

Wonderful Memories Woven into Horsehair Jewelry

By Diana M. Berthold

Five or six years ago, there was quite a stir at one of the vendor's booths at DRESSAGE AT DEVON. I could barely get a glimpse of these stunning creations, let alone to understand how these were even achieved! I was making my way home, with great reluctance, when I discovered it and thoughtfully took some literature home for future reference. This unique collection of fine equine jewelry is custom designed and created by Suzanne Storms using horse hair provided by her clients in combinations that are endless!

Together, you will find Suzanne with her husband, David Dresdner, at about a dozen shows a year, including Dressage At Devon in September, and Equine Affaire, in Springfield, Massachusetts in November, with her magnificent collection of custom horsehair jewelry.

Suzanne rode and owned horses and actively participated in Civil War Reenactments. She constructed period costumes for her participation and it was through this that she became aware of the Victorian art of hair weaving. She explained to me that in that period, it was a custom to save human hair. Some stored the sentimental wisps of hair in lockets and some jewelry was made using a method of a Victorian spiral hair weave craft which has been all but lost over the years. Some of the people she met purchased found pieces in their journeys but no books or complete journals were found on the subject in her research.

WEAVING RICH ART

Determined to re create this art which fascinated Suzanne, she put together the bits of information that she could find, made a hair-work table, much like the old masters, to begin the weaving process.

Suzanne has demonstrated, exhibited, won awards, and been on television sharing her interesting art form. Only a small portion is needed for a piece which can be easily maintained simply by rinsing in mild shampoo. Today, her collection, for both men and women, consists of over 80 designs which continue to grow. Bracelets, rings, necklaces, pins, earrings, watches, tie clips, etc

are designed with or without pearls, diamonds, gemstones, heirloom gems, and finished with gold or platinum by Master Jeweler, Tony Paris.

I admired her work, but never thought that I would ever own a piece until four years ago. My beloved horse, "Morgan," my faithful companion for twenty five years, died at age 38. It was such a terrible loss, one that only true horse lovers can understand. I realized that it would take time and the many memories that my family and I shared with him to help us to heal. The next day, I looked for Suzanne's information and through all this; it struck me that I didn't even think to snatch a piece of his tail! Once, I was able to get his precious tail hair and call Suzanne, I had to try to explain through all the painful sobs of what it was that I wanted to do.

She, in fact crafted a bracelet for me in a combination of his chestnut hair and some of the hair from my bay Shetland pony "Willie," that I had lost 12 years prior. I found that I had carefully wrapped her hair and put it away in a drawer in a cabinet in my tack shed. It is adorned with spiral gold chains and a charm with their names engraved on each side. Even though it has a strong lobster clasp, however, I insisted on a gold safety chain, for security and additional aesthetic appeal. Fortunately for me, Suzanne and David, patiently listened to my story, answered my questions, and ultimately created a wonderful bracelet in memory of "Morgan" and "Willie."

My family at first thought I had lost my marbles along with the horse. My son teased me while dining out, to watch my arm and not get "Morgan" in the salad. Another time, he joked about having their DNA and maybe I would consider cloning. My family knew how hard I took it, and at times the jokes were good for me which made me laugh and remember all the good times. Later on, I commissioned Suzanne to make another bracelet using the hair from my bay thoroughbred mare, "Mega-Veoux."

I enjoyed having the one made of my lost friends. Why not have a bracelet made of her hair and enjoy it while I still have her? They are elegant, attractive, and I receive many compliments. People are truly amazed when I tell them about the origin, how they are made, and the memories that they hold.

For more information, you can go to her website, www.suzannestorms.com, where you can find an answer to questions regarding; how to collect an appropriate amount of hair for a piece, hair preparation process, glossary of precious metals, birthstones, a complete gallery of work, its care, a schedule of events, and even gift certificates.