

In the house that I inherited from my mom stands an antique chair that could tell my family's tale if it could speak. My mom bought it nearly 50 years ago from Germany, and even then it already had stories woven into the fabric from its previous chapters. Little did the chair know that it would become a part of this family's ongoing story – both the highs and lows – for generations to come. I have precious photos from when we still lived in Germany, of my great-grandfather sitting in the chair, with my brother and me on his lap. I have memories from later on in California of my mom working at her desk, in our living room, where that chair was her throne. I can't begin to imagine how many important decisions were made by her there – breeding decisions that resulted in famous horses, contracts, letters, bills, heartbreak, tears and joy – the chair knew it all.

As an Arabian horse breeder, I think in terms of generations rather than years. What came before is very important to me, and the future is what I breed for with each foal crop. But I confess that in my darkest moments, I have a tendency to become lost in the grief of the past or the fear of the future. I believe that I am not alone in forgetting to live in the present.

This was another wonderfully successful year for the horses of Om El Arab. The show ring star this year was Om El Benicio. He started the season at Scottsdale winning Bronze Champion

Stallion, then upped his game in Las Vegas and was crowned World Cup Silver Champion Stallion. Benicio continued his quest at the U.S. Nationalsto benamed U.S. Top Ten Senior Stallion. I showed him in the amateur stallions and he was named unanimous U.S. National Champion Stallion. The win was extra special because I had shown his grandsire, Om El Shahmaan, to the same win 14 years prior. Those of you who know how special Shahmaan was to me can understand the magnitude of this win.



At the World Championship in Paris, Om El Aisha Al Jassimya was crowned Silver World Champion Mare in an incredibly competitive mare class. Aisha is one my favorites and was also my mom's favorite mare. Her win was very emotional for me. It was a tribute to our past, representing a gratefulness for the present and a confidence in the future. Eleven of the eighteen champions at the World Championships in Paris had our foundation mare, Estopa, in their pedigrees. Estopa was foaled in 1965 and

her influence this many generations later is profound.

My 11 year-old niece, Sophia Merz, is a 5th generation equestrian. She cares for her two horses and two piggies every morning before she goes to school, and rides every day after school. I can't begin to describe how proud I am to have watched this incredibly talented, smart, hardworking and sweet young woman grow. I see the same gumption in her that I saw in my mom. As I write this letter, Sophia is flying to New Orleans with her parents to receive an award from the United States Eventing Association (USEA) for Junior Beginner Novice Champion – she had the most points in her division in the entire United States.

I'm very happy about the 12 beautiful fillies and 5 handsome colts born on the farm this season. Several will stay at Om El Arab and create future generations while the others will become great ambassadors for our breeding program as they spread their wings. I'm also very excited about a young stallion that is quietly making waves. I can't wait to use him in the breeding program when he is of age. His name is Om El Shawan.

Bryon, Luca and I traveled to Croatia in September where we spent a week relaxing on the Dalmatian coast. From there we went to the All Nations Cup horse show in Germany, followed by several days with my German relatives. It was a wonderful and cathartic visit. We looked through old photo albums with my aunt that I hadn't

seen in many years. In my cousin's young daughter, I could see the resemblance to her great-grandmother in the old photographs. I loved that Luca got to meet cousins that he knew innately – although it was the first time they had ever met. It was during this time that I began contemplating the connection to my relatives and ancestors, even the ones who I never got to meet.

And that beloved chair that once was my mom's throne? It is now my chair, the chair from which I make our farm decisions. And oftentimes, my four-year-old son, Luca, attempts to use it as a trampoline while I'm making said decisions! I pay bills, make breeding choices, name foals, write contracts, shed tears, laugh AND I try to be present. I have found that the fears go away when I take a deep breath, close my eyes and breathe for a few moments without thinking about anything. In the space between thought is where we are truly present and become one with the power that is in each and every one of us.

This season I hope that you find the space to be present as often as possible. I know that you will find the power within you as well.

Happy Holidays

~JANINA, BRYON AND LUCA
AND THE OM EL ARAB FAMILY