For those of you who do not know me, my name is Carly Parks. I have known Suzetta for about 15 years. Our relationship has grown in many ways during these years: beginning with me as a young girl admiring a famous horse trainer, later becoming one of Suzetta’s students, then her assistant, and most recently to being a fellow horse trainer and dear friend. As she did for many in this room today, Suzetta played an important role in raising me during my teenage years, in grooming me into a young adult, and by inspiring me as I started down the road to my career. I am very privileged to have spent so many great years with Suzetta and her family. I am honored to be here today to share my thoughts about her.

From the outside looking in, it may have appeared that Suzetta lived a very simple life. She grew up, started her career, and made her life with Jim on the same farm where she died. Sounds simple, but we all know Suzetta was far from that. Suzetta was a woman on a mission and she spent her life living out her passion and chasing her dreams.

Suzetta’s love of horses started early. At the age of 5, Suzetta’s parents couldn’t get much work done around the farm without Suzetta stopping them. Anytime she had to get off of the old walking horse to do anything, she immediately needed someone’s help to put her back on. So Suzetta’s father, Buddy, gave in and purchased Suzetta her own Shetland pony named Sparky. He was untrained and stubborn by nature, but this didn’t stop Suzetta. Within months, Sparky became the best-trained, best-mannered Shetland pony… probably ever.

Suzetta and her sister, Sharlene, were always captivated with everything related to horses- horses and competition. In fact, one of Sharlene’s favorite memories of Suzetta is of her racing Sparky at the Calhoun Colt Show pony race. Not wanting to lose, Suzetta raced full speed ahead crossing the finish line only before falling off and skidding down the gravel road in her brand new, snap-button western shirt. She gave her all in the race, but was devastated because her fancy new shirt was ruined. It was one of the only times Sharlene can remember seeing Suzetta cry.

Which brings me to another very important topic: Suzetta’s love for fashion- fashion and anything that sparkled. To this day Suzetta is the only person that I have ever seen wear crystals, animal print, and fur simultaneously and look great doing it. But despite any amount of glitz, nothing ever sparkled more than Suzetta’s smile-which was as genuine as her personality. What you saw was what you got and what you got was honest and full of love.

Suzetta was very generous with her love. She and Jim opened their farm to dozens of children and young adults for whom she became a second mother. Like me, they came to Suzetta eager to ride and to gain the knowledge needed to become successful equestrians. We all achieved our equine goals, while learning so much more.

Suzetta was a teacher in every sense of the word. Despite her endless amount of knowledge and accomplishments, she never bragged or boasted. Instead, she worked hard and led by example. She taught me the importance of taking pride in the smaller, perhaps less glorified tasks of being a horse trainer in order to accomplish bigger goals. Suzetta required her students and assistants to keep up with her unequaled work ethic and that in itself, kept everyone out of trouble. My mom, for one, always loved that part of my summers spent in Clinton. Suzetta’s work ethic could put anyone to shame. At Busby Farm, days of the week really didn’t matter. If you wanted to be successful, every day was a work day and Suzetta taught us that the most important part of the equation was the daily care of the horses.

Suzetta’s students will be forever thankful for the care she gave us and the many life lessons she taught us. This past week social media has been a testament to this. Her niece, Lana, wrote, “Suzetta might have taught me a little about everything I will need to know for the rest of my life.” A former student Madison Malsch shared, “she took a little girl who didn’t know much about life or horses to being a young adult with a clear vision of who she was and wanted to be.” Cody Franklin said, “I have never met someone who cared so much about every client she had. I will never forget the day we asked you why you didn’t have kids and your response was, “because I have all of you.”” There were others who spoke of the countless friendships they made through their relationship with Suzetta. David Miller summed it up well by saying, “She brought so many people together, opened so many doors, trained countless horses, and loved so many people.”

Suzetta, we will all miss you so much. You were a rock for so many during hard times and it will be very difficult not being able to run to you when we need advice or support. Please take care of all of our great horses in heaven until we get there to be with you and them again. I can already picture you there, surrounded by all the great ones, drinking your diet pepsi and munching on brownie bites. In the meantime, we will try to make you proud by living our lives the way you showed us: working hard, being honest, helping others, and taking care of the greatest gift God gave us, the horses.

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