

Kimry Jelen’s love affair with horses

By **Helen Schmidling**
Correspondent

Artist Kimry Jelen has a life-long love affair with horses. At the tender age of three, while attending a local fair, she slipped away from her parents, who found her at the pony rides. By the age of five, she was visiting Galaxy, a stallion that lived on an Arabian farm, next to her grandfather’s home. She recalls the following:

“Galaxy was my friend. He was a national show champion, and he and I would have conversations as I fed him grasses along his horse fence. One time, he invited me to see where he lived. So I climbed the fence, and then he invited me to climb on his back. He walked me around his pasture, and he pointed out where the mares live behind the barn, the feed room and the grain. He stopped and showed me where everything was. He walked around the perimeter of the fence line and stopped right where I got on.”

Jelen climbed back down, but the neighbor had seen her, and called her grandfather.

“I didn’t want the horse to get in trouble since it was his idea,” she said.

She would not admit to riding the stallion. The evidence was clear, however, because the fence had just been painted, and there was paint on Jelen’s dress, and paint on Galaxy.

A mostly self-taught artist, Jelen has been painting colorful images of horses nearly as long as she has been riding. She began putting her work out in the world at about

the time social media came into its own. Commissions came her way, and to share with others, she decided it was time to create calendars. Because of the amount of work involved, she’s done one about every other year.

This year, Jelen got so many calendar requests that she got permission from owners to include some commissioned work, and put other images up on Facebook to ask followers for their preferences. This generated a buzz, and even though a recent move to Creswell has occupied much of her time, she compiled a new calendar, which will be available around December 15, at Sisters Gallery & Frame Shop, Sisters Feed and Supply, Absolute Horse in Bend, Wagon Wheel Feed and Grain in Creswell, and at Silvertail Farm. The 2019 calendars are 11 by 17 inches, and hang flat with no fold. The single-sided pages are printed on thick, glossy white card stock.

Jelen grew up in Albany, on the west side of the Cascades, and for many years, lived and created art in Sisters. She recently moved back to the “wet side,” taking a position as young horse development specialist at Silvertail Farm in Creswell, 10 miles south of Eugene. Owner-manager Laura Frederiksen Park breeds spectacular horses there, in addition to training them and matching them with suitable riders.

“Yes, it seems strange to give up what I had, with my studio in the high desert, but

I took stock of how many years I have left, and this was a perfect opportunity,” she said.

Wanting to become the best rider that she can be, Jelen gets to ride with some very well-respected clinicians. She also gets to have her own two horses, Dhiaa (which means splendor or light in Arabic) a registered Westphalian Filly; and Theo, a Lipizzaner, who is like a giant teddy bear. Jelen’s apartment is on one end of the 12-stall resident horse barn, literally next door to Dhiaa. Laura is also building a painting studio onsite, so that Jelen can continue to create her art there.

Jelen works with young horses, from weanlings to age five and up, showing each horse how to be a good citizen.

“This includes anything from picking their feet up and leading, getting them used to a halter, all the way up to going on outings and being ridden in strange places,” she explained. “It’s fun, because when you start from scratch, just leading them to and from a pasture, you work on the same cues you’d use in riding.”

“Horses have to learn to be bathed and groomed, and to understand the human world. There are a lot of things they have to tolerate that they’d rather not, like getting shoes on and taking a bath,” she said. “If not done with a certain level of kindness when they are babies, horses can turn sour about these things or learn bad habits.”

As with horses, Jelen



PHOTO PROVIDED

Snickers by Kimry Jelen is featured in her 2019 calendar.

grew up around art. Her maternal grandmother was an artist, and she grew up doing everything from Play-Doh sculptures to drawing, painting, coloring books, and lots of crafty things.

“When I had to sell my horse to go to college, it seemed so wrong, like I was selling my best friend,” she recalls.

Nonetheless, she entered

the world of fashion design, found some fun, challenging positions, and when that seemed enough, she left the corporate world and went back to work with horses on a ranch in Montana.

Jelen has developed a unique style that is sought after by people who love horses as much as she does.

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