



Marie Bouvet

Bringing Saddlebreds Back To Middle Tennessee

By Erica Faulkner

Tennessee, nicknamed the Volunteer State, is home to beautiful rolling hills, stunning mountain peaks, and people that truly pull out all the stops and are true to southern hospitality. The state is known for so many things, one of which is being at the top of the charts in the country music world. Nashville, the capital, is known as Music City and is home to the famous Grand Ole Opry. The Grand Ole Opry is the longest continuously run live radio program in the world. It has broadcast every weekend since 1925. One of the most stunning and picturesque mountain ranges are the Smoky Mountains, found on the east side of the state and are estimated to be 200-300 million years old, making them one of the oldest mountain ranges on earth. They get their name from the stunning morning views of the fog resting in the valleys of the mountains. And on the western side of the state, the famous estate known as Graceland, serves as a reminder of the great Elvis Presley who once lived there. Although, for horse enthusiasts, all this is just icing on the cake. Most equestrians hold Tennessee in high regard as the home of the Tennessee Walking Horse, but there is also a rich tradition of American Saddlebreds and recently the American Saddlebred has been making a comeback in the area. Trainers from all over the country are seeing what Tennessee can offer, and even some are making the move and relocating to this beautiful state.

With a growing Saddlebred community, it is no surprise that the horse shows in Tennessee are also increasing in size. Horse shows such as Chattanooga Charity, Southern Saddlebred Spring Fling and Fall Finale, Germantown and Morristown, are just a few of the shows that Tennessee has for the Saddlebred horse community. These shows are well attended and boast some tough competition. Marie Bouvet is one of the trainers who recognizes the value of living in Middle Tennessee, and thus has started her business in the beautiful hills of the Nashville area.



Marie Bouvet stands with Double Black Diamond, a horse she chose for Aubrey Behnke to show from 2014-2016.



Carol Walker and Calibogue Charm won the Limit Rider Three-Gaited Show Pleasure Championship at the 2016 Southern Saddlebred Fall Finale. This team has been instructed by Marie Bouvet for the past three years.



Marie Bouvet works a young prospect in between sessions at the Southern Saddlebred Spring Fling Horse Show.

Marie Bouvet was born in Key West, FL while her father, Dominique, was on active duty in the U.S. Navy. At two, the family relocated to Minnesota where Dominique began his commercial airline pilot career with Northwest Airlines (now Delta Airlines). Along with continuing to serve in the Navy Reserves for nearly 20 years, Dominique worked as Fleet Training Captain for NWA and was an Instructor Pilot and Line Check Airman on multiple aircraft types for numerous years. Her mother, Iris, met Dominique in Key West when she was a bass player and lead singer for a classic rock band performing there. As the children were growing up, she worked part-time as a tutor for the local school district and continued her musical pursuits in music theater pit orchestras, church music director positions and various vocal and instrumental ensembles. She is still actively playing in bands and at their church. Marie's brother, J.P., is a world-renowned drummer (based in NYC) currently touring Asia, Australia and Europe with Generation Axe, Dave Mackay, and his own band, Childish Japes. He is a featured soloist at drum festivals around the world. Isabelle, Marie's "baby" sister, lives in Louisville, KY with her husband, farrier Mike Glatfelder. Their romance began one summer Isabelle lived with Marie to help with the horses and farm in Kentucky. Isabelle was always fascinated by science, so a degree in Medical Laboratory Science was a natural path for her. She is now employed by Norton Healthcare in Louisville. "In my immediate family, no one had any direct involvement with horses other than me," says Bouvet, "but everyone was supportive and encouraged me to follow my dream. Our family is awesome in that each of us was encouraged to find and follow our passion, to work hard, and pursue the path to live our dreams."

Bouvet started riding hunt seat and dressage at a very young age with various trainers in Minnesota. Around ten years of age, she was introduced to the saddle seat discipline, while continuing riding and showing hunt seat. The excitement of riding a saddle seat show horse had Bouvet hooked though. Bob Jorgensen, who had an Arabian barn in Prior Lake, Minnesota, was the first one to show Bouvet the ropes of the saddle seat discipline. "Bob did a great job with

a horse," comments Bouvet. "He had immaculate attention to detail, and his horses always wore the bridle beautifully." It was only a matter of time until Bouvet also learned this talent of being able to bridle a horse correctly. "I will never forget the day" says Bouvet, "I was riding my horse, who was half Arabian and half Hackney. Bob had been trying to teach me the 'feel' that we all know is so hard to teach someone. I remember it like it was yesterday, the first time I 'felt' the horse raise up underneath me and push through, setting his own head. Such a soft, free feeling, there is nothing better." This feeling is something Bouvet strives to teach her riders.

Arabian trainers in Minnesota. At Cedar Ridge, Bouvet spent countless hours working Colts, and took



Marie Bouvet works a young horse at her farm in Murfreesboro Tennessee.

advantage of every opportunity to show any horse she could. From saddle seat to hunt seat, Bouvet competed in a variety of divisions. Eventually, Jorgensen brought in some Saddlebreds to the barn, and seeing Bouvet's passion and work ethic, turned to her to be his main catch-rider. "This was my first introduction to the breed," she says, "and I enjoyed working and showing them immensely. I decided that I was going to stick with Saddlebreds as my primary focus." With her mind made up that training Saddlebreds was going to be her career choice, Bouvet enrolled at William Woods University

William Woods University located in Fulton, Missouri, is known for turning out top equestrian professionals, and Bouvet is one of them. "William Woods is a wonderful place," comments Bouvet. "I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with the great Gayle Lampe for the short time I was there." Bouvet spent a year learning all she could from those at William Woods, and after the first year of school she ventured out to work for John and Renee' Biggins at Biggins Stables in Simpsonville, Kentucky. "Working for them was such an honor," says Bouvet. "I learned so much from the experience, it was a wonderful time in my life, with memories that I will always cherish." Bouvet notes that working with Biggins was not easy, yet that was what she liked best about it. She recalls the hard work that she put forth every day while at the job. Working with Biggins reiterated that "hard work does pay off." Today, she continues to employ the strong work ethic and value of good old fashioned hard work that she learned throughout her lifetime. It is just one reason that Marie Bouvet Stables is successful.

Eventually, Bouvet returned to Minnesota, and went back to her roots, taking a job with her previous trainer Bob Jorgensen. The two of them worked together for years, and according to Bouvet they had a great business partnership. And part of having a good partnership is knowing when it's time to move on. Bouvet says, "I loved working with Bob. And I will forever be grateful for the lessons he taught me. But I was itching to work more Saddlebreds than were at his farm at the time." Bouvet accepted a job at Center Pointe Stables in Delano Minnesota as the assistant



Like many young girls, Marie Bouvet spent many of her childhood years riding as many ponies as she could.



Marie Bouvet and student Aubrey Behnke show off their blue ribbons. Behnke considers Bouvet to be not only her horse trainer, but also her mentor and friend.



Marie Bouvet and her partner Jordan Howell share a moment at the American Royal.

trainer/instructor. "Every job I have had, I have done my best to learn from." Bouvet comments. "Every horse and every rider you work with, teaches you something." After about a year working with Judy Jensen at Center Pointe Stables, Bouvet felt that it was time for her to make her own contribution to the Minnesota show horse community.

In 2008 Bouvet ventured out on her own, to establish herself in the horse industry as an individual. "I enjoyed the Minnesota Saddlebred industry so much that it just made sense at the time for me to stay in the general area." Margaret and Randy Easton, owner of Sleepy Hollow Farm in Roberts Wisconsin, took a chance with Bouvet, and opened their facility up for her use. "Margaret and Randy have a beautiful facility, and they were supportive to my goals of being out on my own. They opened up their facility to me and let me start my new adventure at their place." The farm was stunning, as Bouvet points out, "a beautiful facility to train out of." However, it was not long before Bouvet outgrew what the facility had to offer.

"I had to relocate, but it was only because I had grown from having one customer, to having many." Bouvet found a new facility in the town of Hastings, Minnesota. "I rented stalls, and continued to pursue my passion of training American Saddlebreds." A couple years in Hastings, and Bouvet again felt the urge for something new. "I missed being in the south, and all it offered for those who worked with Saddlebreds. I was also ready to push myself and my business to the next level."

So, Bouvet packed up and relocated her business to the Saddlebred capital of the world, Kentucky. Renting a barn in Danville was "like heaven on earth" said Bouvet. "The weather was so much warmer then it was back in Minnesota, and the Saddlebred community was like no other." Bouvet experienced much success on the Kentucky circuit, bringing up many young horses to the show ring. She also had amateur riders, such as Aubrey Behnke who showed horses like Calibogue Charm and WC Double Black Diamond to many blue.

During those few years in Kentucky, Bouvet ventured out to learn from those at Grand Meadow Farm, as well other trainers in the area such as Tami and Chad Reiser. Bill Knight also had a huge influence on Bouvet. "I first met Bill at a clinic that him and Kris were doing at Centerpoint stables when I was working there. I had asked Bill if he would stay after and look at some of my Colts with me so I could get his opinion on how I was doing training these young horses." From that day

forward Bouvet looked up to Bill and his patient and kind ways with a horse. "Bill has had a huge impact on the person I am today as well as in the training methods I believe in." After experiencing so much of what Kentucky had to offer, Bouvet felt it was time to relocate, this time to Tennessee.

An opportunity became available in middle Tennessee that really caught Bouvet's eye. "I had been in Kentucky for a few years, when I heard of a really special opportunity that I just knew I could not pass up." David and Karla Landrum, owners of Franklin Saddlebreds LLC, in Franklin, Tennessee, saw the talent that Bouvet had and they knew that they wanted her to be the head trainer at their facility. "I accepted the position of head trainer, and relocated to Franklin." It was during this time that Bouvet knew she had found where she wanted to call home. "I love Tennessee," she says, "I knew that bringing my business here was the right thing to do." Middle Tennessee used to be home to a healthy number of Saddlebred farms. However, over the years, the area lost some of these facilities for various reasons. "There is such a great history here," says Bouvet.



Babies play along the fence line at Marie Bouvet's farm. She takes pride in the top quality young stock she develops on her farm.

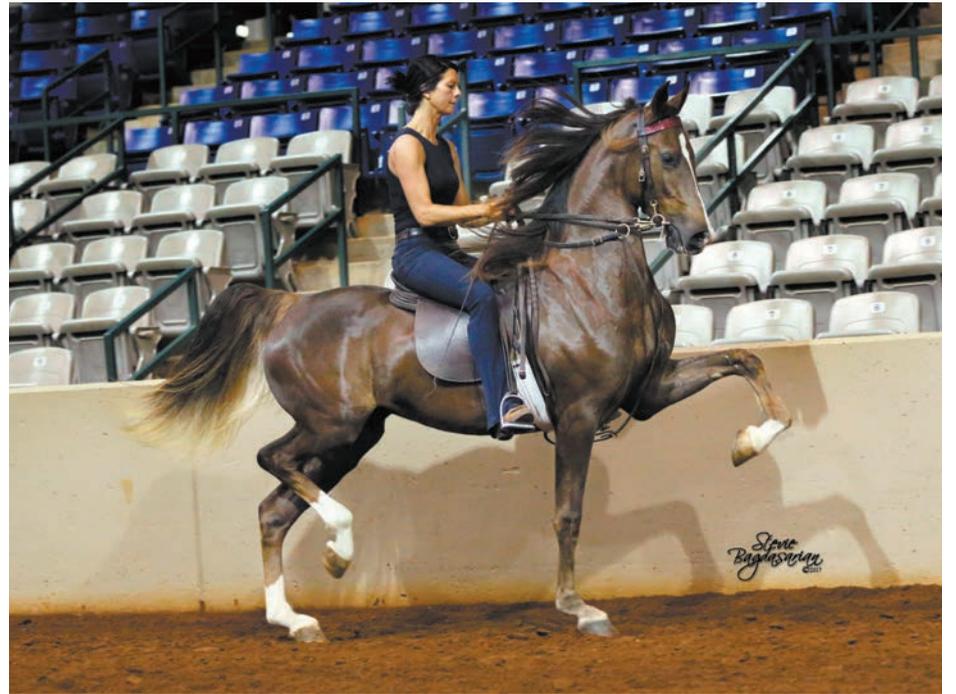
After a short time, Bouvet ventured out and opened her own facility. Since Tennessee had so much to offer, she decided it was a perfect location for her new business. Bouvet found a top of the line facility in Murfreesboro, and went to work building her brand. "I am very focused on building a business alongside of the local breeders so we can create new talent for our industry," says Bouvet. "I love the small successes of starting young, quality horses from scratch. Every day you teach them something new. My goal is for my colts to enjoy their daily work and become competitive athletes in our industry." Bouvet puts together competitive teams for both the junior exhibitor and amateur divisions, and even plays her part in contributing to the academy classes through her growing lesson program. She treats everyone who rides with her equally, and treats every rider with respect and compassion. "I pride myself on being open minded and am very willing to work with people on making their dreams come true, both in and out of the show ring."

And making dreams come true is what she has done for customer, Carol Walker. Walker met Bouvet when she was working for the Landrums at Franklin Saddlebreds. "I was riding at Franklin Stables, when Marie came to work there," says Walker. "I just loved her right from the first day I met her." Walker competes in the amateur show pleasure division with her game and go forward horse, Calibogue Charm. "I have been a customer of Marie's for three years now," comments Walker. "I am so thrilled with all she has done for me. She truly made my dreams come true when she partnered me with Calibogue Charm. She knew she could make us a team."

And when Walker talks about becoming a team, she isn't referring to just her and the horse. "I love that Marie works to make my horse and I a functioning team, but really, all three of us are the team, not just me and the horse." Walker speaks highly of her trainer, and points out that Bouvet puts forth an effort and attention to detail that truly sets her apart. "Marie is very methodical. She has a plan every time I come to ride. There is always a goal, always something to try to perfect." As Walker says, "every time I ride, it's a real learning opportunity. I'll get to the barn and Marie will say 'I've been thinking, and this is what we are going to focus and work on today.' She is so focused." Walker states that her visits to the barn are what she looks forward to each week, that it is her happy place, and all of that is thanks to Bouvet.



Marie Bouvet showed Madeira's Reality Check to the win in the Junior Three-Gaited Stake at the Shelbyville Horse Show in 2014.



Bouvet and a promising young two-year-old, Simply Cynfully Divine, owned by Julie Behrends-Jones and Julie Tooth. This nice prospect is by Undulata's Nutcracker and out of Cabernet's Simply Cynfull.

Marie Bouvet Training LLC, not only is a place for the junior exhibitor and amateur riders to excel, but also focuses on developing top young horses. "Part of our specialty is in creating quality young prospects," says Bouvet. Murfreesboro is a great location for a facility that has young stock for sale, as it's only a short drive from many Saddlebred lovers who reside in Kentucky and other areas of the South. And for those that are too far to drive, the Nashville airport is only a short drive away. "Our location is great for so many reasons," Bouvet comments. One major reason that Tennessee is a prime location, is the fact that there are many competitive horse shows just a short drive away. There is the Kentucky circuit, complete with the World's Championship Horse Show, however there is also the southern Georgia circuit that Bouvet can choose to take her clients to. And if they want even more variety, the Carolinas are not far away, making shows such as Blue Ridge and Asheville an easy fit in the show schedule for the barn. "Our location provides ease of transportation to so many Saddlebred shows, it gives us a wonderful opportunity to put our horses in front of new crowds, whenever we please. We truly are right in the middle of the show horse community."

Developing young stock is something that Bouvet really loves, and has a knack for. Longtime customer Aubrey Behnke has continually trusted Bouvet with the care of her horses, and just recently purchased a young horse for Bouvet to work. Behnke showed the fancy Double Black Diamond, over the past couple of years, so this venture of owning a new young horse, is one that both she and Bouvet are looking forward to. Behnke says it is thanks to Bouvet's patience and perseverance that they found such a quality prospect. "After several months of searching for the right horse, we finally found the one!" Behnke says with the excitement of a child opening her presents at Christmas. "He is a four-year-old named You'll Be In My Heart." This nice young horse is by First Night In and out of Titleist Sweetheart. "We call him Macho for short." Behnke comments on how Bouvet took the time to find her perfect match. "Marie and I had looked at so many horses, but the day we found him we knew he was the one. We clicked instantly." The young horse was purchased for Behnke, and they are expected to make their debut sometime soon. "Marie is meticulous when looking for a horse," Behnke added, "she made every step so fun and it was such a learning experience."

Behnke is quick to praise Bouvet, pointing out that she is so much more than just a horse trainer. "Marie is like a big sister to me in a lot of ways, in and out of the show ring! I look up to her as a mentor and trainer." It is obvious that Bouvet takes the time that is needed with her clients, to ensure that their experiences at her facility are second to none.

"And the way she is with a horse," adds Carol Walker, "it is just awesome to see. She is always patient, and never raises her voice. I love watching her work." It is no wonder that Bouvet continually turns out top young prospects, as she treats them all with respect and kindness. And by treating the horses well, they learn to trust her and thus perform well for her, and for all their future owners.

Marie Bouvet is working hard to bring the American Saddlebred back to Middle Tennessee. Last year, she was named UPHA Chapter 8 Horseman of the Year, one award of what is sure to be many in the years to come. With a quality training program, and a great group of young horses always for sale, she is helping to grow the market around the Nashville area. She encourages other trainers and Saddlebred owners to consider coming to Tennessee when shopping for a horse, or looking for the next barn to take lessons from. "There are many great facilities in Tennessee that I think people overlook when they are horse shopping," Bouvet says. With a top-notch facility, and a determined mind set to produce the best she possibly can, Marie Bouvet Training is sure to experience continued success in this industry.



Aubrey Behnke and her previously owned, Double Black Diamond, experienced much success under the direction of Marie Bouvet.



First Round Pick was just one of the young horses that Bouvet started as a yearling. Here he is shown by Ashely Hallock, however he was owned by Julie Rouse and Aubrey Behnke from 2010 to 2013, when Bouvet had him in training. Bouvet campaigned him in the three-gaited division with much success.