



Obituary - Lockie Richards FBHS

by [Linda Brown](#)
February 2004

Dressage coach Lockie Richards died earlier this month at his home in Reikorangi on the Kapiti Coast after a long illness. He was aged 67.

Lockie's equestrian career started out riding horses on the beach and breaking in horses for Winifred Lysner in Gisborne, who recognised Lockie's potential. He rode in Pony Club Champs for Gisborne Area in 1958 after which he headed for England and taught at the famous riding schools Silver Hound, Porlock Vale and the Fulmer School of Equitation where he passed all British Horse Society (BHS) exams to become a Fellow of the British Horse Society (FBHS) in 1963 (the only Kiwi and youngest at the time).

In 1964 Lockie went to America to teach at Potomac Horse Center - the biggest residential school in the States. He rode and trained Royal Imperial to be National Champion Event horse, who was then donated to the USA 3 Day Team. Lockie trained 5 riders to selection on that 3DE Team.

In 1969 he competed and trained two Advanced Level Event Horses, Star Task and Hull, to win Event Rider of the Year in the US and competed at the US National Dressage Finals. Also that year he started training with Franz Rochowansky (ex Spanish Riding School) at the American Dressage Institute.

In 1970 he visited New Zealand and did some teaching for the first time since gaining his overseas qualifications. In 1970-72 Lockie was resident Instructor for the American Dressage Institute and was selected to train at Spanish Riding School in Vienna.

From 1975 to 1979 Lockie was the National Instructor for the New Zealand Horse Society at Wills National Equestrian Centre in Taupo. During that time Paul Harris with Exile travelled to the Sydney Royal and qualified for nomination for the Montreal Olympic games. He was turned down by the NZ Olympic selection committee on the grounds of not having had sufficient overseas experience. So that was that. Lockie however refused to accept defeat on behalf of eventing; nor would some of the horse trials committee, nor would chairman Boy Caro.

These plugged on regardless with, as their goal, the Kentucky World Championships in 1978. Council finally gave its permission for them to go with Lockie as trainer, Peter Herrick as Manager, and team members Carol Harrison with Topic, Joanne Bridgeman with Bandolier, Nicoli Fife with Never Dwell, Mary Hamilton with Arronshar and Vladivostock and Mark Todd with Top Hunter. But they had to pass a severe veterinary test in NZ and guess what. Only one passed. So they all went anyway with the mixed blessing of the society. They were all youngsters and against the rest of the world they performed astonishingly well. In their lead up competition at Chesterland two-day selection Trials Mark Todd and Top Hunter finished in 3rd place ahead of all but one of the USA Team. Come the grand

final, Carol Harrison and Topic finished 6th the top lady rider of the World.

In 1983 he made a documentary video at Equus, Spanish Riding School and Lexington 3 Day. This was shown on the Discovery Channel in Australia and US many times.

1984 saw a move to Waikanae where he bought land in Reikorangi to set up the Ngatiawa Stud breeding Sport horses. He spent the next 9 years freelance teaching in USA with occasional trips to NZ. In 1986 Lockie trained the NZ 3 Day Team for Gawler World Champs. In 1993 he moved back to NZ.

In Lockie's own words "My success teaching and training is hopefully because I care about my students and have some students that have been with me for 30 years.

This little extract from "Dressage in America" tells it all: "To develop a harmonious relationship is one of the most beautiful experiences one could ever wish to have. The unity between human and animal is a precious quality that sinks into the soul, making life more meaningful."

Under Lockie's tutelage Allison Graham with her horse Lochiel was the first horse in NZ to perform piaff. Lockie was excellent at teaching in hand and was often seen using the Equestrian Centre stable wall for his inhand training. And so began the advancement of Dressage in NZ.

Lockie also coached Margaret Journeaux and Surrey and Sue Alleyne and Johann Strauss who both competed in Australia in the Australian Dressage Championships in 1987.

Marcia Bayley attributes getting her two horses Kentucky and Rubicon to Grand Prix level to Lockie and knew Lockie from his time in England; a friendship lasting 40 years.

The wonderful mare Bitteschon owned and competed by Sharron Hatton was bred by Lockie. Sharon Field is currently competing on a horse bred by Uraeus and the stallion himself is a star in the Lord of the Rings movies, ridden by Viggo Mortensen.

Lockie wrote the book "Dressage - begin the right way" which has helped many riders who have worked alone, to understand the basics of dressage. His knowledge, his love of horses and his dedication to horse and rider will never be replaced. No other trainer has ever demonstrated the intuition that Lockie showed in his teaching both for horse and for rider; indeed Lockie was already practicing equine massage and manipulation long before it was even thought of in NZ I believe that the American Dressage fraternity held Lockie in a much higher esteem than he was ever held in NZ and that Lockie achieved far more than he was ever given credit for in this country. NZ is a much poorer place now that Lockie has passed on.

Some personal memories of Lockie:

First day at Wills National Equestrian Centre

His long awaited arrival back at the Wills National Equestrian Centre. He had been away in America teaching for several months. Early on the first morning he asked for two of his horses to be saddled for him to ride. The first was an upstanding grey that was on the market for sale to Japanese buyers.

It was a particularly foggy morning in Taupo when I legged Lockie up and he went off into

the mist in the large oval paddock that now houses the practice sand arena. I waited at the gate and could see absolutely nothing. Moments later the sound of galloping hooves. Sometime later the horse appears without Lockie. The fog was so thick you could only see a couple of feet in front of you. Shortly later Lockie appeared. He always had that sort of lame gait so I had no idea whether or not he was hurt but he did have a face like thunder.

He said nothing as I legged him up and he rode away into the mist. Moments later, you guessed it, the sound of galloping hooves, the arrival of a horse and no Lockie. Moments passed, I called out, no reply. Then he hobbled into sight. No words passed his lips as I legged him up again and once again he rode off into the fog. After a short time both Lockie and Horse returned to the gate together in one piece. Lockie dismounted and handed me the horse. No words were spoken but the air was as thick as the fog.

Next I saddled up the Bay called Womble and legged Lockie up at the gate. He rode into the fog. The sound of galloping hooves, The arrival of a horse and much later the arrival of Lockie. No words spoken. I legged Lockie up and back he rode into the fog. Twenty minutes later Horse and rider appeared. Lockie dismounted, handed me the horse and hobbled back to his house. Not a word was spoken and I, the nervous working pupil, wondered what the next six months was to bring. You see Lockie was a God; and he had fallen off; and the God had not spoken.

Lockie and Chocolate

Those of you who really know Lockie will know of his great love for chocolate. It manifested itself in many ways. The cheeky grin when he was offered some. The late night trips to the stables at the Equestrian Centre where he took chocolate treats to his horses and the saga of the chocolate Peanut brownies.

We working pupils had a ritual that we thought Lockie did not know about. The first one in from cleaning stables in the morning put on a batch of peanut brownies in the working pupils' cottage. Whoever was going past was supposed to check them and take them out of the oven. Then during the morning the brownies gradually disappeared as we all ate them on our way past.

One morning during our riding lesson Lockie pulled a very black looking peanut brownie out of his pocket and said. "You burnt the Brownies this morning. That's how I like them" and without catching a breath told us all to half pass left.

School riding lessons and taking him literally

Part of our training for sitting the NZHSII was to take a drill ride. One morning Lockie was demonstrating how this should be done and we working pupils were the guinea pigs. After a few fancy twists and turns and being told to "watch our Dressing". The lead rider was told to turn down the centre line at C and we were all to follow. Lockie did not ask the lead rider to turn left or right at A so imagine his surprise when in single file we all left the arena in a dead straight line and headed back to the stables. Lockie was very dry as usual and we were wondering if he was just going to let us go when his voice boomed out HALT. We all did and Lockie just walked on past us heading for his cottage and left us all in the middle of the paddock.

Horse trainer. Died aged 67.

Mark Todd might not have achieved his international success without the support and knowledge of Lockie Richards.

Todd was part of the first three-day event team that competed outside Australasia when Richards took the team to the United States in preparation for the Lexington world championships in 1978.

Richards, 67, has died at his home in Reikorangi on the Kapiti Coast after a long illness.

He began his career with horses in his early 20s, breaking them in and teaching at Winifred Lysnar's "riding holidays" in Gisborne, where he was born.

The riding holidays were set up so that children who otherwise would have no chance to learn about horses or riding could do so in a relaxed environment.

Richards moved to England and taught at riding schools, including Silver Hound and Porlock Vale, and became a Fellow of the British Horse Society in 1963. At that time, he was the youngest person and only New Zealander to receive the honour, according to his life partner Don DeMacedo.

In 1964, Richards moved to the United States to teach at the Potomac Horse Centre, the largest residential school in America. He trained riders and horses, and in the early 70s was appointed resident instructor for the American Dressage Institute.

Richards coached the New Zealand Olympic team for the Montreal games and the New Zealand dressage team for a 1978 Australian tour.

In 1993, Richards and his partner moved to Reikorangi, running Ngatiawa Warmblood Stud, which breeds, trains and sells horses.

One of its horses is Uraeus, which was actor Viggo Mortensen's mount in second and third Lord of the Rings movies.