

## Raises her horses smooth as velvet



Remember the movie *National Velvet* and the love the young Elizabeth Taylor had for the race horse she called Velvet? Watching Gina Carlo groom King Flower, one of the stallions on the Frank Carlo Horse Farm, evoked that memory.

She was not planning to race King Flower, the 15-year-old son of Bar Flower, a stud horse that put the Carlo Farm at the top of the quarter horse business. But Miss Carlo does dream of entering the winners circle at the Congress in Ohio where the top horses in the country compete for ribbons. "It takes a lot to get a horse there," she said, putting King Flower back in his stall.

In the next stall, Mambo let out a whinny. He was 26-years-old and so successful that quarterhorses from his line are simply called Mambo horses. "he's known for being quiet. You can do anything with him. And his babies are quiet."

At 21, Miss Carlo is the manager of this 400-acre farm on Route 40. Of the three Carlo children, she is the one whose cloth

seemed made to fit this life. "Connie and Charles are not interested in horses, so I got it all to myself," she said with delight in her goo fortune.

She started riding at four years of age, was showing horses at 13, then went to college "to learn everything about horses...to learn how to ride really...yeah, I knew I was going to be doing this." And now she sits straight in the saddle of this business, which sells quarterhorses all over the country and even in Europe. While she does consult her father, Frank Carlo, about big decisions, she said she has a free hand on the reins of this growing enterprise.

"We've sold horses to Canada and Texas, some to France. They'll come here and can choose from a baby to a four-year-old. Horses two-years-old are trained for the show ring...we've just about sold all of them," she said.

Behind the horse barn, horses were being exercised and trained in a small ring. "It's a full day's job," she said. And when customers come, they get all her attention. "Sometimes we'll work till 7 p.m. We can be showing 10-12 horses in one day."

With 200 horses on the farm and more at another Carlo farm, the five person staff on the farm is kept busy, especially in the spring, which is the buying season for show horses. Yet when she looks out onto the field of colts, 22 this spring, she smiles...just more horses to train and sell.

"We're always out here watching them move. If you see one loping across the field and he keeps his head level, you know he's a natural." With a skilled eye, she designs the farm's future. "We like quarterhorses because you can do anything with them: western pleasure, race, hunt/seat, jump...I mean, they'll do anything!"

There are a few thoroughbreds on the farm though. She pointed one out in a group of yearlings. She said they are crossing some thoroughbred mares with quarterhorse stallions to produce height. "A lot of people want a tall horse," she said.

When customers come to the farm to find a horse, they bring out Miss Carlo's desire to show her best and when there is a sale, it's like entering the winners circle. But just meeting new people from all over the country is always interesting. "You can talk to them just like you've known them forever because you can talk horses."

She eyes her farm with a sense for its potential beauty and the impression it makes on prospects approaching the farm. "We're planning to improve the place, new sheds, fencing, flowerbeds...the first impression is important, you know."

Daughter of a man who operates one of the most successful velvet textile plants in the country, Gina Carlo brings both strength and softness to her new job. But most of all, horses is what she loves and when you love what you are doing, life feels smooth—smooth as velvet.



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