

**WINTER CIRCUIT PREVIEW—Between Rounds: Scott Hassler;
Carl Hester Profile; Centennial Field Hunter Qualifiers**

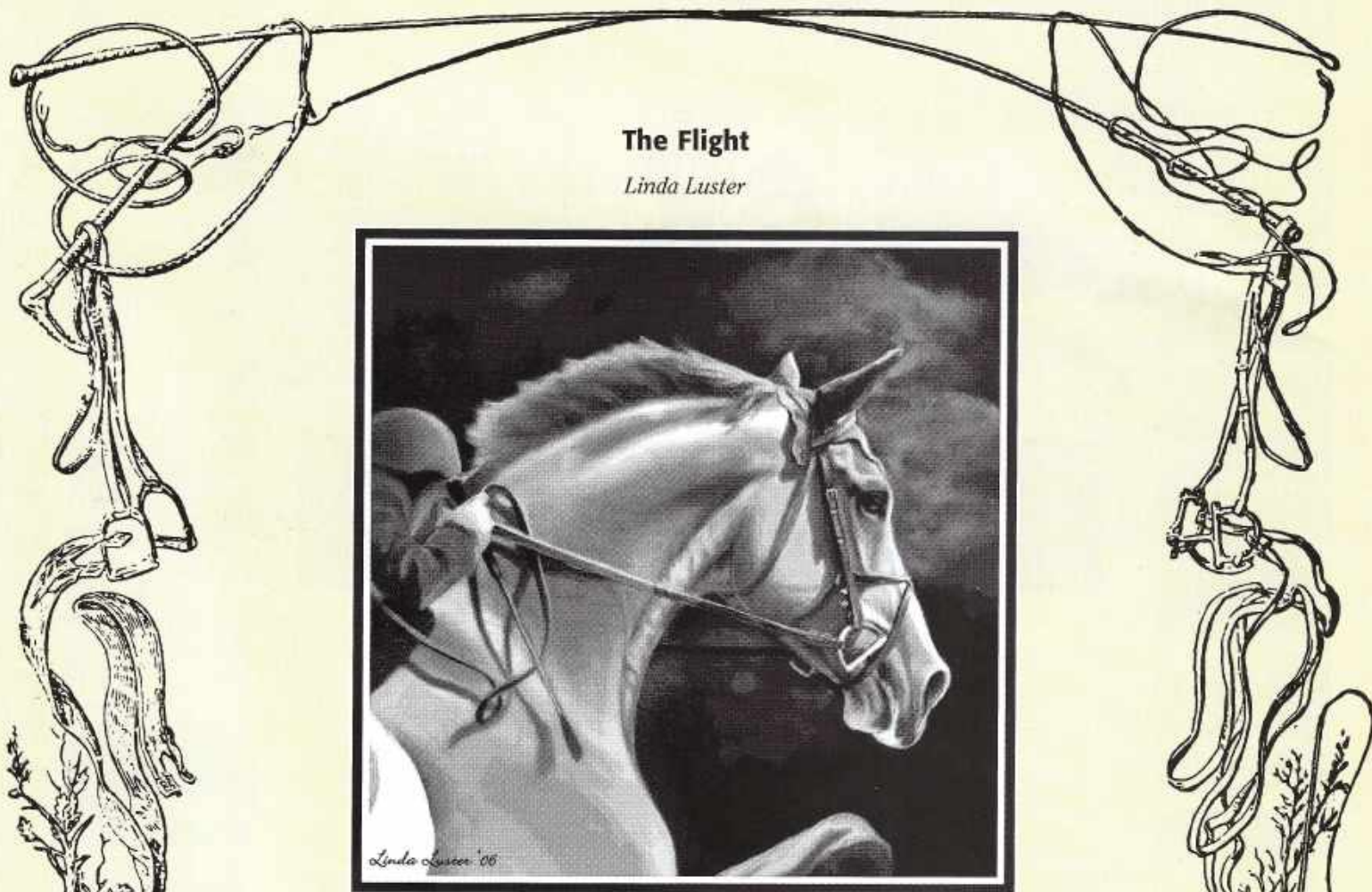
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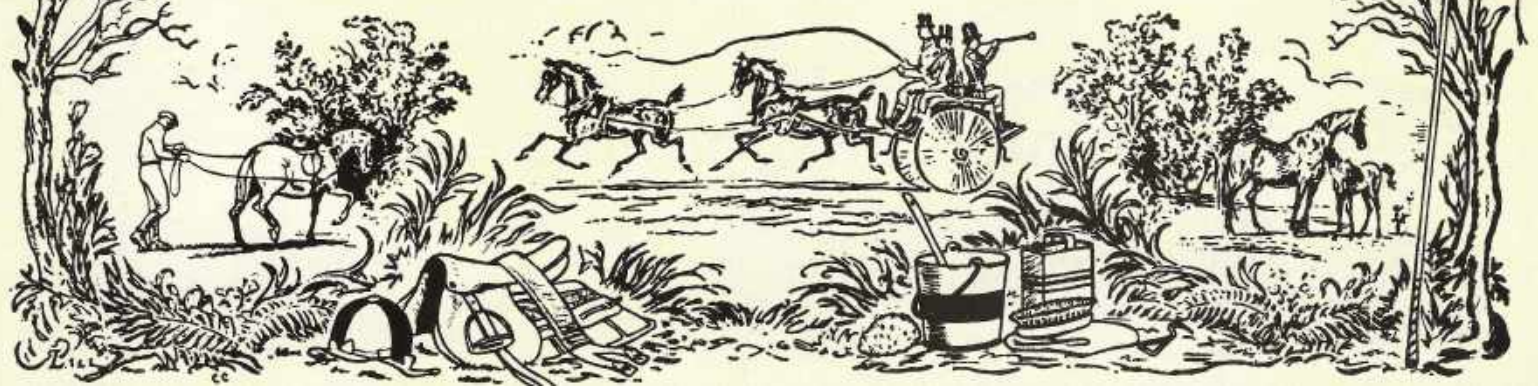
The Flight

Linda Luster



Courtesy of the Artist

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For Frey, The Show Must Go On For The Gulf Coast

Elizabeth Shoudy

Despite a last-minute change of horse show venue, trainer and rider Russell Frey and Sinner's Prayer still kept their cool and pulled off multiple wins and dual circuit championships in the green conformation and second year green hunter divisions at the Gulf Coast Winter Series "Sunshine Circuit" in 2006.

Purchased for Bridget Moseley and Cladaugh Sport Horses from Todd Minikus, Sinner's Prayer, nicknamed "Rissin," matched Frey's vision for what a show hunter should be.

"Her natural jumping technique is impeccable. I've never had to work on her style, just her rideability," said Frey about the 16.2-hand mare by Jazz Time, a horse with strong dressage bloodlines. "When I got her she'd been in an intense dressage program in Europe. Her mouth was very supple, she did automatic lead changes and would jump from any distance I aimed her at. But [she] definitely wanted to go like a hunter with her nose poked out."

In 2005, with only two horse shows under her belt, Frey decided to move Rissin up to the 3'6" divisions where she started winning immediately. Her bright, wide eyes, correct build, ring demeanor and willing attitude all add up to make an unforgettable first impression.

"The way I look at it, you never get a second chance at first impressions. When you go in the ring and look like you just unhooked your horse from a cart out back, the judges

Russell Frey said Sinner's Prayer "catches the judge's eye as soon as she walks in the ring."

are automatically looking for something incredible to make up for how ugly the horse is," said Frey who spends several weeks a year judging A-rated horse shows across the country. "Sinner's Prayer catches the judge's eye as soon as she walks into the ring because she's so beautifully put together."

As the winner of approximately 90 percent of the models she enters, judges recognize her when she goes in to compete over fences. During her stint at the GCWS, Rissin rose to the top of almost every over fences class and all of the under saddles.

Despite her uncanny abilities and repeated success, Frey tries to give the mare time off from the show ring to allow her to be a horse

and to give him time to focus on building his new business.

In 2004, Frey moved from the East Coast to Argyle, Texas, where he opened Elysian Fields Farm.

"Making the transition was certainly difficult," admitted Frey. "It's a whole other world here, and the mentality is quite different, but having nice horses like Rissin helped make the move a little easier."

After ribbons at the Pennsylvania National and the Washington International (D.C.), Frey has decided to hand the reins over to Moseley to show in the adults and maybe the amateur-owners.



(Arl Cook Photo)

"She's such a quality mare that tries hard. I just don't see the need to do her in the four-foot," said Frey, who tries to preserve both his horses and his clients' budgets.

As one of the few hunters Frey's ridden that's won back her entry fees on a regular basis, he said that Rissin has enough mileage now to carry her new rider to additional accolades.

"I've been in the business long enough to know what it costs for a horse owner to promote a young horse. A big concern of mine is making sure that a horse can develop to full potential without breaking the bank of the owner," insisted Frey.

So then why did Frey show Sinner's

Prayer in both divisions on a regular basis?

"Our primary goal was the conformation division since she's built so correct," replied Frey. "But sometimes that wouldn't fill, and since when I show I usually don't do more than a few weeks in a row, Bridget and I decided that the horse should do both divisions to get as much mileage as possible. She takes so little preparation to get to the ring that doing the extra division wasn't physically a problem for her."

What did pose a problem was determining where Frey's Elysian Fields was going to put up the banner for the 2006 winter circuit. As the show date for the Gulf Coast Winter Kick-Off (Miss.) loomed closer and hotel rooms were still filled with Hurricane Katrina evacuees and restaurant windows remained boarded up, horse show co-chairmen Bob Bell and Janet McCarroll scrambled to find a new home for the horse show.

After scouting out various venue possibilities, the pair settled on the Escambia County Equestrian Center in Pensacola, Fla.

"I'd heard mixed reviews about the facility, but I knew that my other alternative was being

stabled 2 miles away if I decided to go to the Winter Equestrian Festival [Fla.] instead. And, well, let's face it, I'm getting old and just don't want to have to walk that far every day to get to the ring!" said Frey with a good-natured laugh. "Plus, I had quite a few clients who only wanted to show for a few weeks, and it's hard to go to Ocala or WEF and only show for two weeks."

Pleased with his ultimate decision to travel to the Sunshine Circuit, Frey reflected, "I think Sinner's Prayer could have been competitive any place, but it was certainly nice to go home with the circuit championship from a horse show people worked so hard to keep alive."