

NO FANCY CAMERA. NO PAST EXPERIENCE. NO PROBLEM.

By Dani Moritz

Sometimes in our lowest moments, something miraculous happens — something that rejuvenates the spirit and sets us on our path to happiness and success. For Kathleen Bryan, that's exactly what happened when she thought she had hit rock bottom around 2010.

Kathleen had just been laid off from her job in construction, which wasn't even remotely in her field, and was able to scrounge up just enough money to pay the bills and feed her horses. What she did have plenty of, however, was time.

That time could've easily been spent sulking and worrying, but that's just not Kathleen's style. She was able to save just enough money to purchase an inexpensive DSLR camera with the help of her mom, and essentially taught herself digital

photography. She thought, perhaps, she could pursue a new trade. She had the artistic passion and the education, having attended Louisiana Tech for studio art (sculpture) and having taken photography classes previously. So, she gave it a shot.

As it turns out, that shot was well worth taking. Upon purchasing the camera, a friend emailed her who happened to know a show manager looking for a photographer that very weekend.



"I told her my camera's not even here yet," Kathleen explained. "But, the camera showed up the next day. I developed a website and that weekend I was taking pictures at a horse show. I've done that ever since."

The show was a success and the show manager asked Kathleen to photograph the remainder of the season. Elated with her newfound success, Kathleen agreed — later to discover not only that the show season included a regional championship, but also that the DSLR camera she bought on a whim would be one of the greatest decisions she had ever made.

An Early Start

While Kathleen may be best known for her stunning photography, her artistic story doesn't begin with a camera. A passion for art runs deep in her veins and she knew she loved art (and horses!) at an early age.

Her earliest memories of combining her passions include sitting in church, doodling and drawing horses on the offering envelopes in the back of the pew. "I couldn't chew gum in church, but I did get to draw," she laughed mischievously.

As for her love of horses, Kathleen isn't entirely sure where it comes from. With nobody in her immediate family sharing her fascination with equines, she can only assume her passion comes from her cousins who had horses growing up.

A Seamless Transition

Beyond doodling the four-legged beauties under the radar in church, Kathleen first professionally combined her love of art with horses via sculpture. She did decorative woodcarving with her dad when she was young, which made for an easy transition into sculpture.

Her first piece was of a Thoroughbred racehorse and, from there, her passion and talent for sculpture took off — much like





her beloved Thoroughbreds at the starting gate. She took jobs to support her passion and became recognized as a gifted artist in equine sculpture. You can find her work in the Back in the Saddle catalog and as a featured artist on their website.

Through sculpture, she discovered her eye for photography. "Sculpture is initially why I started taking horse pictures," she explained. "I wanted my own reference material. It taught me the timing and the importance in catching the right phases of things."

Featured on the Cover: Colorado's Madeline Backus

Madeline Backus of Larkspur, Colorado, is somewhat of a local superstar. Granddaughter of Laura Backus and daughter of Leslie Terry, founders of Colorado's Pendragon Stud Equestrian Center, the 18-year-old eventer is well on her way to the top.

Not only is the young eventer a friendly and spirited personality, but she's also establishing a pretty impressive track record — including a ninth place finish at Young Riders in 2011, securing Area IX's Preliminary Horse of the Year title with her Trakehner mare PS Arianna and winning the Junior Training division on self-trained PS King of Hearts (owned by Laura) in the 2013 AECs. *Sidelines* had the chance to catch up with the busy rider and this is what we found out:

What's it like working so closely with your mother and grandmother?

It's been wonderful. They're super supportive, so it's always wonderful to have them there to back me up and to help me. Sometimes it can definitely get annoying working with my mom because she's my mom, but at the same time it's great because she's really close to me and she understands what I'm feeling.

What's it been like working with PS Arianna?

We've had her since she was a yearling, and I started riding her about seven years ago. I've known her since she was just a baby. We've kind of grown up together. There have definitely been challenges, though. I've done all the training on her with the help of my mom, so it's difficult sometimes and frustrating but I think it's like that with any horse. Still, it's really nice to have that bond with a horse.

How has Pony Club influenced you?

I love Pony Club. It gives you all the knowledge you need. It

She didn't actually take a photography class, however, until a study abroad program brought her to Rome, where she took her first 35mm photography classes. Her new technical education coupled with her brewing fascination with photography (not to mention the inspiring scenery of Rome) solidified her interest in digital photography. But she wouldn't professionally pick up a camera for some time.

Looking to the Future

Since that first show, however, Kathleen has been very busy enjoying life as a photographer, capturing images of competitive pairs at nearly 30 shows each year.

But you can find Kathleen contributing much more than ringside action shots. She also enjoys portrait photography for senior pictures, sale horses, stallions, and the list goes on. She's also immensely talented at bringing the natural beauty of the West to life in her landscape photos. She claimed the People's Choice Award for photography at the 2014 Rocky Mountain Horse Expo, a much-deserved credit to her name.

Over time, Kathleen has developed what she calls a "purist style." She aims to shoot her photos correctly to begin with, so that little editing is required. She does, however, also enjoy the creative editing process that goes into her new collage-style photographs (pictured X).

Kathleen is a very versatile and go-with-the-flow character. Whether editing a masterpiece, shooting ready-to-go photos at horse shows or doodling in the back of the pew, Kathleen is happy as long as horses and art are involved.



gives you horsemanship and sportsmanship and leadership and I think it's really important.

We understand you're on the youth board for Draper Equine Therapy and are an ambassador for Majyk Equipe. How does that feel?

It's amazing! They're both absolutely and wonderfully supportive. It's amazing to have so much support. It's helped me keep going in the sport.

What are your plans for after high school?

I'm not attending college right away. I'm planning on going and training somewhere. I was really fortunate to be able to train with Missy and Jessica Ransehausen last summer and I definitely want to train again with them. It was really, really fun.