

Issue No. 10

Saddle

& stirrups magaz

Saving the
DANISH
Knabstrupper

**ONE
SPOT AT
A TIME**

**MUSINGS
ON CLICKER
TRAINING**

with Suzanne Rogers

for
iPad

How The Silver Dapple Gene Was Discovered In American Quarter Horses

"Branwyn Crescendo" aka Wyndi

Saving the Danish Knabstrupper

by Barrie Getz



...one
spot at
a time.

photograph by kevin kidder
www.kiddergallery.com



photograph by diane truxillo



WHEN I DROVE through the storm on that frigid April night in 2008, I knew I was headed into the middle of nowhere.

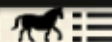
Knowing I'd spent half my life in the cityscape of modern architecture, the old mountain road leading to snow elevations seemed especially dangerous now. Wind gusts, knocked my vehicle all over the place; but no matter – I had a special visit to make, and a life-changing scenario that required my immediate attention.

“Pauliana”, a purebred Polish Arabian mare; had given birth to her extravagant filly; a special filly, by the legendary Danish Knabstrupper stallion “Pegasus vom Niehaus-hof”. Pegasus himself had barely imported to the states a year prior, and Pauliana had been nominated to be the first dam to bring his offspring to the ‘new world’.

The caretaker at the facility was alone, and the rains had somehow pushed through the roof above her stall, drenching the hours-old filly, and her frail, distraught aging dam. So, I got the call. “Barrie, we need help. Pauli’s soaked, the cover fell, and she can’t help the baby!” I knew time was of the essence, so I made that midnight drive.

On arrival, the rain was coming down in sheets. “Pauli picked a heck of a night to give birth”, I told the caretaker. She was notorious though, for her odd birthing situations. As I fought the wind, hindering my ability to open the door on her stall, I had no idea what I’d see on the other side. “Please god, let her be all right...” I whispered, hoping someone above would hear me.

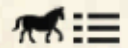
Pauliana and I had spent years together on various show-circuits; whether with her owner astride, or myself. I showed her in H/J alongside my show jumpers, as a glad favor in her behalf. The lanky Arabian mare had a mane past her shoulders; and loved the feeling of adventure. She embodied the spirit of horses across the globe, and my hope was that this filly, would adopt such an inquisitive spirit as well - if she survived the night.



photograph by diane truxillo

Pauli stood there, soaked to the bone. On seeing my face in the lamplight, she nickered slow and cold to me. She was freezing. The wind outside had penetrated into the stall; leaving frosted rain upon her coat. Standing in the opposite corner of the stall, a bay filly draped in a fuzzy white blanket stood shivering. As I looked closer, I noticed the blanket was actually covered in brown spots. "She's spotted" I gasped, realizing the extent of pattern over this new baby's spectacular coat. Yelling at the caretaker to get me blankets and towels, I quickly ran over to the filly; throwing myself upon her, to warm her petite muscular frame. She fought my embrace; mustering up every ounce of strength from within to tell me "no!" but I insisted. After twenty minutes of stall repairs, cleaning and drying Pauli - the spotted filly finally gave in to my assistance.

In the year prior, I had been given the opportunity to meet Pegasus. I had never seen a Knabstrupper in person before, more or less heard of one in the states. All I knew back then was that they had spots, and were warmbloods. He was presented to me, in the round pen at his home in Anza, CA. A large bold stallion, with a coat of near flawless white; peppered mane and tail... a vibrant pink muzzle with patches of taupe mottling intertwined upon his skin. He pranced around the ring, with a blend of sport grace and baroque elegance; keeping one eye on the railing, and another eye on me. When asked to halt his display, he trotted to the center (where I was standing); and came to a standstill within inches of my chest. I half expected him to thrust his large muscular legs at me, from such a short distance, but he surprised me by doing the complete opposite.



Pegasus, in his gentle endearing nature came forth to me, pushing his forehead into my chest. "I'm in love", I whispered, embracing the silken white coat along his crest. I turned to my friend, happily exclaiming "I would do anything....anything....for this."

After the storm had passed through, Pauliana and the spotted filly were able to finally get outside and play. In the daylight, it was the first real chance to see the baby's spectacular coat. "Pegasus really outdid himself", I said, as I watched her prance around the stall like her sire did the year prior. She embodied the spirit of both parental lines...the fiery ambition of the Arabian, and the gentle endearment of the Knabstrupper. Two of the best traits I had ever wanted in a horse. "She's for sale", my friend said, prodding me with a pitchfork. No, I couldn't get another horse...there was no way...

The filly walked up to me; neck outstretched to sniff my plush raincoat. I leaned down to pet her, kneeling at her feet. She was curious, inquisitive, and carried a mysterious presence about her, capturing my heart for all it was worth. She started grooming me...

The bond was established.

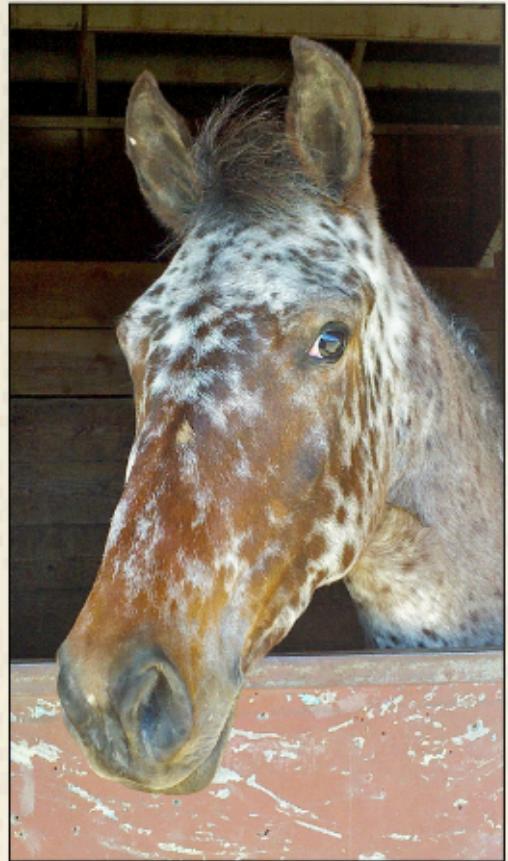
It had been said in the weeks that followed, that the little filly wasn't 'up to par' with the Knabstrupper standards. That she was 'ok', at best...strange words used to describe a newborn foal. But I saw different. What I saw in that filly was the potential to do great things. The spirit of her mother, coupled with the overwhelming kindness and personality of her father. I saw a perfect blend of these two components; laced in a snow-covered silken coat of spotted perfection.

Four years, three national expos, two Danish inspections and a goofy mare later - that spotted filly had risen up a ladder of stardom, in my blessed presence.

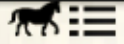
"Wyndi" (a.k.a. "The 'spotted wonder' as she had been dubbed as a youngster) matured into a stunning mare with a silken coat, laced with thousands of tiny spots; each one, a singular reflection of the horses in her noble Danish heritage.

A breed apart from the others; the Knabstruppers remained the royal horse of Denmark - noted for their excellence in athletic ability, and incredibly quiet nature; they seemed to be the perfect horses. One problem stood in the way of this desired ideal, however....

...Knabstruppers are highly endangered.



photographs by barrie getz



photograph by ashlei boucher
www.abbphotography.foliohd.com



From across the round pen I watched her prance, in the mist of the cooled October morning in 2012. The judges were on their way in from the hotel after having only been here in California for a day, and frankly - I had only been there a handful of hours at the inspection site, myself.

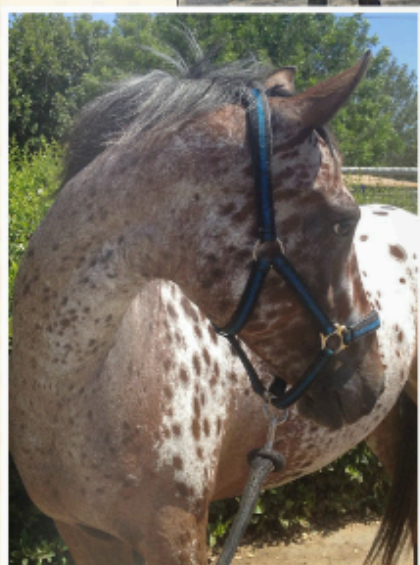
"Wyndi! Kaska woo...!" I yelled, watching as her ears perked forward upon mention of her name. Like so many days that had been spent in her presence, she replied to my calling with her typical 'snort'. She could feel the tension as well as I. It had been three years since the judges came over from Denmark; but today would be the day, in which Wyndi would try for her breeding license.

Being one of only roughly 40 adult mares in the USA; earning the right to breed with a premium score would allow Wyndi to be bred to stallions overseas; and carry on the traditions of the horses who came before her. This would be a day, which defined who she was as a Knabstrupper, and who I was as the woman blessed to be part of her life.

She walked over to me, her mane already braided and coat groomed for the inspections to follow. I reached forth, scratching her lightly upon the neck in greeting. She turned and licked me on the cheek. This is how things were between us (and still are). Bonded together in both spiritual and physical means, our relationship proved to stand as the benchmark for our successes thus far. Wyndi had been presenting herself as breed ambassador, since she was a few days old.



photograph by diane truxillo



photograph by barrie getz

“We can do this...I know we can. The future of the breed is counting on us.”

Being Pegasus’ first foal born in the USA, left a permanent mark on the breed’s future here. With a few younger siblings to follow in her wake, Wyndi would lead the charge into the inspections, once the judges arrived.

“Hey woo...” I whispered into her muzzle, as her lips graced my cheek for another round of affectionate kisses. I continued: “We can do this...I know we can. The future of the breed is counting on us.”

Through physical comments, she replied to me...lowering her head with a slight tilt to the side; her right leg raised up underneath her in a ‘begging’ position. “You’ll get plenty of treats later, if you behave yourself” I laughed. Wyndi always knew the right moment to be humorous. Soon, we would need a lot more of that humor to keep things flowing right at the trials.

Three hours into the inspections, the younger Knabstrappers went ahead of us. Wyndi’s sisters, and little brother all presented themselves in fine form to the judges, representing the standard to what the breeders overseas had upheld.

Now the time had come for the mare herself to step forth and vie for her own score and the official right to breed; continuing on the lines she’d been granted by her sire.

We trotted into the ring...



I could feel the tension on the bit, as Wyndi ground her teeth together. She knew the time had come. This was her moment, and she needed to live it for all it was worth. Born into this world, with the fighting spirit of her dam's heritage, her brilliance and interesting personality set her apart from the other siblings.

Standing at only 15h, she would be the smallest mare being presented as a "horse" at trials throughout the world. Small, but mighty - and I knew this better than anyone.

As a weanling, she was introduced to the public at Equine Affaire... the youngest breed ambassador that year for all breeds; and a natural at public relations. Several other events followed suit. As a three year old, she had the chance to demonstrate at Expo-Pomona - where she showed off her myriad of talents and extensive personality traits to thousands of people daily. It was there, that I watched her slowly mature from a filly into a young mare...

...but here, at the

KNN trials, I would witness the greatest transformation of all.

There she stood, a beacon of speckled light in the darkness of the world. The judges watched her every move. Each calculated breath she took, every flick of an ear... the number of times her lips reached for my hand in comfort. She was nervous; but in a positive fashion - for I knew, that she would channel that nervous energy into something spectacular.

"Let her go" - one of the judges said, waving his hand into the air. I leaned in, unclasping the line from her ironclad snaffle. Her diamond-studded brow band gleamed in the sunlight, as I caught the glimpse of her sclera-encircled eye. "Go..."

I whispered to her. "Go... show them what you're made of!"

She hesitated, standing proudly

in her hunter position; keeping one eye on the judges, and the other affixed on the lead in my hand. I watched her closely, as I gave her the hand signal to takeoff. She reared up, tossing her entire weight into the air, all four feet off the ground as she launched herself in a spectacular sendoff.

Soon, she landed, and trotted away from us with sheer elegance. Behind me, the judges and audience alike were whispering in coos of "ohhhh... my...." as Wyndi put on the show of her lifetime.

Four years of training, hand cues, verbal cues....trust....had come down to this moment. For all it was worth, Wyndi had transformed from that cold shaking filly, to the breathtaking mare that pranced around the ring with enough pride to fill an entire breed with its glory. She had become not only my mare, but a mare for everyone to become part of and recognize. She became a breed ambassador for the ages, and generations to come.



photograph by diane truxillo



Wyndi earned her breeding license that day, but she also took home the titles of 'Best Mare', 'Best Of Group'....and the coveted 'Best In Show'; noted for her exemplary movement and expression. She was even hailed as being 'spectacular', by one of the judges. All this, coming from a little filly that had been said would never make it in the breed. The one filly, which proved that being different, can often be greater than being one of the normal ones.

That filly has captured not only my heart; but the hearts of millions worldwide; and now proudly stands at the forefront of breed awareness for the Danish Knabstrupper, teaching horse lovers worldwide, about the rarity and loving traits of this endangered breed. With fewer than 100 Knabs in the USA, and less than 1,300 worldwide it's a struggle to keep the breed afloat. Wyndi could not have been born into a better time, and step out in front to make a difference.

It's all she ever could have asked for.

For now...

In New Zealand, a young Knabstrupper stallion is proving himself in the ranks, as being the first of the breed imported across to the island. As a sire of several youngsters in this year alone, his kids are the future of the breed in the region.

Only time will tell, where this story may lead in the future.

Until the day comes when our two worlds collide...

Wyndi will be waiting. ■



Barrie Getz, is an avid horsewoman, with over twenty years of experience in the saddle. Originally destined for show jumping fame, her equine interests have ventured far into other expansions. Like many others, her own encounter with the Danish Knabstrupper only came a handful of years ago; now she's blessed to have one as part of her extended equine family. Proud mother of three minis and a thoroughbred (along with Wyndi); her 'herd' is one of the most important elements in who she has become as a person. Outside of the equestrian spotlight, Barrie is an avid writer, artist and designer; welcoming all aspects of creative venture from around the world.

Visit Wyndi's personal [Facebook Page](#), to learn more about the Knabstrupper and her own family and visit the parent website for the [Danish Knabstrupper Association](#).