

Kismet Farm LLC

An Atmosphere For Everyone

By Erica Faulkner



Alex Gravett showed Ask Me Again to many top titles while she was assistant trainer at Bill and Kris Knight's Pleasantview Farm.



Gravett showed Party Nut to the Novice Five-Gaited Champion honors at Rock Creek in 2012. Gravett explains that this horse was the first young horse that she taught to rack.

Simpsonville, Kentucky is home to many reputable and well known Saddlebred stables. It takes talent, a good work ethic and a love for the industry for someone to break into the scene in this area and be successful. In just two short years, Kismet Farm has exploded onto the Kentucky scene and is already leaving quite an impression on those who have been veterans to the area for some time. Alex Gravett, owner and trainer at Kismet Farm, works hard to attain an inviting atmosphere for anyone who is interested in riding.

Growing up in St. Paul Minnesota, Gravett spent her early years learning to ride on her mom's quarter horse. "Poco, my mom's quarter horse, was kept at my grandparents' house. From the time I can remember, every time we would visit them I would ask to ride." Gravett continues, "My mom made me learn to ride bareback, only allowing me to use my tiny kid's western saddle when I would carry it from the house to the barn, which was down a fairly large hill. I would literally drag it through the gravel at the age of 4 so I didn't have to ride Poco bareback. I guess that was the beginning of the end so to speak!"

As years went by, Gravett never lost her love for the horse. Once she mastered riding Poco, it was time to embrace new challenges. "My mom's high school friend, Linda Hagen-Kvanbeck, invited us over for a riding lesson on one of her Morgans. Her family raised Morgans at their Troika Farm in Hampton, MN and was about 5 miles from my grandparents' farm. After a few lessons, Linda asked my mom if I wanted to show in a lead line class at

the North Star Morgan Americana Horse Show when it was held in Rochester, MN. It led to showing in western walk and trot and the rest is history."

Eventually Gravett's parents decided to open their own facility, and they purchased an 80-acre horse farm and opened up the public training stable, Crocus Hill Stables. "After a year in business, they hired Lyle and Colleen Wick to manage the operation and they became my trainers throughout the end of my juvenile career." And what a career it was, with numerous wins at major shows all across the country. However, a few special memories stand out in particular. "I continued to ride with Lyle and Colleen, even after we closed our farm. I continued to ride with them when they opened their own place, Hardwood Creek Farm. They were really like my second family through middle and high school. Some weeks I spent 5 or 6 days at the barn."

Gravett recalls her first national win with Lyle and Colleen, "They took me to my first National titles at Oklahoma City aboard LW Ace's Wild in the 12 & 13 Hunt Seat Equitation and Hunter Pleasure divisions. "Wildman" was a very competitive hunter in his day and will always have a special spot in my heart as my first horse I won at OKC with." However, this was not her only trip to the winner's circle at Oklahoma. "My final year as a juvenile, my mom and stepdad, Dick Cecchetti, decided to geld the 1998 Open English Pleasure World Champion, Cabot French Pepper, for me to show. We went almost undefeated that year and capped it off by winning the 14-17 Junior Exhibitor English Pleasure World Championship in 2002."



RWCC I Spy A Firefly and Gravett are seen here winning the Ladies Three-Gaited Championship at Rock Creek in 2012. This was the first horse that Gravett got to show on Saturday Night at Louisville, and had the honor of being named Reserve World Champion of Champions in the Ladies Three-Gaited class.



The Great Gazoo was just one of the top horses that Gravett worked during her summers in between her semesters at William Woods University.

After her juvenile years were finished, Gravett spent a brief time with the Bodnar Family at Merriehill Farm. "Although I didn't have a horse of my own to show with them, they always made sure I had something to show. They were very encouraging of my wanting to become a professional." It was Mark Bodnar who helped to put Gravett on the path to being a professional, setting up an internship for her with Gerry Rushton and Stacy Hennessy, during her summer break at William Woods. "I had never met Gerry or Stacy and I flew from MN to Monterey, CA to meet them for the first time at none other than a horse show! It was a true "trial by fire" experience and I loved every minute!"

She enjoyed her summer so much, that she went back for another summer the next year. "We purchased Upper Echelon as a summer project for me to show that year. I was fortunate enough to win a large Amateur English Pleasure class with him at the Far West show and earned other top ribbons throughout the summer, including a third place finish in the Ladies English Pleasure World Championship that year at Oklahoma, where we sold him. He has gone on to be a top equitation horse and earned many world titles." After so much success with the Morgan breed, Gravett decided to venture over to the Saddlebred side of things. Hennessy helped Gravett make the transition by setting her up with an internship with Nelson Green the summers between her Junior and Senior years at William Woods. "It was during this internship that I just fell in love with Kentucky," states Gravett.

It was the summer after her graduation when she got the opportunity to work with and campaign the well-known show star, The Great Gazoo. "Gazoo" is probably one of the most special horses of all that I have had since I was a kid. I have never felt a connection with a horse like I have with Gazoo." During her senior year in college, Gravett won the Mo-Kan gaited pleasure class at the Royal with Gazoo. "The summer after college, I leased him and showed him on the Kentucky County Fair circuit and we won at Shelby County Fair, Shelbyville, were reserve grand champions at Lexington and were third in one split of the adult gaited pleasure class at Louisville with a first place vote above Sprinkles and Michelle."



Alex Gravett and her husband Stephen stand with the Triple Crown winner, American Pharoah.

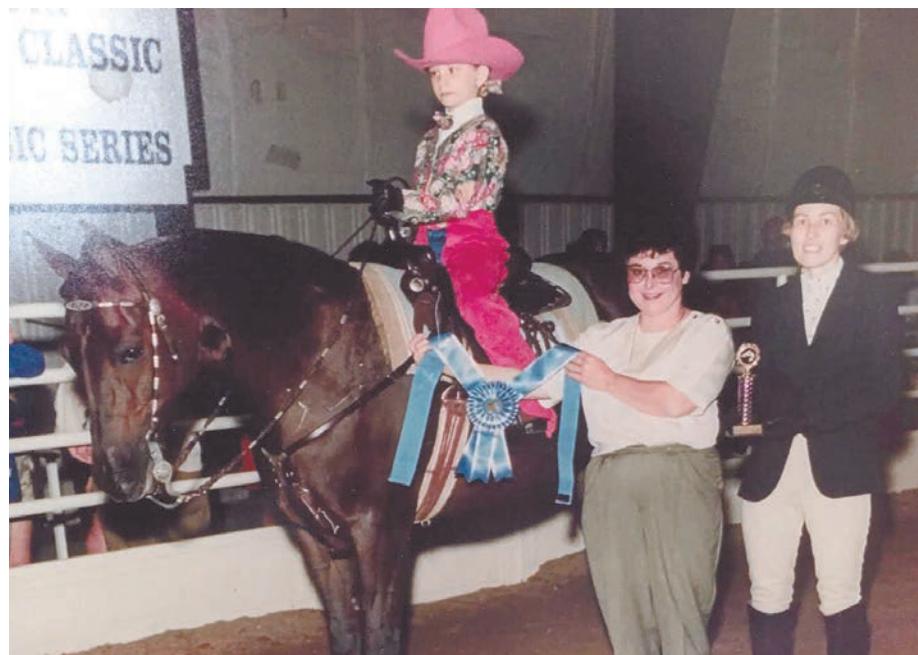
Gravett continues, "He is 19 now and retired with me, enjoying his days in the fields. He still comes running to me when I call him with his ears up. He has a really goofy personality, always had and always will." After graduating from William Woods, Gravett stayed in Kentucky and continued working for Nelson Green for a little over a year.

The next adventure for Gravett began when she went to work for Bill and Kris Knight at Pleasantview Farm, in Simpsonville, KY. As Kris Knight will tell you, "Alex is the best. She is hardworking, and is good at everything she does. She tries to make everything fun, which is a nice quality to have when working in such a competitive field." Working with the Knights for five and a half years, Gravett got to work a variety of horses. "While working for Nelson I got to start a lot of colts. Same with when I was working for Bill and Kris. I started a lot of colts and had the privilege to show a lot of young horses that went on to become nice amateur and juvenile horses." The list of horses Gravett worked is quite lengthy; Stonecroft Ringleader, S'More Undulata, Party Nut, Ask Me Again, Sara Smile, Stonecroft Me First, Stonecroft First Request, RWC First Round Pick and Zombie Stomp, are just a few of the horses on that list. "I really enjoy the process of starting young ones," she says, "watching them progress as they learn and getting them to the show ring."

Along with gaining experience with the young stock, Gravett got to expand her expertise under the Knights watchful eye as she helped prepare and show the amateur and juvenile horses as well. "Their customers were very generous to let me have those opportunities, as were Bill and Kris." RWC Warranty Connection, Shez So Delightful, RWCC Cumberland Crescent, RWCC I Spy A Firefly, are just some of the top performance horses that she got to prepare and show. The solid foundation that she built while working for Pleasantview has carried over into her new venture, the opening of her very own facility, Kismet Farm. "I have worked hard to mold Kismet Farm into a place that everyone can come and enjoy riding and showing," says Gravett. "I think in this day and age, being a well-rounded horse person is vital, and I bring that quality to Kismet farm, opening up our doors to amateurs, junior



Gravett started out the 2016 season for Kismet Farm with a win at the Cloverdale Horse Show with Snowman in the Junior/Limit Three-Gaited Park class.



Alex Gravett in her younger years showing in one of her first lead line classes. As she says "always a stone cold face when I show!"

exhibitors, customers with young horses or even those who choose to have an open horse. All are welcome here and all of them get the same attention."

Kismet Farm is a beautiful facility located on Todds Point Road in scenic Simpsonville, KY. With 19 spacious training stalls, a picturesque barn and arena, Gravett has everything that is needed to turn out competitive show horses. Currently she has 10 horses in training and recently was seen leaving the ring as the winning trainer at shows such as KASPHA and KY Spring Premier. Along with a top-notch facility, Kismet Farm offers its customers plentiful green pastures for lesson horses to be turned out in. "I am very thankful that the owners of the property, Greg and Hollis Weishar, allow me to run my business out of their facility. Without them, none of this would have been possible."

Gravett is already making memories at Kismet Farm, one of which was when she won the Limit Five-Gaited class at Shelbyville last year with Call Me King. "This was a special win for me, for two reasons. It was my first win 'out on my own,' and it was also the first time that Call Me King had ever been shown. Lang and Tracy Gibson of Simpsonville owned him at the time and were crying as though he had just won Louisville. It was a very special night at Shelbyville." Miss Believin' is another horse that has been an important part of Kismet Farm, as Gravett says "she was the very first customer horse I had in training. She is retired now and still owned by Nancy and Christine Oser of Louisville. 'Bella' showed with me for her final two seasons in adult country pleasure with Christine. She won or was second in quite a few classes at the KASPHA shows, Rock Creek, Kentucky Fall Classic, Lawrenceburg and Harrodsburg both years. Without the Osers getting the ball rolling, Kismet wouldn't have gotten off the ground as successfully and quickly as it did!"

Gravett, along with Katie Case and Madelyn Palazzo, gives about 30-40 lessons a week at Kismet. The farm is home to a couple nice lesson horses, however she says her best beginner lesson horse is Cabot French Pepper, the horse that brought her to her first world championship win. "Even as a breeding stallion, Cabby was always very mild mannered. It was truly a dream come true getting to win at OKC with him and I cannot thank my mom and stepdad enough for gelding him for me." She remembers the win like it was yesterday, "It was a class of 24 and there was no workout. We had far from "the perfect" ride, but it was still a great class and I will never forget hearing 315 called out!



Alex Gravett and her husband Stephen on their wedding day in September 2015.

Pete Fenton was announcing that afternoon and I never in my wildest dreams would have guessed it was me! Cabby is now 24 and the best beginner lesson horse in the country. He is at Kismet with me, in the first stall, knows when the peppermint jar is opened, and I simply don't know what I would do without him! Every time we go to an academy show, someone tries to buy him."

Great horses and great customers are the backbone to a good show barn, and Kismet has both. Gravett explains, "I am very lucky to have a wonderful group of customers, both show horse customers and lesson customers, and everyone is very supportive of each other. The horse business is unique in that it is possible to create an environment where there are no boundaries between age, financial status or length of time involved in the industry. I would say Kismet exemplifies this. I have tried very hard to make Kismet the kind of place where people feel comfortable coming to the barn but yet keeping it very professional, classy and clean. I am a very type-A, detail oriented type of person and I think those personality traits come out through Kismet."

Singing her praise, customer Jennifer Joiner is thrilled with the job that Gravett has done for her and her show star Ridgewood's Sir Handsome. As Joiner says "My husband Dan and I think Alex Gravett is one of the most talented trainers we've known. As well as being very intelligent and articulate, she is a great communicator. She expects a lot of herself and her horses. There is no time-clock at Kismet, each horse is given as much time as it needs. Alex has the ability to bring a horse to its full potential with its consent. We're excited to be a part of Kismet and to watch Alex continue with her success!" It is no doubt with such approval from her clients, that Gravett is going to continue to climb the ladder of success and continue to grow her client base.

Gravett is also thankful for the support of her Husband, Stephen. The couple got married last year, and she says "he is a huge help in keeping me balanced and helps a lot behind the scenes when he can. He travels for his job as well, but he is always there when I need him and he is a big part of Kismet." With this appreciation for the customers and the horses, the dedication it takes to be a champion, and the support of her husband, Gravett and her Kismet Farm group are sure to continue to shine in the spotlight over the coming years.