

This text appears as part of the purchase agreement between the "Equine Journal" and the individual/farm/business purchasing the cover. It should not be considered an endorsement.

Cielo Celeste Farm

Santa Ynez, California

By Sarah Wynne Jackson

Celeste Huston, owner of Cielo Celeste Farm, a five-star Gypsy and AQHA breeding facility in Santa Ynez, California, has a story she likes to tell about the ability and versatility of these beautiful horses. She says, "When I lived in Ireland, my husband, the legendary film director John Huston, was the Master of the infamous Galway Blazers Because the gypsy people were a part of the pageantry and history of Ireland, they could not be kept from joining the hunt. Oftentimes a little gypsy child riding a Gypsy Cob bareback with a tattered bridle would come out at the top of the hunt. This would rivet the Irish gentry, but John thought it hysterical."

In fact, these horses can be so versatile one of her stallions, St. Clarins, is currently being trained in the Art of Marialva, the style of Portuguese bullfighting from horseback. She says, "This type of training is highly articulate. It came from the 14th and 15th centuries when horses went to war. It is not unlike the movements performed by the Lipizzaners, but this is a more advanced discipline because they have to be fast and with more savvy. It is such a joining of the animal and the man, way beyond any other discipline. My stallion is the only Gypsy in the world being trained for this style of horsemanship. No bulls are killed from horseback or in the Portuguese style of bullfighting in Portugal. It is against the law"

Celeste chose to breed Gypsies not only because of their versatility, but also their rare beauty and amicable temperament. A lifetime horsewoman, Celeste had worked as a child exercising polo ponies for Russell Havenstrite, a renowned polo player worldwide. She has ridden and shown a wide variety of breeds, from Arabians, Andalusians and American Saddlebreds to Quarter Horses and Paints.

Huston still stands her fine Quarter Horse stallion, Colonels Gotaspot, but the Gypsies are her main focus. She says, "I have a collection of some of the most beautiful Gypsies in the country. For the most part, they have great temperaments, fine conformation, small ears and a square stance They are exemplary of what the breed is supposed to look like."

Celeste currently stands two Gypsy stallions. Her 2003 black and white tobiano stallion, Huston, came from Dr. Ben Eby's Gold Rush Farm in Phelan, California, one of the original Gypsy breeders. Her second stallion, St. Clarins, is currently the only high quality, trained and athletic silver dappled chocolate Gypsy cob stallion in the United States. This 2003 horse is 15 hands high.

Cielo Celeste Farm is also home to a number of lovely Gypsy cob mares. Celeste's foundation stock is originally from the United Kingdom rather than Ireland. She says, "I feel the Gypsy from the UK are better quality, as the gypsy people from the U.K. historically have better feeding programs and means than the Irish Gypsies. I also feel the top-of-the-line Gypsies went to the UK early on in the trading amongst the Gypsies.

We are all familiar with the traditional black and white Gypsies, but Huston has a particular interest in colored horses, and expects St. Clarins to produce some beautifully exotic foals. "I have a palomino overo Gypsy mare who carries the silver gene and had an exceptional foal by St. Clarins. He's a silver dapple with a cream gene, heterozygous to the black with a belly spot and hazel green eyes. The genetic lab at University of California, Davis, are very excited by his DNA, feeling he will be an hellacious color producer. I recently bought a beautiful palomino Gypsy mare from Todd and Leslie Barnes of the Lucky Star Stables in Ohio. She is in foal to the palomino Gypsy stallion, Shantaigh, owned by Thistledown Cottage in New Hampshire. She will be bred to St. Clarins."

Celeste also outcrosses her Gypsy stallions and is expecting an Irish Thoroughbred foal, an AQHA palomino dam foal and a host of outside mares for 2008. She is excited in that her stallion, St. Clarins, has put feather on QH crosses.

Celeste feels that if one cannot afford the pure Gypsy, they might buy a quality QH or draft mare for a Gypsy cross. "There are lots of beautiful PMU horses that would work well."

To those considering a Gypsy or Gypsy cross of their own, Celeste gives fair warning, "You have to realize that these horses are high maintenance. They require lots of grooming if they're going to stay beautiful and healthy. If you don't keep the feather dry, it will break off or the horses can get scratches throughout their feather (a skin infection which prefers dampness). These horses are very time consuming. I can groom a Quarter Horse in twenty minutes. It takes me two and a half hours to properly groom one of the Gypsies. You have to dry the mane and tail fully, then braid the tail and bind it properly to protect it from damage. One must buy an equine hairdryer."

"These horses are very hardy, very easy keepers, so you have to watch your feeding program. You can kill them with kindness. They are workhorses, basically. They do not require high protein and certainly not a graining program."

Celeste Huston is now working with her stepdaughter, the actress Angelica Huston, on a lovely fantasy film about the Gypsy horses. The film is based on a story written by Celeste.

"It is my humble opinion," says Celeste, "that unless the serious breeders who have dedicated many thousands of dollars and much love and interest to these wonderful horses don't get together immediately, the mass importation by those seeking nothing more than financial gain will fracture and destroy the advancement and quality that we breeders are trying to maintain. I am open to any suggestions on what can be done to control this cancerous influx of poor quality and false representation."

All of the Cielo Celeste Farms's horses, AQHA or Gypsy cob, are DNA typed and registered. The Gypsy horses are registered with the GVHS and the GCSA. She notes that her stallions' semen ships very well the first time around. Cielo Celeste Farm has horses currently for sale, with nine foals expected in the spring. For more information, visit www.cielocelestefarm.com or call 805-688-8020 or email chuston@hotmail.com.