



# THE GOLDEN AGE OF SHOWJUMPING BERT DE NEMETHY THE ONE AND ONLY MAESTRO

BY FRANK WATERS

BERTALAN DE NEMETHY, AN ELEGANT, ONE-TIME HUNGARIAN CAVALRY CAPTAIN WHO COACHED THE UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN TEAM TO OLYMPIC AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS FOR A QUARTER CENTURY WAS AN ABSOLUTE ICON IN THE SPORT. HIS MEMORY WILL LIVE FOREVER IN EQUESTRIAN HISTORY WORLDWIDE. BERT PASSED AWAY ON JANUARY 16, 2002 AT HIS HOME IN SARASOTA, FLORIDA, HE WAS 90.

From 1955 to 1980, from the team's headquarters in Gladstone in New Jersey's Somerset County, Bert instituted a training program for young American riders. He taught riding techniques that emphasized skill over strength, what the London newspaper *The Independent* called an "attractive flowing style."

His national teams won Olympic silver medals in 1960 and 1972. They also won gold medals in the Pan American Games in 1959, 1963, 1975 and 1979 and in 71 of the 144 Nations Cups in which they participated. After he retired from the United States Equestrian Team, he coached the United States show-jumping team to the 1982 world championship.

His riders included Bill Steinkraus, a member of six Olympic teams who won America's first

individual gold medal in 1968 in Mexico City. Bert also coached such outstanding riders as Frank Chapot and his wife Mary Mairs Chapot, Joe Fargis, Neal Shapiro, Kathy Kusner, Carol Hoffman, Conrad Homfeld and so many others.

Bill Steinkraus, the United States Equestrian Team's chairman emeritus, said of Bert de Nemethy: "By both example and precept, he taught several generations of Americans not only how to ride, but also how to behave and how to give horses the respect, understanding, care and training they deserve."

Bert de Nemethy was born on Feb. 24, 1911, in Gyor, Hungary, where his father was the governor. In 1932, he graduated from a cavalry academy and became a leading European show jumper and a riding instructor at the Royal

Hungarian Cavalry School. He was a member of the Hungarian equestrian team for the 1940 Olympics, which were canceled because of World War II.

In 1944, Bert led the cavalry cadets to safety when the Soviet army invaded Budapest. He taught riding in Denmark until he came to the United States in 1952. He became an American citizen in 1958.

In her 1983 book, "The de Nemethy Years," Paula Rodenas wrote, "He brought with him all the cavalry traditions of classical horsemanship that he had learned under a system that no longer exists and tailored them to the American riding scene." His book "The de Nemethy Method" became a classic primer on how to train show-jumping horses and riders. The book led to a set of videotapes. He designed jumping courses, including



those for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and the 1989 World Cup finals in Tampa, Fla., and conducted clinics around the United States.

In 1987, Bert was voted a charter member of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in Tampa. Until he moved to Florida in 1991, he and his wife, Emily, lived in Far Hills, N.J. His wife died in 1997. He is survived by a sister, Maria Bobrovniczky of Budapest; a

stepdaughter, Christine Ranelli of Auburndale, Mass.; and three grandchildren.

Armand Leone Jr., the president of the United States Equestrian Team, said Bert de Nemethy would be remembered for more than his coaching. As Armand said, "His genius enabled so many to enjoy the wonder of horses."

I thank the New York Times for

some of this great information on a true legend.

My book *The Golden Age of Show Jumping* and children's book, *Toby Rogue* are being ordered by book stores around the world each month to replace sold stock. This is what authors and publishers dream of. If you want your copy, please go to [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or your local book store and order both books, many five star reviews. 



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