

## GROWING UP IN THE BREED

BY NICHOLAS BREAUX AND KELLY POWERS



Co-author, Nicholas Breaux, riding RyR Guerro Ultimo at age 8. Photo courtesy of the Breaux family.

### SHOW RING COMPETITORS, LIFE LONG FRIENDS

Growing up in different parts of the country, we have had unique but similar experiences in our lifelong journey with the Peruvian Horse. Starting at the tender ages of 6 and 7, we have each learned the dedication of the study of riding, the skill of presentation, and the art of winning and losing gracefully. We have been competitors in the fiercest of competitions, from Juniors in regional shows, to champion of champion titles at the National level. Moving from rivalry to the wonderful friendship shared now, we can attribute it to growing up in the show ring atmosphere of the Peruvian Horse.

Our families have always had horses and participated in the shows, so we both have been competing since a



Co-author, Kelly Powers at age 5, experiencing the Peruvian Horse for the first time on Terry Jarchow's Rival MSR.

young age. When family horses were not available, there has always been a gracious owner or breeder willing to lend a horse to a Junior rider. Riding and competing on so many different horses, trained by different people, has presented its own unique set of challenges and experiences. There were competitions won and lost when the right (or wrong) horse would make the ever so critical difference in earning that much needed placing to win the High Point Junior Award. Having been able to show literally hundreds of different horses over the span of our 20 years in competition has taught us each a unique set of lessons. Learning to adapt to a new horse, a new set of cues, new training styles, sometimes literally in the span of minutes, has attributed to our success and skills as riders. Probably the best lesson learned from all of these experiences is the lesson on how to win and how to lose gracefully – a lesson that serves far outside of the show ring, and had influenced our lives as adults.

# POSITIVELY PASOS



Left: Nick riding MCD Coronado for Silver Creek Ranch. Photo by and courtesy of Stephen Lasko.

Right: Kelly riding MCD Elegancia also for Silver Creek Ranch. Elegancia won her National Laureada with Kelly aboard for all three of her National Champion of Champion titles. Photo by LiLa Foucher.

## THE “AH-HA” MOMENTS

For Kelly, it was at the 1992 PPHRNA US National Show “I was riding \*RDS Dominga, loaned to me for the show by Raul & Jo Ann del Solar. At the encouragement of Raul, I was competing in many Open and Amateur Performance classes, as well the Junior division. It was the Open Ladies to Ride, and I was the youngest entry in the class at 12 years old, competing against professional and adult amateur riders with much more experience than I had. I will never forget the judge asking for individual workouts of each of the riders, and after my workout, being placed first. The thrill and bewilderment of winning my first first place ever was the defining moment in my career as a young horsewoman. I didn’t know it, but that experience as a 12 year old little girl, beating successful professionals and amateurs in an open class, proved to me that anything was possible with hard work and dedication. It was then that I had officially caught the “bug” and made the decision that I would work as hard as I could to be able to win another blue ribbon.”

Nick’s came in 1993 at the Central States Peruvian Horse Show. “I was 13 years old and my grandparents had just sold my Junior horse, \*FPC Celaje, to Bill and Linda Virgin of Alabama. My new Junior horse was very green and not performing well. In an effort to turn my luck around I asked Bill and Linda if I could possibly use Celaje for my Junior classes. Of course they loved the idea and decided that I should try showing her in the Amateur Performance class . This was my first time in an adult class and I was very nervous. In the end I won not only that class, but also Champion of Champions Amateur Performance Mare. It was my first Champion of Champions and I couldn’t believe that I had just accomplished such a feat. Since I was seven years old, I could remember watching the Barrida of Champions from the stands with wide eyes in awe of the horses and riders performing the most beautiful routine to that energetic music. It was now my turn! I will never forget the feeling of suddenly being inside the barrida that I would watch in awe. To this day it is still a rush. The sounds of horses stomping the ground on either side of you and breathing fire with excitement, the smell of sweaty horses who have just accomplished major feats of victory,

# POSITIVELY PASOS



**Kelly and Nick with the crew from their “No Parents Allowed!” Junior seminar held in 2000. Photo courtesy of the Powers family.**

and the energy riders who are still in euphoric states after accepting awards for being the best at that show. Once I participated in my very first barrida I knew I would be around Peruvian Horses for the rest of my life.”

These two specific experiences drove our passion for competition and becoming the best we could be in the show arena. Being able to compete in the open division as children, then as teenagers, gave us the exposure we needed to develop into the riders that we are today. As we each developed our skills as Junior riders, we gained more exposure as competitors in the open division as well. Many times when we were without mounts for a Junior class solicitations weren’t needed – horses were generously offered. Usually, the invitation to ride a horse in the Junior division also included presenting the same horse in the open performance or breeding divisions too!

## **JUNIOR SEMINAR**

It was again from the generosity of a group of breeders and judges from across the U.S. how we developed our friendship. Growing up, we had always viewed each other as competition. Taken out of the context of the show arena, and into a non-competitive environment at a ranch during a seminar, we developed our friendship. We have laughed many times about what we thought of

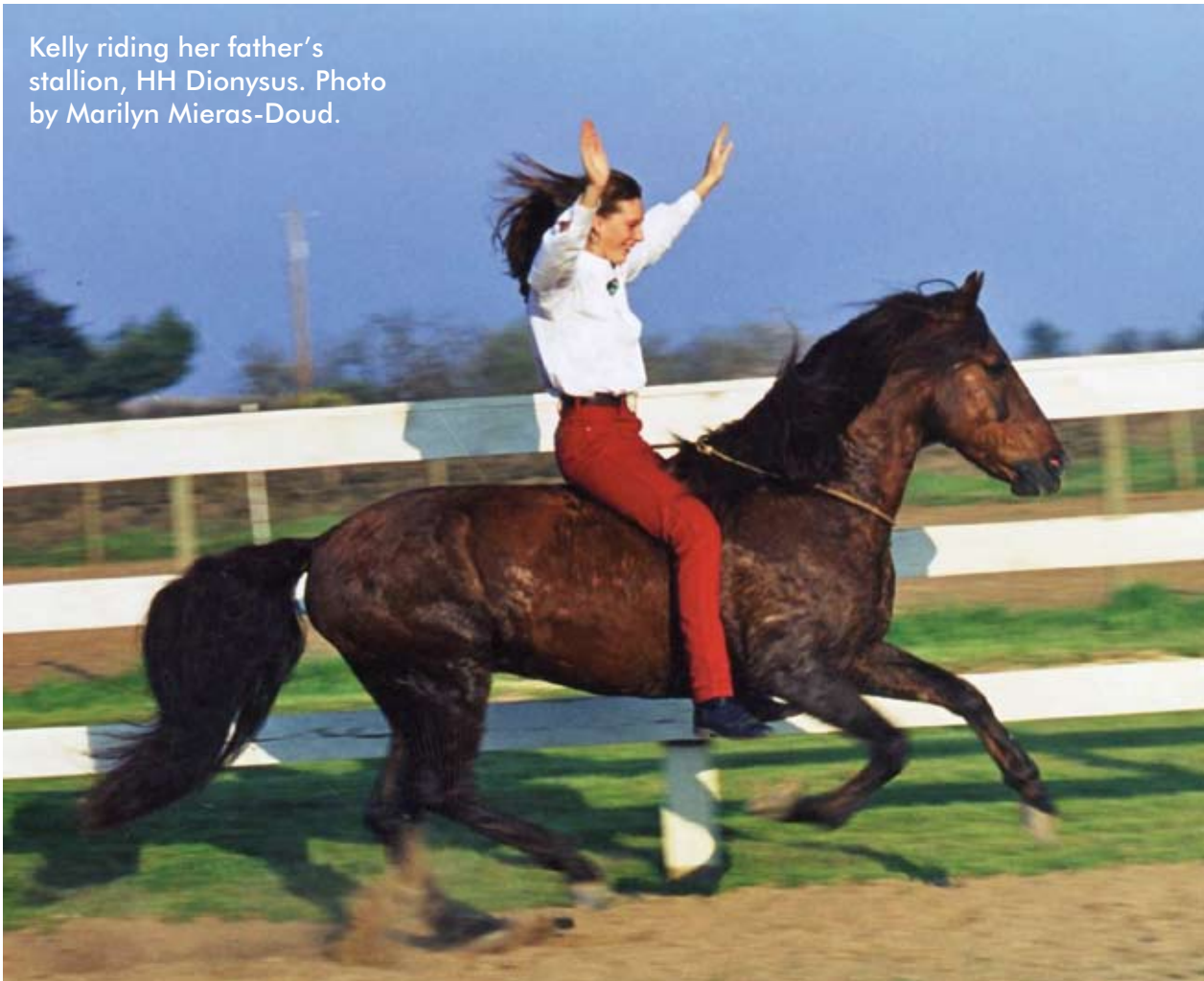
each other while growing up. At the same time, we thought it was horrible that we had missed out on years of great friendship from the time we were young. So, we decided to do something about it! At the time, there were a large number of Junior exhibitors in California, so we put together a Junior seminar at Kelly’s family’s ranch, with no parents allowed! Donations were solicited from around the country to pay for food and expenses so that the seminar could be offered for free to the participating Juniors. It was quite successful, with 17 Juniors participating from all over California. Most importantly, many friendships between the young competitors were forged that weekend, friendships that extend outside of the show arena still.

The experience of being able to pull together an event such as this, while we were both attending universities across the country was an experience. The generosity of Peruvian Horse owners and breeders had touched us once again. The outpouring of support for this particular seminar was incredible, as the donations came from such a variety of people. The idea of a Junior exclusive no-parents seminar was adopted by the Northwest Peruvian Horse club over the past few years, as well as mini seminars and pizza parties put on at regional shows across the country. It is great for us to see this continue on.

## **THE FUTURE**

This level of support from the national organizations, regional clubs and individual owners and breeders is more critical than ever before for the future of our breed. Very simply put – the number of Junior exhibitors is diminishing across the country in our breed because, as a whole, we do not foster or support Youth activities. For comparison, The Paso Fino Horse Association has a very active and healthy Junior program with multiple classes, informal mentoring programs and even a scholarship fund. The \$5,000 scholarships are awarded to Youths that excel in academic achievement, association activities and community service, (financial need is also a consideration). To date, the program has raised over \$60,000, primarily from the support of PFHA members. On a much larger scale, the

Kelly riding her father's stallion, HH Dionysus. Photo by Marilyn Mieras-Doud.



AQHA has an entire Youth association: the American Quarter Horse Youth Association, which boasts over 30,000 members. It has a Youth board of directors, newsletter, as well as numerous activities and awards. The Quarter Horse as a breed is much larger than the Peruvian Horse, but there are lessons to be learned from their support and development of their Juniors. These young riders are seen as an important and integral part of the future of their breeds.

The endorsement, participation and support these breeds put into their Youth shows in the sheer quantity of Junior participants they have, not only in their shows, but also as a breed. For example, in the last few years it has been brought up in regional clubs and breed organization meeting that Juniors should not be allowed to compete in open and/or amateur divisions. To do that, limits entire families that

participate in shows as an entity. As you have read in every single Junior Profile printed in *The Peruvian Classified*, the number one reason that Juniors enjoy showing horses is that it's a family activity. In a world where it becomes harder for parents and children to connect, horses as a common bond is often an important part of "quality family time". It is limiting the abilities and desires of the Youth to ride and show if we prohibit them altogether, as well as decrease the support for our shows, our growth and our promotion efforts. To have had the opportunity to "give it our all" during our Junior years, only benefits all of us to raise the bar in our competitions, shows or otherwise. Our involvement in horse show competition as children has also blessed us with great friendships and priceless life lessons. We hope that others continue to have the same opportunity. TPC