

Diana De Rosa

Capturing a Lifetime of Memories

By Ruby Tevis
Portraits by Shawna Simmons

Diana De Rosa captures her love for horses through the lens of a camera. With experience in photography, journalism and public relations, her love for equine media has landed her in over 30 countries. Through her lifelong journey around the globe, Diana has discovered the true impact of horses, and made it her mission to share it with the world.

She caught the horse bug early while growing up in Long Island, New York. “When I was very young, I remember wishing for a horse when I blew out the candles on my birthday cake,” Diana said. Born with a congenital hip disorder, Diana spent her early childhood in and out of the hospital. Through perseverance, she overcame her challenges and began riding. With a friend’s horse, Panache, Diana competed in hunters and 1.25m jumpers. “The most memorable was at the Hampton Classic,” she said. “The first year, I took a flying leap when he refused a jump; the next year, I won the class.”

After finishing her degree in languages, Diana took over teaching at her mother’s riding school. In 1978, Diana was approached by Dennis Garetano, who asked if she was interested in writing a horse column. “I told him I was,” she said. That began Diana’s shift to focus on journalism. “Over time I asked if he and his partner, Bill Bohn, wanted to start a horse magazine.” This magazine later became *Horse World USA*, a renowned equine publication. “I was the editor of *Horse World USA* for 13 years, and it took me all over the world.”

Diana at her brother’s house, where movie, TV, film and photo shoots take place.

Diana has captured a lifetime of memories with her camera.



COVERING THE OLYMPIC GAMES

While Diana traveled the world, her goal was to cover an Olympic Games. “My first one was in 1988,” Diana said. “I was over the moon about going to Korea. It was my dream of a lifetime and it lived up to all my expectations.” After covering eight Summer Olympic Games, Diana is now preparing for her first trip to Japan to photograph the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Despite the excitement, the Games brought forth the reality of the long, hard work that comes with photojournalism. “That’s when I learned how difficult an Olympic Games is to cover, and how to survive on two to three hours of sleep a night for two and a half weeks,” she said.

The learning curve hasn’t stopped for Diana, but there have been some changes that make the job a bit easier. According to Diana, the switch from film to digital photography was the Holy Grail. Long gone are the days of hauling rolls of extra film.

“I’ve dealt with so many issues that I now have my system down pat,” she said, adding that she always brings extra supplies for friends. “I had my computer fail — now I come with two computers. My adapter died, and so now I make sure I know

where the closest electronics store is. I know what it’s like to have something fail, so I like to help others who go through a similar situation.”

For these reasons, Diana is already organizing for Tokyo. “I have plenty of time, but it takes time to work through all the details,” she said. Despite the hard work, she believes it’s all worth it. “When I went to my first Olympic Games, I was able to see the best riders in the world competing, and watching our American riders standing on the podium was the miracle moment for me.”

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SUPERMAN

After leaving *Horse World USA* in 1990, Diana started Press Link PR, a public relations firm serving prestigious clients like the Hampton Classic Horse Show and the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden. “When I left that position at *Horse World USA*, I felt I had garnered a lot of information on what was lacking in PR firms,” Diana said, “I decided, over time and after learning from other PR professionals, to create Press Link PR.”

In addition to working with horse shows,

Diana had the opportunity to manage public relations for several beloved horse films. Diana worked with Dreamworks for the movies “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron” as well as “Dreamer.” She also had the opportunity to work with Fox for the movie “Flicka.”

“My favorite clients were the movies,” she said. “I got to meet and interview many celebrities and it helped me to understand the movie business. Little did I know that one day I’d have the honor of working for a huge celebrity for the last eight years of his life. That celebrity was Christopher Reeve.”

Diana met avid equestrian and “Superman” actor Christopher Reeve in 1995. Christopher was doing a Celebrity Challenge at the USET office in New Jersey, and Diana was there doing TV interviews. “I remember looking up at him at the time,” Diana said. “He was so tall — 6 feet 5 inches!”

One year later, after the catastrophic riding accident that left Christopher paralyzed, Diana became his road manager. As Christopher’s road manager, Diana was responsible for organizing his trips, speeches, meetings, acting, media interviews, events and more. “I arranged all the details of any of those trips, from

beginning to end,” Diana said. She traveled with Christopher and his staff around the United States and abroad to Australia, England, Germany and Israel.

“Nothing is impossible’ was his motto,” she said. “He was an amazing and a very intelligent man, determined to one day walk again.”

Diana often looks back on her memories with Christopher. “I once asked him if he could throw his name back in the creation hat and could pick out a different life, would he? He said no, that despite his situation, he considered his life a good one.”

LOOKING AHEAD AND GIVING BACK

Diana’s latest venture is bringing her broad skill set to the organizing team of Equitana USA. “I’m thrilled that this event is going to debut September 25-27, 2020 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. What I really like about being part of this team is that I can use all my skills,” she said. For the next year she will be helping with networking, organizing demonstrations, spreading the word about this inaugural event and pitching in wherever she can. During the event, she’s looking forward to taking photos, moderating panels and doing interviews, like she did at last year’s World Equestrian Games for the EQUUS Film Festival and will continue to do at its upcoming annual event.

While Diana’s career has been highly successful, she’s always eager to learn more. Outside of the equine industry, Diana is pursuing a new career as a part-time actress and hopes to land a role in a horse film, a commercial or on a TV series. “Any time I’m acting, I’m happy,” she said. “I’ve also been working on photographing and videotaping some off-Broadway plays and interviewed those behind the scenes at the 2019 Tryon

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International Film Festival.”

Diana is grateful for the doors that have opened for her and hopes to give back to the equestrian and media communities. To give back, she serves on the board of the Press Club of Long Island and is a past president of American Horse Publications. “I like to support any group or organization that I feel I can help based on my skills,” Diana said. “I also like to help up-and-coming equine journalists.”

For Diana, staying busy is the name of the game, and she hopes to continue capturing and sharing her experiences with the world. “With all of this happening in my life, there is really no thought of retiring,” she said.

Through her photography, Diana wants to spread the message that horses take flight in sports but are also healers in many ways. Through her work as co-organizer of the EQUUS Film Festival, Diana has learned the impact horses have on children, veterans and people with disabilities through different horse films. She also strives to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the horses’ owners, riders, grooms and support staff.

In Diana’s life, there is no shortage of extraordinary memories, especially when every adventure has been captured in photographs. “Whenever I look at my past photos, it brings me back to the exact moment I took that photo,” she said. “I feel blessed that there have been so many wonderful people along the way that helped me become better at all that I do, from the writing to the photography, to the acting, to all my travels and to all my horses.” ■

Photos by Shawna Simmons, www.sasequinephotography.com

Photos left to right: Diana with “Superman” actor Christopher Reeve. One year after the riding accident that left Christopher paralyzed, Diana became his road manager and spent the last eight years of his life with him. Photo courtesy of Diana De Rosa

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