

BLACK STERLING

The beginning of a legend

The Goldman family talks about meeting their first Friesian...”at twelve ‘o clock midnight on Christmas Eve, 2000, the anticipation of our first Friesian’s arrival was almost unbearable. A big truck pulled in at the hunter/jumper boarding facility we were boarding at, and we heard their air brakes shut down, with a long low whistle sound. Within 10 minutes, the loading ramp was down, and out came a proud, prominent, jet black, high stepping and snorting Friesian. Ron remarked, “geez Janna, did you buy a horse or a BULL?” The gelding paused on the ramp, looked left and right, and with the dim light illuminating his silhouette—we could see his breath—which looked like puffs of smoke being omitted from his nostrils with every breath”.

Little did the Goldman’s know that the horse they fondly named “Black Sterling”, who had just arrived from Germany, would lead the way, impacting the Friesian fever on the west coast. Janna Weir Goldman was a saddleseat equitation world and national champion, riding with Marilyn Macfarlane of Simpsonville, KY, showing the famed Glenview’s Warlock to two World Championships and was crowned the NHS Good Hands Finals Champion in Madison Square Gardens, in 1983. After taking 9 years off for college and career, Janna came back in 1992 to win the UPHA Adult Saddleseat Equitation National Championship at Louisville, again under the direction of Marilyn Macfarlane, and the help of Heather Boodey in NC. She was chosen to represent the US on the World Cup team in 1993.

It wasn’t until 8 years later, when Ron and Janna were married, that Julia, Ron’s 8 yr old daughter with a passion for horses, asked the question, “Can we get a horse?” Julia and Janna scoured the internet, researching different breeds of horses, particularly looking for a horse that could be shown saddleseat, and easily trained by an amateur. They fell in love with the Friesian breed due to their beauty, intelligence, and ability to show and trail ride the same horse in the same weekend.

They found “Black Sterling”, a 8 yr old gelding with a history of being trained in dressage in Germany, on a website. They bought him sight unseen, after having a vetcheck and x-rays performed. Part of Sterling’s German training included two tricks: Spanish walk and rearing.



Andy, Julia, Ron and Janna Goldman

Janna trained Sterling daily for 3 months, in preparation for his show career debut at the Monterey Springfest Horse Show. 3 out of 4 of the Goldman's had never been to a horse show before, although they had heard many stories from Janna about the saddlebred shows. In April, 2001, the Goldman's loaded up their one horse, registered as Ewout VD, and took him to the Monterey Springfest Show. There was only 1 class offered that a Friesian could participate in, Open Eng Pleasure. Wearing the Le Cheval riding suit Janna had won by winning the Eq World Grand Championship 18 years earlier, Janna guided Sterling through the in-gate, creating a stir with his beautiful black flowing mane, tail, and feathers. Many exhibitors had never seen a Friesian before and they were awed by his presence and performance. Needless to say, Sterling won the class, and it was the start of 5 year domination by this imported Friesian of the Open Eng Pleasure division, at all the major west coast shows.

In the coming years, an entire Friesian division was added to the line up of classes at Monterey, UPHA Chapter One, Del Mar, Santa Barbara, NWSA Fall Classic, and the Calif Futurity saddlebred shows. The Goldman's decided it was time to acquire a 2nd Friesian and they purchased (again sight unseen) a driving champion that had been formerly driven and owned by the Queen of Holland. The 6 yr old gelding turned out to be a much better driving horse than riding horse, so Janna decided to put him up for sale. "Zorro" immediately sold for more money than they paid, and Ron told Janna that she could get another horse, as long as it was a Friesian.

After importing their 3rd Friesian, the Goldman's realized they couldn't afford to board multiple horses, and thus purchased a ranch in Sonoma, which they promptly named "Black Sterling Friesian Ranch". Located in the heart of Sonoma wine country, just 40 minutes from the Golden Gate Bridge, the ranch has since transformed from a 3 stall barn, to a 26 stall facility with two barns to house their show and sale horses, and two arenas including an indoor lighted arena. The Goldman's still live in Greenbrae (Marin), thirty minutes from the ranch, and spend all their free time with their horses.

After the ranch was established, Janna's full time job became finding, importing, and selling these black beauties. Janna and Ron have made numerous trips to Holland, Germany, and Denmark, scouting for the best horses in the world, and establishing relationships with trainers and competitors in Holland. With the addition of a website (blacksterlingfriesians.com) which is updated daily with photos, videos, and prices of their horses, the Goldman's quickly became the largest importers of Friesians in N.America, selling 150-200 Friesians per year.

Julia Goldman, emulating her step mother drive to be the best she can be as an equestrian, has spent time learning from the best—including three summers in a row of Anne Speck's riding camp, and apprenticing with Marilyn Macfarlane in Ky last year.

Julia can now be seen wearing that same rust colored riding jacket Janna won at Louisville, showing an array of the Goldman's personal and sale horses. This Chico State student two the IFSHA Junior Exhibitor of the Year award in 2007 and 2007, and has numerous national championships at the Friesian Grand Nationals to her credit.

Ron and 14 yr old son, Andy, round out the Black Sterling team. Ron enjoys showing their Friesian "Stormy Seas" in driving classes, and "Majestic" in the Walk and Trot division. In fact, Ron and the 10 yr old gelding registered as "Ronald van de Zuiderwaard" have won the Amateur Friesian Pleasure Driving National Championship at the Friesian Grand Nationals in both 2006 and 2007.

The Goldman family are true "do it yourselfers", hauling their own horses to shows, grooming, bathing, clipping, and training all their Friesians themselves, without the assistance of any grooms, trainers, or instructors. However, Janna is quick to add that their business has grown to a point where they would LIKE to add a trainer, and they are currently searching for a saddleseat professional to add to the Black Sterling team. Until a trainer is found, 18 yr old Julia is working long hours, training and showing sale horses to customers.

Fifteen-year-old Black Sterling, the horse that started it all and as been a one of a kind ambassador for the Friesian breed, has accumulated more than 200 blue ribbons. After winning the Open Eng Pleasure Stake at the Del Mar Charity Fair Show from 2001-2004, he took a year off and switched gears, and was crowned Champion or Reserve Grand Champion in the Open Western Pleasure Stake from 2006-2008. This National Champion Western Pleasure Friesian currently shows in Friesian western classes (when offered) and otherwise shows against saddlebreds in the Open Western Pleasure division, on the Pacific Coast Horse Show circuit. He has quite a fan club and his trademark tail drags two feet on the ground behind him. The Goldman family and their beautiful black Friesian horses, including "Sterling" are a nice compliment to the high stepping saddlebreds at any show.

