

SAM SAVITT EQUESTRIAN ARTIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

BY AMY PHILLIPS PENN



Sam Savitt is a man of action, especially when it comes to horses.

As a rider, he has taken horses straight from the track and shaped them into first-rate hunters and jumpers. In his role of artist, he has wowed the equestrian world with his prolific portfolio, which ranges from comic book covers to polo ponies going for the goal.

Fascinated with horses, both astride and behind the canvas, his favorite subjects are horses in action—speed gets his adrenaline and brushstrokes racing. Cowboys in technicolor-Western motion, steeplechasers and polo ponies in power plays, are the motions that he is moved to immortalize. Even the titles of his polo portraits are action-packed—"Dangerous Riding," "Hard Bump," "Taking the Man First," and "Foul," say it all.

While Savitt trained young horses that proved to be a handful to most riders, his trainer, Gordon Wright, of U.S.E.T. fame, showed Savitt "that riding was an art. He

told me that I had no bad habits, which was more of a compliment than I knew at the time." Under Wright's tutelage, his pupil rode to earn his trainer's respect. "He called me the best man with green horses he knew," a wide jump from his original comment.

While mastering the world of hunters and jumpers was a natural, polo was a horse of a different color. Riding them that is. Even though the action of polo proved mesmerizing—"I love the contact, the clashing, watching the players change horses without seeming to touch the ground,"—Savitt didn't have the time or financial wherewithal to give the game his all. Besides, he was left-handed. Lucky for us, his art came first.

His resume is overwhelming, it's hard to imagine he's ever had time out to ride. Sam is named in "Who's Who" for outstanding achievement in his field, has authored fifteen books of his own, while illustrating one hundred and thirty five of other authors, including The Horses of San

Simeon by Austine Hearst. His paintings and portraits belong to legendary American families including Busch, Hearst, Kennedy and Firestone. Then, there are his famous educational posters which enhance the academic world, along with illustrations in encyclopedias and a place in the Smithsonian Institute. On the equestrian front, he has achieved the blue ribbon of equestrian/ artistic accolades, as the official artist of the United States Equestrian Team.

A graduate of Pratt Institute, he spent four years in the army, then went on to the Art Students League, while supporting himself illustrating the giants of publications--Sports Illustrated, True, Field and Stream, Outdoor Life and Country Gentlemen. In the 1950's , Savitt painted over a hundred covers for Lone Ranger's Silver, Roy Rogers' Trigger, and Gene Autry's Champion.

He shared his insights into equestrian art with the world in 1981, in his book Draw Horses with Sam Savitt. The work remains the best selling instructive book on drawing horses today. The Glenlivet Scotch Guide to Polo sports Savitt's rendering of polo plays from the throw-in to the backhand, and features his favorite polo play--riding off.

Savitt has covered every inch and discipline of the equestrian cosmos from polo,



Mr. Sam Savitt



The Goal Post, By Sam Savitt

riding, racing, steeplechasing, fox hunting, rodeos and the Grand Prix to immortalizing the individuality and strength of a multitude of breeds.

As an artist/ author, his curiosity and respect of horses has taken him on a variety of journeys-- from capturing the birth of a foal to recording its development with due awe. Then there was the famous bucking bronco that could throw a world champion for a loop within seconds.

"The horse is beauty, strength, rhythm and action. To really know and understand him, to capture his magnificence with pencil or brush, will be to me, forever changing."