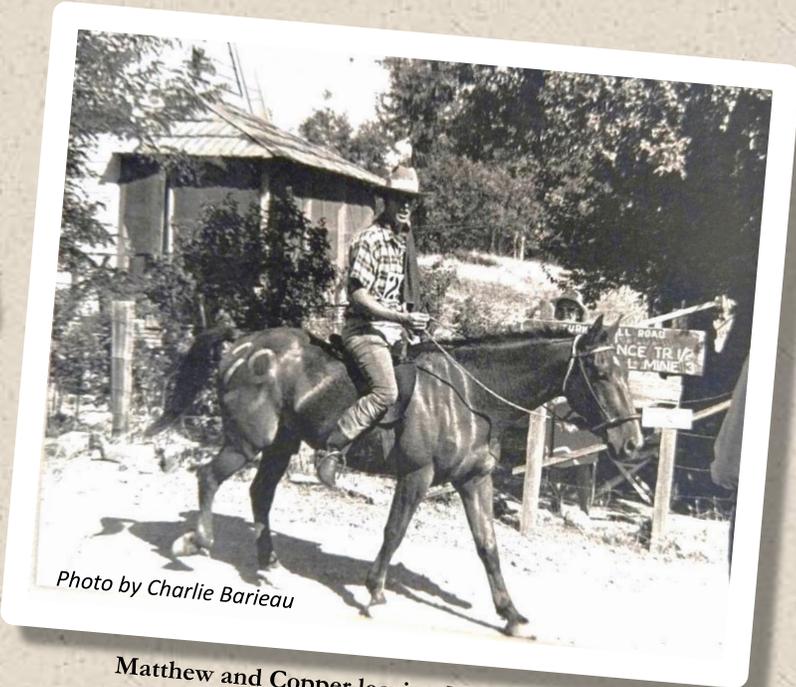


Photo by Charlie Barieau

Matthew and Copper leaving Michigan Bluff
1964 Tevis

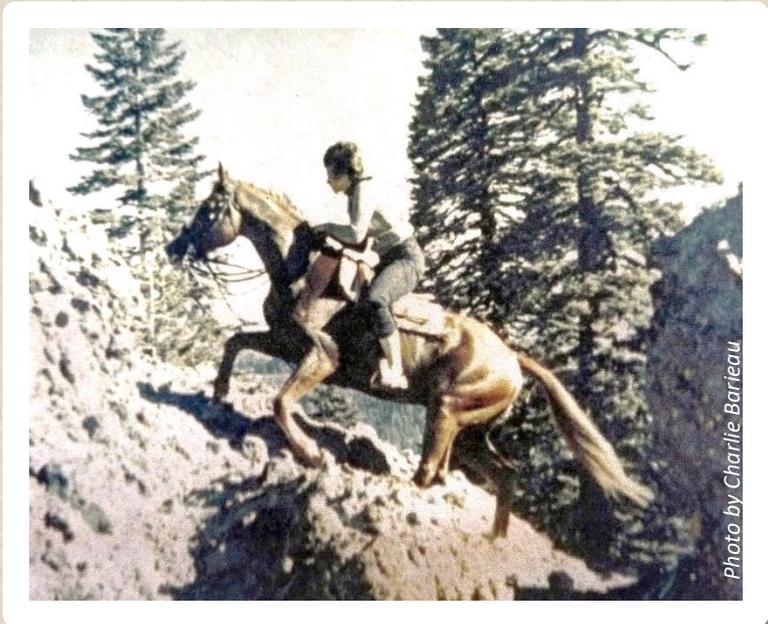


Photo by Charlie Barieau

Winkie on Donnie Mack
climbing Cougar Rock in 1967



Matthew & Winkie
Count Be Fast better known as "Rugby" & AM Mister Gypsy
Vermont 100 Mile One Day

The Story Behind the Picture

By Winkie Mackay-Smith

Our dear friend, Heather St. Clair Davis horsewoman, renowned artist and occasional houseguest, invited us to come to stay at her farm in Windsor, Vermont while we competed in the 1997 100 mile/1 day ride. She was intrigued by the idea of such a grueling race, and offered to pit crew for us on the day of the ride. As we were more-or-less veterans of the endurance riding scene, we laid out the times when we would show up at the designated vet-checks. We gave her a specific time that we would make the first stop and she said she would be there.

As many endurance riders are aware, Matthew was the "endurance Guru", having written and lectured many times and in many venues about all aspects of the sport. One of his stern admonitions to his audiences was the utmost importance of working out the equipment issues well ahead of the actual ride and especially not changing anything on race day that would affect the horse—or rider—during the contest. No new ankle boots, no different electrolytes, no better britches—everything must be tried and true. So, on the morning of the ride, Matthew decided to put a different saddle on his horse, "Rugby", accompanied by a shiny brand new saddle-pad, and off we went.

Well, the truth of the matter was that Rugby was not your ordinarily built Arabian, being of stout construction, especially around the middle, and had not much in the way of withers. The first long hill we climbed, the saddle slipped back, and Rugby objected violently to the girth behind his ribcage, and went bucking off into the pucker brush. Matthew didn't fall off, but we did have to stop and reset the saddle. Down the other side, and the saddle slipped forward, and Rugby again objected to the girth lodging behind his elbows. So we had to stop for another reset. Vermont being Vermont, there were many hills to traverse and a concomitant number of resets.

Meanwhile, Heather had arrived at the appointed time at the first vet-check, and waited, and waited, and waited while all the other riders came in and went back out, eventually concluding that something calamitous had happened to us. So she retraced the trail looking for us. She finally found us, slightly off the trail, by a babbling brook, having a minor "domestic" while I held the horses so Matthew could reset his saddle for the umph-di-umph time.

I am honestly not sure whether or not either of us finished that ride—by then we were so far behind the field—and our time—that we probably just called it a day.

The following December, Heather came to Virginia to deliver some paintings to her clients and she brought us this picture, which she called a "Christmas card"! We all had a good laugh and never again did Matthew second guess his alter-ego, Dr. Mackay-Smith!