



Shelly Kerron and Steer Clear at the Monterey National Horse Show

SHELLY KERRON

Legacy Hunters & Jumpers

Third generation equestrian Shelly Kerron is one of the most respected hunter/jumper trainers in the Northwest. She has owned and operated Legacy Hunters & Jumpers since 1984, and last year moved her operation to Little Bits

Therapeutic Riding Center's old location in Woodinville, WA and continues to teach and train and build on her equestrian legacy. Horse Connection sat down with Shelly to talk about horses, her training philosophy, and her future.

YOU COME FROM A LONG LINE OF EQUESTRIANS – TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND THEIR HISTORY WITH HORSES.

My grandfather, Harry Kerron had one of the first riding stables in Portland in the 1920's (The Portland Riding Academy), and he supplied horses to the cavalry and the taxi companies. Back then that was the mode of transportation so people would come to my grandfather for horses. Then my father came into the business and rode racehorses, jumpers, and western horses. He met my mother in 1963, and they opened Sunwood Farms in 1969 in Beaverton, Oregon and it was very successful. Both my parents were in the hunter jumper business and I was raised in that business. I was fortunate to go to open horse shows where I was exposed to western and gaited horses as well, so I have ridden all sorts of horses and because of that early exposure, I have a very rich background and knowledge of horses in general.



Shelly's father, Don Kerron, rode racehorses and jumpers and in 1969, with wife Joan opened Sunwood Farms in Beaverton, Oregon.



"There was no other color to her but blue," said Shelly about her mother, Joan Curtin, an accomplished competitor.

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU ACTUALLY STARTED RIDING?

I started riding at age five and started competing at age seven in the pony hunters. And back then, the pony hunters were three foot and I don't believe we had anything lower than three foot, and the junior hunter was three foot six. There wasn't a children's hunter division back then so you started off jumping three foot six and went up from there.

HOW LONG DID YOU CONTINUE TO COMPETE?

I've been competing for over 40 years. I rode one year as an amateur owner and turned professional in 1984.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT IN YOUR COMPETITIVE RIDING CAREER?

I rode in the World Cups in the late 80's and did really well. I had a great horse named Reno and I competed him many times at Spruce Meadows and did really well. I also loved qualifying and

competing back east in the indoor shows. Those are my highlights.

WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM EACH OF YOUR PARENTS IN REGARDS TO YOUR RIDING AND YOUR CAREER?

My dad and I were close as far as horsemanship skills, but I was always in awe of my mother because she was a great competitor. There was no other color to her but blue. She rode to win every single time she went into the ring.

AND YOU'VE CARRIED THAT COMPETITIVE DRIVE INTO YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

I have – I'm top quality – horses, training, feed, shoeing, vet work, it's all top quality.

WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY WHEN IT COMES TO RIDING?

Riding is a lifetime of practice. You have to put a lot of hours in the saddle in order to develop your skills. I request

of my riders that they spend a lot of time practicing.

WHEN YOU SAY PRACTICE, WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN?

I have my students ride almost six days a week, or at least five days, and take lessons three days a week. In our barn we ride each other's horses and this raises their skill level because they get the opportunity to ride different horses.

WHAT IS THE MOST FULFILLING PART OF YOUR BUSINESS?

The most fulfilling part is watching and teaching students to have good relationships with their horses. To have good relationships whether they're on the ground grooming them or in the show ring winning classes. I want everyone to understand the horses – how they think and feel.

WHAT'S THE LEAST FULFILLING?

The least fulfilling is the struggle of getting people to take the time.

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Shelly & Sea Smoke, aka Coaster, on course at the Evergreen Classic at Marymoor Park in Redmond, WA.



Trainer and World Cup competitor, Shelly Kerron comes from an equestrian family that spans three generations, with each generation making their mark on the northwest equestrian industry.

DO YOU SEE THAT STRUGGLE GETTING ANY EASIER?

No, it's getting worse because money can't buy time and time is what it takes to perfect your skills and to develop a relationship with the horse. A relationship with horses is where my center focus is. The care of the horse is number one in my barn and what I teach and what I preach. The clients are second the horses are first.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT NOW AS OPPOSED TO 20 YEARS AGO WHEN IT COMES TO TIME COMMITMENT?

Everything is faster now, cellphone, the web, texting, computers, and people are more pre-occupied. When you walk into my barn you'll see that there is a "cell basket." When you come to my barn as a student or a client you put your phone in the basket. There is nothing more dangerous than to be around horses and not be engaged – to be fully there, with the horse. My grandfather taught me that you come into their (the horse) time and their space, so you have to put the cellphone down.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HORSES HAVE TAUGHT YOU THAT TRANSLATES INTO YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?

Horses have taught me to be very patient and very still, so I am patient and stay grounded in my beliefs.

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Leslie Howard, as a competitor, inspires me greatly. A lot of the older horsemen – Judy Richter is a very big inspiration to me. She is a great horseman – she was horseman of the year once.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR TOUGHEST CHALLENGE?

My toughest challenge is to run a good business. My integrity is everything to me.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHARITY?

Little Bits Therapeutic Riding. They have been a benefactor of horse shows locally and I've been working for them for a long time. I have seen handicapped children and the difference the horses make in their lives. I have seen children that could not walk, walk!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK?

My favorite book currently is Arianna Huffington's, Thrive.

BESIDES HORSES, DO YOU HAVE ANY HOBBIES?

I love to water ski and I have my own ski boat and it is a passion I share with my brother Tom.

FAVORITE SADDLE?

Antares. All of my clients ride in Antares.

WHAT IS YOUR GUILTY PLEASURE?

Chocolate ice cream.

WERE YOU A WILD OR MILD CHILD GROWING UP?

Under the radar wild!

WHERE DO YOU LIVE IN YOUR DREAMS?

Right here and right now.

YOUR PARTNER MUST "LOVE HORSES." WHAT ELSE MUST THEY LOVE BESIDES YOU?

Dogs.

THAT PROBABLY ANSWERS THIS QUESTION AS WELL - DOGS OR CHILDREN?

DOGS.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST REGRET?

Not being at my nanny's deathbed.

GREATEST FEAR?

Not succeeding.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ITEM ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

Visiting the Turks and Caicos.

WHOM WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE DINNER WITH?

Russell Wilson.

WHAT IS YOUR MOTTO?

Winners never quit and quitters never win.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON FOR SHELLY?

To continue the legacy and to pass it on to my sister Elizabeth, and to help her build her career. Shelly still has some

big sights and some big horse shows and grand prix to compete in. I want to continue riding competitively for another 10 to 12 years, and to pass the torch.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF HORSE SPORT IN THIS COUNTRY GOING?

I feel the business is going to boom, perhaps not as fast as soccer, but I believe that if we could get some television coverage it would boom faster.

DO YOU THINK THE ECONOMICS OF THE SPORT IS GOING TO PREVENT IT FROM BECOMING AS POPULAR AS IT SHOULD?

Yes, absolutely, it does take money to compete and show but it doesn't take a lot of money to have a horse and to ride well. It doesn't take a lot of money to take lessons and go to clinics but to go on the road and compete at horse shows takes money.

DO YOU THINK IT IS VALUABLE TO A YOUNG PERSON'S DEVELOPMENT TO BE AROUND HORSES - TO RIDE OR TO TAKE CARE OF THEM?

Learning respect of the animal and the responsibility factor in feeding and caring for the animal is huge. Building a relationship with the animal – understanding what they need and valuing what they have done for this country, that is invaluable to a young person.

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