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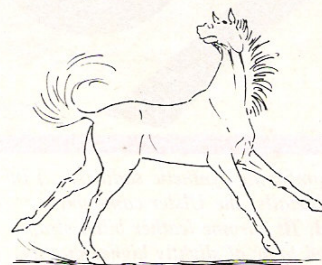
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About the cover: Knowing how to respond when your horse unexpectedly rears can mean the difference between a single instance of evasion and the unintentional encouragement of a chronic problem. Photo by Cappy Jackson.

Elegant Sam

A gentle equine escort lends dignity to burial rites.

By Barbara Lesniak

Counted among those horses who earn their keep in unusual occupations is Elegant Sam, a big chestnut gelding with flashy white markings who customarily escorts the funeral processions at Cedar Park Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois. According to Cedar Park Executive Vice President Lawrence Anspach, who hired Sam seven years ago, the response was favorable right from the start.

"Sam lends a certain dignity," he says, "and can even help people to forget some of their grief. When people see him, they can't help but smile. A horse leading the procession makes the survivors feel important, as if their loved one were a dignitary."

Anspach first got the idea of purchasing a horse while he and his wife, Donna, were out jogging in Chicago's Lincoln Park. "We saw the Chicago police mounted patrol," he recalls, "and I couldn't help but notice how people flocked around the horses. Often the police have a negative public image, but the horses make for super public relations. I figured that if it can work for police departments, why couldn't it work for a cemetery as well?"

A former fourth-level dressage horse, Sam still performs his *haute école* paces, from side passes to flying lead changes, with aplomb. His previous owner sold him because he could no longer afford to keep him, and the gelding's quiet, steady manner makes him ideal for this, his second career. In addition to his daily duties, Sam frequently participates in local parades and has garnered an impressive collection of trophies from his public appearances. He is also a celebrity of sorts who has been featured widely on Chicago radio and television.

A gentle giant at 19 years old and 16.3 hands, Sam loves people and soaks up all the affection, as well as the apples and carrots, he receives from his many regular visitors. His favorite treats are jumbo-sized Milk Bone dog biscuits, though on the advice of his veterinarian he enjoys them only in moderation due to their high protein content.

Elegant Sam is also trained to drive, and Anspach's future plans include purchasing and restoring an antique hearse so that the big chestnut fellow can transport the deceased to their final resting places. ■