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CONTACT: Alexandra McKay, [events@morvenpark.org](mailto:events@morvenpark.org), 703-777-2414 ext. 6615

## **Morven Park to Host 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion of International Equestrian Institute**

Fifty years ago, the Morven Park International Equestrian Institute (MPIEI) graduated its first class of students, ultimately becoming the most prestigious U.S. equestrian school of its time.

To commemorate this historic event, Morven Park will celebrate the school's history and accomplishments with a 50-Year Reunion in conjunction with the Park's 2018 Fall International Horse Trials, Oct. 5-7. All those associated with the school—students, instructors, and staff members—from the first class of 1968 through the final graduation in 1991, are invited to attend.

MPIEI was established by Morven Park to meet an international demand for high-quality instructors. In earlier times, cavalry units provided the training ground for top riders and instructors but, by the 1960s, military horse regiments had been almost entirely replaced by motorized vehicles.

The school flourished under the early direction of Major John "Joe" Lynch, remembered by his students as a life-changing teacher whose colorful language and disciplined approach to training motivated and inspired all who had the opportunity to learn from him.

An instructor in the British Army Equitation School at Weedon, England, as well as at the English military academies at Sandhurst and Woolrich, Major Lynch coached British, Irish, and American Olympic equestrian teams before joining Morven Park. His unique training style is evident in an early film from the school, in which riders are shown removing their buttoned jackets while maintaining perfect form as they complete four increasingly difficult jumps without the benefit of stirrups or reins.

During its heyday, MPIEI was where the world's best riders trained to become equestrian coaches and instructors, receiving not only training in advanced dressage, 3-day eventing, and show jumping, but also classroom instruction on equine health and behavior as well as barn and business management. As more U.S. colleges and universities offered academic degrees in equine studies, MPIEI registrations began to decrease and its doors were closed following the 1991 graduation ceremony.

A number of MPIEI students went on to become international competitors following graduation. Other alumni made their mark in other ways, with some publishing books about their riding experiences, and others creating high quality riding equipment, or running horse breeding and training facilities.

"To this day, students of the Morven Park International Equestrian Institute continue to have an impact on the equestrian world," said Sheryl Williams, Morven Park's Executive Director. "So many of them continue providing instruction around the globe, using many of the same methods taught by the school's directors."

Physical reminders of MPIEI are also still evident at the Park—the building that once housed the school's classroom and student lounge is currently the office of the Morven Park International Equestrian Center,

and the student cafeteria is now a café that serves competitors and spectators during the numerous equestrian events held at the Park every year.

Morven Park is eager to hear from anyone who had a personal connection to MPIEI. If you or someone you know played a part in its notable history, please email [events@morvenpark.org](mailto:events@morvenpark.org) or call 703-777-2414 ext. 6615 for full details about the reunion.

**About Morven Park:** Morven Park is a 1,000-acre nonprofit park in Leesburg, Virginia. Known as the “Central Park” of Loudoun County, Morven Park welcomes over 200,000 visitors each year who come to enjoy exquisite scenery, formal boxwood gardens, the Morven Park International Equestrian Center, the Athletic Field Complex, the iconic Greek Revival mansion, museums, and hiking trails. For more information, or to support the Park, visit [www.MorvenPark.org](http://www.MorvenPark.org).

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***[Photo Caption:]***

Morven Park hosts a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion for its International Equestrian Institute, which graduated hundreds of accomplished riders during its existence, 1968-1991. Disciplined training by former cavalry officers developed students who could accomplish spectacular feats. This photo from the Morven Park archives shows a student removing her jacket while executing a series of jumps.