

CASSIE DEW

By Elinore Tonsor

Cassie Dew is a 7/8 Arabian mare. She stands exactly 14-3, and is every inch a competitor. She is owned and ridden by Romona Radtke of Madison, Wisconsin. Romona purchased the mare from Jan Worthington and Grace Ramsey after she had been on their farm less than 48 hours. She had been bought off the "killer wagon" only a few days before, and little to nothing was known about her. At that point in time, she was so obese that her nick name became "Mama Cass Elliot" which was eventually shortened to "Elliot." Her place on the killer wagon was soon justified, when it was discovered she was unmountable. As soon as body weight hit the saddle, she reared up and threw herself over backwards. Three hours of mounting and dismounting her while tied to a large oak tree did little to diminish this habit. By the end of a month, she could be mounted with only two good sized men holding on to her. She was campaigned as a competitive horse in 1984, and did well, as long as the ride did not exceed 25 miles. She never ran out of steam, she just didn't seem to be able to stay sound for 50 miles. The lameness was mystifying, but was finally diagnosed as the development of a curb. The curb calcified over the winter, and with 450 miles of Competitive riding behind her, Elliot was campaigned as an Endurance horse in 1985.

The 1985 distance season was a successful one for this mare in many ways. By the end of the 6 month season in the Midwest, Elliot had logged 750 miles, placed in all but one ride, and finished in the Top Ten in all rides she had been entered. She had qualified herself for the Purina Race of Champions in exactly 550 miles. The horse was never "pushed" in the entire 750 miles of competition. She set her own pace, and if she wouldn't increase her speed with one squeeze of the legs, she was not asked to go any faster. As a matter of fact, the biggest problem Romona had was getting Elliot to slow down or stop, not getting her to go faster.

Elliot earned her **1000 Mile Award** from UMECRA in 1985, the same year she earned the UMECRA Heavyweight Endurance Grand Championship, the AERC Midwest Region Heavyweight Championship, the AERC Midwest Region Over-all Reserve Championship, the AERC Midwest Region Most Best Conditions Championship, and the A.H.D.R.A. Endurance Reserve Championship.

"She's a phenomenal horse, she has a tremendous amount of heart and spirit," Romona says of the mare. "She's taken me farther than I ever dreamed possible. There are times when I watch her in pasture, playing with the other horses and I'm in augh of her. Thank God she's there instead of in an Alpo can."