

In English

Blue Fire Moon Farm

One of Cynthia Spanhel's treasured keepsakes is a small photo, taken by her mother with a Brownie camera, of her posing with the great Poco Bueno at the Waggoner Ranch in Vernon.

Horses were at the center of Cynthia's world as a girl growing up in Garland, when that Dallas suburb was still largely rural. "I remember one of our neighbors was still plowing with horses," she says.

Another neighbor took her to horse races in Frisco, rodeos in Mesquite, and cutting horse shows at Fair Park, where she saw Cutter Bill. Ultimately, her parents bought her a Quarter Horse named Bryan's Sugar as a birthday gift.

"That mare taught me the basics, and I rode her all over our part of the county."

Then education intervened. Cynthia earned a degree in anthropology at Texas Tech, then an MBA at Arizona State, and a Ph.D. at Indiana University, where her focus was management systems and research methodology.

Her first job after graduate school was as an assistant professor at the McCombs School of Business at UT Austin. That's when she returned to horses, beginning with dressage lessons.

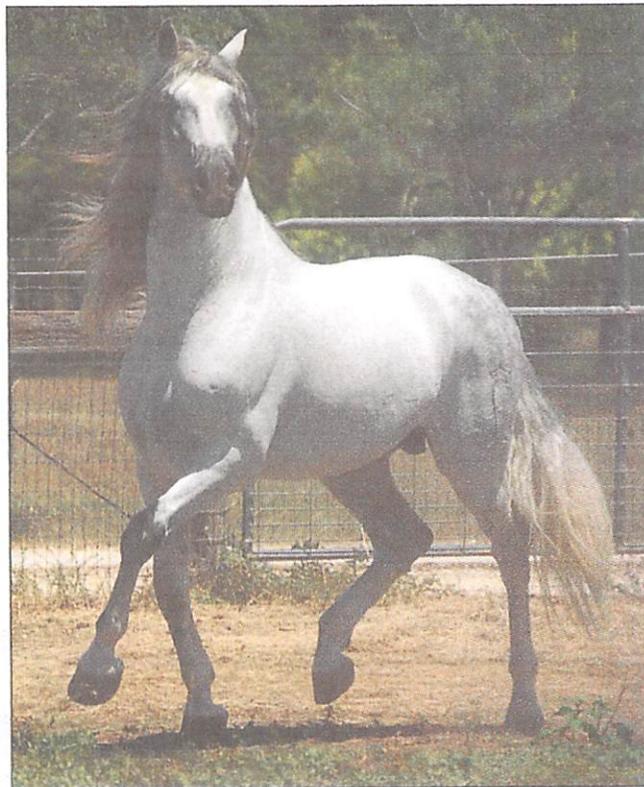
She married Pat Nester, an attorney, and they have a daughter, Leah, now 22.

Cynthia had always been attracted by Spanish horses, thanks to earlier extensive travels throughout Mexico and Latin America.

Descended from the Barb of Africa, the elegant, compact and powerful Pure Spanish Horse (Pura Raza Española, or PRE) influenced the development of breeds in Europe and the Americas for hundreds of years. The International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association (IALHA) is the primary breed registry for purebred Spanish and Portuguese horses in this country.

Cynthia became acquainted with Sherry Spielmaker, a USDF "L" judge and Andalusian breeder in nearby Pflugerville.

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After a distinguished show career, Pure Spanish stallion Odilon JIM is standing at stud at Blue Fire Moon Farm. Alice George photo.



Timex, a Pure Spanish yearling gelding and a grandson of Odilon, is among the horses for sale at the farm. Sharon Sandle Photography.

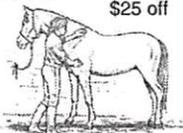
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Blue Fire Moon Farm

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"For two years, I looked for a Pure Spanish horse to buy," she says. "I also attended IALHA shows, which reinforced my desire to own one."

At last, with Sherry's help, she found Mr. Right at Gremlan Farms of California - a two-year-old named Odilon JIM, imported from Mexico. His sire, Indiano XVIII, was a two-time Spanish National Champion and Grand National Champion of Mexico, and his dam was a daughter of Jerez, one of the highest-ranked horses in the Spanish Book of Merits.

Odilon has a distinguished show record, but Cynthia is proudest that he was the personal mount of leading trainer Sabine Schut-Kery for exhibitions at Dressage at Devon and the Southwest Dressage Championships in 2005.

He is standing at stud for a fee of \$1,500 for pure Spanish mares and \$750 for other approved mares.

"It takes a really good dressage seat to ride him," says Cynthia, who is moving up the Parelli Natural

Horsemanship levels. "He moves like a warmblood. He's like an NFL athlete, with every muscle and joint engaged."

In 1999, she and her husband bought a 28-acre farm for her horses in Driftwood, southwest of Austin. The farm colors on the gates and house trim are blue and silver, reflective of the name "Blue Fire Moon," which their daughter Leah suggested.

There Cynthia keeps their stallion, eight mares (six PRE, two Welsh Ponies, and an Andalusian-Oldenburg), and a few of their Odilon offspring she has retained as personal horses. She does all the breeding, foaling and training herself, assisted at times by Leah. Limited pasture boarding for outside retired horses is also available.

Seven foals, four by Odilon, are expected this spring. Meanwhile, the farm has a selection of pure Spanish and Spanish-cross horses for sale. Deidre Malburg, a USDF silver and bronze medalist based at Salado Creek Riding Club in Belton, is helping Cynthia with marketing and sales. (www.deidredressage.com)

In 2012, exhibiting several of her young horses, Cynthia won the Outstanding Horsemanship Award at the Hy Court Farm Versatility Show Series in Cedar Creek.

One of the best Odilon foals she has raised is a leggy Spanish-Oldenburg filly, Titanica, who will compete in Sporthorse in Hand classes this year with an outside handler.

In addition to running the farm, Cynthia - who spent 15 years as a researcher for the State Bar of Texas - has started teaching online classes in research methods for Ashford University.

Out her window at home, she can admire Odilon. "He's jaw-droppingly beautiful," she says.

Besides their good looks and elegant movement, she says, Spanish horses develop a strong attachment to their owners.

"They become part of the family. Odilon actually misses me when I'm away from the farm. He gets this hang-dog look. It makes me feel guilty!"

For more information, visit www.bluefiremoon.com. ★

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