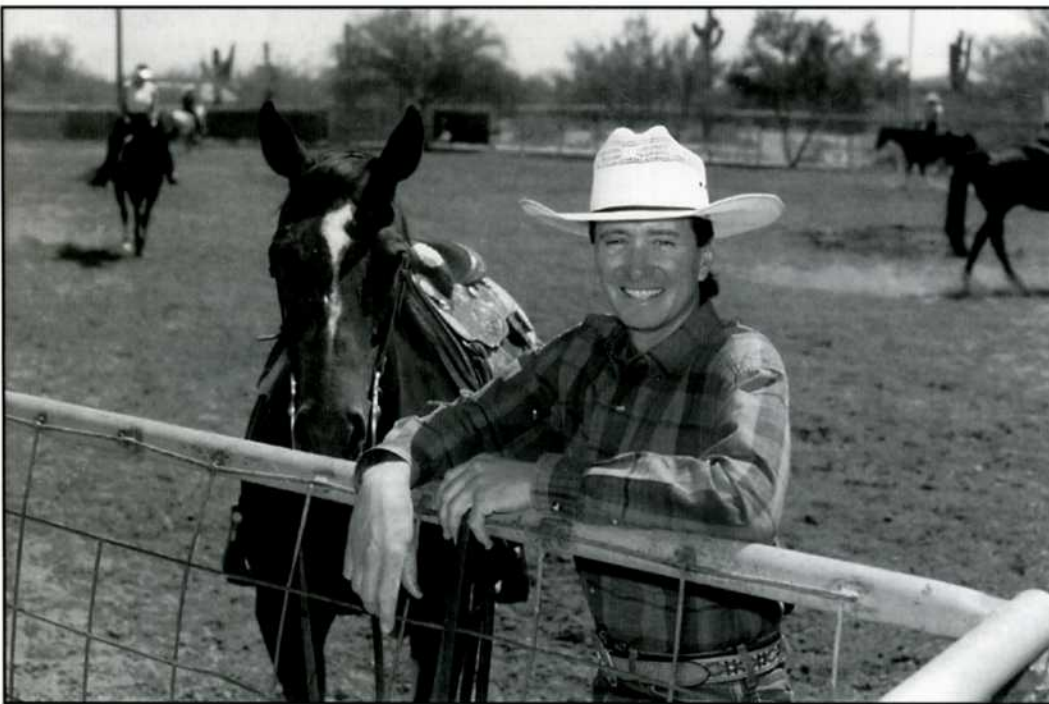


MainLine

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He Learned the Ropes with Findlay's First Equestrian Class



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Mark Sheridan, owner and operator of Mark Sheridan Stables, Inc., was one of the first students to earn his bachelor's degree in equestrian studies when UF launched the western riding program 20 years ago.

by Kathryn J. Kelly
Director of Media Relations & Advertising

When Mark Sheridan '80 began his educational pursuits at then Findlay College 20 years ago, some of his classes were held in a hay barn. And, when it was too cold, some of his classes were even held on a school bus.

Sheridan, who was among the first to major in western equestrian studies at Findlay College in 1976, remembers his early days at Findlay. "The building [at the farm] was not finished, so for a few months we had some classes in hay barns. But on the cold days, the instructor lectured from the front seat of a

school bus. When the bus got cold, he turned the heater on," he recalled.

Much has changed at The University of Findlay in the last 20 years, but Sheridan said he feels the quality of instruction was top-notch from the very beginning. Two instructors, Dale Wilkinson and Clark Bradley, made a strong impression on Sheridan. In fact, he described them as "two of the most talented people in the business."

"Dale Wilkinson didn't pull any punches; he was real straight-forward. As his first class, we really wanted to gain his respect and learn a lot from him. He was a valuable resource for us as students," he said.

Raised in Nebraska, Sheridan's interest in UF began when he heard of Wilkinson's involvement with the western riding program.

"Dale was a big draw, and also Findlay had all the other requirements - the business classes, psyc[hology] classes, art classes. Other schools did not offer that," he said.

In 1978, Sheridan earned an associate of arts degree in equestrian studies. In 1980, he earned his bachelor's degree.

From Findlay, Sheridan worked one year in Texas where he managed a farm and trained and showed quarter horses. Then, he spent about four years as a trainer for Doug Lilly in Arizona, again working with quarter horses.

In 1984, Sheridan opened up Mark Sheridan Stables, Inc., in North Scottsdale, Ariz. His business, which is a
(Continued inside)

training stable, is only a portion of his involvement in the equine industry. Sheridan also shows quarter horses, gives lessons and is an American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and National Snaffle Bit Association (NSBA) judge. He also is involved in sales.

Sheridan credits Findlay for his ability to initiate and manage a business.

"The ability to train the horses is really the easy part. Managing the business is the hard part. Going to Findlay really helped me out. It gave me an educational background that was not only horse-related. The marketing, accounting, psychology - these have really benefited me in coordinating my own business," he said. "I didn't realize that the two [kinds of classes] were just as important until a few years after I'd been out. Then I found out how relevant it was."

It was during his years at Findlay that the University's Horse Club was founded, in 1979, according to Sheridan. Other than his involvement with that organization, he said most of his free time was spent at the farm.

"I was so busy at the farm and with studying that I didn't have time to do much else. We had the morning shift at the farm, had classes in the afternoon, and at night we were studying or at the farm riding. I really took every advantage of Dale and Clark. I spent a lot of time out there [at the farm], learning as much as I could," he said.

Looking back at his training at Findlay, Sheridan said he feels he made the right choice.

"I don't think I would have gotten where I am today if not for what I got from Findlay. Findlay gave me the basis to go from, different areas to expand in to. [Findlay] gave me the knowledge to get started. It was a good experience," he commented.

As far as how he would advise young people looking for a career in the equine industry today, Sheridan has a few simple suggestions.

"Keep an open mind to all the different areas of the horse business. When I went there, everyone wanted to be a trainer. Only so many can go one route. It's a wide open industry. The

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broad, general knowledge you get from Findlay can help you decide what aspect of the business to go into," said Sheridan.

And he ought to know, because, 20 years from the program's inception, Sheridan can still say, "One of the best things I've done in my life was to go to Findlay. By far, it was the best move I ever made." 🏠

Findlay's Equestrian/Pre-Vet Programs 1976 - 1996

Celebrating 20 Years!

- 1976 -Western Equestrian Program Initiated
-Dale Wilkinson Named First Director of Riding
- 1978 -First Summer Youth Riding Camps
-Clark Bradley Named Director of Western Riding Program
- 1982 -Pre-Veterinary Medicine Program Initiated
- 1985 -Steve Brown Named Director of Western Riding Program
- 1986 -Equine Management Program Initiated
- 1992 -English Riding Program Initiated
-Cynthia Williams-Curie Named Director of English Riding Program

More than 500 students have graduated from the Equestrian or Pre-Vet Programs

1995-96 Enrollment: 196 Pre-Vet, 127 Western Riding, 75 English Riding

During the 1995-96 school years, English and Western Riding Programs earned top five placings at national competitions.