

THE ROTARY CLUB – WEST BRISBANE DAYBREAK



Where the City Meets the Bush

With Pride Presents

Champion of Our Hearts A Queensland Inspiration

From the Western Suburbs of Brisbane



Susan Seipel

para-athlete

proudly representing
Queensland and Australia
as an equestrian

www.susanseipel.com
www.rotarywestbrisbanedaybreak.org

The Rotary Club of West Brisbane Daybreak

Calls colleagues, friends, local enterprise leaders and Rotarians to join us in a campaign to support our local “international” champion.

**We invite you to learn about Susan
through the lens and pen
of photo-journalist**

Nell Arnold

Author of the “Out of Australia” Series
www.glades-globalenterpriseinnovation.com

Rotary Clubs internationally are committed to taking leadership in communities where we live and to serve as leaders of industry, education, and community.

**We also outreach globally
to support humanitarian efforts
as a membership of 1.3 million people
serving communities in 175 countries of the world.**

We invite you to join us in building awareness of the challenges and triumphs of people like Susan, who reach beyond expectation, to become champions - not only in our communities - but also in the arena of international competition.

We invite you to join us as our Club raises funds to support Susan Seipel as she begins several months of national competitions for the right to join those

**“Riding to London”
as Paralympics Equestrians on the Australian Team**

We invite you to learn about the Centre where Susan started her equestrian career with horses as companions of spirit some 15 years ago.

The McIntyre Centre - Pony Riding for the Disabled

where horses and coaches help children with less ability
participate in exercise, build self confidence and find self esteem

www.rda.asn.au

Susan Seipel's sponsors include

Flying Changes Saddlery
www.flyingchanges.com.au,

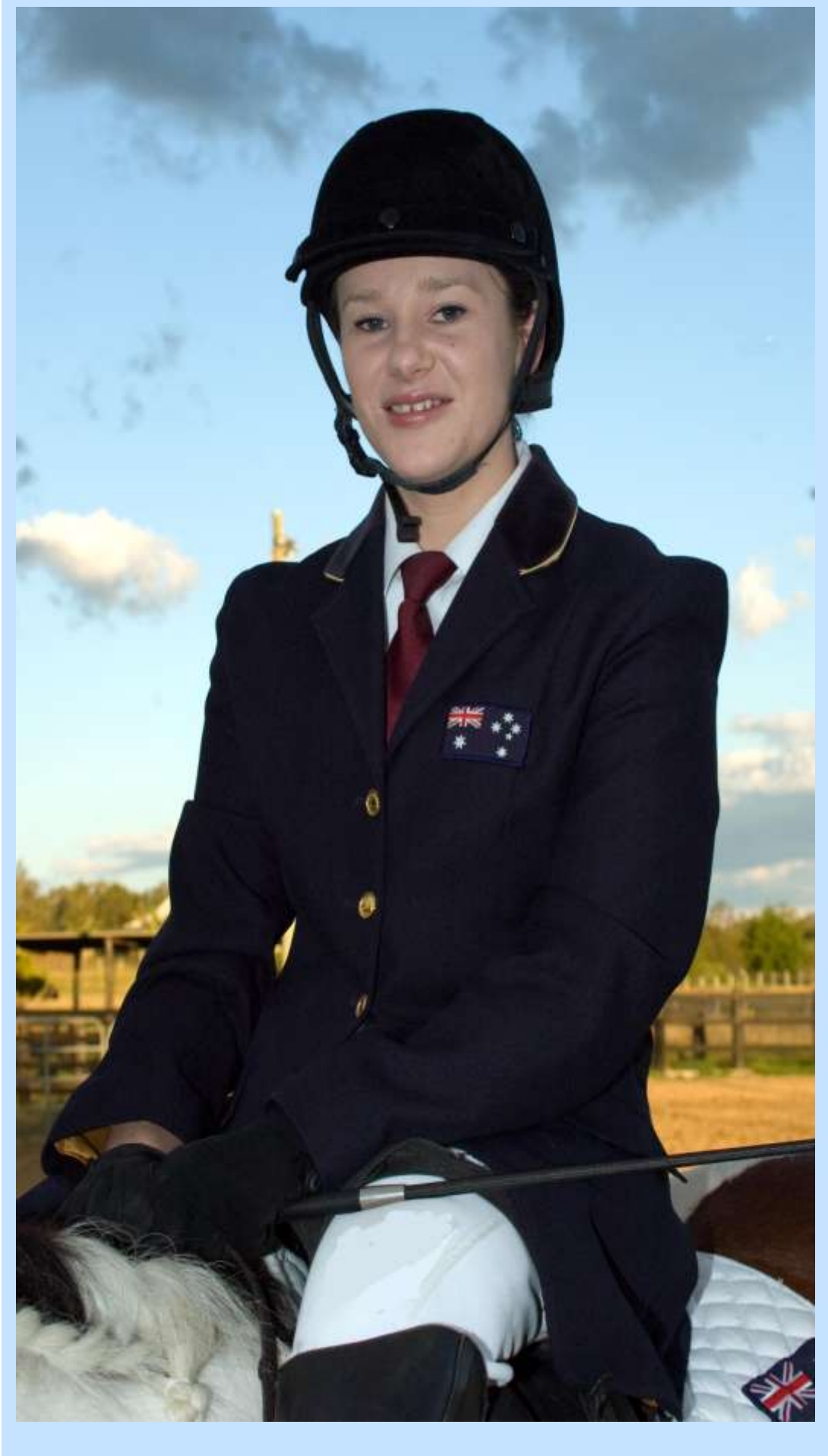
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MBStudio and Gallery
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Contact: Professor Nell Arnold
07 3202 8940





RIDING TO LONDON

Hello,

I am Susan Seipel
a para-athlete
proudly representing
Queensland and Australia
as an equestrian

A Photo-Story about an Australian Equestrian

Photography: Photo-Journalist Nell Arnold
Author of the "Out of Australia" series
featuring people of inspiration.



This story begins in Queensland, Australia.



Our patch outside Brisbane

Supported by Kylie

I. Champions of Spirit

“Nell Arnold who is writing my biography calls me a champion of heart and spirit.

I understand the spirit part because I started in athletics as a “tiny tot”. By age seven I began riding. Horses are powerful, fast and many times taller than I am.”

Many athletes, dancers, artists, musicians – people developing skills, do begin a focused pathway at a young age.

So why is this story different?

Susan Seipel tells her story with simplicity. I found inspiration in that simplicity. I hope you do as well. I also uncovered a sense of awe that one so young had already accomplished far beyond the expectations of most.

Yet, she says, “I have only begun.”

Her words and my photographs offer a preview of a few pages in the book about her life.

We invite you to a glimpse of a champion, not born to athletic frame, yet with greatness of spirit within.

By sharing a few pages of this story in the making, we hope you also will seek opportunities to make viable her effort, “Riding to London” and to witness this story of inspiration outreach from Australia.

“The challenge to spirit for me?”

Susan reflects, and then begins her story.

“I was born with Arthrogryposis Multiplex, a rare disorder characterised by fusion of joints and absent muscle formation in my legs.



The Path Taken



“I have only begun.”

At the age of four I was taught to swim as Physiotherapy. I developed a fondness for the sport becoming classified as a S7 disabled swimmer.

Between 1999 and 2001 I held six Queensland State Games Records and three Australian, National Age Records in freestyle and backstroke.

I enjoyed competing against others, but also against myself and took up many sports including rowing.

Fifteen years ago, I started riding lessons at the McIntyre Pony Riding for Disabled Centre. Little did I know at that time, how much the centre and the horses would change my life. I have now ridden 70 different horses.”



II. Champions are not born, they chose to become. They chose to continue.

A Matter of Choice

“My first competition was in 1998. My coach entered me into the Riding for the Disabled, National Dressage Championships, which were held that year on the Sunshine Coast. I had been training on “Goldie”, an old chestnut gelding from the centre.

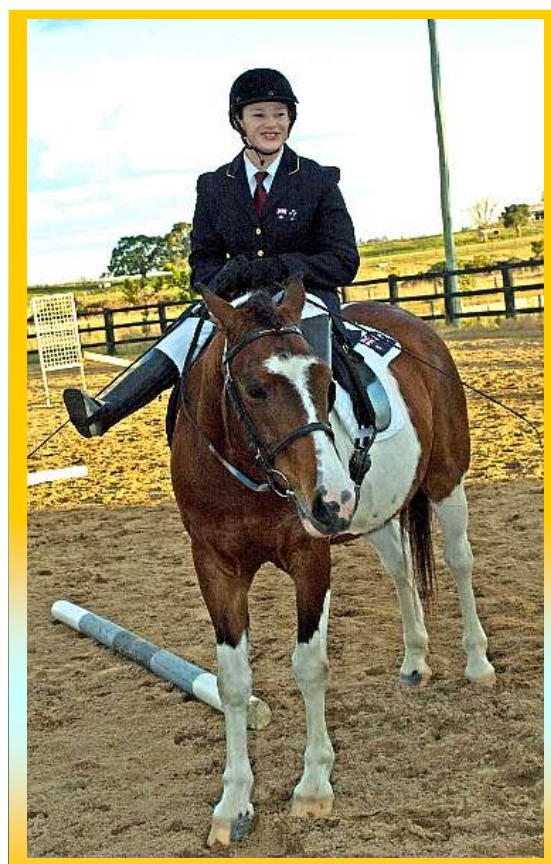
We were up against international riders from Great Britain, Japan and New Zealand. I was one of the youngest riders. At age 12 I was also in the lower age limit for competitors.

Goldie and I had a bit of a rough start to the event. The day before the competition began I fell off Goldie, not once but twice in the warm-up arena. But, on the first day of competition, Goldie and I rose to the occasion. To everyone’s surprise we actually won our first test!

This was my introduction to dressage competition and I loved it. I have competed at ten National Championships.

And Goldie, my partnering champion? Goldie recently retired from The McIntyre Centre. He is still going strong into his 30’s, which is very old for a horse.

I continued. In 2006 riding my own horse, “Menora Wildfire”, we won the RDA Australian National Dressage Championships.



Menora Wildfire

In 2008, I won again riding a borrowed horse named “Mellizo”. Together we achieved the highest score of the competition.

The highlight of my career, so far, came in 2006. I was selected to represent Australia at the FEI Pacific Rim Para-Equestrian Dressage International Competition, held at Milner Downs Equestrian Centre in Langley, Canada.

I had a great time overseas with the team. But my horse could not go with me. Once again I had to borrow a horse. This time a Canadian horse named “Conclusive Talent” took up the challenge with me. Only a few days practice, but we won a Bronze medal.



III Champions of Spirit Rely On Courage and Persistence

Persistence – even with an audience

I strove to be part of the Paralympics Equestrian team going to the 2008 Games in China.

I came very close, just missing out on team selection.

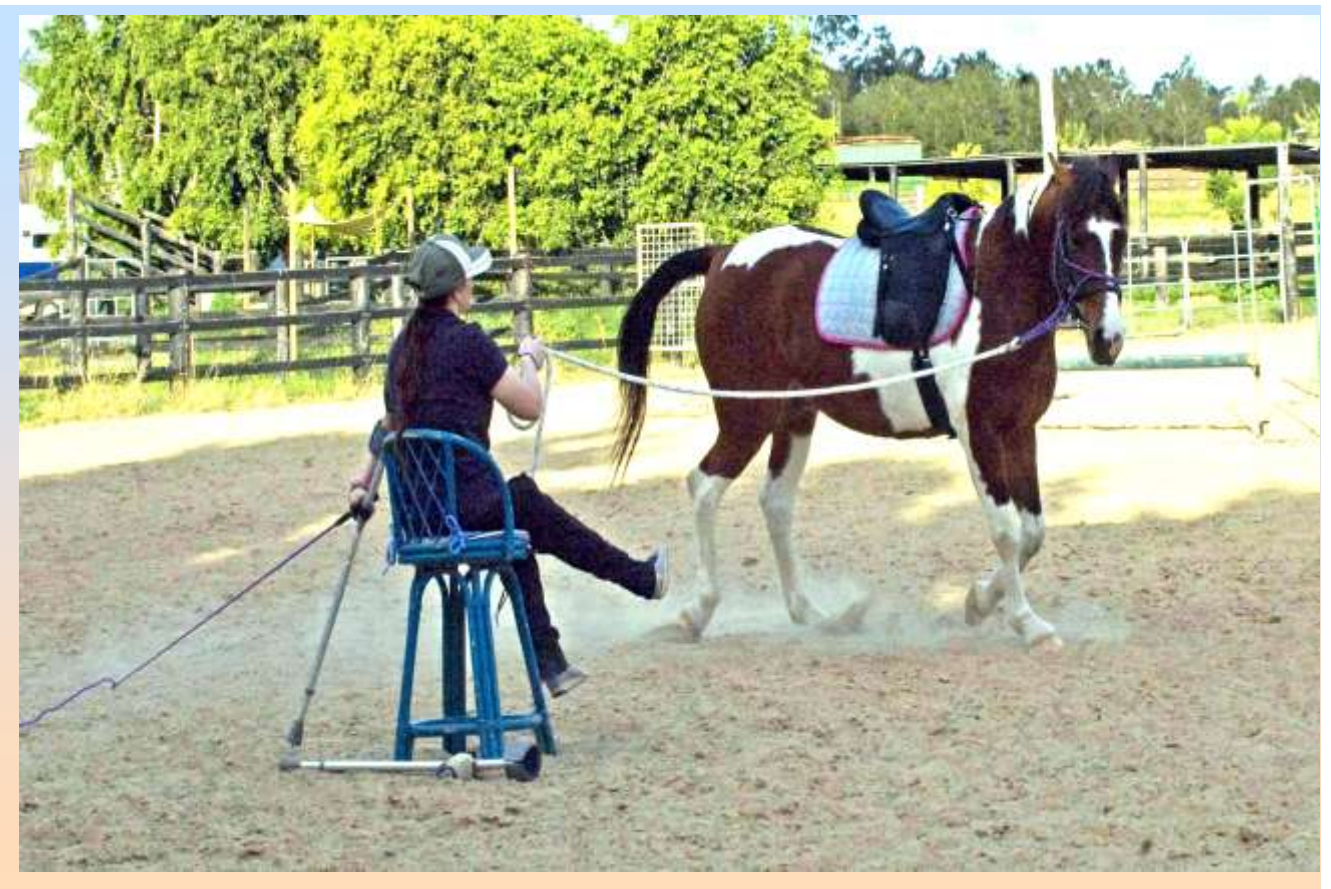
Something that I have learnt from riding horses is that “if you fall, you should get back up and try again”.

I am doing just that.

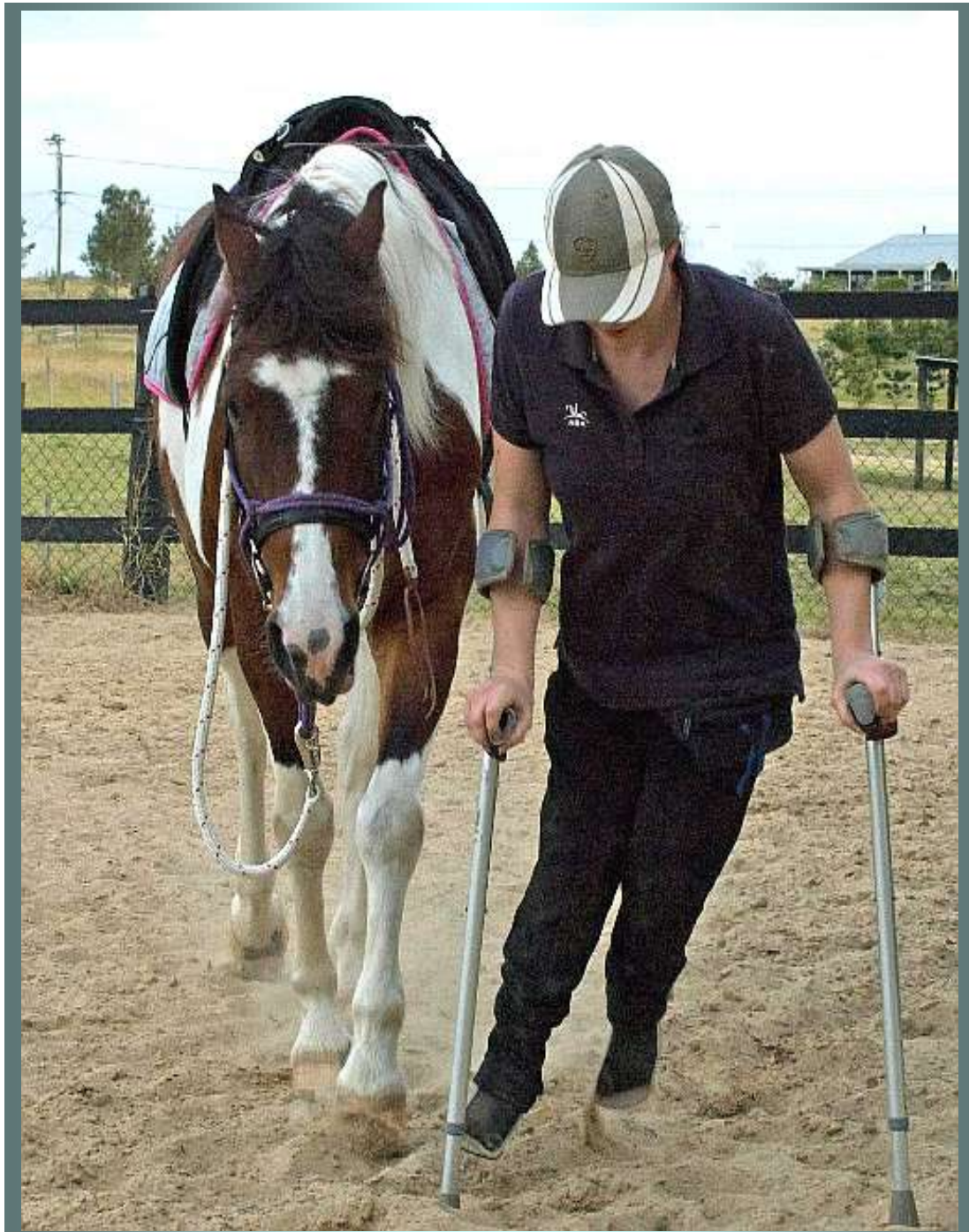


**My new goal?
To compete in 2012 Paralympics in London.
My dream includes my horse riding with me.**

The persistence part of spirit keeps me focused as I prepare two horses as competitors. Many hours are spent in grooming and washing. I undertake the training including the essential “lunging exercises” in perfecting the stance and footwork required in Dressage.



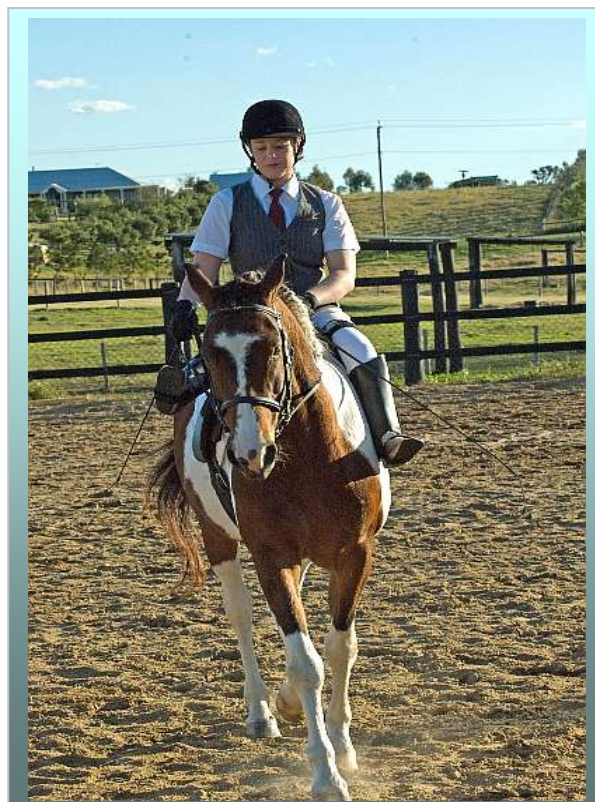
My life basically revolves around horses and I honestly can't imagine life without them. I have my own horse that I train and with whom I compete against fellow disabled riders and also able-bodied riders. My second horse comes from another family of incredible generosity.



Quiet Moment

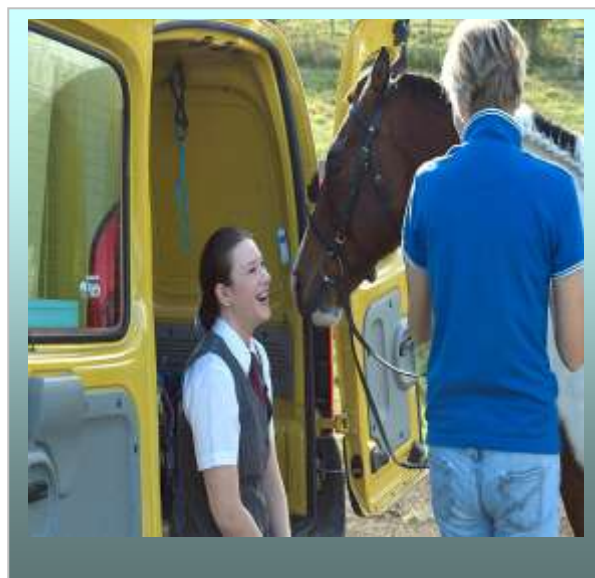


Heads Up



Foot up

Yes, I understand the 'champion of spirit' requirements, not only in me but also in the horses, which have supported me in these often exhausting competitions and in the other athletes who meet me in competition.



Touch Noses

IV Championship is about Partnership in Spirit.

There have been many horses and people who made my story of success possible. As I reflect on these individuals and horses, I understand the meaning of Nell's phrase, "champions of heart". Without these quiet champions, my story might have been very different.

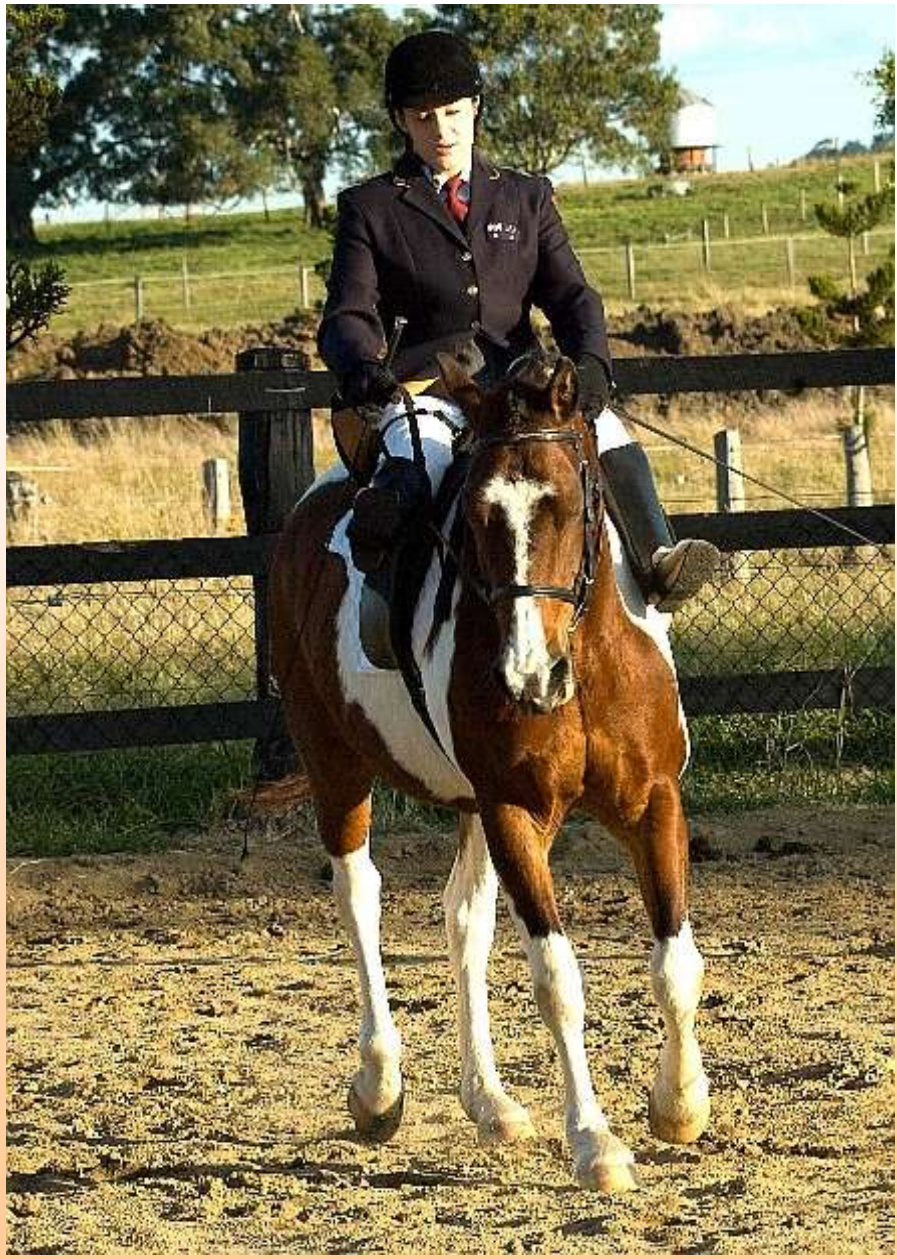


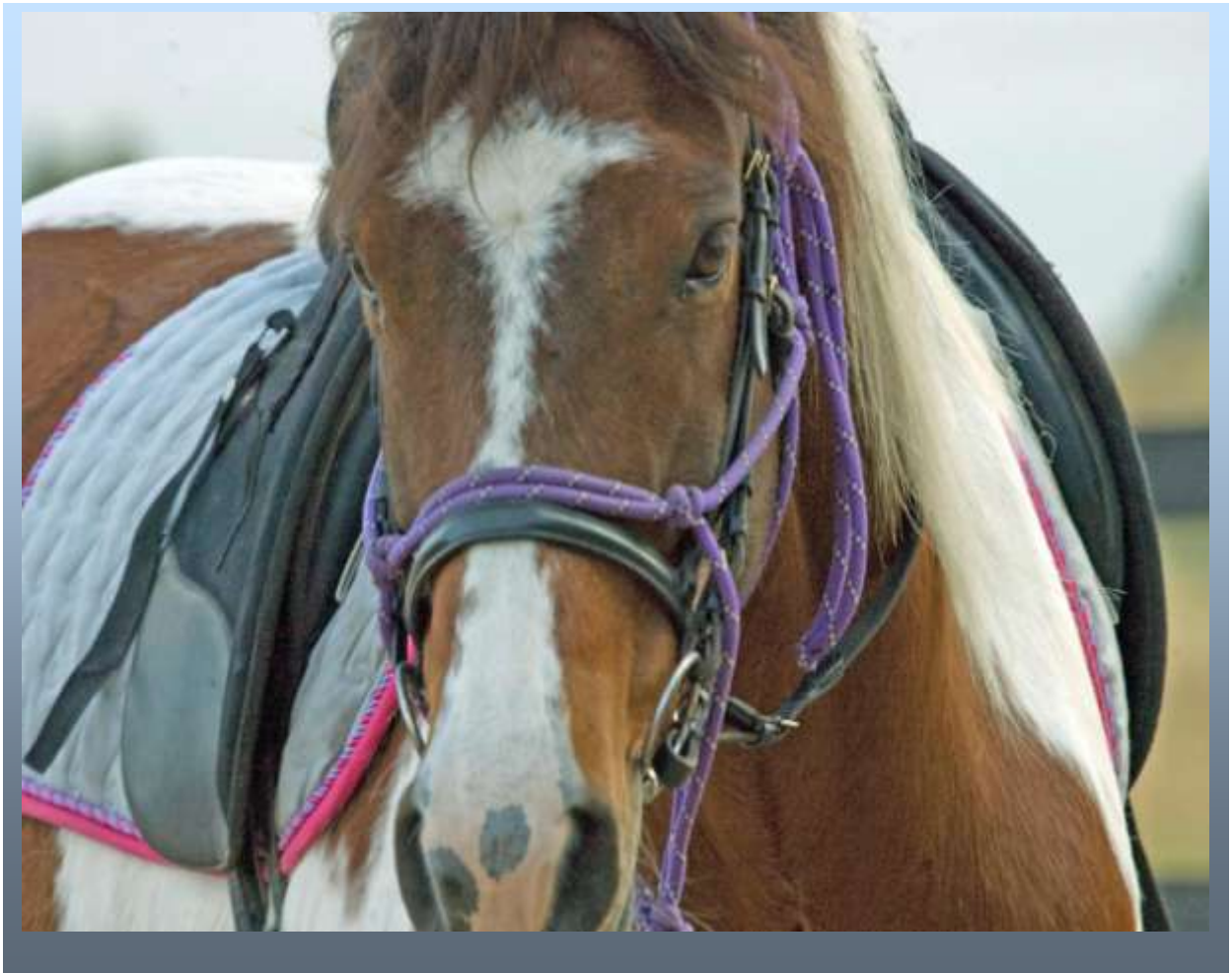
A Portfolio of Two Champions

working out, training, preparing for competition.

"My current horse is a rising 13-year-old Mora(Morgan x Arab) paint gelding named **"Menora Wildfire"**.

I first rode him at the 2001 RDA National Championships in Victoria where we placed 2nd in Grade 1. Originally used for endurance riding, "Menora Wildfire" was released from his Morgan and Morab Stud in Victoria for dressage training with me in Queensland. We regularly compete in open EA competitions at novice level, against able-bodied riders.





Champion of Heart



Do you see
what I see?





Strange looking horse!



Little ones weren't there yesterday.



Together



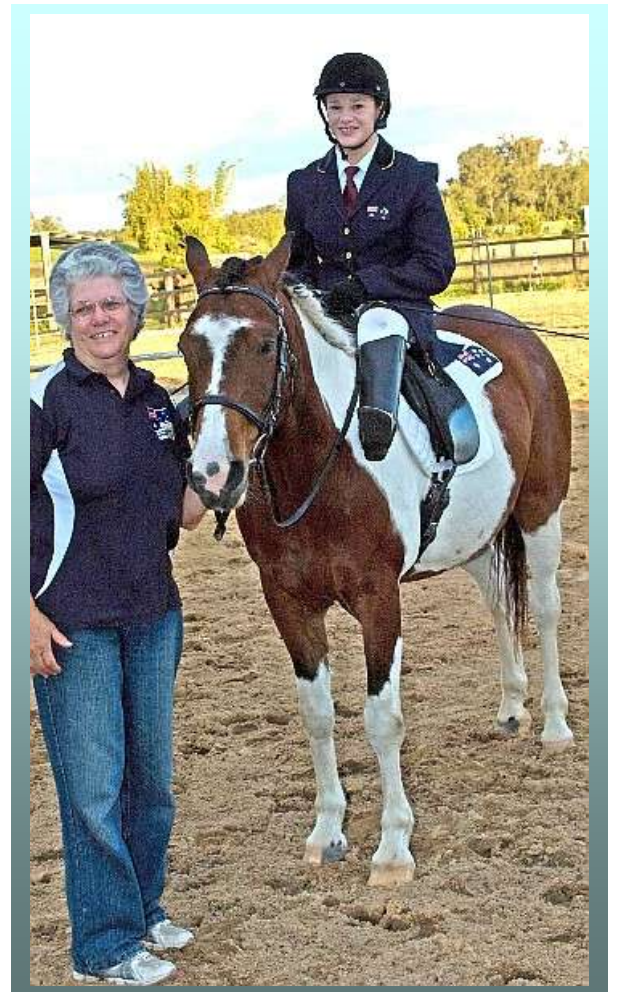
Waiting for instructions

And so my book features these champions of heart, some who silently, and others less quietly, helped me clamber into the saddle;

Others who taught me to ride not only for exercise, but also in competitions against myself and others.

Then families who contributed their horses so that I had long term partners in training, competitions, events and as companions in spirit.

But I will leave this part of the story for the book for across Australia many people have helped me achieve my dreams. My book I hope will let me recognize them as the quiet champions who ride with me in my mind and heart.



**Cecily Seipel, a Quiet Champion
There from the beginning.**

Horse riding for me began as physiotherapy but has become so much more. I can do things now that I never before thought possible, like having the freedom to go where my wheelchair can't, and seeing the world from up high on horseback instead of always having to look up at people.

With horses, my long-term dream of representing my country on the world stage is being realized.

I could not have achieved what I have, without the support of the McIntyre Centre – Pony Riding for Disabled. Staff, trainers, volunteers, horses – all gave me opportunities to achieve my dreams and goals. They continue to help others like me to overcome their own limits.”



V Performance Beyond Expectation



When Susan is not riding horses, she enjoys other sports including swimming, rowing, sit-skiing, and wheelchair tennis, with the Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association of Queensland.

In 2003 she completed her senior certificate, and Information Technology certificates I and II. She finished top of her class in a TAFE course in Horse Management in 2004.

In 2008 Susan attained a Diploma in Applied Science with a Major in Equine Studies from the University of Queensland.

In two weeks, Susan begins the long drive with her horse to Sydney for another round of competitions seeking to earn a place in the Australian Paralympic Team.

Menora Wildfire goes with Susan in this first set of competitions.



**We invite you to join us
in underwriting some of the costs of these trips.**

“Freight Forwarding a Horse, A Rider, and Gear”
Unexpected Costs to Ensure Performance Beyond Expectation.

**\$5,000 A Trip
Divided by 10 Companies
\$500 Investment in Two Champions
x 2 National Competitions**

Then Catching a Ride to London

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Thank You Wild Fire