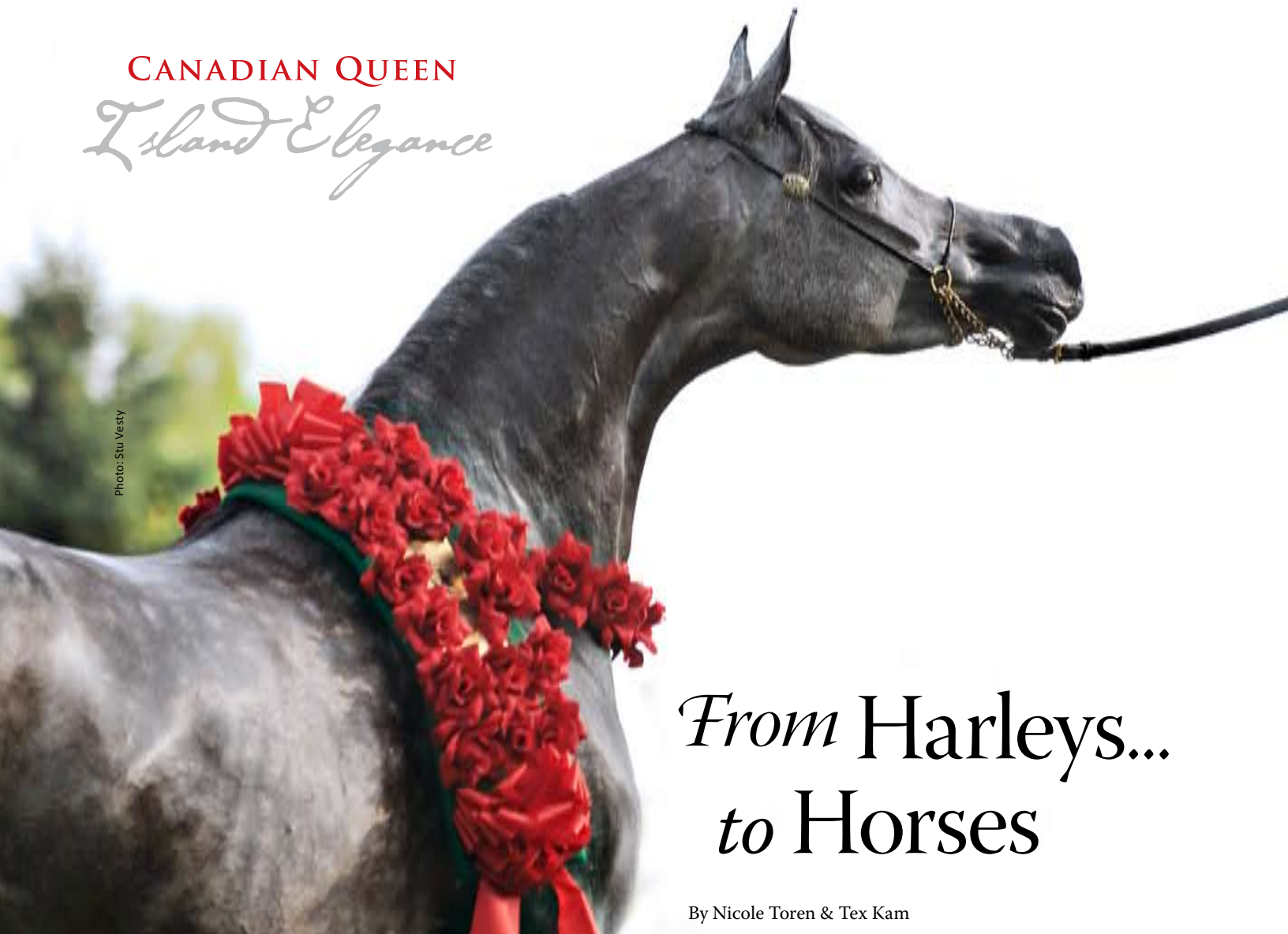


CANADIAN QUEEN

Island Elegance

Photo: Stu Vesty



From Harleys... to Horses

By Nicole Toren & Tex Kam

What do you do once you've achieved all that you set out to accomplish? We're not sure, but what we can tell you is that the story of the two men whose breeding program created **Island Elegance** (known to all who love her as "Ellie"), is not your everyday Arabian tale. According to our research, Don James and Pat Simmonds have in Island Elegance the first Canadian-Bred Canadian National Champion Mare ever. Sometimes the little guy does win "the big one."

Our story starts out in approximately 1993 when Don James and his wife Ruth were ready for a change. They had decided to relocate from their home in North Vancouver to a farm just outside of North Saanich, on Vancouver Island. It was very much a diamond in the rough, forty acres of raw land and a house that required some TLC. There they built the facility that would become the backdrop of Island Arabians. In order for Don to achieve his dream of breeding Arabian horses, he needed not only good foundation stock, but the knowledge of how to create a winning breeding program. This is where he approached his good friend, Pat Simmonds.

Having both grown up in Edmonton, Don and Pat have been friends since they were teenagers. Pat's father Vernor Simmonds was a successful breeder of Arabians and in his day was very involved in the local Arabian community. This included being a founding member of the Aurora Arabian Horse Association. Although Don didn't grow up owning horses as Pat did, he was always drawn to them. His childhood consisted of hitchhiking to the family farm outside of Sedgewick, Alberta at every opportunity just to go for a ride. It was through this friendship with Pat and Vern that Don came to appreciate the qualities of the Arabian.

"What stands out for me," Don says, "is that although I was always a horse enthusiast, it's the experiences that touch us, that are truly amazing." His affection for the Arabian took root thanks to the Simmonds family. It was further developed by another Edmontonian, critically acclaimed filmmaker Anne Wheeler. Anne had an Arabian mare that she loaned to Don for a summer. He kept the mare at the Simmonds' farm and entered her in a local show that year. His first venture into the show ring was less than he had hoped for. "Everything was going good until they asked for the hand gallop," Don laughed. They excused him from the ring and



VERSACE

COUTURIER

*Wunderbar Arabians,
Saskatoon SK*

EVENING INTRIGUE

Wunderbar Arabians

Island Elegance

ISLAND MIST

*Don James & Pat Simmonds,
Vancouver Island, BC*

KGB SPRING FIRE

*Dr Al Wilke,
Okotoks, AB*

FAME VF+

PRECIOUS AS GOLD

ALADA BASKIN

PRECIOUS ME

Wunderbar Arabians

BEY SHAH+

GH VENTURE

*Frances Fischer,
Aldergrove, BC*

QF NOBELESSE

*Geert Keur,
Richmond, BC*

KGB INTRIGUE

SPRING CLASSIQUE

*Gary S. Fraser,
Surrey, BC*

BEY SHAH+

RAFFOLETA-ROSE

*EL SHAKLAN

AUTUMN IN GOLD

*ALADDINN

LAUNA BASKETU

WILDWOOD KOCHAR++

Sharon Barnes, Calgary AB

GAI FERZON DREAM

BAY EL BAY++

STAR OF OFIR

QF BALLADEER

Geert Keur

QF PARADISE

Geert Keur

*MUSCAT

VELVET DRIFT

JURAFIC

ROYAL VICTORIA

Cary Flack, Aldergrove, BC

It is noted which horses have, on record, a Canadian breeder. Some horses, such as Gai Ferzon Dream and KGB Intrigue, were owned for their entire lives by the Canadian breeders who purchased them, and contributed greatly to their breeding programs – however, their recorded breeder did not reside in Canada.

that was the end of that for a while. His show ring debut may not have gone as planned, but his love for the breed never dimmed.

In the mid 1960's the two young men forged similar paths. Both were accepted to the University of Alberta to study Pre-Veterinary Medicine. Around the time they were about to start their post-secondary education, the cowboy lifestyle (or more specifically the thrill of the rodeo) also drew their attention. "I had a 'flash'," Don recalls with a hint of good humour. "I got this idea that I wanted to be a rodeo cowboy." Pat apparently had the same idea. They joined the local rodeo association and entered the first Intercollegiate Rodeo, held that year at the University of Alberta. (Normally the intercollegiate rodeos used 3rd or 4th string stock, but the stock supplier for the more mainstream rodeos happened to be passing through with their first string on hand.)

Much like his first foray into the show ring, Don's attempt at Bareback Bronc was nothing to write home about. Pat came to the same conclusion. As he was being launched into the air high enough that he could see eye to eye with the people in the stands, he had enough time to decide that this was perhaps not his calling either. To seal the deal, he landed on the only rock in the entire arena. As dreams of a rodeo career faded, so too did their interest in veterinary medicine.

Don and Pat eventually chose different career paths. Pat became a pilot, flying for major Canadian airlines for thirty-five years until his retirement, while Don followed his love for the other horsepower with Harley Davidson Canada. Not to be completely outdone in the air by Pat, Don also became a recreational pilot and pilots his own helicopter.

The years flew by; Pat's father Vern Simmonds passed away in 1993 and Pat inherited a few of his father's horses. That same year, Don moved to the Island and he approached Pat with an idea for a partnership. Don reiterates, "Pat had this group of great foundation horses and mountains of knowledge, and what I lacked in experience, I made up for in enthusiasm and drive."

Once the handshake was done, as with any new venture, Pat and Don began to lay out a plan. According to Pat, the basic principle was simple: "Between 1993 and before I reached 70, I was going to work at breeding a National Champion." In actuality, Pat had accomplished this once before, with the part-Arabian mare **Lady Rahmeer**++, but he wanted to succeed with a purebred.

The road map to get there was pretty simple as well... begin with a good foundation of mares, breed them to the best stallions you could afford, and produce something better than what you started with. But to be even more specific, they wanted to prove that they could breed National-calibre horses using only Canadian breeding stock. Simple... right? Simple, but by no means easy...

From Vern Simmonds' stock, Don and Pat picked three mares that would give them their start – **KGB Spring Fire**, **TC Moonlight** and **Shai's Springette**. They decided that the best way to evaluate what these mares could produce was to breed them all to the same stallion. Their priority was to choose a stallion with the right attributes, but it was also important to both men to use a Canadian horse. They turned their hopes to the Bey Shah son **GH Venture**, who was bred and owned by Frances Fischer in the lower mainland of BC. The big, handsome grey was exactly what they were looking for. The mares could go from the farm in Alberta to Island Arabians in BC, with a stop along the way to be bred. It was a great plan, until they discovered **GH Venture** was not in BC, but was standing at RA Aloha Arabians in Reno, Nevada that year.

If they wanted to breed to this stallion, they either had to pack up and head south with their mares, or ship the semen north. They opted to ship semen and in the spring of 1995 they bred all three mares but none conceived. Disappointed but by no means discouraged, that following February Don and Pat loaded the mares into

the trailer and took off to Reno. Pat felt it was rather ironic that in their efforts to use a Canadian stallion they had to cross the border and travel several hundred miles into the U.S.

Regardless, it was worth the trip. All three mares caught this time and their first foal crop in 1997 produced **Island Mist** (*x KGB Spring Fire*), **Hailey Bop** (*x TC Moonlight*) and **Island Venture**+++/*(x Shai's Springette)*. Pleased with the results, Don and Pat repeated the breedings to **GH Venture** for the next couple of years. After they had a few foals on the ground, they decided that the **KGB Spring Fire** foals were the best of the group and would be used

to carry on the breeding program. Many of the foals that resulted from that first foray went on to successful show careers, especially those out of **KGB Spring Fire**. The first of those was **Island Mist** and she is still considered by both Pat and Don to be one of the best they ever bred. She was shown as a two-year-old and earned Top 5's at Region 17 and the Western Canadian Breeders.

By 2001, Don and Pat had begun breeding the second generation of **Island Arabian** horses. When choosing a stallion for **Island Mist**, they stuck to their guns on Canadian bloodstock. Their sights ended up setting on Ed and Laura Friesen's Versace son **Couturier**. Pat had seen him as a yearling. "He had everything I required," says Pat. "He had all the necessary strong points to offset any points in the mares that needed help." As they did with the previous generation, they bred a number of mares to **Couturier** over the span of a few years. The first crossing of **Island Mist** and **Couturier** produced **Island**

Shamrock, who was Region 17 Champion Colt as a yearling. In 2003, their second year of breeding to **Couturier**, **Island Elegance** was born.

At one point the partnership's herd had grown to about fourteen horses and it got to be too much for Don and his staff, who cared for the horses. Don's very busy personal life and professional career as the CEO and co-founder of **Deeley Harley Davidson Canada**, coupled with Pat's retirement, dictated that the time was right to divide the herd. With fourteen horses and more on the way, decisions had to be made as to how they were going to accomplish this.

A love of everything exciting seems to be a common thread between Pat Simmonds and Don James. One dedicated his life to the skies as a professional pilot, and the other to the highways on a Harley Davidson. Daredevils to the core, it is probably not coincidence that Don and Pat picked the Arabian horse.



As Don explains, “The basis of our decisions were made on where our attachment was.” Pat decided on his favourites and one of them was Ellie’s mother, Island Mist. Don chose his own favourites, and it is interesting to note that Island Elegance was not his first choice but rather his second. All of the other horses Don picked showed and did well, but Island Elegance stayed home in the pasture as she was something of a late bloomer. Don continued to show his horses locally and regionally, but was determined not to go to Nationals until he got there with his own breeding program.

By the time Island Elegance was four a decision was made to get her into the show ring. “When we started,” Don remembers, “we showed her in a few halter classes locally and she did alright.” Ellie was considered a Western Pleasure prospect, and did do some showing in that area, but by then Don ascertained that she really loved halter. “To me, Island Elegance epitomizes the Arabian horse,” says Don. “She has this presence that forces you to look at her.”

He decided to find someone who had had some success in the ring for Ellie’s chance at recognition. They discussed who was available and at the suggestion of Susan Nichol, Don’s barn manager, ultimately chose fellow British Columbians John and Andrea Pringle on Salt Spring Island. “It was a tough decision to send Ellie,” says Don, “because John was quite a ways away.”

John and Andrea readied the mare for competition and she was shown successfully in 2008, winning Region 5 Top Five Mare, Region 17 Reserve Champion Mare and Region 17 Mares ATH with John and Andrea’s daughter Jody. After those wins Don felt very strongly that he had made a good decision. “It was during the Region 5 Show in 2008 that Jeff Schall of Shada Arabians in Minnesota approached us,” says Don, “and he said, ‘This is a great mare, she can go all the way and I’d love to help you with her!’” After some thought, Don wasn’t sure he wanted to put the time and expense into it, but the Schalls were very convinced that Island Elegance could do it all.

Jeff wanted Island Elegance to show at Scottsdale 2009, but despite the pressure of a big show, Don decided to have John show her at Scottsdale – he had gotten her this far and this was their op-

portunity. “In a very Canadian fashion we had a compromise,” says Don. “We decided to send the mare down to Schall’s in Scottsdale in November 2008, and to have John work with Jeff to get her ready.”

The grey Canadian-bred mare was the talk of the show in the open mare class. Everyone was wondering who she was and who the handler was. John showed Island Elegance to a 2nd place finish (or in Scottsdale terms a Reserve Championship) in the 6- and 7-year old Mares class. Not to be left out, Jody showed her to a third place finish in the JTH class against some nationally very well-decorated mares. At that point, they knew they really had something and both John and Don decided to let Jeff have her for a Nationals campaign.

Island Elegance returned to Salt Spring Island after Scottsdale to be readied for the balance of the 2009 show season. Was this mare to be pampered and kept like a hot house flower after her Scottsdale wins? Well, yes and no! John and Andrea were adamant that she should be top condition to face the toughest competition of her life. Her regiment included lots of work under saddle... now who says you can’t ride halter horses! Ellie was even shown in (and

won) several performance classes while also competing in halter in 2008.

In early July 2009 at Region 5 in Monroe, Washington, Island Elegance was Regional Champion Mare with John at the lead. What a coup considering that Region Five is generally one of the most competitive

in North America, with top halter trainers flying in from around the U.S. to catch lead horses. As the end of July approached the tension mounted; Ellie would now be competing in her own backyard at the Region 17 Championships in Langley, BC. To add to the excitement, Midwest Training Center from Rogers, Minnesota brought several horses to the Region 17 Championships, including the reigning Scottsdale Champion Mare **Dulcinea BHF** (*Denali BHF x Felisha BHF*) for the open mares class and U.S. and Canadian National Champion **NBW Angels Kiss** (*Magnum Psyche x BHF Dark Angel*) to compete in ATH mare halter.

The excitement was substantial and the ring was elbow to elbow in the blistering, record-breaking heat as spectators gathered to watch the standoff. In the end, Dulcinea BHF was named Region 17 Champion Mare with David Boggs at the lead, while Island Elegance was named Reserve Champion with John Pringle. Not one bit dismayed, they readied the mare yet again for Jody to handle in the ATH class against NBW Angels Kiss and all other comers. This time victory was in the air with Jody and Ellie taking the championship.



TOP Island Elegance’s sire, **Couturier**.
MIDDLE ROW **Island Mist** with Ellie as a foal.
BOTTOM **Island Shamrock**, full brother to Island Elegance.



John Pringle, *Island Elegance*, and Don James in Scottsdale 2009.

A Conversation with PAT SIMMONDS

What was the most important element in achieving this goal?

You have to have the dream – you are going to run into all kinds of obstacles, it's so easy to quit and say, I've got a nice horse, but that level of the big time, it just can't be done for whatever reason. It takes an exceptional horse to come out of the blue and win over those big names and Ellie is that exceptional horse. It's so important to keep your eye on the goal and not to give up.

What did you feel when she went Canadian National Champion?

It was a super high – We've DONE IT – it was so exciting, but at the same time it brought closure to the dream. I thought it would take three generations, and it only took two. The chances of doing it once are in the hundreds of thousands. Doing it twice is... who knows!

Now what?

That's the ultimate quandary... what do we do now. I'm going to move on to something different – maybe a performance horse. It's someone else's turn to take the Halter torch and run with it....

A Conversation with DON JAMES

What were some of the great positives about your win?

I felt that Ellie really brought the Arabian Community together. The biggest example was as I was walking around the showgrounds prior to the class, everywhere I went everyone kept coming up telling me how well she had been doing. When she won, it was like a spontaneous move that everyone who had anything to do with her came rushing into the ring for the photo. I never really envisioned this kind of success with her, but when she did so well with each show, I really thought she deserved the chance to go all the way.

After fifteen years in this business, I still consider myself a novice. I have been impressed by the Arabian community, because to me when you reach out for help, you always get it. People have been very supportive – the pre-conceived notion that this business is very elite and standoffish certainly has not been my experience. Many of the other exhibitors in the show ring came up to say how nice she was and to offer their support.

*What makes *Island Elegance* so special to you?*

I have always had a lot of faith in the personality of a horse if it is to make fantastic show horse. *Island Elegance* has that exceptional personality. Her type of personality, the snort and blow is precisely what drew me to the Arabian in the first place. The investment we put in over time on her will continue, it's not about the monetary reward. Just having her is reward enough.

The victories were sweet but the toughest challenges were still ahead of them. Just a couple weeks later, after a short rest at Pringles' farm on Salt Spring Island, she was loaded back on to the trailer for her trip to Canadian Nationals in Regina, Saskatchewan. Once in Regina, Ellie was handed off to Jeff Schall at Shada and the rest shall we say is history! This Canadian-bred, Canadian trained, and Canadian conditioned mare was the first National Champion Mare bred in our country, ever.*

Island Elegance finished off her halter career in fine style by claiming the 2009 U.S. Reserve National Champion Mare honours with Jeff Schall in Tulsa, Oklahoma in October.

This story has so many feel-good elements, it's hard to put into words. That night in Regina, generations of Canadian Arabian breeders had their passions fulfilled with the blood of their Canadian horses running through the veins of this mare. A dedicated owner putting faith in a local trainer, and everyone attached to the horse not seeking the spotlight, truly just wanting what is best for the mare. This story has got to give every Canadian breeder of Arabian horses, whether large or small, a chill up their spine, to think... maybe one day that could be my horse with those roses on!

Producing a National Champion using only Canadian breeding stock was Pat Simmonds' goal all along. Right from the ground up, Pat and Don felt there were enough good horses in Canada to achieve this. "At the time of our partnership," says Pat, "it was popular for breeders to head to Brazil to buy their next champion. We felt that Canadians had been importing horses into Canada for a long time and we have some pretty great ones right here. Our average Canadian Arabian is probably better than the average Arabian in any other country. We simply proved that a top Canadian-bred horse can be as good as a Top Arabian from anywhere!"

"The Arabian business in Canada is no different than any other business," says Don. "We offered a quality product and surrounded ourselves with committed people who were directly responsible for making this a reality. There are some very talented people in Canada and we were able to find them. Sometimes you just have to have a little faith, take a leap, commit, and sort of bring them through."

What does the future hold for this Canadian Champion?

Only time will tell, but as we speak Don, Susan and John are looking at many opportunities in regards to *Island Elegance's* breeding future. While the mare is a hot commodity after her winning streak, she is not for sale. Perhaps her next mating will produce another National Champion bearing the insignia "Made in Canada". 🐾

* In the category of National Champion Mare (excluding other classes such as Futurity Fillies, ATH, and other filly/mare halter).

The Pringle Farm

By Tex Kam



What do you say about a family so humble they do not take an ounce of credit for what was accomplished with *Island Elegance* these past two years? That describes John and Andrea Pringle to a tee. Everyone who knows them would be the first to say, "Wow, what a great thing to happen to such good people." Let us say from all at the Registry and the *News...* CONGRATULATIONS!

John and Andrea along with their children Jeff and Jody operate Pringle Equine Services. Their farm is located on picturesque Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. It is the largest of the Gulf Islands, situated between Vancouver Island and mainland Vancouver, British Columbia.

As with *Island Elegance*, the story of Pringle Equine Services is deeply rooted in Canadian Arabian horse breeding history. John's attachment to Arabians goes back to his parents and Willomar Arabians, then of Taber, Alberta. Willomar was owned by Dr. George Allen and his wife Lynn. Its main breeding and showing operations were located in Taber, but satellite farms were located in the United States and in Holland.

Willomar, in its heyday, was one of the premier Arabian breeding operations in the world. The famous Polish horses *Pietuszok, *Rezus, and *Arwistawa all called Willomar home at one time or another. Dr. Allen was also one of the first breeders to import Russian-bred stock to the North American continent.

John's parents owned South Springs Arabians on Salt Spring Island and were long-time clients of Willomar. Through their association with the Allens, they became heavily involved in the syndication of Willomar's two main breeding stallions, *El Kasaka (*Patron x Purga*) and Pyatigorsk (*Pietuszok DWA x Mystical Lady*).

By the early 1980's John had left the farm to pursue a career in welding. The early 80's were a very lucrative time in North America for Arabian horse breeding, and it was suggested to John that he return to the farm to train horses. John surmised that if he was going to take that on he needed more experience, so he enlisted the help of Willomar and started off as an assistant trainer in 1982 to Blair Allen.

One year eventually led to five with John showing many of Willomar's best horses. It was during that time at Willomar that he met his wife Andrea, who also worked at the farm. By the late 80's, John's mother had passed on and John's dad was left alone to care for twenty-five horses, so along with his new wife Andrea, John moved home to help sell horses and get things under control. Not long after their move to Salt Spring Island, the business began growing, people started to buy, horses came in to be trained for the show ring. The Pringles ended up introducing many new people to the industry in those first few years.



By 1990 the Arabian breeding business was in a total free fall and Willomar was forced to liquidate its herd in a bankruptcy auction. The Pringles acquired *El Kasaka, who lived out his life at the farm, breeding mares until his death at twenty-six years old.

John and Andrea have now been in business on Salt Spring Island for the past twenty-two years. The farm sits on 22 acres and is home to approximately 30 purebred and partbred Arabians. They specialize in showing the Arabian horse.

Their professional services include training for halter, under saddle, breeding, sales and purchasing consulting. They have a strong competitive amateur and junior rider program as well. They have competed for many years at the Class A and Regional level, and have recently added National competitions to the mix.

Through the success of their strong amateur programs and now a Nationally decorated halter mare, Pringle Equine Services has flourished on Salt Spring Island... a location where many would have said it couldn't succeed.

The 2009 successes at the Pringle farm are taken with the dose of modesty one would expect from John and Andrea. When interviewed about their success with *Island Elegance* ("Ellie") this year, they quickly gave a large part of the credit to Susan Nichol, Don and Ruth James' barn manager, for caring for Ellie through her younger years.

We could all learn how to handle success from these folks!
Congratulations!

What a wonderful year...

Congratulations & Thank You
to all of our clients for
the 2009 season!

ISLAND ELEGANCE

Cdn National Champion Mare
US Res National Champion Mare
Shown by Jeff Schall

SCOTTSDALE 2009

Res Champion 6 & 7 Yr Old Mares
Island Elegance *shown by John Pringle*

Top Ten (3rd) JTH
Island Elegance *shown by Jody Pringle*

CANADIAN NATIONALS 2009

Top 10 Half-Arabian Hunter Pl JTR 14-17
SS Bak Street *ridden by Jody Pringle*

REGION 5 & 17 WINS IN 2009

8 Championships
6 Reserve Championships
10 Top Fives

*In Halter, Hunter Pleasure,
Sport Horse, Western Pleasure,
Equitation, and Showmanship...*

HORSES FOR SALE

Western, Country, and Hunter Pleasure,
Purebreds and Partbreds.

SERVICES

Arabian Training, Showing & Sales
Amateur & Lesson Programs
Breeding Sales & Services



REGION 17
CHAMPION ATH
Island Elegance with
Jody Pringle

Pringle Equine Services

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email: pringlefarm@telus.net ~ www.pringlearabians.com

2009 Horse of the Year



WAHO TROPHY

The Canadian Arabian Horse Registry is pleased to announce the recipient for the 2009 WAHO Trophy, ISLAND ELEGANCE. This mare is an exceptional example of Canada's breeding program. Bred by Pat Simmonds and Don James, of Western Canada, her pedigree is deeply rooted in Canadian bloodlines, especially along each of her parent dam lines. She is out of the Canadian-bred mare **Island Mist** (KGB Spring Fire {KGB Intrigue CAHR#14281} x Spring Classique {Jurafic CAHR#5884}) and by the Canadian-bred stallion **Couturier** (Versace x Evening Intrigue CAHR#22135).

Her recent accomplishments include 2009 Canadian National Champion Mare and 2009 US National Reserve Champion Sr Mare. She also represented Canadian breeding at the 2009 Scottsdale Show with a Reserve in the 6 & 7-Yr-Old Mares class, and a Top Ten in the JTH. Her show ring accomplishments were largely credited to the training and handling by Canadian trainer John Pringle and his wife Andrea.

The CAHR selection committee felt that Island Elegance is a shining example of superior Canadian breeding and represented the high level of quality that the Canadian industry can accomplish.

The **World Arabian Horse Organization (WAHO) Trophy** is a perpetual award provided by WAHO to each member country, to be presented to an outstanding purebred individual of their choosing. *Each WAHO Member Society/Registry has been advised that they should choose one living Arabian horse each year, bred and still domiciled in that country and registered in that country's WAHO approved stud book, which in the opinion of the Board or Committee Members deserves to be presented with this award for a particular achievement. Ideally, WAHO has requested that they should look for an Arabian horse which has itself in some way been an excellent "ambassador" for the breed or, in the case of older horses, has achieved the same through its immediate progeny.*