



Mehdi Kazemi

March 14, 1959 - August 18, 2016

On August 18th 2016 Mehdi Kazemi passed away peacefully after a long difficult bravely fought battle with ALS, at Lower Cape Fear Hospice in Wilmington North Carolina.

Mehdi was born on March 14th 1959 in Tehran ,Iran to Dr Davoud Kazemi and Mrs Nahid Tavallali Kazemi. He attended school there and in England . Mehdi moved permanently to the United States in 1977. He attended Emory and Henry College and graduated from Virginia Intermont College with a degree in Horsemanship. After graduation Mehdi moved to Maryland and became a very accomplished equestrian coach and trainer. He worked briefly at McDonogh School and then for many years at Colombia Horse Center. He then, along with his life partner Tommy Byrnes, bought his own farm . Winter's Run Farm was a hunter- jumper barn located in Fallston, Maryland. He also was the riding coach for Towson University and proudly coached the Featherdown team along with friend Julie Wright.

About five years ago Mehdi and Tommy moved to Wilmington , North Carolina to be closer to family. There he started teaching at Old Homestead Farm in Rocky Point , North Carolina. He along with his friend and owner of O.H.F, Margaret Overby, started a very successful IEA team (Interscholastic Equestrian Association) and he became the equestrian coach for UNCW. Mehdi's career as an equestrian coach, trainer, course designer and clinician was long and successful. Over the years he has had many newspaper and magazine articles written about his accomplishments. In 2016 Mehdi was

awarded the IEA National Coach of the year. As profoundly talented and gifted as he was, he will always be remembered by his adoring students, spanning three decades for his beautiful soul, kind heart, booming voice, and infectious laugh, sense of humor, compassion, loyalty and friendship. He was a father figure to many over the years.

Mehdi is survived by his loving partner of 27 years Tommy Byrnes, his parents Dr. Davoud Kazemi and Mrs. Nahid Tavallali Kazemi, sister Nafiseh Kazemi, brother Reza Kazemi, loving nieces and nephews Yasmine, Sahar and Raud Farazian, Chloe, Arriana and Benjamin Kazemi. He is also survived by his loving in laws, Carolyn Byrnes Greenwood, Sam Greenwood, John Douglas Byrnes, Dawn Byrnes, Johnny and Lynn Byrnes, Jamie Byrnes, Mark Greenwood, Mike and Rachel Greenwood. He also leaves behind a large family of loving cousins, friends and students.

Mehdi lived each day by his belief in :

Good Thoughts - Good Words - Good Deeds.

Tribute Wall

SG

“ I just heard of his passing tonight, and I was so sad. I found his profile on FB and the first thing I noticed was his familiar smile! I grinned immediately. My partner looked at me like, who's that? I said, 'One of the most influential mentors of my adolescence...my riding coach.'

He was one of the most influential people in my young life. He taught me that no amount of talent will make you great without a ridiculous amount of hard work. With a little bit of talent, and a lot of hard work, I was high point rider in TSEL...a kid of a single Mom who worked for every additional minute I got in the saddle, and loved every minute of it. I had no silver spoon in my mouth, far from it in fact, I just had a love for the sport and an amazing coach. As a team we beat the britches off of the fancy Foxcroft team with their stone barns and their designer jackets. I was only 14 and it was such a high point in my life. Truly, more than anyone else, he taught me the value of hard work. I can still remember his voice like it was yesterday..."Again Suzanne! Nope, I see daylight between those thighs! AGAIN!! MUCH better!!...Feel the difference??"

Now I am a former Commissioned Officer in the US Army, I have a Master's degree, a flourishing career, and three amazing kids. My daughter wants to learn to ride, but honestly I'm afraid that she will love it as much as I did and I will end up broke just like my mom was :o).

I will carry the values Medhi taught me for the rest of my life. Hopefully, I can pass them on to my kids. In this way, he will live for ever.

Suzanne Grant - July 13, 2021 at 11:26 PM

DS

“ One of my dearest friends from Emory & Henry College and way after Virginia Intermont and his path in life. Miss you Mehdi !!

David "Shep" Shaw - December 12, 2020 at 06:57 PM

JK

“ I knew Mehdi at the Columbia Horsed Center. I came to him as a student who had been terrorized for several years by a horse that was totally inappropriate for me. I didnt believe I would ever be able to put my foot in a stirrup again without fearing for my life. Mehdi gently and patiently took me from ride geriatric school ponies to eventually having enough trust in him to close my eyes and take my new hunter over a four foot fence. I will be forever grateful to Mehdi for all that he gave me as a student and a friend, and am grateful that he had a place in my life. Rest in peace, old friend, I will always miss you. Judith

Judith Kornett - May 22, 2018 at 09:43 PM

VW

“ Medhi was my instructor while I was a lesson student @ Columbia Horse Center. He was a wonderful combination of assertiveness, humor and compassion. After riding an hour with him coaching, I felt like I could ride any horse. He gave me so much confidence. I am so sad. My sincere sympathy to all his family.

Vicque White - December 29, 2017 at 11:51 PM

KW

“ Tommy, my heart breaks for you. I just recently learned of Mehdi's passing and I am so sorry. I love you both. Mehdi was the best instructor I ever had. To this day, I miss taking lessons with him at Winter's Run Farm. I have moved on from the hunter-jumper world and into the dressage world. I can still hear, while cantering a 10 meter circle, "1,2,1,2 let the jump come to you". In the crazy warm up arena, at the shows, Mehdi's voice is what I would listen for to guide me through the chaos and over the fences. I am glad our paths crossed and am honored to have met him. I will forever miss his smile, the twinkle in his eyes, his huge, warm heart and his laugh. Ride on Mehdi. Tommy, I am sending you huge hugs, take care.

Kristy Whipperman - August 21, 2017 at 12:50 PM

LW

“ A fellow Emory & Henry classmate and I were talking about how much we miss Mehdi tonight, and she found his obituary by Googling his name. It's gratifying to hear what a happy and successful life Mehdi lived, and his influence on the many students with whom he worked comes as no surprise to me. I miss his big laugh and his big heart.

Lana Whited

E&H class of 1980

*Professor of English and director of the Boone Honors Program
Ferrum College (Va.)*

Lana Whited - April 22, 2017 at 10:38 PM

BR

“ I knew Mehdi from Virginia Intermont College where I was a Horsemanship major. He always had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. You could tell at a glance what a warm and loving person he was.

Rest in peace, Mehdi.

Barb McCaslin Riffey - August 31, 2016 at 05:51 PM

KK

“ *Deepest condolences.*

Kourosh Kazemi - August 26, 2016 at 06:03 PM

ST

“ *Mehdi Joon,
When we talked last, it was Xmas and we said we should meet up soon.
This earthly life is way too short, so I promise to visit you on the other end when my time comes.
Your voice and the sound of your laughter and giggle remains so alive in my mind and in my heart.
Remember how vast and eternal you have become. Watch over us.
Kisses
Your baby coz,
Sogol xxx*

Sogol Tavallali - August 26, 2016 at 05:55 PM

LM

“ Mehdi was one of the three most influential people in my life. He was my mentor, but more than that, he was my friend over many moves (mine) and many years. To say I feel a rent in the fabric of the universe is not overstating it; I treasure every minute I spent with Mehdi; as teacher and student, then as colleagues, always as friends, and sometimes even as adversaries. We had epic disagreements, but always made up and laughed about it. My soul misses his presence on earth more than even I could imagine. To whomever is reading this, and to one of the dearest men to ever walk the earth and who will always live in my heart, Namaste.

Laura Harrison McBride - August 26, 2016 at 11:40 AM

TM

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Mehdi's passing. I worked with him years ago in a professional setting (the barn) and could tell what a great person he was. He was knowledgeable and always willing to help others, as well as having a great sense of humor. My condolences to his family and friends on their loss.

Teresa Martinoli - August 25, 2016 at 08:58 PM

LW

“ Although my daughters never rode for Mehdi, they competed against his IEA team in MD. The memory that stands out most for me was of a winter IEA show that his team was hosting. My youngest daughter was at the time a tiny pint of a girl. The horse she drew to ride was the largest there. The Mama Bear in me was confident in my daughter's riding ability, but running through the what ifs if a fall were to occur at such a height off the ground . Before I could raise my concern, there was Mehdi, arguing on my daughter's behalf, spouting safety over competitive rules, and ensuring she received a redraw and a more appropriately sized ride. That voice and that smile have stuck with me for years. I was truly saddened to learn of Mehdi's struggle with ALS. I am so sorry for you loss. He touched the lives of many young riders AND their parents.

Linda Wilson - August 25, 2016 at 07:54 PM

AS

“ A beautiful person through and through. May he rest in peace.

Ali Shahegh - August 25, 2016 at 05:20 PM

KK

“ Dear all, even though I did not know Mehdi very well I'm still shocked by this very sad news. Condolences to all the family and wishing you much strength. Love, Kourosh

Kourosh Kazemi - August 25, 2016 at 05:14 PM

MS

“ Tommy, my thoughts of love are with you now.

Marilyn Sherman - August 25, 2016 at 02:56 PM

NJ

“ I was privileged to have had a couple of riding lessons with Mehdi years ago. He was a great horseman. He once convinced me to trot through a small jump course, even though I was a training level dressage rider who was afraid of jumping. When I tried to argue with him, he said, in that big voice, "I'm a hunter jumper coach and YOU called ME." I gave up and let him coach me through it. We successfully jumped the course, and it was a shining moment for me. He was a truly kind soul, and I know that such a vibrant personality will be missed. My condolences to his family and friends.

Nancy Jackson - August 25, 2016 at 02:18 PM

FT

“ My heart breaks for Tommy and the whole family From immediate family, horsey community to airline family there will be an empty place that can only be filled with the wonderful memories of Medhi himself.

Freddie Trebby - August 25, 2016 at 11:38 AM

RS

“ I began riding at Columbia Horse Center during the winter of 1994 after following my best friend, Amber, around the barn on Saturdays when she worked as a student worker in exchange for her lessons. Before that, I would attend her lessons with her and just hang out and watch, longingly. Eventually, I was offered a place in the student worker program as well so that, at the ripe age of 18, I may finally learn to ride as well, for they recognized in me a true lover of horses and an inner equestrian that I hadn't the money to tap into. Ever since, no matter who I rode with, whether on my own or with a different instructor, it was Mehdi's voice I heard the second I put toe to stirrup. And later, as an instructor myself, I could feel myself channeling portions of his personality by way of phrases and lesson modalities. He taught me, and others like me, so much, and not just about how to ride, but about how to LIVE. Not only that, but somehow, he always managed to find and show us the best in everyone and in every horse. No matter how "bad" others might have seen him or her, he was still able to find for us those qualities that made them shine. Mehdi was a great man and he will forever live in my heart and as long as he lives in the memories of others and his lessons carry on, he had succeeded in gaining immortality. Ride on, Mehdi, you got the spot! Love always, Rachel.

Rachel Secora - August 25, 2016 at 11:22 AM

RF

“ My sincerest sympathy and thoughts are with Medhi's family at this time. I also share my condolences to his many students who absolutely adored him. My daughter was one of those students, and I can tell you he had the most impact on her of any instructor she ever had. Rest in peace dear Medhi, you will be greatly missed .

Rebecca fletcher - August 25, 2016 at 12:10 AM

MB

“ My thoughts and prayers are with the family. Mehdi is in peace now and pain free. May the family have peace as well. Mehdi left an impression on everyone he touched, including myself. His kindness and patience was truly a virtue.

All my thoughts and deepest sympathies,

Mary Beveridge

Mary Beveridge - August 24, 2016 at 04:15 PM

MP

“ My precious friend, 40 years of friendship and I still yearn for more! I have always been proud of our friendship but evermore as you perfected all that you are with time. You are giving, selfless, courageous, loving, and an anchor for all. The largest wing span I ever saw! Thank you for making me a better person through our friendship and for giving more life through Tommy! You have the biggest heart Tommy and more courage than one can imagine. Thank you for showing what loving someone means. I celebrate my friendship with you both!

Mehran Pourzanjani - August 24, 2016 at 03:36 PM

MP

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Mehran Pourzanjani - August 24, 2016 at 03:11 PM

RT

“ *Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.
Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there, I did not die!*

Mary Frye (1932)

Rafael Suarez Tavallali - August 24, 2016 at 01:08 PM

MO

“ *I will never forget Mehdi's beautiful laughter and mischievous eyes.
I am honored and blessed to have him in my life for he will always
live in my heart and in my thoughts. May all the love that surrounds
you bring comfort to ease the pain of his loss.*

Merce Otero-Carrady - August 23, 2016 at 10:29 PM

MN

“ *The Newburys give their condolences . What a lovely tribute to a
remarkable man. Horse people are the best people*

Mary Newbury - August 23, 2016 at 05:16 PM

NK

“ Saying goodbye to you was the hardest thing I have ever done.
Enough already come back .

Nafiseh kazemi - August 23, 2016 at 03:55 PM

JR

“ What a wonderful man.. Tommy and Medhi were so lucky to have
each other... Love and prayers to all of his friends, family, and
equestrian family...

Jill Runnion - August 23, 2016 at 11:30 AM

CB

“ He was, and is, one of the truest of gentlemen, with a heart of gold
& the ability to change the mood of a room just by entering it!
Heaven is a better place having him there....but the world is a better
place for having him here. Stay close by Medhi! We all need you
still.

Christi B - August 23, 2016 at 10:08 AM

KB

“ Words can not express my sorrow. I did not meet Medhi, I feel that I
knew him from your photos, words and love that shone through. To
have a love like this is truly the greatest experience of life. True soul
mates. May your grief turn to Joy everyday as you remember the 27
years you two spent together. I love you my friend and send peace
to you. Om Shanti. Kathy

Kathy Bodenhamer Bryan - August 23, 2016 at 08:51 AM

KF

“ Mehdi was one of my favorite patients. It was an honor and privilege to be his Respiratory Therapist. I am thinking of you all during this difficult time.

Kim Folan - August 23, 2016 at 08:41 AM

PE

“ I love you, buddy.

Perk - August 23, 2016 at 12:43 AM

MT

“ I am somewhat heartened knowing how loved dear Mehdi was. His life was BIG, it had purpose. He touched so many from young to old. And to know he found true love is to know he was happy. RIP gentle Mehdi.

Michelle Taylor - August 23, 2016 at 12:40 AM

JB

“ My thoughts are with you & family Tommy~

J Scott Burton - August 23, 2016 at 12:20 AM

CS

“ Love, thoughts and prayers...

Clark Shannon - August 22, 2016 at 09:18 PM

JP

“ My deepest condolences to Tommy and Mehdi's family, friends and students. I have not seen Mehdi in at least 15 years but he was a profound influence on my life. His presence affected me into adulthood. Through the highs and lows of my life I could hear his encouraging words uplifting me and not letting me quit. Hearing all the stories of how he touched so many lives warms my heart. I will miss him greatly and am blessed to have had him as a part of my life.

Jennifer Plummer - August 22, 2016 at 09:16 PM

WL

“ Tommy,
We are so very sorry for your loss. The pain of losing a partner never goes away, but it does get easier with time. You have so many beautiful memories to hold on to. Those will help through the hard times. Love and hugs
Wayne Moneymaker and Coby Lee

Wayne Moneymaker/Coby Lee - August 22, 2016 at 09:03 PM

LR

“ I am so glad that many of Mehdi's students and friends got to post memories and show our love on the Facebook site for him to read.

Tommy, your heart is so full and so empty at the same time. My thoughts are with you.

With much love,
Laureen

Laureen Rengel - August 22, 2016 at 08:58 PM

AD

“ Mehdi was bigger than words can describe and will be missed by so many of us "horse" people. I am so happy he had Tommy in his life, they made a great team. Mehdi I miss you and love you I know all the great horses from your past greeted you. Star

Astrid Dalley - August 22, 2016 at 08:20 PM

DW

“ Condolences on your loss of this wonderful man. Sending prayers and love

Diane Wright - August 22, 2016 at 08:01 PM

MH

“ Thinking of you Tommy, with love, Mary

Mary Hardy - August 22, 2016 at 07:33 PM

KL

“ Tommy, Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. May God's infinite love lift you up in joy for the wonderful life you had on this earth with Mehdi and the life eternal you will share some day.

Katherine Lynch - August 22, 2016 at 07:05 PM

BC

“ My deepest sympathies to you & your family, Tommy, as you enter your season of mourning. Though I never met your beloved Mehdi, I feel as if I know the essence of who he truly was because he was so deeply & wholly loved by you.
Peace & Comfort unto you & yours.

Betty Chambers

Betty Chambers - August 22, 2016 at 06:16 PM

SB

“ Rest in peace dearest Mehdi. I saw a twinkling star in the sky last night. I am sure it was you. You always little up the room! I am sure you are doing the same up above. Warmest thoughts and prayers to you all. Tommy, you have my deepest sympathy and affection. Love Sue xoxo

Susan Beck - August 22, 2016 at 06:14 PM

RR

“ My thoughts and prayers are with Tommy Byrnes and all of Mehdi's family and friends. Such a kind, sweet, hardworking, talented, and loving man gone too soon. He will be missed by the many lives he touched.

Rindy Russell - August 22, 2016 at 06:13 PM

TR

“ Mehdi was one of the kindest people I have ever met . Generous, hilariously funny, collaborative with--and kind to, everyone he knew. My heart goes out to his family and friends as I remember him from college .

Trevor - August 22, 2016 at 06:04 PM

JR

“ To All...It is never easy to lose someone who is loved, especially as deeply as Mehdi was and by so many. I know the days ahead will be challenging, but know that there are so many of us holding you close in our hearts. We miss him right along with you, but are so grateful to have had the opportunity to know him. He was a very special person...there are really no adequate words.
Jill

Jill Randles - August 22, 2016 at 06:03 PM

BK

“ You will always be with me.
The sound of your laughter, your beautiful smile
Your hugs, our long talks.
You were and will always be my most handsome and beloved
cousin.
My heart is crying.
I love you Tommy .
You are the other half of one person I loved as much as my beloved
brother.
May he rest in peace .

Bitka Kazemi - August 22, 2016 at 05:55 PM

PG

“ Tommy, you and the family are in my prayers. Love you all

Pinky T Gual - August 22, 2016 at 05:48 PM

MD

“ What a beautiful description of his well lived life. Our prayers are
with you and your families. I believe your wonderful memories will
carry you through this time along with all of your many, many,
friends and family that have cared for you both. Know that you are
loved, Tommy and family!

Molly Crone Dewey - August 22, 2016 at 05:22 PM

DA

“ Tommy, I never got the chance to visit the two of you and met
Mehdi, but my heart knows him through all your photos and stories
about him. So when the time comes that we do meet in Heaven, I
will know him. My heart sends you strength and love through this
time. To his parents/siblings many prayers...

Danielle - August 22, 2016 at 05:08 PM

GW

“ There was never a time that I didn't know Tommy without being happy with his lifelong partner. Both were so kind, generous, loving, and had admiration for all their friends and loved ones. Mehdi brought out the best in all around him; he was the bravest person I've ever met in my life. I know he's riding a beautiful horse as a brave angel above....Much love, Gina

Gina White - August 22, 2016 at 04:58 PM

AM

“ Wishing love, light and eternal memories of Mehdi's most joyous laughter to Tommy and all of Mehdi's dear family all over this planet. He was truly an angel among us.

Anna Crone Montgomerie - August 22, 2016 at 04:48 PM

AN

“ Gallop on my friend....

Andrew - August 22, 2016 at 04:42 PM