



HUNTERS COURT

IN 1977, A YOUNG TRAINER NAMED DAVID WRIGHT started a hunter/jumper training business at a walking horse farm in the section of the U.S. known to southerners as Middle Tennessee. Armed with boundless energy, work ethic, and unparalleled love for the horse, David created the now iconic show stable Hunters Court. For forty years, Hunters Court has been synonymous with quality, integrity, and success. David was a consistent winner in the hunter and jumper rings and his students found success at the top levels of the sport.

Fast forward four decades to 2017 and the Hunters Court banner still hangs proudly at horse shows



throughout the United States. The difference is that the name of Dani Grice is embroidered on it as trainer. In a tragic twist of fate, David died from a brain tumor in July, 2014, leaving his beloved horses and farm to partner, Linda Seay. Determined to honor David's legacy, Seay has tended to the farm and business at Hunter's Court – including hiring the perfect fit in young trainer, Dani Grice. Grice stepped into the position in the winter following David's death. Respectful of the feelings of both clients and employees, Grice moved slowly and deliberately to make the business hers. She has deftly learned to manage the large facility, its loyal clients, and the 35 horses that happily live there.

The Hunters Court property is a staple in the Tennessee equestrian scene. Established in 1997, the Murfreesboro facility boasts 101 acres, 53 stalls,





40 Years and Counting

indoor and outdoor rings, and spacious turnout. The size and structure of the property enable Grice to offer numerous options for her clients. Hunters Court offers a riding school with wonderful schoolmaster horses for children and adults who would like riding lessons. For the more experienced riders, Hunters Court offers full care and training for their boarders. While some clients ride on a pleasure basis, many are competitive horse show exhibitors.

Grice enjoys teaching all levels of riding. Having been a competitor in both the junior and amateur ranks, she has a great affinity for her students. Dani grew up in Minnesota riding in the jumper and equitation rings. On her successful Junior Jumper, The Boy Wonder, she was a competitor in the USEF North American Junior and Young Riders Championships. Riding the agile little Appendix



Quarter Horse, she was successful into the Grand Prix level as an amateur. Under the tutelage of trainer Holly Shepherd, Grice's hard work culminated in the Amateur Owner Jumper Championship at the National Horse Show.



In 2005 Shepherd asked Grice to become her assistant trainer. Grice turned pro and hit the AA circuit with Shepherd's successful show stable, Accolade Farm. As Shepherd's assistant for eleven years, Grice benefitted from exposure to all levels – Grand Prix jumpers to hunters, advanced riders to less experienced. She taught, trained, and rode as well as learned valuable management and horse care skills. Currently, Grice has an exceptional team of employees at Hunters Court, including manager Emma Price.

Price lives on the property and handles horse care, client scheduling, veterinarian interface, feed and supplements – all of the important ingredients for a well managed barn.

As a teacher, Grice holds the connection between the horse and rider as crucial to success. “I like to open lines of communication with the horse and rider. There has to be an understanding so that the horse knows what you want him to do.” She explains the mechanics of riding to her pupils so that they can grasp the concept of cause and effect. As an example, Grice cites the concept of inside bend. “I ask my pupils for inside bend as they turn to a jump and explain that the horse needs to see where he is going. Inside bend is not arbitrary. I try to give the horse an opportunity to do the right thing.”

Grice thoroughly enjoys teaching at all levels. “I have ladies aspiring to return to showing after a long break who are dealing with nerves. I teach them good communication with their horse, and the nerves go away and riding becomes fun. I also have some very competitive riders who are really trying to win. I enjoy all levels.” Grice drills her riders on pace, track, and position. Hunters Court averages around two shows per month throughout the year.

As a rider, Grice has had a long career in the jumper divisions, and has recently found success in the hunter divisions. On Allison Reichenbach's High Life, she has won in the Green Hunter divisions and took first place in USHJA National Hunter Derby at the Country Heir Horse Show. Grice's first passion is bringing along young horses. “I love to bring along the young ones! I get them after they have just been started, teach them to jump, and get them off to their first horse shows.” She laughingly calls these first shows for the green horses “field trips.”



Grice's approach to training youngsters is slow and deliberate. “I am a horse trainer. I take my time with them and let them tell me how much and how fast they can go.” Grice wants her young horses to enjoy their job and feel no pressure to progress. “David [Wright] always used to ask, ‘Where are the young horse trainers?’ Well, here I am!” Grice exclaims.

In the increasingly fast paced, competitive equestrian world, professionals who put time and a personal stake in young horses are becoming scarce. Hunters Court benefits from a trainer who values horsemanship and careful training over quick results.

As Grice looks toward the future, she realizes that change is inevitable. The present Hunters Court location has been sold to developers who have leased it back to enable the business to run in its usual form. Although Grice hopes to stay at the facility for some time, she is looking forward to owning a property of her own which would include less stalls, a smaller tract of land, and room to include her mother's small breeding program. While there is no timeline for any move, Grice is confident that the transition will be smooth when the time comes.

Grice is extremely grateful to Linda Seay for the opportunities offered to her at Hunters Court. She respects and understands Seay's sale of the facility as Seay plans to move closer to family. “I am proud of Linda for being able to move on,” Grice explains. “She kept this place and wanted to keep David's legacy alive. I hope to do that for both of them by training horses well and treating customers like family.” David

Wright used the slogan “Hunters Court – Teaching horses and riders to be their best.” With Dani Grice at the helm, Hunters Court is in good hands to continue its legacy for another forty years.

■ BY TPH EDITOR SISSY WICKES