

Other Than Editing

by Debra E Blakely

Morna Conway: Home on the Farm

Whether she's helping a mare foal at dead of night, putting a young horse through his paces in the show ring, or trail riding on the Gettysburg battlefield, it's "a horse of course", when it comes to Morna Conway's interests outside her journal consulting business. She has owned a world grand champion horse, Raven's Touch of Class, and she has raised a foal named Bob that was, she says, "an ugly duckling, who turned into a duck". Conway's passion, hobby-turned-business, is her Maryland horse farm. "I was about 10 years old when I started taking riding lessons [in Scotland]", Conway said. "It wasn't until years after establishing my medical publishing career that I returned to horses."

Conway is president and owner of The Conway Group, a strategic planning and management consulting firm. "My clients are primarily medical and scientific journals", she explained. She specializes in the business side of journal publishing: negotiating publishing contracts, helping the journal make the transition to self-publishing, providing market-research studies, particularly of the library market, and doing business planning for online publication. Conway's diversity in her present job is supported by her academic and professional experience. She received her master of arts in English language and literature from the University of Edinburgh in 1966. "At Scottish universities, a master of arts is an undergraduate degree equivalent to a bachelor's in the States", she explained.

Conway moved to the United States in 1971, where she began her publishing career at Williams & Wilkins (a division of Waverly Inc in Baltimore, Maryland) as a temporary staff person. She was hired as a full-time sales-promotion clerk and shortly thereafter became a copywriter and then a sales-promotion manager. She left that job to start her own business in 1975 and has been a successful independent consultant ever since. Conway received a master's in educational administration from Loyola College in Maryland in 1980 and then a doctoral degree in higher-education planning, policy, and administration from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1986. She has taught organizational leadership, behavior, and development classes



MICKEY ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Morna Conway with her stallion Generation's Honey Gold.

at Loyola College since 1986, and she organized and taught in the Short Course for Journal Editors offered by CSE for many years.

Conway now runs her business, which serves around 20 association clients, and oversees the largest Tennessee walking horse facility in Maryland. Hers is a hobby that has grown into a thriving business. However, as Conway explains, she began small, literally. "I used to go back to Scotland to visit my family regularly. One year we went to Loch Awe, where I met a Yorkshire terrier named Freddie. I decided then [1977] that it was time to get my first pet." When Conway returned to Maryland, she bought Crispin, a Yorkshire terrier named for the patron of bookbinders. A year later, Conway said, she had to get Crispin a companion, so she bought a German shepherd. "Then I decided to take riding lessons, and I rode my first Tennessee walker", Conway said. "The ride was dead smooth. And one thing led to another." Conway bought her first horse and was "amazed and delighted" with the breed. "After a few years, I bought a farm and more horses", she said. "Now I have 60 animals [45 horses and various dogs and cats] and a 23-acre farm." She recently published a book, *Creature Comforts* (Suna Press, 1999),

Other Than Editing

continued

describing some of her most memorable experiences with a variety of animals.

Conway put her research skills to the test, selecting brood mares and stallions that would improve the local Tennessee walking horse bloodlines, she said. “I spend a lot of time developing a feel for the right horse”, she explained. Being actively involved in the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association and listening to the admittedly sometimes tall tales of new trainers and old-timers in Tennessee, as well as visiting the main breeding farms in the South, provide the bulk of the information she uses to select well-bred horses. Conway’s commitment to the breed is such that she is the current director for Maryland of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association.

“I have a staff that takes care of the horse farm; otherwise, I wouldn’t be able to travel”, she said. “But when I get to spend time with my horses, I am completely consumed and

then recharged for work.”

Conway admits that there are parallels between the two businesses. Both require complex thinking. Each horse is like a journal in that each is an enterprise, she explained. “You have to be clear and calm”, she said, and you can’t allow your personal feelings to complicate either the horse or the client, since both require considerable research and patience. And there are times of crisis in both—when horses are sick, or journals are failing. “I could say that everything I know about business, I’ve learned from my horses, and it would be partially true. But the big difference is the emotional bond between horse and person. It’s strong, and it’s real. Journals don’t quite do that for me”, she said with a wry laugh.

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