Mary Anne Grimmell
(October 13, 1926 – November 30, 2010)

Friend and Mentor of the Arabian Horse Breed!
Mary Anne was born in Kimball, Minnesota. She passed from this earth on November 30th, 2010 at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis after a brief illness.

Mary Anne was the third daughter of William Emil and Emma Edith (Ryti) Leppa, and grew up on the family farm in the area of Kimball during the 1920’s and 1930’s. When four year-old Mary Anne refused to stop following her older sisters, Marjorie and Dorothy, to school, she began school with them and graduated high school at the age of 15. She completed nurse’ s training at the University of Minnesota and worked as a registered nurse in and around Minneapolis until her marriage to Dr. John Grimmell on May 30, 1952. She maintained her nursing credential for many years, working on a volunteer basis in different school districts, and late in her life she served with the Rivers of Hope domestic abuse advocacy agency in Elk River, where she was the 2002 recipient of the Kathryn Young Richards Distinguished Service Award.

Mary Anne began her involvement in the horse world in 1962 and was actively involved in the promotion and governance of the Arabian and Pinto horse for 40 years. She became a Show Steward in 1969 and a Judge in 1974, in addition to serving on many regional and national boards from the 1970’s through to the new millennium. She managed GB Arabian Farms near Elk River, Minnesota, which produced one National Champion horse, Jardana, and many other prize-winning horses in both Arabian and Pinto circles. Among the unique achievements and honors she achieved, one of her newborn foals was chosen as the “model” for the introduction of the Ford Pinto automobile in 1970. She served as President of International Arabian Horse Association from 1995, succeeding to the office on the death of the President, and then serving out her own elected term afterwards. She was invited to judge shows in South America and was a guest of honor of the World Arabian Horse Association in Bahrain. In 2009 she was elected to the Hall of Fame of the Pinto Horse Association. From Mary Anne’s Obituary forwarded by her son, Derek Grimmell!
Mary Anne Grimmell
Dedicated Friend of the Arabian Horse Breed
& Very Dedicated Member of the Insallah Arabian Horse Club

By Lorry Wagner

Mary Anne standing next to the stallion she chose as
National Champion Stallion
At the 1996 Argentina National Championship Show
held in Buenos Aires, Argentina!

Mary Anne and I met many years ago, served together as Regional Directors for 4 years, and became very best friends for nearly 30 years. When her daughter called me with the news of her passing I was shocked. I had spoken to MAG on the phone the previous week...we kept in contact at least once a week for many years. I share the following glimpses of our friendship and activities over many years in the hopes of highlighting what a terrific lady and friend Mary Anne was to not only myself and the many people whose lives she touched, but also her work and dedication to the Arabian breed over her nearly 50 years of involvement.

MAG (as we affectionately called her) was absolutely the finest person I have ever known and I feel so honored to have had such a close friendship. Her integrity, honesty and dedication to the Arabian horse were of the highest caliber. She and I shared so much during our years of friendship, including traveling around the world together in support of the Arabian horse. I still have tears running down my cheeks as I write this. I will miss her terribly for the rest of my life as will many of her friends including the Arabian horse breed.

I took the above picture after the 1996 Argentina National Championship Show when the lady that owned this stallion was in tears and thanking MAG for choosing this horse. There was no question but that this gorgeous stallion certainly deserved the honor. MAG and I spent a week in Argentina...4 days of her judging while I gave seminars on English and Western riding in the USA which was apparently fascinating to these people. After the show, we enjoyed visiting several ranches, including flying to one in a private plane that was quite a long way from Buenos Aires. We landed on a landing strip off which the “gauchos” has chased the cattle as we were making our approach. The horses that were presented were beautiful and the hospitality was warm and gracious. It was an unforgettable trip. People we met there later became friends we looked forward to seeing at the WAHO Conferences. MAG became an outstanding delegate for IAHA at the WAHO Conferences and was highly respected around the world.

MAG always brought a feeling of warmth and a positive attitude everywhere she went. On our trip to the WAHO Conference in Bahrain in 1998, our itinerary took us through London where we spent 2 days indulging in tourist sights and fantastic history. Between conference meetings, one of the highlights was a trip out into the desert to observe Arabian horses being kept in the Bedouin style. They were great horses. We were served wonderful food after the presentation, but neither of us asked what we were eating. Just

Tent that was erected for us to watch the presentation of these lovely horses!

(l) Lorry and (r) MAG at the Manama, Bahrain, WAHO Conference, 1988, where we were both IAHA Delegates
the fact that it tasted so good was as far as we wanted to go. There was a building off to the side of the area where the horses were kept, and after lunch we (the ladies) were taken there to “rest” after the meal before returning to the Conference hotel. It turned out to be one of the homes of the ladies of the “harem” who had removed to another place for our convenience. MAG and I had such fun exploring a real harem…it was fascinating! Over the ensuing years we often spent time discussing and evaluating the horses we had seen, the interesting manner in which they were maintained with one foot cuffed and anchored to a stake and, of course, enjoying our “nap” lying on the beds (mats on the floor) of the ladies of the harem trying to rest before the bus trip back to our hotel. Certainly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Again, the hospitality of the Bahrain royalty who hosted this conference and people of Bahrain was fantastic. As always, MAG made a tremendous impression at this conference, leaving a very positive picture of IAHA. She was so good at always making people so very comfortable with her, even strangers.

During the years that MAG and I were Directors of our respective Regions, we attended not only IAHA Conventions, but also the IAHA U.S. Nationals. During the 1990 U.S. Nationals show, Mary Anne and I were privileged to dash around the arena between classes in a 4-in-hand hitch pulling a carriage driven by Francine Dismukes. What an exhilarating experience that was...we enjoyed every minute. Boy! Can Francine handle those multiple hitches. This was one of those times we shared and often recalled as one of the “lighter” moments of our time of service to our IAHA organization and the Arabian breed.

Here is a picture taken during the 1992 U.S. Nationals where some of the IAHA Directors attending were called into the end of the arena between classes on Saturday night to have a group picture taken with some show officials. As best as I can remember, (Region Nos. in parenthesis) from left to right, Lorry Wagner (2), Dr. Robert Barter (4), Bill Hughes (show commission), Dr. Bill Little (5), Mary Anne Grimmell (10), Jim Baker, (show commission).

In looking back through innumerable pictures to find one or two of MAG to use in this writing, I kept finding more and more bringing back great memories of our activities. There just isn’t room in this publication for everything I would like to share. Here is the last picture I will share, since it includes Don Miller, Region 9 Director, (center) who was a tremendous help to MAG during her Presidency of IAHA and the problems of the Boggs’ lawsuit, which she handled so well. This picture was taken at the 1990 IAHA Convention held in Vancouver, B.C., long before the mentioned lawsuit. Don was an attorney and of positive influence during his 4 years on the IAHA Board of Directors, serving at the same time as did MAG and myself. As Mary Anne moved through the positions from Region 10 Director to 2nd Vice President to 1st Vice President and on to President of IAHA, Don Miller also became a good friend of MAG’s and of tremendous help on the legal front. Don is also no longer with us.

Serving on the IAHA Board of Directors with fellow-director Mary Anne plus accepting assignments from her when she became President of IAHA was a true privilege and gave me a wonderful opportunity to really get to know this fantastic lady and cement a life-long friendship which has brightened and enhanced my life over all these years. I share these few memories to bring to the readers a bit of the depth of the true essence of Mary Anne Grimmell. The Arabian horse has truly lost one of its very best friends.

Farewell, Mary Anne Grimmell,
as you move on to the next dimension may you continue to bring joy, enlightenment and happiness!