

COLORFUL CHARACTER

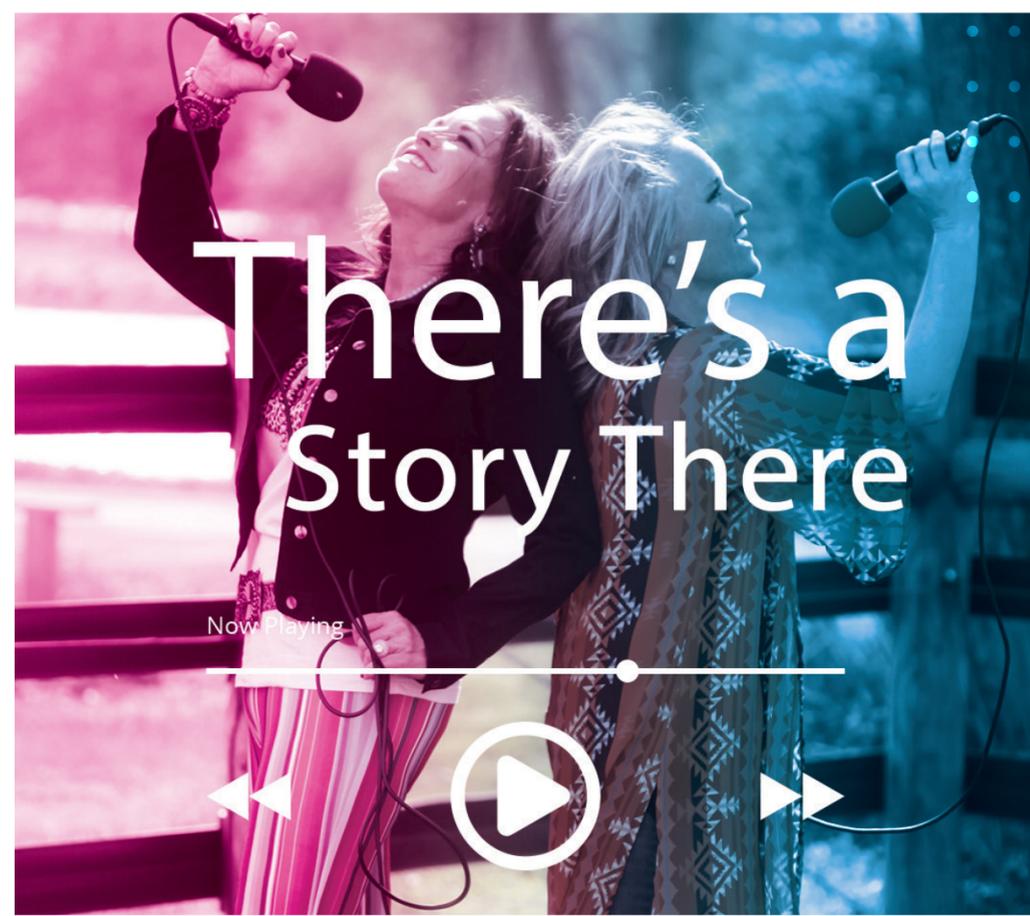
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PODDOORS
STARTERS

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY HORSE INDUSTRY PODCAST

Storytellers Lynn Cool (left) & Regina Schinker (right)



There's a Story There

Now Playing

Paint Horse podcasters share the lore and legacy of the horse community.

By Larri Jo Starkey

Giant green corn stalks tower over two little girls, braids bumping down their backs, as they gallop their ponies through a field in Mendon, Michigan.

The girls' faces shine with joy as they race home through the rows of corn they call their "highway." They live on opposite sides of the cornfield, and the ponies make it easy for them to get from one side to the other to play. The warm summers seem endless and endlessly joyful, and Lynn's pony "Stubby" is the best of the best.

No, Gina says. "Buttercup" is the best. Finally, they agree between giggles and arguing—all ponies and horses are the absolute best.

Today, both girls have grown into women who have left their childhood tiffs behind them to agree that all Paint Horses are the best.

Gina and her Aunt Lynn—and yes, there's a story there—are podcasters, sharing their love of Paint Horses and Paint history in between belly laughs and silly puns.

"Horse Industry Podcast" is their new cornfield, full of light and laughs.

Telling Their Stories

After the women's idyllic childhoods, Lynn Cool married a horse trainer in 1987 and moved to Florida soon thereafter.

"We had 25 or 30 horses in training and we were showing horses in Florida," Lynn said. "We had a few world champs, and my husband won a lot of the pleasure futurities in Florida."

While Lynn was hobnobbing with the Florida Paint Horse community, Gina Schinker went to graduate school and began working in higher education.

"I did a lot of research on organizational storytelling; my dad is a storyteller," Gina said.

Both started families while continuing to show horses. Lynn and husband, Kevin, are now involved in cutting with the United States Cutting Horse Association. Lynn also became a medical sales professional with a special expertise in marketing. The women eventually migrated back home, and now once again live about two miles apart from each other in Mendon.

While seated at the dining table at a family event, the two women started talking about their mutual love of true crime podcasts. They liked the banter between hosts and the revelations about lives cut short. They liked how they learned about events they never knew had happened.

Then they connected the dots: They loved chatty podcasts. They loved the horse world. They loved storytelling. Maybe a podcast of their own? They can't remember who said it first.

"One day, we said, 'You know what? There are so many stories in this industry that we love. Nobody's capturing those stories. We have to capture them,'" Gina said.

Gina would do the research. Lynn would do the marketing. Together, they would learn the technical hoo-haw.

"It was one of those things that if you think too much about it, you'll never do it," Regina said. "I just

randomly bought some equipment off of Amazon. It arrived, and we just randomly plugged some stuff into a laptop and started talking."

On February 22, 2021, the first episode of "Horse Industry Podcast" was sent into the world. It was about ponies. They started talking and kept talking.

So far, they have talked about APHA Founder Rebecca Tyler Lockhart, horse proverbs, the Pony Express, overcoming anxiety, Buster Welch, Sergeant Reckless and bras. Yes, bras. They have shared poems and jokes and a curiosity that keeps them interested in each new topic—even if it's the 10-year-old meme about the 52 Thoroughbreds in need of a good home.

Gina and Lynn speak to each other in confiding tones, giving the podcast the feeling that the listener is right there in the kitchen with them, chatting over coffee and tea.

In between podcasts?

There are the day jobs. It takes commitment to sandwich a podcast between the responsibilities of marriage, work and motherhood.

"Lynn and I are highly motivated and find the time!" Gina said. "We prioritize this podcast as something that is our legacy, so we find the time. We enjoy the research, the interviewing and the creativity afforded to telling the stories."

Lynn feels less stress because her two sons are grown, she says. Working remotely from her living quarters horse trailer allows her more flexibility.

Gina spends any free evenings cozied up with an ever-increasing pile of books, researching future topics, digging for information and essentially behaving like the researcher she is professionally.

"It's not work for us—it is a joy," she said.

The new medium gives a new voice to storytelling.

"What's cool about podcasting is that the stories are in magazines or books, but

the podcast is a new way to consume those stories," Lynn said. "And so we're giving a voice to people and horses and ideas that haven't had a voice like this before."

Family Ties

Lynn and Gina never had to build trust in each other as podcasters—it was baked into the relationship from the beginning by blood.

"My oldest sister is Regina's mother," Lynn explained. "So she's my niece, but we're only about four years apart in age."

Regina is an only child, so her mom's two youngest sisters were more like her sisters growing up.

Even after Lynn was married, she and her husband continued to take Regina to horse shows, although Gina didn't always get to ride in the front of the pickup.



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY HORSE INDUSTRY PODCAST

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"I think it's probably illegal, but Lynn used to put me in the gooseneck of a horse trailer and just go down the road," Gina said.

"And then we would tell you to hold out your arm if you needed anything," Lynn interjected.

After they had families of their own, they introduced their children to horse showing and the joys of showing Paints in particular. They

deny the notion that any of their own children have ever ridden illegally in the gooseneck of a trailer.

"Back in the day," Lynn said, "when Kevin and I were hauling, we had five or six Youth girls who rode with us, and we would all squish in the truck. I don't know why their parents sent them off with us like this. We would just squish in there, and we'd fall out at truck stops.

"Those traveling memories!" she said. "You forget how you placed. But when I run into those girls now—and they all follow the podcast—they remember things like that one time we stopped to eat and we only had \$20 for all five of us. Those are the special times."

Lynn and Gina's children's success has become more important to them than their own.

"My daughter Lila went to the Paint World Show last year, and she won a buckle and a lot of awards," Gina said. "But actually, the triumph was her being part of the Michigan Paint Youth team and going to the headquarters and participating in their Youth leadership day.

"I could pick out a personal win pretty quickly, but I think for me as a mother, my biggest win was taking Lila to the Paint World Show last year, having her participate and live and dream and experience and show, as I did as a Youth, and sharing that with her."

Next Steps

In just a year, the podcast's popularity has exploded.

"It's shocking how the word has spread about the podcast," Lynn said. "We just shared it on Facebook, and then somebody would listen and then they would share it."

"It's not work for us—it is a joy."

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The podcast now has its own Facebook page, as well as a VIP membership, both with active conversations where Lynn and Gina are trying to create a community. Listeners don't have to be people who own horses.

"We have people who listen who don't even show horses," Gina said. "So many people will say, 'I don't have horses, but I always wanted a horse,' and so they love hearing those stories."

As entrepreneurs, Lynn and Gina have plans in the works to increase their download numbers—although those numbers are already impressive.

They have a wish list of people they would like to interview including famed sports broadcaster and Paint Horse breeder Terry Bradshaw. They hope those interviews will be down the road for their eager listeners.

"And we have international listeners," Gina said. "England is probably the biggest, but we have the Netherlands and some from Canada. We were so excited to get our first 100 downloads. And now that's like a day. We're jumping by hundreds every week and it's so much fun. It's a passion. Lynn and I talk about how we both had successful careers, but this is our legacy."

Gina's oldest daughter, Loryn, put



it into perspective for her.

"She said, 'Mom, have you stopped to think about the fact that 10 years from now, 20 years from now and going forward, people are still going to be able to go back and listen to that moment in time or what that person went through?'" Gina said.

That powerful image resonated with both Lynn and Gina, and it has become more important to them

than buckles or trophies.

"Lynn and I have always been involved in the horse industry," Gina said. "We've worked outside of the horse industry. But at the end of the day, we always go back to the barn and to our horses, to showing and traveling. This is a way to give back."

From the beginning, horses were a way of life. The podcast, they say, is just an extension of that life. @

How to Listen & Where to Start

"Horse Industry Podcast" is the oral stories of the horse world. It's available on most podcast apps, including Apple, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Anchor.

If you're only going to listen to one episode, Gina recommends "Sergeant Reckless: America's Brave Little Mare from the Korean War" that aired September 27, 2021. Lynn recommends the true crime episode, the "Horses, Candy, and Crime: The Disappearance of Helen Brach" that aired July 5, 2021.

They both recommend that you join their Facebook group to become part of the community.

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