



Madeleine (Betty) Yaw Kirk jumping her pony, Merry Legs, over a rail fence at age 8 schooling for a small show at the Bloomfield Open Hunt, Michigan (1938).

I was put on a Shetland pony called King Edward the VIII when I was three and my interest in horses began at that moment. King was black, furry and very round. He used to come with a nice man on a big horse to the back of our house on a farm in Michigan where I grew up. We children were in turn put on King and taken for a ride around the farm. That's how it started. I remember feeling on-top-of-the-world happy on King.

My cousins would drive out from Detroit to ride with my sister, brother and me. Aunt Betty (Betty Maloney of Warrenton, Va), just eleven years older than we were, dreamed up countless schemes to entertain and trill us. It was a big family affair. One special Christmas morning when I was six, my brothers, sister and I were told to eat our breakfast quietly in the dining room with the double doors closed. There was excitement in the air, of course, as we waited to see the Christmas tree and presents we hoped Santa had brought us. There was a noise in the living room, the doors opened, and there in the middle of the fancy green carpet stood a black and white pony!

You can't imagine our instant delight at the sight of this gorgeous pony in our living room. We were introduced to her and told that her name was Merry Legs. This 14.2 h pony was to be shared by the whole family. We all got on Merry Legs right there in the living room. First, my older sister, Margot, got on, then it was my turn. To our great surprise my mother, in her silk robe and nightgown, wanted a turn, so she was lifted up side-saddle fashion and sat on Merry Legs, too. We got Merry Legs out the french doors before anything happened on the green rug. This was a Christmas none of us would ever forget. Merry Legs was a big, big part of our lives as she taught us how to ride, jump and love horses.