

AN INSTANT PICK

By Jan Marquardt

We were asked to write an article on how we found and purchased our lovely mare, EMC Ana Isabellah (Autocrat x Inschallah (Furioso II)), while we were driving to Lamplight for the Nationals in July, 2010. So I guess I should start in the beginning.

Our quest started in 2006 when my non-horsey husband, Gary, announced he was buying me a horse for my birthday after my being "horseless" for a number of years. After some serious soul searching about the pros and cons of getting back into the world of horses, I got really excited and starting vigorously doing my homework. I'm a "mare" person and had always had an ambition to start a small breeding facility so that was the only definitive in the process. Next I learned more about the specific warm blood breeds/registries and blood lines. The internet was a great resource for finding barns, breeders, writing for information and getting references. I don't think this was exactly what Gary had in mind when he said he was going to buy me a horse! He felt this was way too much work; you should just find one you like and buy it ... period! I explained that's not



how you do it and went about my business. I'd spend hours browsing, printing out pages and then going back to checking pedigrees and bloodlines. It was turning into a major process.

I was in the midst of narrowing down my search to a mere 10 states and was considering a trip to Germany when I opened a website to find this picture of a 3 day old Isabellah with her surrogate mother Holly (Izzy is an embryo transfer foal). Gary walked up behind me and said "That one is mine!" I laughed, carefully explaining why you can't buy a foal from a photo but I did add that breeding facility to my list. By the time I finished my shopping list (after having some friends do pre-screening/shopping for me), we were taking a 2 week trip and stopping at 12 facilities in 9 states. So in May, 2006, we did just that ... we spent days and days, flew all over the place, rented cars, drove to several facilities (including a ferry ride across Lake Michigan) and then ended up buying Ana Isabellah, the filly

he'd chosen from a photograph when she was just 3 days old. Just think of how much time, effort and money we would have saved if I had taken my husband's advice and bought her without all the dramas involved in the search! Izzy was about 6 weeks old when we actually bought her (along with her younger "sister" Dolce Rhosa who was only 18 days old) from Sherry White of Graystone Farm in Maumee, Ohio. That was just the beginning.

Gary went to pick up the "girls" after they were weaned in November, 2006 and brought them home to Walkabout Station in Willis, Texas (about 60 miles northeast of Houston). Although Izzy could be a bit difficult as a suckling, she was anything but difficult once she was home. Izzy almost immediately became Gary's shadow whom we affectionately dubbed his St. Bernard.

For the next two plus years, she and Rhosa grew up at Walkabout Station just being horses. Our goal for Izzy was to give her the opportunity to pass the Hanoverian Mare Performance Test and earn Elite Mare status for our breeding program. In early 2009 (Izzy would be turning 3 in April); we started interviewing young horse trainers so we could get her prepared for the MPT.

After talking with some folks, visiting a few training barns and meeting several young horse trainers, we elected to send Izzy to Erika-West Danque. Erika is a young trainer who, conveniently for us, is also in Willis, Texas. Erika shared our passion and love of horses along with a superior horse sense, making her a good choice for us and Izzy.



This was Izzy's first trailer ride and trip "away from home" since arriving in Texas 2-1/2 years earlier but she took it all in stride. Erika started working with Izzy in April, 2009 and they had great chemistry together. Everything went relatively easy with Izzy, she was simple and uncomplicated to break and by Labor Day, we thought she should get some exposure to being at a show with all the hustle and bustle involved before her MPT. Izzy's first introduction to schooling was at the HDS Laborious Day Show in Conroe, 2009. We hauled her there and like nervous parents sending their child to the first day of kindergarten, we brought our chairs and stayed parked outside her stall. (Continued on page 14)

AN INSTANT PICK, *continued*

Izzy was absolutely unfazed by everything except the overhead speakers. That took a bit of getting used to when someone would talk over her head but she quickly settled down to that as well. While Erika was schooling her, Lucy Sharp

(formerly Meyer, owner of the Hanoverian Stallion Sonntagskind) and Jenna Stern (owner/trainer of the Belgian stallion, Gran Casso) came by and complimented us on what a nice mare Izzy is and how well Erika was riding her. When we said she was just 3 years old, they were surprised and said we should be showing her in Materiale class. We



didn't know anything about it but they are both seasoned professionals so we decided to take their advice and entered her ... Izzy scored a 74.7%. We were amazed ... this was her first time at any show; she was in the large coliseum ring (which is intimidating at best) and acted like she'd be doing this her whole life. Not so much for her parents who knew absolutely nothing about dressage or showing and could not have pulled any of this off without the help of Erika, Marilyn Kulifay, and the show secretary, Julie Harkness.

That set the tone so we decided to take her to Windy Knolls later that month. Erika showed Izzy in four classes in two days and brought home four blue ribbons! So exciting ... Izzy had qualifying scores for both the Regional Championships and SWDC in just one weekend! Izzy was so comfortable in all these strange surroundings, nothing seemed to bother her ... we were amazed and had to keep reminding ourselves that she's only 3 years old (and less than 6 months under saddle).

Since we were on a roll and Izzy only needed one more score in Materiale class to qualify for a USDF award, we headed to Tyler, Texas the next weekend. It was a very long trailer ride, huge facility and Izzy never quite "settled down" the entire time. Being on the road two weekends in a row was probably too much for this youngster yet she earned a respectable 62.4 in T4 and 73.2 in Materiale. (Ana Isabellah would finish the year in fourth place nationwide in the three year old filly Materiale class.)

October rolled around and it was time for Izzy to perform her MPT. We had taken her, along with a couple of non-Hanoverian mares to be approved for breeding, to the inspec-

tion site the night before so she could get a bit accustomed to yet another different setting! We decided to turn Izzy loose in the covered arena, where the jumping chute was set up for the next day's event and she decided to jump through the chute ... at liberty! Funnier yet was Rhosa who followed her right through the jumps and she'd never seen a jump in her life! Quite the pas de deux! In any event, we were very excited yet nervous about having Izzy inspected and given the MPT in the same day as a three year old. Izzy made us all proud by being the High Point Hanoverian mare and attained Elite Mare Candidate status with a very high score of 7.88. Hard to believe this mare is just three years old. (We would later find out this score was high enough to earn Izzy the Reserve Champion Hartwig Memorial Trophy from the American Hanoverian Society.)

Naturally, we had to take her to one more show in 2009 - South West Dressage Championships which were held at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center, Katy, TX in conjunction with the 2009 GAIG/USDF Region 9 Championship. This was Izzy's first exposure to a show of this magnitude and for a youngster; she took things pretty much in stride ... that is until the tornado warnings, 40 mph winds and pounding rain that made the metal roofs sound like we were in a washing machine with bad ball bearings! Not much fun for any of the competitors, 2 legged or four legged! So much drama! In any event, she did her test wide eyed (that's an understatement) and alert, definitely not in her normal, relaxed fashion earning a score of 64.2 and ending up 9th out of 22 competitors in the SWDC. Ironically, she was in the same test (T4) outdoors in the afternoon (very wet, muddy and sloppy but not storming down rain) and earned her very best score to date at 72.0 which made her the High Score Champion. Go figure! This was a great learning experience for us all ... plus she had her first qualifying score towards the 2010 Regional Championships!



That should be the end of our saga since our goal was for her to achieve her EMC status and semi-retire to become Gary's pleasure horse and ultimately a broodmare. However, Izzy was enjoying herself and we were being nudged by her "fan club" (which appeared from nowhere and has grown rapidly, thank you all!) to see what her potential really is and pursue the Four Year Old Markel Young Horse Championships in 2010. After a two week vacation back at Walkabout Station with all of her friends she was back to Erika's to work in preparation for her 2010 campaign.

About the author: Jan Marquardt and her husband, Gary, own Walkabout Station in Willis, TX. For more information, please see their website www.walkaboutstation.com