

# FOR THE GAYLORDS, ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE WESTERN SHOW PEN

by Catherine Cole Ferandelli

Long-time Arabian horse owner Natalie Gaylord has lived stories. Confident in her ways and easy to laugh, she is delightfully immersed in the latest wave of horse fever in her life and sharing the joy with 9-year-old daughter Natalie and husband E.K (Ed).

Fresh off a stellar 2022 Scottsdale show (three championships, two of them unanimous), both “Natalies” are forging ahead in the 2022 Arabian show season, competing in pretty much all of the Western/Working Western competitions the show pen has to offer.

For mother Natalie, a native Coloradan, horse fever began with this, “Remember those stick horses our mothers could buy at the local supermarket? Well, that’s where it started for me. I had them in red, white and black. I wore them out in a month and ultimately wore out my parents shag carpeting playing stick horse throughout the house!” She laughs and continues, “Fortunately, my mother loved horses too, later driving me to riding lessons an hour from our house. To and from, we bonded through our shared love, deepening it, to my getting a horse of my own.”

War Owl, a Half-Arabian grey gelding bred by Frederick and Barbara Foss was Natalie’s first horse. “My parents’ rules to owning a horse were clear and non-negotiable from the beginning,” says Natalie. “I performed all the care for my horses: feeding, cleaning and stall care; and was required do it well. One horse soon morphed to anywhere between four to six. It was all a fabulous dream for a girl like me who wanted nothing more than to live, eat and breathe all things horses.”

Possessing a natural curiosity, Natalie sought to learn everything she could, frequently taking in horse seminars, including those put on by the iconic Lasma Arabians. New horse friends (four- and two-legged) motivated Natalie to try her hand in the show pen. And again, her parents set the rules. “My parents insisted I do it all,” says Natalie. “Horse care and showing was to remain 100% my efforts, from hauling my horse, caring and prepping for the classes, to cleaning up and hauling back home.” Natalie chuckles, “In those days we entered

every class, doing every discipline we could.” One horse was especially memorable. “I had started my young mare who would come up on all fours and scream like a woman. It was terrifying, but she and I won plenty of top tens! Of course, I bred her, getting a daughter with whom I competed in side saddle at U.S. Nationals, and we won!” Finishing her story with a flourish, Natalie exclaims, “Prouder than all get out, riding to get our prize, this mare kicks out like a mule, no doubt a rebel like her dam, but I couldn’t have been prouder!”



E.K.III, Nichols, E.L., Natalie, Ed, Natalie, Grant

Photo by Allison Tyler Jones Photography



After graduating high school, Natalie attended UCLA. While there, a friend who knew of her horse passion and was sure the potential suitor and Natalie would “hit it off”, told her about a guy she knew who loved horses too.

“We all know the general term of being a horse lover is about on par with loving cars,” says Natalie. “He could be an unemployed cowboy, he could be a race horse owner!” Turns out, the guy who loves horses was E.K. Gaylord II, the son and grandson of the iconic Gaylord Family of Oklahoma.

The Gaylord Family, famed for Gaylord Entertainment (Grand Ole Opry and more), has a long, treasured history with horses, “Everything from Saddlebreds to Thoroughbreds and more,” says Natalie.

Marrying in 1990, Natalie and Ed later combined their horse passion by purchasing top Arabian broodmares, focusing on the highly revered Barbary and Bask bloodlines and breeding top English, halter, hunter and reining progeny.

Several years later and the parents of four boys, Natalie and Ed took a recess from Arabian horses, scaling down but never completely out of the horse world.

Then daughter Natalie was born, who quickly exhibited the same crazy horse fever her mother and father embraced.

“Baby Natalie was surrounded by horses, horse books, memorabilia, figurines and stuffed animals from birth,” recalls Natalie. “She grew up amidst fervent horse lovers. It seemed natural that as soon as she could talk, our girl was asking for riding lessons.”

A decades long friendship with veteran riding coach Rick Nab, was the first step in getting daughter Natalie into a responsible, safe riding lesson and training program. Rick, a keen observer of the established and up-and-coming horse trainers, referred the Gaylords to Colby Powell Performance Horses.

“Rick instinctively knew the right trainer for me and our daughter,” Natalie says. “He continued to coach equitation at shows, but from the beginning, Colby quickly took the reins, locating and purchasing the best horses for us both.”

Colby, son of veteran trainer LaRae Fletcher Powell, was local to the Gaylords, his training barn located in Scottsdale. He began the search for and purchased two perfect horses for mother and daughter.

The first was Saratoga BF (Sir Fames HBV x A Current Affair), a gleaming purebred black gelding. The (then) 12-year-old “Saratoga” was already an open and amateur western pleasure success at the national level. Both Natalies built up their riding skills in 2020 and 2021, showing and earning championship ribbons at Scottsdale, Regions 2 and 7, and many nearby Class A rated shows.

Young Natalie’s first national competition was Youth Nationals 2021, where her beloved coach Rick Nab proudly announced her and Saratoga’s results in Arabian Western Pleasure Equitation Walk/Trot 10 & Under as, “First national show, first national class results in first national championship!”

The team went on to Scottsdale 2022, winning the Walk/Trot 10 & Under Western Pleasure championship.



Above: Natalie Jane & Natalie Gaylord at the 2022 Region 7 Championships. Facing page: The Cowboy Way, 2000 U.S. National Champion H/A Western 40 & Over (top), and Saratoga BF, 2021 Youth National Champion Arabian Walk/Jog 10 & Under (bottom).



Photo by Allison Tyler, Jena Photography







And what is mother Natalie's expectations of her daughter for this privilege of showing Arabian horses? "The same as I had growing up, my daughter is expected to work hard. Other than having a trainer, she is expected to clean her tack and perform all the hands-on horse care she can. Ed and I are so proud of how all our children have embraced their own higher standard of stellar achievement through hard work, and we are pleased with how much effort Natalie puts in to both improving herself every time she rides and helping around the barn. She truly loves to ride and loves her horses."

The second perfect horse found by Colby for the Gaylords was the Western Pleasure Half-Arabian pinto gelding Fixations Khash (Fixation x Khaadi) at Youth & MidSummer Nationals in 2020. The handsome 6-year-old bay overo impressed Colby for his natural ability and seamless and successful ease of competing in the open, amateur and walk/trot divisions.

"Khash' always brings a big smile to my face," says Natalie. "We call him garbage disposal around the barn as he'll eat anything. Further, he is just a real goofball." At the same time, Natalie acknowledges his rock star ability. "This same silly horse happily allows Natalie and I to show him, framing up perfectly in all of our western pleasure classes. When it comes to competing, Khash is all business and an absolute love to show."

At U.S. Nationals 2021, Khash outdid himself, teaming with Colby to take the top prize in the highly competitive Half-Arabian Western Pleasure Open. The Gaylord family, unable to be present, watched the live feed from home, letting out whoops and hollers that "could be heard all the way to Tulsa!" Natalie delights in the memory, "Champagne bottles were immediately popped open, it was such a happy, festive event."

This year's show season has started off with a bang, with both Natalies earning multiple championships at Scottsdale and Region 7. Beaconing is Region 1 in the beautiful Del Mar and Youth & MidDummer Nationals in July.

Young Natalie is looking forward to the additional disciplines of short stirrup reining and showmanship, while mother Natalie is adding ranch rail to her competition schedule.

"Our family is blessed to own, ride and show wonderful horses," Natalie concludes, "all purchased sight unseen by our amazing trainer Colby Powell. His instinctual ability to match horse to rider is uncanny. Our latest purchase, multiple national reining horse champion Whata Doc Bar TR ("Teddy") is the perfect youth and amateur partner for both Natalie and I in working western. We are very fortunate indeed."



Facing page: Fixations Khash with Colby Powell, 2021 U.S. National Champion Half-Arabian Western Pleasure Open. Above, left to right: Fixations Khash and Saratoga BF with Natalie Gaylord; Saratoga BF with Natalie Jane Gaylord.