

Sharing a Dream

A Tribute to March Enders

I have been “horse crazy” since before I can remember, and started riding when I was 5 years old. It didn't take long for my new hobby to become a lifelong passion. Like most riders it hasn't always been easy for me. I gave up a junior prom to go to a horse show, and spent hours in the car each week in college traveling back and forth from school to the barn trying very hard to continue to learn and progress with the horses. When I turned 20, I made a huge decision to go to Europe for a working student position at a barn in the Netherlands. I realized when I came back to the United States that I needed to step up my game.

I contacted a top trainer, Mary Flood at Wildfire Farm, who thankfully lived close by and thus began a new chapter in my riding career along with a new dream - to become a top FEI rider and to one day represent the United States in the Olympic Games. Mary fostered this dream bringing out the best in me. As a mentor she listened to my goals and dreams and guided me through tough choices. She also introduced me to some amazing people who also shared my dream. One such person was March Enders who also came to share in my dream and believe that it could be accomplished.

At the end of 2012 March, Wiecor VA and I started our journey. At this point I, had been riding with Mary for 6 years and was currently showing NPJ Copper Sand, a 15.0h quarter horse appendix gelding who was 16 years old at second level. Copper taught me a lot over the years, but I was beginning to outgrow the abilities of my longtime partner. I was a broke newlywed and wasn't sure how I was going to afford to feed myself let alone purchase a new horse. March came to my rescue.

She owned a talented hanoverian gelding, Wiecor VA (Wie Weltmeyer o/o SPS Wanda) currently showing 3rd and 4th level. She had owned Wiecor since he was a young horse and had ridden him some herself. She brought Wiecor to train with Mary when he was 5 years old. He needed a talented trainer to help bring out the best in him. March found that in Mary. When I met March, she had been working with Mary for over a decade and they were in need of rider for Wiecor. At the time I didn't realize how life changing this moment was, but in this moment my dream came within reach ... all because March took a chance on me - a young professional rider.

I can remember being scared to death when faced with my first ride on Wiecor. I was terrified about riding for an owner who was investing in me and my dreams. I didn't want to let them down.

It was obvious that Wiecor knew much more than I did and I had a lot to learn. March came to all my lessons and watched and encouraged me. I am sure it wasn't easy to watch her beloved horse put up with a young rider as she makes huge mistakes. She may have even thought, "What did I get myself and Wiecor into!" but she never let it show. She was always positive, supportive, and encouraging. March is every rider's dream owner. She was very involved and active in our progress. She didn't put any pressure on me. I was allowed, under Mary's watchful eye, to take my time, learn, build confidence and grow as a rider and teammate for Wiecor.

Wiecor and I had a successful first season together at Third and Fourth Level. March was always there to cheer us on, and always had words of encouragement no matter how many mistakes I made. I specifically remember one show in September 2013 at Morven Park. Freestyles were March's passion. She loved them as much as Wiecor did but they were new for me. We had been successful so far that season but it was hard to find time to practice with the music. The weather had not been cooperating so there was no practicing in the big ring outside. At the Show, Wiecor and I pranced our way down centerline with March proudly watching from the sidelines. It was just after our first lengthening that things started to go very wrong. I was starting to realize that I was ahead of my music and not just a little ahead but 20 or more meters ahead. This was not something for which I was prepared. I started to panic and then added several awkward circles in the middle of my test. After a few added random turns, I realized I was now behind my music. To take matters worse, I was on the wrong side of the arena! A new level of panic set in. What was I going to do? I again started making things up, before I knew it the music was ending (thank goodness) and I was by the letter P. I quickly turned towards centerline to halt and salute, only to realize I had left out my entire half pass left at the canter. I received my first 0.

I left the arena in tears, how was I going to face March? The freestyle was her one true love, she lived for it, and I ruined it. I could not have screwed it up worse. But March was at her best. I was greeted with a smile, a congratulations, and pat on the back. Her comment to me was more special than she will ever know. She said, "I thought you did a great job recovering from a tricky situation. I am not sure I would have been able to handle it as professionally as you did". This is what makes March beyond special. She gave me the opportunity to learn, grow, and make mistakes. This was a mistake I promised to never repeat. The next month at BLM Finals in North Carolina, Wiecor and I scored a 76.333% for the win and the high score Musical Freestyle of the show. The joy in March's voice when I told her (she was unable to come see us), was worth every minute spent practicing.

March continued to support Wiecor and I in all our endeavors. Last season, we made our debut at the FEI levels together. A show ring, March was uncertain

Wiecor would ever attain. March always said she lived vicariously through me. She would canter down the centerline right along with me. It was a special connection we all shared. We both shared the same dream and I was so honored to have her always beside me as Wiecor, March and I continued to advance and win.

At the end of 2014 March was having some trouble with her health. Even from a distance her love and support of Wiecor and I continued. We often talked over e-mail about plans, goals and the progress both Wiecor and I made. Over the past 2 ½ years she became more than a client, more than a sponsor, she was the leader of our team- Team Wiecor; more than all of that she was my beloved friend. On March 26, 2015 after a brief illness March passed away peacefully. Wiecor and I will continue our shared dream and will “dance on” in her honor. This season we will debut our I-1 freestyle that she helped design. In her honor, we will complete with the canter entrance. I know that she will be right with Wiecor and I for the rest of our years.