

My Hero

(Stephanie Marcum)

By Barry Marcum

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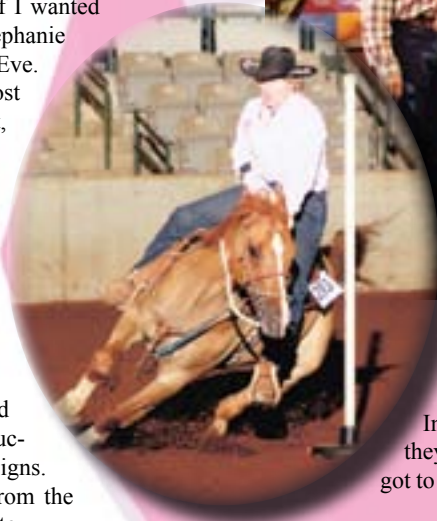
I met her on New Years Eve 1990. I had gone to Michigan to pick up Debbie Elliott's truck for her and when I dropped it off at her house, she was talking to Steph on the phone. Deb decided that Steph and I should meet. She called me and asked if I wanted to meet a friend of hers named Stephanie Taylor and go out on New Year's Eve. I said that sounded okay but, I almost changed my mind. As it turned out, I went and we had a great time. About fifty days later I asked her to marry me and we were married in September of 1991.

Steph has had horses since her dad convinced the family to move out to Avon (Indiana) from the city. You should hear her tell stories about their first barn her dad built out of leftovers from construction jobs and old standard station signs. It was at the bottom of the hill from the house and in the winter they had to slide water down to it on a sled.

When I first met her she was riding a horse named Exotic Jag, "Dub" for short. He got his nickname because he ran Double A on the track. She was also riding a horse named Jetido (Dewey) whom she later sold to Leah Roberts. The weekend after we got home from our honeymoon we went to Kentucky or Tennessee, I can't remember now, to look at a horse that Richard Cotton had named Royal Guy Pogo (Guy). We got to the show and asked where Richard's trailer was and someone pointed out an old stock trailer with what looked like a big pony tied to it. I looked at her and said, "Is that what we came to look at?" It was.

Then they threw a saddle on him and he grew about 4 inches. Chris Coffey took him out and blew everybody away. Steph rode Guy and Dub for a lot of years, taking both to Congress and the World Show several times. Dub was Reserve Champion Amateur Poles in 1998. During that time she also won several GBRA-I (Girls Barrel Racing Association of Indiana) saddles and buckles and is a six or seven time Girls All-Around Champion. She has ridden several other horses and colts over the years, including ones that have gone on with other people to run in high school rodeo, the GBRA-I, Open and Quarter Horse Shows.

Steph's dad, Noble Sr., who was a major force behind Steph and her riding, passed in 1995 from cancer and she lost her mom Dorothy in 2002. Steph's parents were not just parents, but also her best friends, though sometimes you would be hard pressed to tell it the way she and her dad would argue. Those arguments really meant nothing because that was just the way they were with each other. In 2005 a friend of ours, Mary Freels, called Steph and told her that Dave Smith wanted to sell his horse Moonstruck Sue and she thought that Steph might like him. We brought him home to try him out for awhile and decide if she liked him. She thought about sending him home, but I talked her out of



it. That year she won the Senior Barrels at the Kentucky State Fair with him.

In 2007, right after Congress she had her yearly mammogram and they found a lump. They called to tell us it was cancer just as we got to Oklahoma for the AQHA World Show that year. We both cried a little and then decided that we came here for her to try and win a championship and she did try, coming in at Reserve Champion in the Amateur Poles, just missing winning by two one thousands of a second.

We came home and she started treatment which included chemo, radiation and surgery. In 2008 we were back at the Worlds again, which was one of her main goals after treatment. In 2009, the cancer was back again and with it more treatments. We went to the Worlds that year, but the best she could do was a ninth place finish in the Senior Poles. I told her I didn't think that was too bad considering the fact that she took chemo on Monday and we left on Wednesday and she was showing on Friday.

2010 was a really good year for Steph and Sue, they did really good at Congress, running a couple 19's and getting 3rd in the Amateur's and 5th overall in the Pole Sweepstakes. They won the final go of the Pole Sweepstakes with a 19.8 and she told me it was her luck to finally win a class at the Congress and they didn't give a trophy for it.

This year at the World Show she did OK, but got sick while we were out there right before she had to run in the finals. I told Sue he would have to stay under her and help her through the poles, which he did, and they ended up finishing 5th place.

We got home from Oklahoma and she continued to have some health issues. She ended up in the hospital on Thanksgiving Day. She came home for awhile but now she is back in the hospital. Unfortunately, the cancer has returned and as I sit here in her room writing this I know that she is once again in an uphill struggle. But I know that she will face it as she always has, with a strength of character and perseverance- the likes of which I have seldom seen. That is why she is now and will always be my hero.

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