

2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Winner: C A EXCELANTE



By Meghan Johnson

I would like to nominate C A Excelante (C A Acierto x Bur-Amber), aka Excelante or Ex. Excelante is a 17 year old Spanish Arabian owned by Amara and Clark Morrison and their little three year old daughter Islay. Excelante has been a part of my life for the past three years as his care taker or "Pony Au Pair". Excelante is a wonderful horse. He has had a lengthy show career in western pleasure and trail. He loves to trail ride. Excelante is a patient teacher to inexperienced riders learning to ride from Jill Mitchell and I. He has taught countless students of all ages to ride over the years as well as introduce riders to the wonderful world of horse shows. He also enjoys taking riding lessons in Western Pleasure, English and Dressage with his owner Amara Morrison and I. What makes Excelante deserving of the Family Arabian of the Year award is his willing attitude, kind and patient spirit with riders from six to sixty, his friendly personality, his athleticism and his stunning beauty.

I love Excelante for his eagerness to please and be loved. He is always excited to see me. When I come up after a long and tiring day at work he is happy to take me on a relaxing trail ride on the Mt Diablo regional trails. The other boarding members of Summit Ranch think it's funny to see him stand up straight and hold his head high and start screaming when he sees me. There is nothing more heartwarming to see him so happy to see me. Ex is always happy to see the riding students and lets them catch him to bring him over to the cross ties to groom and saddle him, feed him carrots and he willingly goes around the arena and achieve what is asked of him. The lesson riders just love him. Sometimes it is difficult to watch the inexperienced riders pull on his face and give him conflicting cues but he would never buck, balk, spook or misbehave with these riders. He knows his job.

Excelante showed for many years and I often have people tell me that Ex was their first show horse and that he always won their class.

I had the recent pleasure of watching him show with one of my young lesson riders, 10 year old Kiera Hooper at Summit Ranch's annual "Play Day" and sure enough he won the musical tires class and he was very excited and proud of this accomplishment, especially when he realized that he

won a large bag of horse cookies. I was so proud to see my riding student and special horse win together.

Excelante loves to trail ride. He just loves being out in the open and especially loves to trailer to new places and ride new trails. You might think that I'm probably projecting these feelings onto Excelante but you can tell through his willingness, his happy outlook and the serene look on his face and ears that he really enjoys being out on the trail. I often think that it's his reward for being patient all week in the arena with the lesson riders and his owner and me. He loves to go on organized rides through Diablo Arabian Horse Association and the San Ramon Horse Association as well as the occasional limited endurance ride. He is simply stunning and loves the attention he receives. People are constantly coming up to us to ask me his name and his breed. They always tell me how beautiful he is as a former dapple grey that is becoming more flea bitten as he ages. I can never get over how gorgeous he is while running free in an arena with his proud head carriage and holding his tail high.

C A Excelante deserves to be given the Family Arabian of the Year Award. He is a very special horse to a lot of people. Excelante should receive recognition for his patience, enthusiasm, and outgoing personality, love of life and striking beauty and intelligence. C A Excelante is the ideal family Arabian.



2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Nomination: Cypress Samurai+ "Si"

By Meghan Johnson, Amy Edwards, Michelle Englehart and Maranda Vomund

Since July 7, 2007, there isn't a Saturday that goes by that I don't think about my favorite lesson horse, Si. One of the hardest days of my life was telling my riding students that they would have to say goodbye to their beloved lesson horse and later telling the rest of my lesson students that Si had passed away and see the tears in their eyes. What made Si so special was her innate understanding that her job was to take care of these beginner riders and give them the confidence they needed to succeed in riding. From the smallest child to adults, she stoically braved the pulling on her reins, kicking, hot arenas and multiple beginner riders in one day. She was always so kind and patient to them. I took the time during my lessons recently to ask those who had enjoyed learning to ride on Si what they remembered and loved about her: 12 year old Thea told me that "Si was the kindest and best lesson horse in the world." 10 year old Kiera told me that what was most wonderful about Si was that she "was a mind reader and always knew what I wanted and did what I asked."

One of my adult students, Kathy Re, wrote a little note to me about Si: "I'm over 50 years old and began to learn to ride about six months ago. Si was my first lesson horse. From the start, I felt safe and secure on her - that she would protect me and not let anything happen to me - and that she wanted to help me succeed. Si was a gentle, patient and forgiving teacher, encouraging, tireless and brave and she will be forever loved, missed and remembered." I never got to ride Si but what I loved most about her was how patient she was with beginner riders. She was always willing to walk, trot and canter for them and that made my job easier trying to teach them to ride. Over the years, she has probably taught hundreds of children and adults to ride, introducing them to the joys of riding, showing and Arabian horses. We lost a noble, understanding and kind Arabian mare long before her time. *Meghan Johnson

My 7 year old, Caroline, had ridden Si since she was 4 years old. Her sister Allison had many of her first lessons on Si and learned to ride hunter with her. Si was a primary member of our "horse" family. Caroline started her lessons on Si and then progressed to competing with her at our local and regional shows as well as at the 2006 Youth Nationals. She was one of the kindest mares I have ever known. Si gave Caroline her great beginning as an equestrienne. She made corrections when needed without being asked and made each child shine their very brightest. As the months have gone on since Si's passing, Caroline still tells me, especially at night, that she misses Si so much and life is not the same without her. I have to agree with her about that. As a mom with girls growing up with horses, I never worried about them with Si. Two years ago when Caroline had just turned 5 years old, we were at the Red Bluff Arabian Horse Show. Caroline wanted to ride whenever Jill Mitchell would let her and so one afternoon we saddled up Si and she and Caroline walked around those fairgrounds and race track, just the two of them for about an hour. We heard so many comments from around the show about the kind and careful horse who took such special care of "her" little girl as they roamed around all by themselves. And although she was officially owned by Jill Mitchell and Kirsten McKillop, Caroline will always count Si as her

“first horse.” What a beautiful grey mare with such kind and gentle ways, we miss her dearly, but she will remain with us always. Every trail chosen in the future will be one traveled first with Si. Caroline writes, “Si was the best horse ever in the world. She taught me how to ride and she was there whenever I needed her. It is not the same without her. She would nicker for her grain. She was so great!! With love...

Caroline’s 12 year old sister Allison writes, “Si was the biggest hearted horse that ever walked the planet. She was everyone’s first horse. Si was sweet and never tried to hurt ANYONE. She would listen to anything that she was asked to do. Si was loved by everyone. She will be missed by me and will be with me for the rest of my life. I love you Si!! Love, Allison

*The Edwards Family (Amy, Allison, and Caroline)



Si with Caroline at Youth Nationals Albuquerque, NM, 2006

What can we say about Si that hasn’t already been said in the tributes above. I will try and put a different twist to her story. I don’t ride and am quite scared of horses. Fortunately, my girls don’t have that same fear. When they started riding at the barn 7 or 8 years ago, they rode many great lesson horses. All the while, I would sit in that lobby of Summit Ranch in fear that they may fall off (which they did) or that the horse would spook and instill a new fear in them. Needless to say that never happened. While Si wasn’t Alexa’s and Mady’s first lesson horse, she was Mady’s first show horse and Alexa’s first hunter. Trusty, safe and reliable, Si always afforded them the pleasure of placing high enough to move on to Regionals. She got them there year after year with her kind, patient temperament. As my girls said, “Si always tried her hardest to do the best job she could for whoever was riding her!” Never was there a moment of around safely. For a non-riding mother, this alone was enough to make me learn to love this horse! Si was always the horse I didn’t mind going to get out of her stall to groom or walk. I had such a comfort level with her, like no other! Because of her kind spirit, she was instrumental in helping me to overcome my fear and gain an understanding and love for this breed. I miss Si as concern or worry about whether she would get them much as the many lesson kids who grew up riding her! Even my son, Blake, who doesn’t ride but is forced to spend time around the barn, cried when Si passed.

*Michelle, Alexa, Mady and Blake Engelhart

This is a story about a horse. Or more; two horses. Two horses that embodied the heart of one. At first sight, this horse was just like every other horse, she was rather plain, actually. A little grey Arabian mare with a pleasant looking eye. She was gentle and kind; the perfect lesson pony. Everyone loved her, but none so much as me. Her name was Cypress Samurai. I first met her when I was just a kid, about nine or ten. Before her, I was riding a mare by the name of Carrie. I arrived at Summit Ranch (known to me as "The Barn") My riding instructor, Jill told me to get a "little mare named Si." When I arrived at the stall, I wasn't sure what to think. She looked like every other horse in the barn. I picked up her halter and slipped it over her head, and she lowered it for me. (I was rather short.) I lead her to the cross-ties and began to groom her. And every week after that, the same routine. I rode Si. I learned her show name "Cypress Samurai," I loved her with all of my heart. As far as I was concerned, Cypress Samurai was mine. She was the greatest horse in the world. I never rode her with a saddle, always bareback.

When I rode her, I wasn't just a person sitting on a horse. I *was* the horse. Cypress Samurai and I, I am Cypress Samurai, we were one. But, one week, I rode a different horse. A fine, little bay mare. And so, Cypress Samurai passed from my thoughts as I rode that bay mare. But, one day, I saw her again. But it wasn't Cypress Samurai, the mare with whom I was one. It was Si, a broken down lesson horse. She had boots on and was limping down the hall. I inquired about what was wrong with her, and wished I hadn't. *Laminitis*, the same disease that Barbaro had. It's a hoof disease, and makes it hard for the horse to walk. A few months later, I saw her halter in the tack room, along with her blanket, and I knew what had happened; the body in which Cypress Samurai and Si had inhabited, had died. * Maranda Vomund

Editor's Note: Cypress Samurai+ was just 6 points away from AHA Achievement Award points needed to qualify for Legion of Supreme Honor which would have given her a slash along with the plus she already had. She has earned 144 points and needed 150 to qualify for this award. In the Arabian "world" she would have been recognized for these accomplishments, and elevated to a group of great Arabian Horses, a privileged few, who have achieved such high competition records. She was a "family" horse at home, but also had an important show career over the years, and shared these accomplishments with all those children lucky enough to have been able to show her along the way.



Si with Caroline at Youth Nationals 2006

2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Nomination:

CHEYENNE



By Sidney Simpson

As I small child, I dreamed of having a horse. In fact, I often played that my bike was a horse or that I was the horse myself. I would whinny and gallop around my back yard to my parents' amusement. That was many years ago. We did not have money for horses; it was not meant to be.

I grew up, went to college, became a teacher, married, had a daughter, and then at the age of 58, I decided that it was time for me to fulfill my childhood dream. I wandered into a ranch in Castro Valley, inquiring about riding lessons. I had decided that it was now or never, and I embarked on a journey that would change my life forever.

A year later Cheyenne—a 9 year old gelding who was a finished Arabian show horse—came into my life. I was taken in by his beauty, soft eyes, honest heart, and sweet temperament. In the beginning, I had no idea how talented he was or how strong our connection would be. My own riding skills were pretty basic, and I did not know where all of his magic buttons were. Even though I was now 60, in many ways, I was like a little 12 year old kid. I delighted in grooming Cheyenne, braiding his mane, and acquiring an eclectic wardrobe of halters and tack. Dressing him up and taking him out brought me huge pleasure.

Walking into his stall and burying my face in his sweet neck and mane—just being with him—took any stress or tension of the day and melted it away. I came to the ranch every day and would spend hours—even on the stormiest, nasty days—when I would just sit outside his stall and be with him. I remember grieving over the death of my long-time childhood girlfriend two years ago and finding solace on a quiet bareback ride with Cheyenne in the early evening. He was always there for me with soft nickers and sweet, warm horsy breath.

Now 4 years later—Cheyenne is 13 and I am 63—we are embarking on new trail. I realized that Cheyenne's talent and comfort zone—his job, so to speak—is in the show ring, and so I moved

him to a show facility--Rod Hernandez Training Stables--in March of this year. Rod specializes in quarter horses. Cheyenne is his only Arabian, but he is definitely one of Rod's favorites and is glowingly referred to as "brilliant," "talented," and "gifted." Rod calls Cheyenne his little Ferrari and is teaching me to ride Cheyenne the way Cheyenne was intended to be ridden.

I feel as though Cheyenne is a lovely flower that is exposing one beautiful petal after another to me...gifts and talents that I am now a part of. He has patiently waited for me to catch up to him and learn to ride him as he was meant to be ridden. It is like a beautiful dance with a creature that is a part of my heart. He has brought me immeasurable joy, given me confidence and strength to face other obstacles in my life, and has rekindled the little girl in me, who years ago galloped around the backyard pretending to be a horse.

2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Nomination:

Diamond Jimm+ /



By Cindy Volz

In the summer of 1995, my good friend Eileen Seijas decided we should look for a Western Pleasure horse to show. A mutual friend mentioned a well-bred horse she had seen on a recent trip to Southern California, so down we flew to see this horse with no clue how our lives were about to change. What greeted us when we arrived at the ranch was shocking to say the least. The horse was on the hot walker some distance away, and as we drew closer, our jaws dropped at what we saw. He was nothing but bones! This was the *Bask++ son Diamond Jimm+/, then 15 years old. We couldn't believe it! All thoughts of what we had come for flew out of our minds. We both felt we could not allow him to stay in that situation. It was the beginning of what would be a long and wonderful relationship and, to this day, neither of us regrets the decision to rescue him.

Getting Diamond Jimm was not what we had planned. Eileen wanted a show horse and neither one of us really wanted to deal with a stallion again. Jimm had been Canadian Top Ten Ladies Side Saddle and U.S. Top Ten Western Pleasure, 13/under. After those National wins, many other Class A and Regional wins and earning his Legion of Honor, he was taken home where he was placed in a stall and basically forgotten. He spent five long years in that stall, his only outlet being brief periods on the hot walker. Two weeks after his purchase was finalized, Jimm arrived at my ranch in even worse shape. He unloaded from the trailer on his hind legs and stayed on them all the way to the barn rearing and bellowing! The rest of our horses must have thought we brought home a monster, which is exactly what he acted like! Every time the horses came into the barn from their paddocks, Jimm would bellow, and they would run back out to safety. That first night, I left their stall doors open so that everyone could become adjusted to each other. Jimm had not been around other horses for so many years, he thought he was going to breed EVERYTHING! Mare or gelding, it didn't matter to him! And his manners were long gone! Jimm was so wired from being around the other horses and having a paddock, he needed someplace to channel all that energy so he was lunged twice each day. However, lunging was the last thing he wanted to do and he was not happy about it. After all, he hadn't had to work for

over five years. On the fourth day, Jimm decided enough was enough. When I asked him to go to work, he faced me and charged, ears pinned and teeth barred! In self-defense, I popped the lunge whip and the lash hit him square on the soft part of his nose! Jimm stopped dead in his tracks, looked at me, then turned to the rail and went to work. And that was that! It was a major turning point in our relationship.



Photo of Diamond Jimm+ / at time of purchase.

A couple of months later, after he had put on some weight, we decided to breed him to our *Perkal++ daughter. Another fun adventure! Jimm saw the mare and away he went, dragging me along with him. I dropped the whip, got him stopped, and put the chain on his upper lip (not that it helped any). He kept rearing and taking me grass skiing! In the end, he got a front leg over the line and ended up on his knee. I sent the mare back to the barn. Every time I tried to get the line out from between his legs he would try to rear. I don't recall just how long we stayed out there working on this little problem, but in the end he finally gave in. Until the day he died, if the line got between his legs, he would freeze!

It took a year to put on enough weight and conditioning to get him in shape to be shown. He was fun to ride, most the time. We had some nice wins and some funny times. Region 3 was one of them. He had warmed up very nicely but when we went into the ring, things changed. He did not misbehave, not really. But if you have ever ridden a horse with a long neck with a good range of motion, you will understand what happened next. Every time a horse would pass by us, he would raise up to check and see if it was a mare. He never went past vertical, he just raised his neck to get a better look! Needless to say, we got the well-deserved gate!

Jimm's last home was Rochand Equestrian Center in Livermore. By the time he was moved to Rochand, he had settled down, EXECPT when going past Jan Williams' gelding, Don De Valle. He absolutely hated Don! One evening, we walked by Don's stall and Jimm reared and acted like a stupid young colt! I had had enough of this behavior, so when he started to come down, I would not let him. I made him stay on his hind legs until his front legs were just dangling and he was ready to drop! After that, he still hated Don, but his feet stayed on the ground!

Over the years, Jimm sired several wonderful foals, the most notable being ETC Cracklin Rosy+/, a multi-National winner in several divisions, and Sure is Bright+++/, U.S. Sport Horse Reserve National Champion Stallion and U.S. Top 10 First Level Dressage. When Jimm was forced to retire

from breeding due to a severe heart murmur, he had long since stopped acting stupid and could be led all over the ranch with just a lead rope. I started using him to teach my students that stallions are just male horses and not all of them are monsters. (They did not know, and I never told them, that once upon a time, Jimm was one of those monsters!) He loved the little girls, was always kind and gentle with them and would stand quietly for hours to be brushed! This wonderful horse taught me a lot. He was my friend and would act like a nut when I was the only person around. I could kiss his soft nose, love on him and just stand in his stall while he sniffed my hair and made sure I was good and dirty. When I would enter the barn, he would begin nickering, getting louder and louder until I arrived at his stall on the far end. How he knew it was me walking down the aisle, I'll never know. Diamond Jimm was the kind of horse the Bedouins would have been proud to own. I know he had a soul, because you could see it in his big beautiful eyes.

On March 4, 2006, at the age of 26, Jimm's heart could no longer do the job. His body started to shut down and my wonderful stallion was put to sleep while he gazed at the horses up on the hill.

It has been almost two years since that day and I still miss the old man. I know that I am not the only person who has had a relationship like the one we had. That is what Arabians are like, they love their people.

2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Nomination:

CS CRUISER



By Sunny Townsend

Like most little girls, I fell in love with horses. For me it happened at my grandfather's Oregon ranch, with a salt-and-peppered colored mare named Pokey. When I was eight years old my parents signed me up for lessons and summer camps at Castle Rock Arabians. I learned how to vault, drive miniature horses, and I even got to paint on a real horse. I loved it! I never wanted to leave and would decorate my room with horse pictures that I ripped out of magazines.

By age 11, I was spending so much time out at the barn that I was invited to become an apprentice. As an apprentice I would muck out stalls, clean water troughs, and help out with lessons and summer camp. After a year I had finally convinced my parents that my love for horses was not just a phase, and they let me buy my first horse.

Cruiser was old, slightly crippled, and well passed his prime, but my heart jumped when I saw him. Soon after I bought him, I joined the Castle Rock Drill Team and started competing in trail trials and long distance trail rides. I lived out at the barn, grooming and loving Cruiser ever chance I got.

For the next year things continued as normal, Cruiser and I competed in the Grand National Rodeo at the Cow Palace along with the drill team and won numerous blue ribbons out on the trail. We played games with the other kids such as "pass the hoof pick" and "jousting with lunge lines". We went swimming on hot summer days and took trips to the snow during winter. Everything was great, but as I got older and Cruiser's old injury began to heal, simple trail trials no longer provided the challenge we were looking for.

With the help of Leigha Perry, a new trainer out at the barn, Cruiser and I soon started to train for a local show coming up. Leigha decided that Show Hack would fit us best, and the fun soon began. We started with hiking up steep hills to rebuild the muscle in his left hind leg and then began to work on flexing. Through are intense training sessions and long merciful hours of icing and rubbing sore legs, my retired, lame, old show horse and I made it to our first show.

Unfortunately, no showing actually took place. In the warm up arena for our first class, Cruiser somehow managed to pull his suspensory ligament, and was unable to show. Despite coming home empty handed from our first show, Cruiser had given me my first glimpse into the world of horse shows, and I loved it.

In the ensuing months, it became quite clear that Cruiser would never make it back into the show ring, and my search for a new horse soon began. At about the same time I found Megha Exclusive, a two-year-old bay filly, my dad came to the realization that the only way to spend any quality time with me was to learn how to ride. Cruiser made the perfect babysitter.

I still remember the sight of my dad on his third trail ride. Heels up, and hands on the horn as they moseyed on down the four mile trail in Yosemite. Although my dad pushed all the wrong buttons, Cruiser loved to have my dad ride him, and would carry him around like a champ. Cruiser now lives in 50-acre pasture along with 5 other horses and finally gets the chance to "just be a horse". I go out and brush him each week and every once in a while we sneak out for a little trail ride. He is as happy as he could possibly be, and has his owner I proudly can say that, that is all I ever wanted for him.

Through Cruiser I somehow managed to find the gateway into that parallel universe of horse shows. I have experienced more than I ever could have hoped for, and my life has taken many twists and turns that I would have never anticipate. While I no longer ride Cruiser he is still a major asset to my family, and I couldn't imagine life without him. He has been my best friend through all of ups and down of my adolescent years, and no matter how many horses pass through my life, none will ever touch my heart the way he has.

2007 Family Arabian Horse Award Nomination:

FAJA



By Amanda Kelley

We purchased Faja when he was 20 years old. The first year or two of owning "Fudgie" consisted of trail rides with our barn's well-known horse Harley, and loping around bareback in the outdoor arena. My best friend Annie and I would ride together all the time, through good times and bad. It wasn't until freshman year when I started showing him in PB Western Pleasure. He had been showing all his life when we bought him, winning everything due to his undeniable beauty. He was a professional at showing, and I had never gone in one class before. He knew more than every single horse he went up against, and he knew it. My first show ever, we got a third, second, a first, and even a champion in the DAHA Fall Fling show. He carried me through the classes like he was taught to do, giving me 110% in every class. He truly introduced me and taught me how to show.

Winter of freshman year, I was on Faja bareback, just loping around the indoor arena at Summit Ranch. I was feeling weightless as always, I closed my eyes and let him carry me. Suddenly, one of Faja's back hooves hit his front hoof causing him to trip to his knees, and fall straight to the ground. I flew directly over his head, and he fell over me. Shock and adrenaline rushed through my body as he arose. He could've killed me right then. He could've stepped on me. Instead, he carefully placed his hooves around me while getting up, making sure not to touch me.

Because of the deep footing, and my riding helmet, we came out of the accident with only a lost shoe and a couple of bruises on my part. It was after that moment when I knew I'd always love Faja. I knew that no matter what would come into my life in my high school years, he would ALWAYS be there for me. I am now a Junior in high school, and although I love a bundle of aspects of my life, I love Faja like no other. I now compete on a new horse of mine who I also love unconditionally.

Through the nerve-racking classes at youth nationals and regionals this year, I know he was rooting for me. I know he was with me in the finals in Albuquerque. I know he was with me during my high school tennis try-outs. I know he was with me through all the obstacles I have overcome. And I know that he always will be with me through the storms that I must meet as I get older.

Faja is truly a magnificent horse. Although he cannot show anymore due to leg issues, I still refer to him as a champion. He saved my life instead of crushing it. He taught me how to show instead of taking complete advantage of me. He's not only my horse; he's my partner, my brother, and ultimately my friend. At the age of 23, he continues to be all those things to me.