

Unusual Equestrian Artist

By ROBERT G. BREEN

OVER the weekend, Sam Savitt was out at Timonium, sketching with his left hand, the youngsters and ponies participating in the Maryland Pony Show.

"Wasn't it unusual for an artist to be left handed?" Sam was asked.

"Not exactly. At the Pratt Institute there were four left-handed students in my classes; the teacher was left handed, and the director of the institute was left handed," Sam replied.

What was unusual to Sam as a student at the institute was that when he went there it seemed that all the other students had had previous art training. He was so amazed at what he regarded as their superior ability, and appalled by his lack of it, that he went to the director and said he wished to leave.

The director told Sam that was just a lot of nonsense and that he should stay.

Special Talent

He did that.

Gradually, he began to realize that along with his life-long love for drawing horses, he also had a special talent for it. He noticed that his horses appeared to be better drawn than those by the other students. With that he began intensifying his interest in his work.

"But then, after you work up an interest in something like that you forget how it all began," Mr. Savitt commented in explaining how he became an equestrian artist.

As an equestrian artist, Mr. Savitt proved to be unusual. He prefers drawing a horse in action. Most equestrian artists draw or paint horses in a standing position to illustrate the fine points of a horse's conformation. This means that most horses are drawn in exactly the same position.

Mr. Savitt always thought of a horse in

motion, and began expressing that motion in his work.

For his own records, he one day started drawing a colt. A colt can grow rapidly, and can go from 75 pounds to 700 pounds in a year, he explains.

Each week Mr. Savitt went to the stables and sketched the colt. After a year he had a complete record of the colt's growth.

A Writer, Too

Then one day he started flipping through the sketches and could actually see the horse grow. He got so excited about it that he submitted the sketches to a publisher to see if there could be some possible use for them. The publisher said yes, indeed, and suggested that Mr. Savitt write some text so as to pull the whole thing together.

Thus Mr. Savitt found himself a writer as well as an artist.

That book, published in 1957, he called "Step-A-Bit."

"Then I got the bug," says Mr. Savitt, who then wrote "Midnight"—a story of the famous bucking bronco by the same name that no one could ever ride. That book won Mr. Savitt The Boys Club of America Award for 1958.

Mr. Savitt's latest book for which he has supplied both the text and pictures, is "Around the World With Horses." It is a book giving a page of text on 24 breeds found all over the world.

It is a book that can best be described by applying to it the word that Mr. Savitt uses in describing his favorite breed.

It is a book of "heart"; a book with a deep and affectionate appreciation of the different and subtle characteristics of the various breeds.

Consuming Interest

Mr. Savitt can write of horses with understanding. He loves them. He has a consuming interest not only in horses but in horsemanship.

After World War II, in which he served four and one half years with the Army Combat Engineers in Burma, Mr. Savitt returned to New York as a magazine and book illustrator.

"I got sick and tired of illustrating horses that weren't horses," he says, adding that "authors would always give the horses human characteristics. If I had a horse with human characteristics I would put him in a museum. I certainly wouldn't want to ride him, or have him around."

That is why Mr. Savitt's horses are always horses. They are never humans in disguise.

An official artist of the United States Equestrian Team, Mr. Savitt came to know Gordon Wright, the celebrated equestrian coach. Mr. Wright has brought out a new edition of the "Cavalry Manual of Horsemanship and Horsemastership," with the illustrations by Mr. Savitt.

Previous editions of the book, long re-

garded as the Bible for equestrians, had been illustrated with photographs. The book seeks to tell the reader how to achieve perfection as a rider—but the perfect rider is impossible to be photographed. Because it is perfection that an equestrian desires, Mr. Wright asked Mr. Savitt to illustrate the book with sketches showing riders exhibiting perfect form.

Motion In Mind

When Mr. Savitt starts to draw a horse he always has motion in mind. If he wants to show a horse bucking, he starts with a curve thrust forward and upward. Then the body takes shape. Earth flies up. The horse's ears go back. His mouth is open. "You get guts to your picture," he says.

This method of drawing is at variance with the method used by Paul Brown. Mr. Brown, despite the fact that he never rode, was, before his death one of the most eminent of equestrian artists. He always painted a horse to emphasize the merits in a horse's conformation. Although they liked to disagree on the methods they used as artists, they were fast friends.

Because of this, Mr. Brown insisted that Mr. Savitt go to Maryland to see the Maryland Hunt Cup which was run in the spring of 1958.

A horse was killed in that race. So moved was Mr. Savitt that he returned home and wrote a book around the incident, called "There Was A Horse."

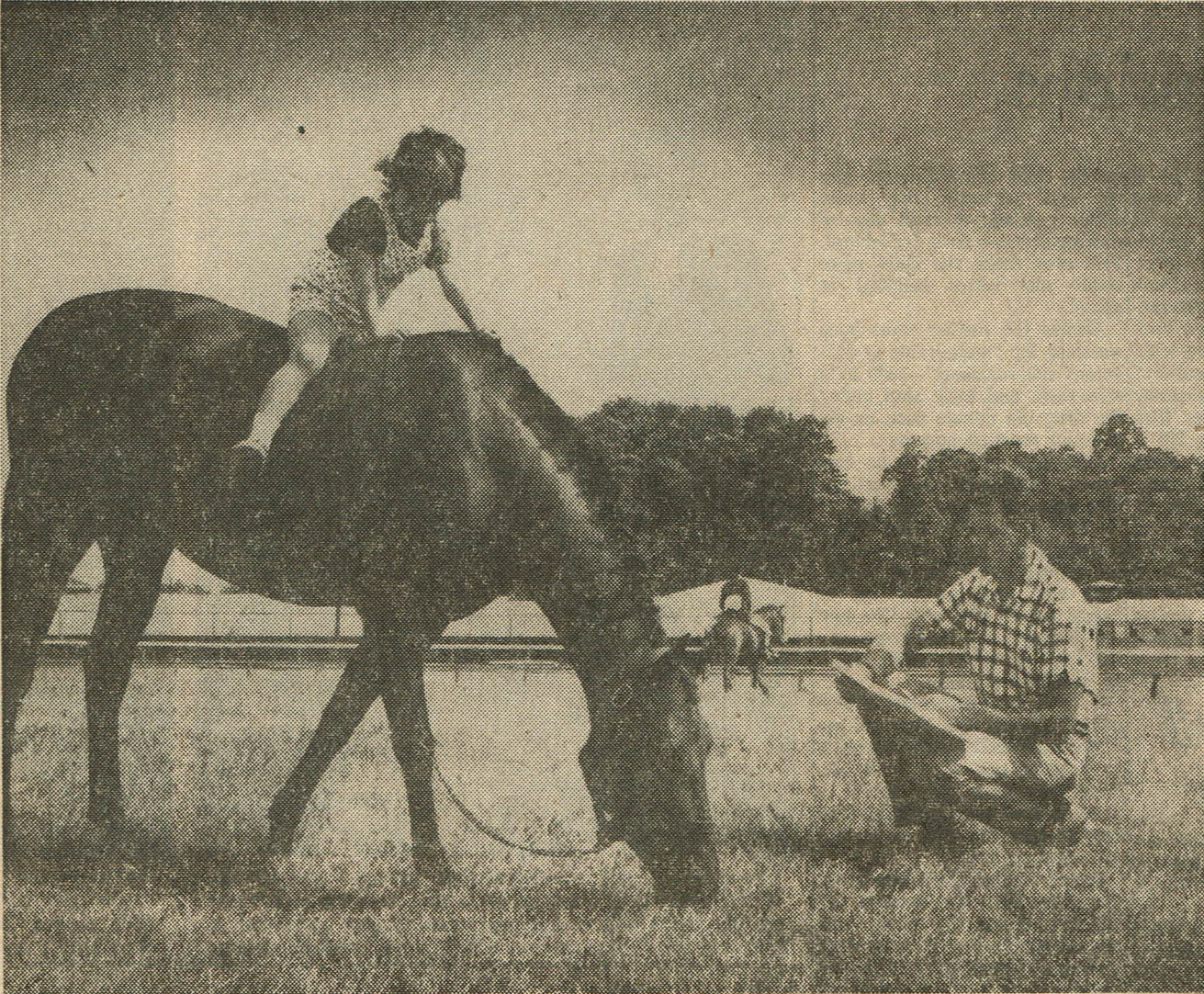
Tractor Chased

Now living in North Salem, New York, Mr. Savitt relates that he has been "tractor chased all over the country" seeking a place which is still country, without the threat of urbanization hanging over it.

He calls his present home, "One Horse Farm"—not because he has but one horse there, but because he has "just about one of everything and everything getting in everyone's way."

There, he and his wife are ardent hunters and ride regularly with the Golden's Bridge Hounds.

He has but one complaint about life on the farm. He finds it impossible to interest his two children in riding.



A SPECIAL TALENT—Sam Savitt is shown sketching a horse at the Maryland Pony Show held this past weekend at Timonium. Mr. Savitt, who has made a career of drawing horses and then writing about them, has just had published his "Around the World With Horses." The book tells of 24 breeds. In view of the fact that there are actually more than 90 breeds of horses extant, it is expected that some companion volumes will follow.