

# Fascination For Horses Leads Artist To Career

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Sam Savitt is a man who likes to think in wholes. Concentrating on fractions frustrates him.

That's why he rides horses, raises and trains, and draws them, studies their anatomy, appreciates rodeos, specializes in fox hunting, likes races, polo, steeple chasing and generally thinks of himself as a sort of a renaissance man of the horse world.

Acclaimed as the world's foremost equestrian artist and author, he prides himself on the fact that when he steps outside in the morning, neighbors are likely to ask quizzically, "Well, what in the world are you doing today, Sam?"

In Palm Beach to address the Palm Beach Round Table, yesterday, he ignored the chilly morning weather and sat on a friend's terrace talking about his art.

"Two things that all artists have in common are enthusiasm and frustration. They have to have the first and the second is inevitable," he said, pointing out a tiny flaw that only he could see in the hind leg of a horse in one of his paintings.

"Sometimes, I get two-thirds through a painting and then throw it out. I used to think that once I reached a certain point, everything would be all right and I would have made it. But when I reached that stage my standards had changed and it

didn't mean anything any more."

Savitt started out as a horse-crazy kid in western Pennsylvania. He hung around riding academies, mucked out stalls for lessons, and watched cowboy movies just for the horses. During World War II, he met Gordon Wright, who was doing a book on riding and wanted it illustrated.

Wright asked if Savitt could ride and he answered a hesitant yes. Wright watched a demonstration and commented skeptically, "Well, at least you don't have any bad habits."

While Savitt illustrated the book, Wright gave him lessons. He became one of Wright's trainers, schooling jumpers and hunters and judging shows.

He began writing when a favorite mare foaled. He kept a sketched record of the birth and the days of rapid growth for the little horse. A publisher suggested he try writing a commentary to go along with the pictures. The book that resulted was so successful that Savitt says, "It went to my head."

Since then, he's written 11 other books on a variety of subjects. He studied the anatomy of horses so he could understand them better and the hand-drawn charts that resulted are used in veterinary schools and offices.

Savitt travels with the Nation Equestrian Team and documented the last Olympics with pencil sketches of all important riding events. Other people photographed things Savitt was unable to attend and he recreated the situation later so that his book "The Equestrian Olympic Sketch Book," is an accurate and complete record.

Another of his works, "Midnight" is the true story of a



*Ft. Lauderdale, FL*

# Horses Famous Artist's Subject

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the world's most famous rodeo rider couldn't stay on his back more than seven minutes.

Savitt interviewed the horse's owners, rodeo people, and others who had come in contact with the animal. He traced Midnight's life experience until the horse died in 1936.

Savitt's latest publishing venture is a children's story called "Wild Horse Running." It tells about a small boy and his grandfather who protect a wild horse, but leave it free.

The artist lives in North Salem, N.Y. He has two horses, a thoroughbred and one trained to hunt foxes in rough terrain.

He varies his life by not only writing and illustrating books, but also doing portraits of horses and their owners, appearing on television shows, and traveling to sketch horse events.

"I always make a drawing, then I take a photograph. If I make a drawing first, I look at all parts of the horse and it imprints him indelibly on my mind."

One of his pet peeves is television programs and movies that give horses characteristics they could never have.

"They are really very stupid animals. They can't reason like dogs can. The cowboy



*Sam Savitt's drawings of horses decorate greeting cards and carry messages of strength, beauty and love.*

hanging on a cliff who sends Trigger home for a rope — that's ridiculous."

The horse is so skittish, that Savitt chooses carefully which animal he takes on television to demonstrate riding techniques or his art. One time, a children's show host climbed onto a horse's back. The man was not a horseman and he reported nervousness from his precarious position.

"You're not any more nervous than I am," Savitt told him, praying a light bulb didn't flash, frightening the horse into doing something disastrous.

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