

The horse business is a family business. Look around the fairgrounds and you'll see mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and grandparents with grandchildren participating in the sport that's held deeply in our hearts.

For Audra and Rose Snyder, it's been their livelihood since before they could walk. Growing up in Noblesville, Indiana, the pair started riding horses as soon as their parents put them in the saddle. They even started picking up their own "clients" at the age of nine. Growing up with parents who are trainers, judges, and breeders of two Appaloosa Horse Club Hall of Fame inductees, it's easy to see where the girls got their passion for the industry.

After mentoring with some of the top trainers in the country, the sisters have partnered up to start Snyder Performance Horses in Pilot Point, Texas. Audra handles the western pleasure horses, and Rose tackles the speed events. The partnership was their own

idea. Their parents, Iris and Bill Snyder, just wanted their girls to be happy doing something they loved.

"When the girls were very young, we didn't think about what they would do as adults, until they were in their teens," Iris explains. "We just enjoyed taking them everywhere we went, including the horse shows. When they were very young, they wanted to be a part of the horse activities, so we made it possible. Since Bill and I trained horses on a daily basis, the girls grew up thinking that was a normal life. They had many opportunities to train ponies for clients when they were as young as nine years old. They had earned enough money, by the time they were 16, to buy their own nice cars with cash."

"They gave us the opportunity to go work with other trainers, not just any trainers, but the top trainers," says Rose, age 27.

"To me, that's huge," says Audra, age 26. "The more people you work for who are at the top of their game, the more you learn."

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Sister Act

By Megan Arszman

THE SNYDER SISTERS
CONTINUE A FAMILY LEGACY

Audra (left) and Rose (right)

photo ©Iris Snyder

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Growing Up Hoosier

Both girls competed in just about any event they could enter: halter, barrel racing, western pleasure, jumping, showmanship, trail, pleasure driving, and steer daubing at 4-H, open, and Appaloosa shows. Between the two ladies, they have accrued at least 100 National, World, and International Championships.

"We made sure they had very good horses to show and more difficult ones or less trained horses to ride or train at home," Iris says. "We did not want them to be spoiled."

"[Mom and Dad] did a really good job, when we were young, of teaching us, but also making sure we had the opportunity to work with other trainers as well. It's difficult taking direction from your



Audra and Rose competed at their first Appaloosa National Championship Show in 1991 in the Lead Line. Their father, Bill, led Audra (left) and mother, Iris, led Rose (right) photo ©Harold Compton

parents a lot of times," Rose admits. "They also made sure we were on good horses. You can only go as far as the horse you are riding, and they made sure we were on horses that could take us where we needed to go."

Branching Out

"We grew up learning the business side of things [from our parents], like how to manage our money, finances, and the breeding [side of the industry]. They taught us to research the bloodlines to make sure you're breeding for what you want, know the specific characteristics of what they're good at, and how they move. We can't say enough about how good they were about getting us the best help out-

side of what they could give us."

Iris and Bill wanted to make sure their daughters were well-rounded equestriennes, learning not only the stock horse events but also taking dressage lessons from FEI dressage judge Ken Levy in Indiana. When they started talking about wanting to follow in their parents' footsteps, Iris and Bill made sure they ventured out and learned from other trainers as well.

"When they started talking about training horses as an occupation, we told them they should go out and see how other top people were doing it," Iris says. "Everyone needs a fresh point of view from time to time. Much of this business is networking as well, and this was a great opportunity for them to do just that."

Prior to stepping out into the professional training world, Audra pursued a degree in nursing, just to have a back-up option. "I wanted to make sure that I finished school," she explains. "Even though you don't necessarily need a degree to train horses, I like the idea of being educated outside of my field as well."

However, Audra decided she wanted to stay in the horse business and started working for Tim and Katy Jo Zuidema and Lonnie Ledbetter in 2010. She then went to work for Cole Baker Performance Horses in Florida before moving back to Texas this past January.

"Being from the Appaloosa world, it just made sense to go to one of the best, top, Appaloosa western pleasure trainers, in Tim Zuidema, and I had the added bonus of having Katy Jo there. She helped me a lot in those years," Audra says. "The knowledge I gained from Cole Baker on how to start a young horse for the big futurities was very influential. Cole's knowledge and attention to detail has really helped me refine my own skills quite a bit."

Rose went to work for Appaloosa breeders and trainers Jim and Sandy Jirkovsky, a duo she credits with developing her interest in roping. "They taught me so much about general care and horse-

MEET THE SISTERS

Rose

Age: 27

Favorite Music: "My iPod is so random. I'm a huge 80s rock fan, and I listen to classic rock and country, too."

Favorite Snack at Horse Shows: "I don't eat when I'm at horse shows! I like to eat healthy. Honestly, I'll pack a cooler of fruit, but then I end up getting nachos at the concession stand."

Favorite Discipline: Barrel Racing

Something Not Many Know About You: "I'm working on getting my pilot's license. I'm very much into aviation. It's been a passion of mine since I was very young. My mom bought my first flight lesson for my 14th birthday. I think she hoped I'd find it scary and give it up, but that didn't happen."

Audra

Age: 26

Favorite Music: "My music is random, too. I listen to a lot of Nickelback and Imagine Dragons. I'm just so varied on everything."

Favorite Snack at Horse Shows: "Eating at horse shows? What's that? It's impossible to eat much at horse shows. I like Cheez-Its, because they're easy to grab. I can throw back a drink of Coke and head back to the arena to ride some more."

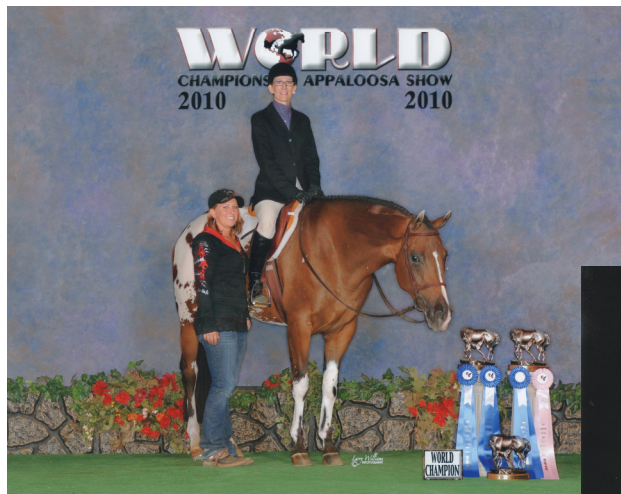
Favorite Discipline: Western Pleasure

Something Not Many Know About You: "I talk so much that people probably know everything about me! Even though western pleasure is by far my favorite thing to do and compete in, my first three World Championships were all in the speed events."

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Audra Snyder and client Debbie Leus riding Reason To Play celebrate and sweeping all three Non-Pro Hunter Under Saddle classes, as well as a third place ride by Audra at the 2010 Appaloosa World Show.

photo ©Larry Williams

manship," she recalls. "Jim always inspired me to do things that I wanted to do with the horses, because there aren't very many women who professionally train roping horses."

Just recently, Rose worked for Carol Rose where she worked horses through the NRHA Futurity and helped the farm get through the dispersal sale.

"Carol Rose, as far as somebody who can keep track of their bloodlines and the amount of emphasis she puts on horse care, is incredible," she says. "I helped get a lot of horses ready for her dispersal sale. I know how to prep a horse for the show pen and for a sale, but she goes above and beyond in the amount of detail she puts into caring for them."

On Their Own

In January, the sisters decided it was time to team up and open their own training facility in Texas where they could concentrate on their passions—Audra on western pleasure, trail, and western riding and Rose on speed and cattle classes.

They are renting a facility in Pilot Point with 25 stalls, two arenas, and lots of turn out space. Their primary focus is on creating the best partnerships and developing the potential of their horses and clients. Even though their background is in the Appaloosa breed, they aren't fo-

cusing on any particular breed circuit at this point. "We're trying to shoot for the all-breed futurities," Audra explains. "We're primarily trying to focus on our specialties and hitting those large futurities, which works for us so we can accept the best of all breeds. We don't have to limit ourselves."

"We'll hit the breed circuit to help our clients if they want to work on a couple of things or they want to get the points for the World Shows. We want to provide the best service that we can to

our customers and give them the experience and knowledge for the events they want to do."

While some might think that working with a sibling isn't the best idea, the Snyder sisters have their partnership down to a science after more than 25 years of working together.

"It works for us, because we are very close and we have the same ideas and philosophies as far as

training all horses," Audra explains. "It does help that I have always loved western pleasure, western riding, trail, and all-around, and Rose has always been better and more focused on the barrel and pole horses. It works great, because, if our clients want to do more of the all-around events or try something different, we don't have to send them to someone else."

Another positive point for the partnership, Rose points out, is that the sisters aren't in direct competition with each other because of their focus on different events. With both young ladies having a background competing in just about every discipline, it also helps if they happen to have multiple horses to show at an event. For example, at the Appaloosa Nationals this summer, Rose has two horses competing in barrel racing. Since the Appaloosa club has a horse-against-horse format for the barrels, she can't ride



Rose Snyder and multiple champion Cowboys Paradise

photo ©Larry Williams



Growing up in a barn is a lot more fun when you're helping your dad.

photo ©Iris Snyder

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Rose (left) and Audra (right) Snyder have essentially been working together for more than 25 years with their parents in Indiana.

Now they're branching out on their own in Texas, specializing in Barrel Racing and Western Pleasure, respectively.

more than one horse. Therefore, Audra will catch-ride one of the horses. "There's no competition over who's going to ride what," Rose says. "It's apples and oranges. I think that helps keep us united."

"It's a partnership; we assist each other," Audra agrees.

"Business-wise it works because we pretty much have the same thought process," Audra says. "We just talk with each other. If we disagree, which we actually very rarely do when it comes to business, we're pretty levelheaded and sit down and discuss what's best for everyone involved—us, the clients, and the horse."

Proud mother, Iris, thinks their partnership couldn't be any better. "They complement each other's abilities with horses and clients," she says. "Audra is super-organized and methodical, while Rose is more spontaneous and adaptable. I think they're a formidable pair that will be able to provide top training services for a wide variety of horses and clients."

In addition to the futurity and speed horses, Snyder Performance Horses has amateur and youth clients coming in for lessons and training. "The barrel racing around here is different than what I'm used to in Indiana," Rose says. "It's so much bigger, which is awesome. A lot of people come in for riding lessons, and then they might decide they need some training, too."

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The future looks bright for the sister act, with clients following them from Indiana and Florida to Texas, as well as new clients calling every day. “We’ve got so many good prospects that we’re excited about this year and the years to come,” Audra says. “We’re building on the support from all of the people that have been with us for so long. The biggest excitement for me is taking every horse and making sure it reaches its full potential. It’s important to both of us. It doesn’t matter where that horse is going or what he’s doing, it’s important that the horse reaches his full potential.”

“I’m proud of them both,” Iris says. “My only regret is that they want to live in Texas and not Indiana. The fact that they are working together in partnership is a reflection of our strong family ties, and that makes us proud, too.”

*For more information on Snyder Performance Horses,
check out their website:
<http://www.snyder-performancehorses.com/>*



photo ©Iris Snyder

Audra (left) and Rose (right) grew up on horseback