

Educated for Life

By Kathy Serio

College — it was never a question of “if” — it was a question of “where.” That isn’t meant to sound snobbish. There really were no other options discussed, because my dad was a college professor who taught Ph.D. candidates at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Dad was a Ph.D. as well, with a degree in Nuclear Engineering, graduating valedictorian at Stanford University, so we grew up with “college” all around our family discussions.

We lost my pop, suddenly, in 1999 — my hero, my educator. I still believe education is very important, although I also believe there are different ways to attain your education, whether it’s through college lessons or through life lessons.

I loved that when we were kids, we were immersed in many different events — lots of educating, lots of lessons. We received an education in piano, clarinet, riding, dance, theater, gymnastics, skiing and even singing. A real education is when these things “stick” over the years and something you tried as a kid, you pick up later in life and still find success with, such as riding, skiing or even singing! (Think “Wedding Singer!”)

Gymnastics — not so much. The last time I was able to do a split was the one and only time it happened, in seventh grade cheerleader tryouts. I actually made the team, but it was more for my screaming ability than for my double back handsprings with split. I think I was the only girl on the team who could only do a cartwheel. Somehow I made captain of the team too, big lungs. “We are the Lion Cubs, the Mighty Mighty Lion Cubs!” (Since when were lion cubs mighty? Who knows, but I could sing it loud!)

The one thing I loved about learning to ride as a kid was that you can actually walk away from it if you have to (I had to) and sell the horses, and pick it back up later and remember most of it! Even your muscles remember riding pretty quickly.

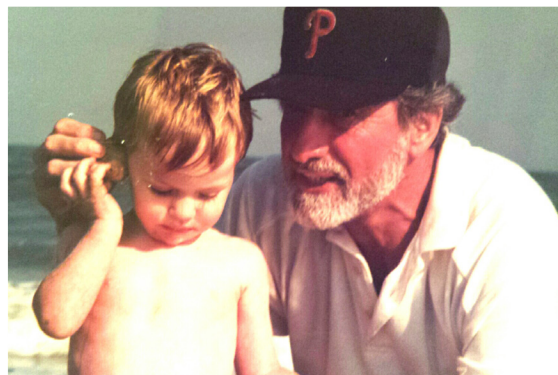
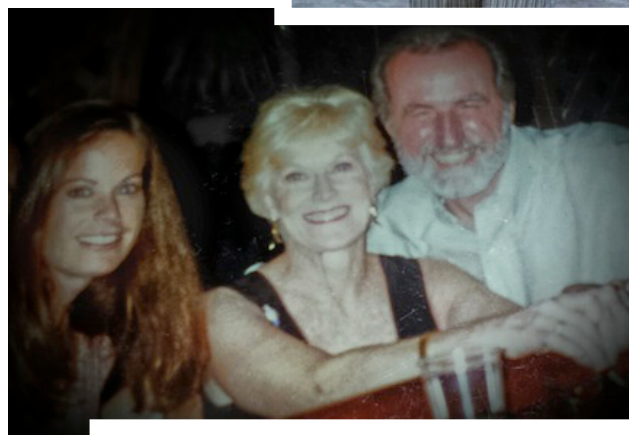
I took 10 years off from riding — for college, post college careers and marriage — and then found my way back to it when my unassuming ex-husband left me alone too long during his internal medicine residency. Note to all newlyweds: Do not leave your former equestrian bride alone for long periods of time or she might begin the slippery, expensive slope back into riding. Before he could say “Happy First Anniversary,” I had a horse. Before he could say “Happy Third Anniversary,” we had three horses. Before he could say “Happy Sixth Anniversary,” we had built our 22-stall barn.

The important lesson to learn while you’re growing up is to be sure to remember to learn while you’re growing up! Take notes and remember your lessons! So one day, when you see your old trainer in the common schooling arena at the Winter Equestrian Festival and you hear her voice talking sternly to a pony rider, you have something smart to say to her after all those years.

The first time I heard my first trainer, Joy Kloss, talking to a child saying “that pony is not afraid of that horse passing you, just keep riding forward,” I froze! I hadn’t seen Joy in 18 years. So I said, “That’s right, that pony isn’t afraid of that horse, he’s afraid of Joy!”

That was an exceptional day. I was able to catch up with my old trainer, and now dear friend, and reminisce on horses and life, and she actually watched me ride and was proud.

I guess it’s safe to say mom and dad were right. Education is important. **S**



Top Left: Kathy Serio

Photo by Holly Gannon Taboada

Top Right: Kathy’s first trainer, Joy Kloss, gave her a great education in riding.

Photo courtesy of Kathy Serio

Middle: Kathy with her parents, Carol and Harry Brown

Photo courtesy of Kathy Serio

Bottom: Kathy’s dad “educating” Kathy’s nephew Tyler at the beach.

Photo courtesy of Kathy Serio