



Eileen Johnson with her horse Zhivago

Unbridled with Eileen Johnson

By Lisa Davis Engel

Eileen Johnson grew up in Norwich, Connecticut, a typical horse-crazy teen who would accompany her neighbor to her riding lessons, sitting on a fence wishing it was her in the saddle, but loving every minute of it. A high school class in jewelry making sparked a passion in Eileen at the age of 17. At 16, she got her first job as a dental assistant and by 20 she was able to purchase her first horse and since then has had at least one or two horses in the barn.

As a dental assistant she was fascinated by the molds the office would create and eventually opened up her own business creating dental prosthetics. Working with molds and metals paved the way for Eileen, and her formal dental studio became Tempi Design Studio.

As the designer and creator of custom horse and equestrian jewelry and accessories, Eileen's subjects are diverse, ranging from jumpers, hunters, dressage, foxes, hunting, driving and cross-country. Eileen works with all breeds and was recently asked to design a jewelry line for the American Saddlebred Museum at the Kentucky Horse Park.

How did your jewelry career begin?

In 2000, my aunt/godmother gave me a gold pocket watch and fob that had horses on it. It had belonged to my grandfather. His students had it engraved when he was accepted into MIT in 1909. The design was the famous Pharaoh's Horses by John Frederick Herring. I got the design copyright and created a modern series of the Pharaoh's Horses.

First piece of jewelry ever made?

I made a sterling silver cuff when I was 13 years old. I still have it.

How much custom work do you do?

I do a ton of custom work for horse people. It's growing constantly. I do so much of it, I have to put my own designs down for a bit. I even do designs for other companies and create their prototypes.

What's your favorite custom piece of jewelry you've created?

I just did a Paso Fino for a client and it was spectacular.

What's your favorite piece of jewelry you've ever made?

Moorland's Totilas. He was the World Cup winner in dressage with Edward Gal from the Netherlands. And, he has ears and a presence just like my horse.

Who inspires you?

My own horse, a G Line Hanoverian named Zhivago. He is such a character.

What three things are most important to you?

Being able to ride my horse, my home life and being able to create.

How do you relax?

I go to the barn.

Favorite movie?

Dr. Zhivago

Favorite piece of clothing?

A short, little black dress

Favorite food?

Ice cream — there is no bad ice cream.

What three traits are most important to you in a person?

Honesty, openness and consideration

What's the best feeling you've ever had?

Jumping — air time. Going over a big fence.

How many weeks of the year do you travel?

Now I only travel four weeks a year because I want to stay home.

Favorite place you've traveled to?

Castle Leslie in Ireland. I spent a week there riding Irish horses twice daily, taking a break from my working student position in Yorkshire, UK. It was great to be back on my comfortable draft cross-type horses there.

If you had a week off, what would you do?

Go somewhere with my husband and not tell anyone where we went

What's on your bucket list?

I was very fortunate to travel a lot in the past, so my bucket list is now to stay home amid my beautiful surroundings and have a glass of wine. My husband is an excellent cook — I just need to show up.

Do you have a personal motto?

Live, Love, Laugh **IS**