

Sylvia Bishop

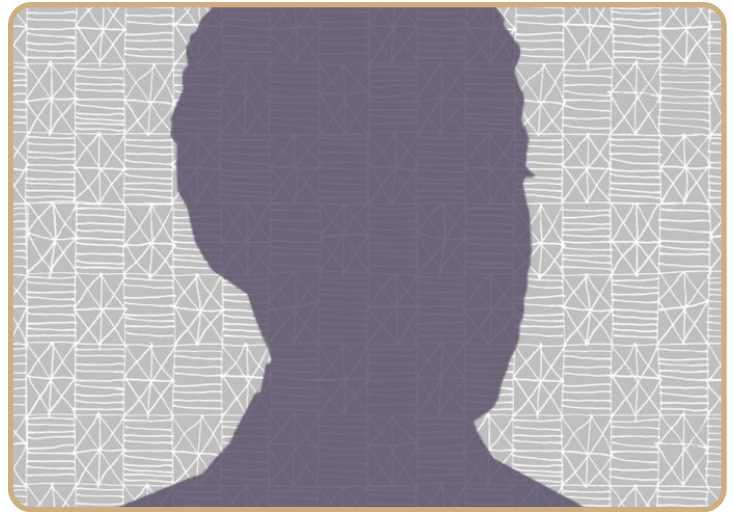
Author: Michael Phelps,
Graduate Student Intern

Places: Baltimore, Maryland; Charles
Town, West Virginia

Birth: October 5, 1920

Death: December 26, 2004

Professions: Horse Owner, Trainer



Childhood in a Horse Family

Horse racing ran in Sylvia Bishop's family. Her parents were James H. and Barbara Snowden Rideout. She had three brothers who all worked as grooms and four sisters who all married trainers or jockeys. From the time she was thirteen, Sylvia Bishop was visiting horse tracks and stables. By seventeen, she quit school to be an exercise rider and groom. Bishop also married a horse trainer.¹

First Female African American Trainer

In 1954, Bishop became the first female African American to officially train Thoroughbreds when she earned her license working at Charles Town race track. Bishop is quoted as saying, "When I began training back in 1938, men were definitely shocked and surprised to see me. The fact that I was a woman, and on top of that a Black woman, was almost too much for some of the fellows."²

Sylvia embarked on a long life within horse racing with most of her horses entered in races in West Virginia.³

Legacy

In 1961, Ebony Magazine featured Bishop in an article for her work with horses. Thirty years later, she was honored at the African American Heritage Society's tribute to Black horsemen at Pimlico Race Course.⁴ Finally, after sixty years in the horse industry, Sylvia retired in 2000 citing worsening arthritis. Bishop passed away in 2004.

Sources

Ebony. 1961. "Lady Horse Trainer," December 1961.

Peddicord, Ross. "Black Horsemen to Be Cited at Pimlico Tribute." Baltimore Sun, February 28, 1991. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1991-02-28-1991059156-story.html>.

Schelzig, Erik. "Sylvia Bishop, African American Race Horse Trainer." I Speak of Dreams (blog), January 6, 2005. https://lizditz.typepad.com/i_speak_of_dreams/2005/01/sylvia_bishop_a.html.

Footnotes

¹"Lady Horse Trainer."

²Schelzig, "Sylvia Bishop, African American Race Horse Trainer."

³"Lady Horse Trainer."

⁴Peddicord, "Black Horsemen to Be Cited at Pimlico Tribute."

