



UNITING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S HORSEPOWER

THE EQUESTRIAN NEWS

LIFESTYLE

The Horse of a Lifetime

Equine therapy works its magic on a new rider

By Talmage Bachman

I had no idea where the impulse had come from.

If you'd met me 10 years ago, you wouldn't have guessed that buying a horse would lead to one of the greatest experiences of my life. Between my career as a recording artist and my life offstage as a husband and father of seven, it was hard to imagine me making time to become an equestrian in my mid-30s, but that's exactly what happened.

It started when my marriage began to falter after my wife and I decided to sever ties with the religion in which we had been raised. The resulting upheaval threatened to leave our once-idyllic lives in a shambles. I had to do something. But what? For those entrenched in the equestrian lifestyle, the idea of "horse therapy" is pretty well known, but it wasn't to me. I had no real familiarity with horses. Like most young boys, I had fantasized about becoming a cowboy, but in real life, I didn't even know anyone

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Lesser Goldfinch



Feathered Friends

Bird-watching on the trails

By Oscar Lopithecus

My fascination with birds began when I was growing up in the wilds of southern Michigan, where, surrounded by smokestacks and factories, nature was only something you'd read about. My first significant brush with nature was triggered by the words, "No! I don't want porridge for breakfast again!" That remark resulted in me being sent to my room with no breakfast at all. There, I opened the window by my bed and crawled out onto the garage roof, where an old pine tree towered above. Reaching up, I touched the pine needles and noticed a bird, its head held high, shoulders squared and orange chest puffed out. It was my first robin.

That robin soon became a regular part of my life. It didn't take long for me to realize we could interact. We ate together

(actually, I fed her) and we slept together (though not in the same nest). Ultimately we formed a bond, but it was one in which I was always at a disadvantage. I could not fly, I could only observe.

All these many years later, I'm still observing and enjoying the local bird population to the fullest when out hiking the Southern California trails. There are some species that live in here, and some that just pass through during migrations.

This is the first in a series of periodic looks at the birds that can be seen while riding our beautiful Southern California hills.

Belted Kingfisher

The first time I saw the belted kingfisher, I was 10 years old, walking along the Loon River with my dad. He pointed to a bird sitting on an oak branch that extended over the river. It had a strong, dark, pointed bill and beautiful light-blue plumage with a spiked, blue crown. (There is some resemblance to a woodpecker, but they have red heads and are usually seen pecking at the bark of a tree for food). Suddenly this blue beauty dove into the water and emerged flapping its wings, then airborne, a small fish in its mouth.

A kingfisher often hovers over water where a fish is visible and then dives vertically for the prey—one of a very few birds that dive headlong into water from the air. They also feed on crayfish, lizards, mice and insects, and often patrol a regular beat along a stream. You can

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Tall in the Saddle

Reagan's centenary recalls a life of ranching and horses



Ronald Reagan was an avid horseman, whose favorite mount was a white Arabian named El Alamein.

By Paula Parisi

February 4 is the 100th anniversary of Ronald Reagan's birth, and it is a day worth celebrating. For many, the man who would become the 40th president of the United States exemplified numerous fine qualities. Humble, hard-working and down-to-earth, Reagan chopped wood "for fun," loved horses and spent a good deal of time enjoying nature.

In her autobiography, *My Turn*, Nancy Reagan said she "knew almost nothing about riding when I first met Ronnie, but I soon realized that if I wanted to marry this man I'd have to trade in my tennis racket for a saddle." Sure enough, she learned to sit a placid old Quarter Horse, throwing in with her husband on Sunday hacks through the California hills. But Reagan himself favored more spirited mounts – Arabians and Thoroughbreds.

A common misconception is that the Reagans were wealthy and lived opulent, indulged lives. That was hardly the case. Before he met Nancy, Reagan-the-actor owned a seven-acre ranch in Northridge, where he would spend weekends, and was reported to have cleaned the stalls himself.

After they married, the couple

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Don't Fence Her In

Artist Leslie Anne Webb Captures Light & Color

By Nancy Cole Silverman

If there is a catchphrase that best describes the work of artist Leslie Anne Webb, it's "Don't fence me in." Her work, like nearly everything she does, is big and bold, from her choice of oversize canvasses, to her horses, with their whimsical expressions, peering out at the viewer as though they might be leaning over a fence for a treat. But it's her use of strong, vibrant colors that provides the kicker. Webb likes to imagine that her work brings viewers "a sense of peace or a smile to their face."

It was that goal which drove Webb to define her style, a quest that began eight years ago when she became fed up with a fast-paced world that she felt was causing her to lose focus. She refers to this period as her "do-over time." Selling off all her worldly belongings, she moved with five horses to a bare swath of land in Grass Valley, where she erected a tepee. Learning to live without life's luxuries (like running water!) allowed her to get

The artist at play.



back to the basics.

In the process of redefining herself, she redefined her art. Absent the distractions of civilization, Webb recalls the sense of solitude when she picked up her paintbrush

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Leslie Anne Webb *Continued from page 17*



Webb titled this portrait simply: Love.

and looked into the eyes of a horse, and how it allowed her to open up to her intuitive side and the pure experience of opening herself to the colors of the world and the personalities of the animals.

Webb started to discover the person she believes she was born to be. "I vowed to dedicate my life to painting these larger-than-life, colorful horses, and to saving as many of them as possible." Webb made it her mission to be surrounded by horses and to enlighten those around her through art. "Most of all," she says, "I wanted to have a cause or a purpose of importance."

Studying Webb's work, it doesn't take long to understand her purpose is to support abandoned and abused horses. She is an ardent supporter of the United Pegasus and Cloud Foundations and dedicates much of her time to educating people about the plight of America's wild horses, and why it's important we pause in our day-to-day routines to remember our connections to each other and to what Webb refers to as the "energy around us."

Many of Webb's subjects are horses she has rescued. She sets them against bold shades of blue-green, red-orange, purple and yellow that come to her as she studies the animals, like an aura, allowing her to visually recreate the energy she feels as gets to know them. There's Charlie Blue Eyes, who in her latest work, looks askance at the viewer, his head slightly tilted as though he might be about to turn and run, pausing cautiously against a massive blue background. There's Sam, formerly a PMU baby, now an 18-hand gray Percheron draft horse rescued by the United Pegasus Foundation. Webb has painted Sam's stunning profile, his white mane partially covering his eyes,

against a vivid red background. In one of her newest works, entitled *Eat, Pray, Love*, she has paired two giant red-orange horses, one about to affectionately nuzzle the other as they gaze at the viewer against a spill of bold blue. Sometimes a client will ask Webb to paint their horse with certain colors, but she says that she instead lets the horse guide her.

Webb's refusal to be 'fenced in' by conventional standards doesn't end with her work on the canvas. Her artistic sensibility extends from her studio, where she lives and paints next to the tepee, to the arena where she works with people to teach them about the healing powers of the horse.

Three years ago Webb opened the Circle Seven Ranch. "The ranch," says Webb, "is a form of equine-guided education, promoting healing through horses." She believes strongly in a universal spiritual energy, a human-animal connection, and says that people have the ability to learn and to be healed from horses if they open their hearts and minds to the possibility. "The horse is a teacher, and offers us lessons in honesty, truth, authenticity... breaking down the walls that keep us from connecting with ourselves and others on a deeper and more spiritual level."

Today, eight years after her "do-over" and looking back on her first days in the tepee, Webb says, "There is a sense of knowing, a tranquil state of excitement that soothes the soul." She knows she's doing what she's been called to do. "It is through my artwork and the presence of these majestic horses that I hope to change the world for the better."

For more information, go to www.lawebb.com.



The artist at work in her studio in Grass Valley, California.

Cavalía Thunders into Town

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standing "500 feet away from one in a field," he was taken with the way one of the animals seemed to completely captivate the audience as a bit player in a local show he'd produced in Quebec.

Thus, Cavalía was born. Latourelle feels it is best summed up not as an equine extravaganza but "a celebration of life." He says one of the most difficult aspects of putting the show together was getting the horses used to having people fly in the air above their heads. "We had the acrobats regularly giving them carrots, so they came to view the whole thing as flying carrots," he explains, sharing a bit of wrangling wisdom.

On Jan. 20, its second night in Los Angeles, Cavalía hosted a fund-raiser for the Larry King Cardiac Foundation, which provides funding for life-saving treatment for individuals who, due to limited means or no insurance, would otherwise be unable to receive treatment and care.



Redefining the art: bareback riding becomes airback riding under the big tent.



Marliela Michaud and friend perform the segment called "Discovery."

Two lives that have been saved specifically as a result of Cavalía are the horses Rocky and Roucao, rescued Mustang colts who are the first horses onstage each night. But every one of Cavalía's 49 horses is a treasure in itself, and the sheer variety of breeds spans the world: Paints, Criollos and Quarter Horses featured in Roman and trick riding; Andalusians and Lusitanos in carousel and dressage; Percherons and Comptois in vaulting.

The horses range from 8 months to 19 years in age, and they are all either geldings or stallions. The stallions, Latourelle concedes, are "more difficult to train than geldings or mares, but are far more spirited performers."

The variety of the horses is a wonderful complement to the show's array of multi-media special effects. Water appears and disappears on stage, produced by a water curtain and drained away as if by magic. Autumn leaves fall from the sky, and later in the show, snow drifts down on stage as the air grows chill. Complex projections re-create onstage the caves of Lascaux, a Roman coliseum, a Renaissance courtyard, the forest and the desert.

Some serious backstage magic permits the audience to enjoy the show without being aware of the massive amount of equipment required to produce it. Cavalía arrived in Burbank in a convoy of 80 semi-trailers. (The tent alone weighs 100,000 pounds, requiring seven trucks.)

For those looking for an experience that blends wonder and fun, Cavalía is

hard to beat. The show combines the natural with the mechanical to create a unique entertainment environment. Latourelle sums up: "My passion in life is to make people dream."

Cavalía: A Magical Encounter Between Horse and Human will be held under the White Big Top in Downtown Burbank at 777 North Front Street. For show dates and reservations, call 1-866-999-8111 or visit www.cavalía.net.



Above, Cavalía creator Normand Latourelle; Below, the "big tent," a white confection where they whip-up magic.