

# Fair's pony champ remains in saddle 50 years later

Pleasant memories will be recalled by Whitchurch-Stouffville's Wendy Ann (Fairty) DeBartolo when she attends Markham Fair's Pony Party Sept. 30.

It was 50 years ago that, in 1961, she rolled up a total of 38 points to win the Syd Duncombe Trophy, an award she still prizes today.

Wendy was only 10 when, for a first time, she entered the fair's pony competition, not expecting to do well against a field of older boys and girls. However, to her surprise, she not only topped two classes in junior ranks but scored highest among seniors as well.

Wendy would go on to ride with the Canadian International Pony Team at Westport, Conn, against entries from the United States and Britain. A year later she repeated



## Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

this achievement in Brampton.

On three occasions, she won top awards at Toronto's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. She also enjoyed excellent success at the CNE.

Wendy Fairty was born on a farm

at Steeles Avenue and Hwy. 48, one of four in the family of Howard and Muriel Fairty. She graduated in marketing from Seneca College in 1977 and opened Fairwood Garden Centre on Hwy. 48 in northern Markham.

Her interest in ponies began at the age of four when, at Christmas, her dad surprised her with the gift of a Shetland foal.

"I remember him calling me out to the barn and asking if I could see anything different in the stable. Because it was dark, I couldn't see anything."

She was introduced to Thunder, a pony that would soon become a much-loved pet. She rode him bare-back around the property.

At age seven, Wendy joined the Markham-Unionville Pony Club, operated by Helen Johnston and

Ruth Kitchen. She took riding lessons twice a week and attended pony club meetings Saturdays.

One of her teachers was Beverley Thompson.

"She saw in me a little bit of talent," Wendy said. Beverley loaned her a palomino called Gold Dust and invited her to Markham Fair's pony show. The fair was at highways 7 and 48 then.

"I entered just for fun," Wendy said, "also, it was a holiday — I didn't have to go to school."

Later, her dad purchased two show ponies and a trailer. Her mother drove her wherever she needed to go.

"I owe everything to my parents," she says, "to my father for his support and to my mother for her dedication."

Although Wendy no longer

competes, her love of horses continues. She belongs to fox hunt clubs in Cobourg, North York, Eglinton-Caledon and Wellington-Waterloo.

"We don't kill anything," she says. "It's only a social thing. Being with other horse people is enjoyable."

While the Markham-Unionville pony club no longer exists, for Wendy warm memories remain.

On Sept. 30, a flood of fond recollections will be recalled as she watches, this time from the sidelines, boys and girls competing for plaques and ribbons.

And she'll be holding the Syd Duncombe Trophy.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.

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