



Family footsteps led three top hunter/jumper professionals into the horse world.

by EqSol for Blenheim EquiSports

In this annual celebration of beginning riding programs, we were curious about how some of today's top riders found their way to the sport. Hunter/jumper riders and trainers, Lindsay Archer, Joie Gatlin and Olympian Lucy Davis, were lucky to have family members and friends immersed in some aspect of the horse world that triggered their interest and fueled their passion. They all rode in lesson programs before journeying to the show ring. The importance of high-quality and affordable entry level programs is key!

As can be seen by the photos provided by Blenheim EquiSports, all of these professionals have honed their competition skills and amassed current resume highlights at their events in San Juan Capistrano and Del Mar over the past two decades. We hope you enjoy their answers and insights!



What triggered your interest in riding horses?

Lindsay: My parents imported, bred and sold Arabian halter horses from the late 70s until the mid-80s. I grew up on the farm where they had the horse business and in the early 2000s my husband, Matt, and I converted that farm into Shady Lane Farm. During my parents' time in the Arabian horse business, they were close friends with Bill and Twinkie Nissen. Twinkie rode an Arabian jumper that my mom owned and Bill was their vet from time to time. Bill was the one who got me started riding hunter/jumpers, but horses were definitely a family thing.

Lucy: I've been riding horses since I could walk. My grandfather was a jockey so I grew up around the track. My mom started taking me to a local place in the Los Angeles area called Sullivan Canyon for lessons.

Joie: I grew up with horses in my family. My dad rode saddle broncs and bareback broncs, then worked in the movie industry starting out as a stuntman and then moving into second unit directing and stunt coordinating. My mom was Miss Rodeo America, barrel raced and showed western. So as a kid I rode all the time (bareback) and just had fun.



Where did you start riding?

Lindsay: Thanks to Dr. Nissen, I started riding at Starlight Stables in the East Bay Area's Danville with Nancy Patton and Diane Yeager. I have so many fond memories of trailering into their barn and meeting them at the shows. It was an amazing group of kids. From there, "Doc" guided me to Karen Healey Stables, where I rode from when I was 13 until my early amateur years. I'm so grateful for what I learned in both programs!!

Lucy: I started taking lessons with a woman named ChaCha at Sullivan Canyon, which had a public arena. After ChaCha, I started riding with Cathy Megla.

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Joie: I was on a horse at the age of 2, by myself. As a kid, I rode in the hills, roping arenas and on movie locations. I didn't start to ride english and have lessons until I was 10.

What do you remember most fondly about your first lessons?

Lindsay: I remember my mom picking me up at school in the drive-through pick-up line with my pony in the two-horse trailer behind her Jeep Wagoneer and my mom driving through the drive through at McDonalds with the trailer on the way to lessons!

Lucy: I was obsessed with horses! I was well-behaved according to my parents, but I threw a tantrum if I couldn't go to barn. I had a lot of friends there. It was an unstructured program where we could trail ride, groom, go to pony camps, and just organically get to know and love the horses, which I think is missing from a lot of the programs today.

Joie: That I had super nice trainers and that jumping was really fun.



What advice would you offer beginners?

Lindsay:

Groom your own pony/horse

Play with your pony/horse

Spend as many hours at the barn as you can

Ride bareback

Learn how to do "around the world" and slide off their bum

Most importantly, ride on your own without instruction regularly and learn to trust your own reactions to what you feel, without someone telling you what you should be feeling!

Lucy: Spend time on the ground with the horses, ride a bunch of different ones, and learn what type of ride you like. Work with good professionals, who know what they are doing and also encourage you. Riding is much more than getting on top of horse and riding around then getting in your car and leaving the barn, even at the top level.

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Joie: Work hard and do not get discouraged if things don't go according to plan. Remember that you get out what you put in.