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Photo Credit: George Morris with Bezie and John Madden at the 2006 World Equestrian Games. Photo by: Peter Llewellyn. *Photograph may be used only in relation to this PMG press release.*

## **Rich History Propels New Canaan Mounted Troop's Horsemanship Program into the Future**

New Canaan, CT – November 27, 2006 – New Canaan Mounted Troop, Inc. (NCMT), a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational and charitable youth organization, was founded in 1939 by noted horsewoman, author and educator Margaret Cabell Self. Founded as part of the Junior Cavalry of America, the program is devoted to building leadership, responsibility and confidence in youth through sound horsemanship. NCMT continues to follow Self's mission, and the organization's rich history adds to the equestrian education.

As one of NCMT's most famous alumni, as well as one of the equestrian industry's most successful horsemen, George H. Morris started his equestrian career at New Canaan Mounted Troop.

"My first year, I started there in the 40s with Mr. and Mrs. Self," commented Morris. "It was something for young people to do during the war years. We wore uniforms and did a lot of marching. My father was the treasurer of the Mounted Troop, and my brother and my two sisters attended it also in the winters of 1945 and 46."

“It was a mile or two from my house,” he reflected. “It is quite an institution in New Canaan, and I am very happy that Michelle [Schmerzler] has taken it under her wing and is making an aggressive approach toward rebuilding the troop. I left the troop, to be perfectly honest, because there was so much marching at that time just after World War II,” he admitted. “I did not like the marching; I wanted to ride. I moved to the Ox Ridge Hunt Club, but the troop is where I started riding my very first year. I also gave clinics there in the 80s,” he said. “It is an excellent institution, and it has always been one!”

Michelle Schmerzler, president of NCMT, has been involved with New Canaan Mounted Troop for 15 years. “It has been my greatest reward to see the organization grow to become one of the most sought after horsemanship programs in our area,” she stated. “We have accomplished so much over the years and have significantly improved the program without ever losing sight of the original mission established by Margaret Cabell Self so long ago.”

“We have worked very hard to implement a curriculum of which Mr. Morris would be proud – a curriculum specifically designed to focus on both hunt seat equitation and complete care of the horse, equipment and stable,” she added. “The program consists of three important components - riding, equine care and community service. As always, our goals are to instill qualities such as leadership, responsibility, management skills, confidence and the development of character through our unique approach to horsemanship.”

“As far as George’s comments, he always says there was too much marching and not enough riding,” smiled Schmerzler. “We joke about this all the time, and I have assured him the program has improved significantly over the years. We do way more riding and equine care, and less marching!”

Since 1939, NCMT has provided a comprehensive program for children from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to participate in the equestrian sport. “Interest in the program has never been greater, yet we are facing our biggest challenge,” revealed Schmerzler. “After more than 66 years of service, time has taken a serious toll on our barn and indoor ring. At this point we have no option other than to completely rebuild.”

In order to preserve the quality of the program, as well as the living conditions for the horses, NCMT has launched the Building on Tradition Capital Campaign, which is a \$3 million initiative to build a new facility for the historic NCMT. “A new facility will provide our students, staff and horses with a far safer and more functional environment, room to expand our programs and allow us to continue for many future generations,” she added.”

For more information on New Canaan Mounted Troop or to learn more about the Building on Tradition Capital Campaign, please visit [www.newcanaanmountedtroop.org](http://www.newcanaanmountedtroop.org).



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