

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

### **Chapter One: Women of Antiquity (500 B.C. - A.D. 1200)**

Some believe the game of polo originated in China. A stone tablet near the silk route from China to the West reads: "Let other people play at other things. The king of games is still the game of kings."

However, has anyone considered the idea that the first polo player may have been a woman? Many of the beautifully illustrated manuscripts, pottery figurines, and works of art depict women playing the game of polo. Who but a woman would have the courage to climb aboard that first horse and decide to play a game rather than kill her neighbor? Could it be because the majority of historians were men that women's contributions to polo were ignored or forgotten?

Evidence exists that, from polo's earliest days, women played the game of kings. The sixth century Persian Shah, Khusru Pavez, was a polo enthusiast. During, or perhaps before, his reign women took up polo and apparently held their own. Just as the women in the "Golden Age of Women's Polo" did in 1934 to 1941.

This chapter contains four pictures of figurines of women playing polo in this era; one is in color.

### **Chapter Two: Louise Hitchcock (1901 - 1932)**

Louise is considered the "Mother of Women's Polo." Louise began riding lessons in Aiken, South Carolina. She soon tired of the precarious balance of riding sidesaddle and broke with the tradition by riding astride.

Louise soon learned to play polo, and in 1901 she played the first recorded game with women players in the United States. The teams were mixed men and women and Louise captained the team.

In 1909 at the Meadow Brook Club on Long Island, the first all women's team played a men's team.

An expert polo player and teacher she became the coach for her son, Tommy Hitchcock, who became a ten-goal player, Captain of the United States Polo team and considered the finest polo player in the world.

Louise also founded the Aiken Preparatory School in 1916 where she coached both boys and girls the game of polo. She noticed the young girls and boys could compete with each other, as their abilities were similar.

In the early 1930s Louise was organizing a women's team in the East to compete with a newly formed women's team in the West, captained by her friend, Dorothy Wheeler of California.

Louise died in 1934

This chapter contains three photographs of Louise and two Sideboards.

### **Chapter Three: Mother of California Women's Polo (1916 - 1937)**

Far from the social setting that fostered polo on Long Island and Aiken, South Carolina, Santa Cruz California had not produced one polo field in 1920. Not until Dorothy Deming Wheeler came on the scene.

By 1934 Dorothy Wheeler organized and became the first Chairman of the Pacific Coast Women's Polo Association. Later in 1936 the organization became the United States Women's Polo Association. She always intended the USWPA to be national but, due to its short duration, the women's polo association was made up of California teams.

Dorothy did not do this all by herself. The great Louise Hitchcock, who was officially the "Mother of Polo" and was so honored by the Polo Hall of Fame, preceded her. Regardless, it was Dorothy Wheeler's complete dedication in forming all-women teams that made the United States Women's Polo Association possible.

The California women did not just play on men's teams, they had a league of their own.

Her good friend Ann Jackson of Santa Barbara constantly supported Dorothy. Louise Tracy (wife of Spencer) and an early member and organizer of the women's teams at Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles was another supporter.

The USWPA had over one hundred and thirty members. They played anywhere from ten to twelve tournaments a year up and down the coast of California.

This chapter contains eight photographs.

### **Chapter Four: From Santa Cruz to Santa Barbara (1922 - 1930)**

Polo in Santa Cruz started at the Wilder Ranch. It was a dirt field (skin field) and regardless of the conditions was played with great enthusiasm by the men. Dorothy Wheeler joined the men and was greatly admired for her skill.

On occasion military personnel from Monterey would join them and it was noted by the Santa Cruz newspaper that Tom Mix, the famous cowboy movie star of the era, played in some of their games.

It seems the Wilders were more interested in Rodeo type events and it was decided to move to a new field at Bay and California Street.

Northern California also formed clubs in Sacramento, Berkeley, San Mateo and Sacramento. Del Monte became a polo center for the military men.

In the meantime Santa Barbara, like Meadow Brook in Long Island, was a bastion of society, where both men and women were playing polo.

Due to the conditions of the polo fields in Santa Cruz, Dorothy Wheeler would travel to Santa Barbara and join her friend Ann Jackson on the grass fields of Montecito. At first they would practice at the end of the field. Soon more women joined them and pretty soon they had all women games.

Dorothy realized the women couldn't hit the ball quite as far as the men and as a result she emphasized teamwork. And by 1928 they had at least fourteen women playing regularly on the fields of Santa Barbara.

This chapter contains five photographs and three Profiles

## **Chapter Five: Riviera Polo and the Hollywood Stars (1927 – 1934)**

Santa Barbara was not alone in having polo fields in Southern California. As well as the Uplifters and Midwick Club, there was the Riviera Country Club, which opened in 1927. Located at the end of Sunset Boulevard, it had four polo fields, golf, and tennis. The club boasted not only a main field with bleachers, but also a lavish clubhouse, and several practice fields.

Riviera was lucky to have as their resident coach, Snowy Baker. Snowy was a famous Australian athlete and former Olympian who had made his way to Hollywood, but fortunately decided the movies were not for him and landed at Riviera Country Club in 1928.

Snowy was convinced that young people, both boys and girls could play polo and he devoted himself to making sure they learned the rudiments of the game. He was also convinced that women polo players had a place on the field. Thus Riviera became the first club to have regular weekly polo games between women's teams. Consequently, the women played every Sunday before the men's games.

In 1933 Snowy encouraged the formation of a Ladies' Polo Association and on December 9, 1933, the first meeting was held at the Riviera Country Club at Snowy's cottage and the first women's polo association was born.

Riviera boasted plenty of movie stars that played polo. People like, Will Rogers, Leslie Howard, Spencer Tracy, James Gleason, Tim Holt, Jack Holt, Robert Montgomery, Buddy Rogers, "Big Boy" Williams and people associated with the movies, such as Walter Wagner, Darryl Zanuck, Adrian Roark, and Walt Disney.

This chapter contains twenty photographs, i.e. Leslie Howard, Will Rogers, Spencer Tracy, B.Stack, etc. and seven Profiles.

## **Chapter Six: Women's Polo Comes to Santa Cruz along with Marion Hollins.**

Early Polo Fields: In 1920 California had some excellent grass polo fields located in San Francisco, San Mateo and Del Monte in the North and Santa Barbara and Midwick in the South.

In Santa Cruz, the Wheelers started the polo field at Wilder Ranch but the Wilders were much more interested in Western Events so another location was found at Bay and California Streets. The field was not regulation and it was dusty in the summer and muddy in the winter. When the opportunity arose to establish a new field at the old Spreckels racetrack in Aptos, they jumped at the chance. Besides the old track had stable for the horses and they were promised a grass field and a new clubhouse.

The Aptos field was used for almost four years but it became apparent the owners were not going fulfill their promises. In fact they closed the polo field.

This may have been the end of polo in Santa Cruz if it had not been for a horserace!

Marion Hollins arrived from Long Island in 1927. Marion was a fine athlete and she had played polo under the guidance of Louise Hitchcock. She was introduced to Dorothy Wheeler and one day they went off to San Francisco to attend

the horse races. Dorothy asked Marion to place a bet for her and by mistake Marion placed the bet on the wrong horse! The horse came in and paid \$450.00 to the dollar and Dorothy used her winnings to develop a polo field at the newly established polo field at Pasatiempo.

This chapter contains four photographs and one Profile.

### **Chapter Seven: Douglas School-Youngest Girls Polo Team**

Grace Douglas was a teacher at Westlake School for Girls in Southern California. Her husband was a choir director and each summer he would take the boys camping.

Grace and her husband had four girls and Grace wanted her husband to take their daughters camping, but he remarked that he didn't take girls camping.

Grace Douglas decided to start a camp of her own and she drove up the coast to Pebble Beach. Here she met Samuel Morse, the founder of the Pebble Beach Company, and she talked him into selling her some land on the 17-mile drive.

It was 1925 when Grace started the camping facility for her daughters. By the next year the camp grew to twenty-seven girls and the school now offered archery, volleyball and swimming.

Douglas School became a boarding school for girls with a day school across the street for boys. The school offered, academic classes, horseback riding, archery, tennis, riflery, swimming and polo.

Polo became a major sport at the school, as Grace Douglas believed it developed horsemanship, quick decisions and sportsmanship.

Grace, like Louise Hitchcock, and Dorothy Wheeler, was a champion of women in a world of men's sports.

Dick Collins, a young man from Ireland became the polo coach in the 30s.

Elaine McNerney started her polo career at age nine at Riviera Country Club in Santa Monica; at age twelve she won the Will Rogers award as the "Most improved Lady Polo Player." In 1936 she received a scholarship to Douglas School and became Captain of the Douglas team. Douglas won many of the junior tournaments.

Douglas School is now the Robert Lewis Stevenson School of Pebble Beach.

This chapter contains seven photographs and two Profiles.

### **Chapter Eight: A League of Their Own (1932 – 1934) The Women Play Polo**

In 1932 many women in California were forming their own teams. Ann Jackson had a team in Santa Barbara. Pasatiempo formed a team headed by Dorothy Wheeler and Marion Hollins.

The two teams held a three-day tournament at the Cox polo field in Montecito. The first tournament was won by Santa Barbara but Pasatiempo won the next two.

Women's polo was becoming a great attraction. Not only were they playing in Santa Barbara and Pasatiempo but in Pebble Beach at the Del Monte field, Sacramento, San Mateo, Berkeley, Salinas and San Jose.

With all the women's tournaments being played in the state it was time for Dorothy Wheeler to do what she did best: organize a women's association so they could have a league of their own!

Dorothy wrote to the USPA in New York for some help in organization and Mr. F.S. O'Reiley, Secretary, Treasurer replied that the general opinion was that "polo is not a women's game!"

The woman in California knew this was nonsense and successfully formed their own organization with the help of the California men players.

This chapter contains seven photographs.

### **Chapter Nine: The First Tournaments (1934) Pasatiempo**

In June of 1934, all the frantic planning came to fruition when the first tournament of the Pacific Coast Women's Polo Association was held on the new field at Pasatiempo. (Please note the beginning name of the organization was the Pacific Coast Women's Polo Association,(PCWPA). Two years later it became the United States Women's Polo Association, (USWPA).

The tournaments were held on the new field at Pasatiempo and the local paper gave the event extensive publicity: "Noted Players in Polo Match Here Tomorrow...Led by Mrs. Spencer Tracy, wife of the popular movie actor, the Riviera polo team goes into action tomorrow on the Pasatiempo field in the first round of the women's polo tournament."

Dorothy Wheeler captained Pasatiempo and the team included Elaine McInerney, of Hollywood, the little 12-year old prodigy from the Riviera Club in Southern California.

This tournament was such a success that another tournament was scheduled for November and was called the North-South championship.

While the teams were all together they held their first meeting of the PCWPA. Dorothy Wheeler as chairman discussed the sticky issue of handicaps. Dorothy maintained that individual handicaps might cause jealousies within teams. Those in favor cited the tradition of men's handicapping and argued that it led to safety on the field, as the players would be equal in skill.

The meeting was cut short as some of the players had to return home to get ready for their trip to the Southwest where they were scheduled to play exhibition games to prove to the public that: "women can play polo".

This chapter contains nine photos and one Profile.

### **Chapter Ten: Women Barnstorm the Southwest (November - 1934)**

While Dorothy Wheeler had been unsuccessful to set up East/West matches for the women's association, Louise Tracy set up exhibition matches in Arizona and Texas. Louise's plan was simpler and cheaper because unlike Dorothy's plan she did not intend to bring horses on the trip. The nine women that took part agreed to ride whatever mounts were provided and promised not to hold anyone responsible for any accident that might happen.

Well, the women simply ‘Wowed’ the Southwest! They did better in some games than others but people were overwhelmed at how good they were. In one of their games they played on a lighted football field at night and they were amazed at all the crowds and publicity they received.

The men were especially gracious to them, not only by loaning them their horses, but also in their welcoming attitude.

All in all when they returned home they proclaimed their trip a great success and in the articles written by Louise Tracy for magazines and local newspapers she proclaimed that at last this is the moment in the history of women’s polo when the old movie title might be used appropriately: *Came The Dawn*.

This chapter contains four photographs and one Profile.

### **Chapter Eleven: Winslow B. Felix Trophy of 1934**

Riviera Country Club was located at the end of Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles and opened in 1927. It was a beautiful facility with four polo fields, one with bleachers where the Sunday women and men’s polo games were held. There was an eighteen-hole golf course and tennis courts and a beautiful clubhouse.

The Riviera Club was very fortunate to have Snowy Baker as their resident coach. Snowy was a former Australian Olympian who came to Hollywood to be in the movies but he decided the movies were not for him and landed at Riviera. Snowy (he was named Snowy because of his white hair), believed that girls could play polo just as well as boys, a theory he proved most successfully.

Riviera held men and women’s tournaments and in September of 1934, the Winslow B. Felix women’s event was held in his honor. Mr. Felix had donated four gold horse trophies for the occasion. The Riviera team of Rose Donnelly, Elaine McInerney, Louise Tracy and Mary McCall won the prize.

Mr. Felix was a Riviera polo player and President of the Winslow B. Felix Chevrolet Company, the largest automobile dealership in Los Angeles at the time.

On May 31, 1936, Mr. Felix was playing at Riviera on the Freebooters team against the Riviera Blues when he attempted to ride off Snowy who was on the opposite team. Felix’s pony stumbled and both riders and horses stumbled and fell to the ground. Baker ignored his injuries and rescued Mr. Felix from the horse’s hooves but not until Mr. Felix suffered serious injuries. He was rushed to the hospital where unfortunately he died the next day. Mr. Felix was 42 years old.

Most people are not aware that polo is the most dangerous game in the world.

This chapter contains four photographs.

### **Chapter Twelve: The Lady Chaytor Tournament Brouhaha**

The beginning of the first women’s polo association was not without its difficulties. One incident occurred that almost caused the demise of the first women’s polo association.

It was an invitational tournament extended by the Riviera Country Club to all women polo players. A three-day event to be held at the Riviera Club for the

prestigious “Lady Chaytor Challenge Trophy.” Seven teams accepted: Long Beach, Las Amigas, Santa Barbara, Sacramento, Douglas School of Pebble Beach and Pasatiempo, later the Pogonip team, captained by Dorothy Wheeler, the newly elected chair of the Pacific Coast Women’s Polo Association.

The finals were between Riviera and the Pasatiempo Club but Dorothy Wheeler refused to take the field as both referees were from the Riviera Club whereas the ruling required there be one referee from each club. Finally, the correction was made and Pasatiempo went on to win the tournament.

The Riviera Club felt that Dorothy had insulted them, as the replaced referee was the husband of the president of the Riviera women’s team; therefore, the Riviera women’s club resigned from the newly organized PCWPA.

But wait, Grace Douglas from Douglas School in Pebble Beach comes to the rescue, and the PCWPA is back in business!

This chapter contains five photographs and three Profiles.

### **Chapter Thirteen: Pogonip Polo Club (1936) - a new polo field comes to Santa Cruz.**

When the Pasatiempo field was established in 1934 the field was undersized and the grass was difficult to grow.

The Santa Cruz Golf and Country Club was going out of business and Dorothy Wheeler and her husband, along with a few other wealthy backers, jumped at the chance to start a polo field.

The golf course had been Bermuda grass. This superior grass was used to build two new polo fields. The main polo field was established in front of the beautiful clubhouse, and a lower practice field was also built.

The new polo field had several advantages: It was completely piped with spring water and it was a short twenty-minute ride from the Wheeler’s ranch.

New stables were built so rental horses could be provided to the players, but it was also unusual as the polo fields were built primarily for women polo players!

Mixed games were held on the weekends when the women were not away on tournaments. However, occasionally all men’s tournaments were held.

Dorothy Wheeler encouraged the young people to play. She started them on the lower polo field where they learned the importance of the rules and the advantage of teamwork. When they became proficient they would graduate to the upper polo field.

In November 1936, Dorothy’s dream of high-goal matches played at Pogonip came true. The third USWPA Circuit Championship was held at Pogonip and the Pogonip team won for the third time in a row. They lost both the Governor’s Cup and the U.S.Open that year but the Pogonip team did go on to win the Circuit Championship for seven years in a row.

This chapter contains nine photographs and three Profiles.

## **Chapter Fourteen: California Women Play Polo in the East (1937)**

It was finally Ann Jackson in June of 1937 who took a women's Santa Barbara polo team to play in the East. The Santa Barbara team shipped some twenty-one polo ponies back East but were met with a big surprise in the quality of play by one Majorie LeBoutillier.

In Ann Jackson's opinion she was the best player she had ever seen "BY TWO GOALS."

Nevertheless, in front of a crowd of 4,000 the team from Santa Barbara did hold their own but lost by a score of seven to six. As someone in the crowd observed the Eastern victory was not easily won.

One commentator remarked that the Long Island crowd was definitely against women's polo, no logical reason, just that it was not a game for the fair sex; a statement that would not have surprised the women from California after their chauvinistic treatment from the USPA in 1934.

This chapter contains four photographs and two Profiles)

## **Chapter Fifteen: United States Open and Governor's Cup (1937 - 1938)**

In October 3, 1937 the women's polo invaded the Golden Gate polo field in San Francisco. It was the first Open Tournament to be played by women. Unlike the Association tournaments, the women did not have to be team members, but could mix up and form teams of any combination.

They received a great deal of press from the San Francisco newspapers, as many people had not witnessed this kind of horse showmanship from the ladies. One local paper wrote: "Arriving tomorrow with the Riviera women's polo club, which plays Mrs. Deming Wheeler's Pogonip club Sunday at the Park Bowl, will be Dorothy Rodgers and Audrey Scott, respective six goal players."

This pair rides so well that Hollywood motion picture producers call on them to take part in the horse riding sequences of pictures being made by famous actress. Both Miss Rodgers and Miss Scott enjoy the dangers of hard riding, and frequently double for movie actresses."

Pogonip lost to the Riviera team by the uneven score of 9 to 1.

The finals between Riviera and Santa Barbara were played on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Again the Riviera team was successful in winning by a score of 9 to 4, thus winning the first United States Open Championship in which women were allowed to compete.

Again the women headed to the Del Monte Polo field in Pebble Beach to play the Governor's trophy on October 15, 16, and 17. Once again the women could pick their own teams.

On the final day of the tournament finals, it was the Pasatiempo team that was victorious.

This chapter contains eight photographs.

## **Chapter Sixteen: U.C.L.A. Men's Polo Team has a Woman on Their Side!**

In 1939 Barbara Rand, a former member of the Riviera women's team, was accepted as a member of the UCLA squad. However, according to the 1939 article in *Life* magazine there was a slight hitch.

USC refused to play UCLA with a women on the team. They wouldn't play UCLA that is, until Barbara was replaced with a man.

When Barbara was accepted as a student at UCLA she was also accepted as the first woman to ride on the men's polo team. Barbara was probably the first woman in the nation to accomplish such an endeavor.

When Barbara made the men's team, she was an eighteen-year-old sophomore and carried a three goal rating in women's national rankings. Each member of the UCLA team supplied his or her own horses.

Barbara was born in Chicago and started her polo career playing indoor polo at age twelve. In 1933 Barbara moved with her family to Los Angeles and started playing polo at Riviera Country Club. Here she met the famous Snowy Baker who became her coach and the rest is history

This chapter contains five photographs and one Profile)

## **Chapter Seventeen – Final Games (1940 – 1941)) Newsreel at the Del Monte Polo Field**

In June of 1940, Paramount, Universal and Fox Movietone film crews arrived at the Del Monte polo field to shoot footage for a Newsreel between Pogonip and the Douglas School women's polo team of Pebble Beach.

One of the ace cameramen informed us that he shot over 800 feet of film of which he would probably be able to use just eighty feet.

The film would be rushed to New York and within two weeks the newsreel would be on the local screens.

Eric Tyrell-Martin, international polo star, and Dick Collins, the polo coach for Douglas School, helped to direct one polo scene after another of the eight players who have played polo games up and down the coast in the highest of women's polo.

After the newsreel had been filmed, the Pogonip team had a practice round with Eric Tyrell-Martin, the former Captain of the British polo team and nine-goal player and Dick Collins, the polo coach for Douglas School.

The newsreel arrived at our local theatre in Santa Cruz and the Pogonip team was able to view themselves on the big screen.

In 1986, my sister Elaine's son, Paul Kozak, was employed by the American Film Institute and he was able to locate the newsreel. The Library at the University of Santa Cruz purchased the film for their archives and gave me a copy of the film.

Fourteen tournaments are listed in the 1941 handicap book; no '42 book was produced as women's polo came to a screeching halt and the USWPA turned their efforts towards the war.

This chapter contains four photographs.

## **Chapter Eighteen: United States Women's Polo Association at War (1942). The Women's Mounted Corps**

With the beginning of World War II on December 7, 1941, the women's polo association immediately became involved in the war effort.

Dorothy Wheeler traveled to Washington, D.C. where she offered the services of the USWPA and, consequently, the women formed the United States Mounted Corp and became a wing of the Red Cross Motor Corp.

Upon her return to Santa Cruz, Dorothy wrote the manual for the Mounted Corps: "The United States Women's Polo Association Manuel of Field Training Maneuvers." The training included recognition of military insignia, learning to read maps, find fire trails and read a compass. And all members were required to have standard and advanced first-aid. Since their goal was to rescue any of the pilots that might be shot down by the enemy, they adapted the Stokes stretcher to a horse. An invention that was so successful that the Army considered adopting their idea.

A Navy Relief polo exhibition was arranged at Golden Gate Park and the Pogonip team participated in the two-chukker event.

In 1942 three handsome Argentines came to Pogonip and when they discovered just how good the women players were they stayed the summer.

This chapter contains five photographs.

## **Chapter Nineteen: Polo in the Park (1998)**

Polo in the Park is held in San Francisco at the Golden Gate Park and is a benefit polo game for the James S. Brady Therapeutic riding program for children with special needs.

The benefit was started by Melba Meakin in 1987 and gives the children the opportunity to experience the joy of being on a horse and feeling the power of movement and to look down on the world from above.

One of the finest polo players during the Golden Age of Women's polo in the 30s and early 40s was Elaine McInerney-Kozak. Elaine started playing polo at Riviera Country Club at age nine. Her coach had been the remarkable Snowy Baker and she went on to be a six-goal player with the Pogonip team and participated in the U.S. Open tournament of 1937 and 1938 and was on the winning team of the Northern Circuit and the Circuit Championship that the Pogonip team won for seven years in a row. She also played in the Governor's Trophy, and the Proctor, Pacific Coast Handicap, and the Scholastic Handicap tournaments.

In 1998 Melba Meakin established a perpetual trophy in honor of Elaine and in 2001 Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco declared it Elaine McInerney-Kozak Day.

Included in the chapter is a profile of Elaine. Also included are her memories of her early career and how she played polo with Walt Disney, Spencer Tracy, Robert Stack, Tim Holt to name a few. In 1935 she won the Will Rogers Trophy at age twelve as the "most Improved Lady Polo Player."

This chapter contains sixteen photographs and a profile of Elaine.

## **Epilogue-Women's Polo Since the End of World War II**

The USWPA came to an end at the beginning of World War II.

Since its beginning in 1934, the USWPA grew until there were one hundred thirty women players up and down the California coast. The USWPA organized as many as twelve tournaments a year and when you consider the communications system in those days, it was quite an accomplishment.

Tournaments could last from three to four days and there had to be room and board for the women, as well as their horses and the grooms who traveled with the horses. Remember, there was no email in those days so most of the connections was done by mail and an occasional telegram and people didn't casually pick up the phone as we do today.

Nevertheless, women polo players were successful in starting the first and only United States Women's Polo Association, something that has not been duplicated to this day.

The women today play with the men's association and that would not have happened if it had not been for the courage of Sue Sally Hale who in 1960 knew that women were not accepted on the polo field so she disguised herself as a man and played with the men for twenty years before they discovered she was a woman! The USPA feared a lawsuit and the women now play under the USPA but they still do not have their own handicap system as the women did in the 30s.

This Chapter contains a profile of Sue Sally.