

Julie Froelich

Yes, I'm back! My final exams were the only hindrance that could keep me from even sending a column in overnight. I apologize for breaking my consistency and missing the Feb/March issue, but I think I can make up for it. Let me start by stating that since I've really gained my "l.s.i." (live show independence) only recently, I haven't had the chance to visit live shows nationwide and meet "model celebrities" in the flesh. I saw Julie Froelich once at IMHCC, but I didn't dare speak to her—she was Julie Froelich (and her studded leather motorcycle jacket probably didn't help my timidity either). OK, maybe I was a bit starstruck and naive, but the woman is practically a legend in the model horse hobby, *n'est-ce pas*? Thus, you can imagine my surprise when she readily and affably agreed to talk with me about her involvement in the hobby.



Many hobbyists might picture Julie as somewhat of a recluse. If you're lucky, you can catch her at a live show. Otherwise, Julie keeps a low profile. It's not that she doesn't want publicity—"A lot of times I wish I could get more publicity," she corrects. In fact, in an early letter, commenting on her lack of public persona she jokingly asked "...where IS an American Express card when one needs one?" The factor holding her back is, of course, *time*. She just moved to a house in Woodruff, Wisconsin, and after recovering from packing, will undoubtedly throw herself back into her many interests. One of Julie's great joys is science-fiction. She is co-editor and writer of a sci-fi magazine, and Tolkien fans may notice her stable name (Riddermark, a fantasy land dominated by horses) was inspired by the author's Middle Earth world. Julie applies her B.A. in Fine Arts (earned at University of Wisconsin-Madison) to "diverse" fields: sci-fi artwork, model horses, commissioned portraits, and (gasp) tattoo designing! At one time she listed some of her "loves in life" as being: "Men, music, walking my dog (now two dogs) and doing obedience training, writing, drawing, trying to teach myself Japanese, weight-lifting, creating new recipes, reading Japanese books, corresponding with Science Fiction and horse enthusiasts around the world, studying classical Japanese painting, sewing..." and today continues to be interested in just about all of these activities. She owns two horses: a QH and Shetland Pony, both rescued from the meat market. Arabs rank at the top of the list of her favorite breeds (did I really have to tell you that?) and Julie is now considering buying an Arabian to become a third horse ("...which I need like a hole in the head!").

Model horses of course have been a long-standing hobby with Julie; she's been collecting them for 31 of her 35 years. At age ten she started to paint them, and in about 1972 she began remaking. She is still remaking, though her move to Woodruff has slowed production. However, once she settles into her home, Julie will be better accommodated to create her art: the basement of the house will serve as a workshop while an upstairs room will be set aside for a studio. It is there that the finishing touches will be put onto the models to be sold in the Riddermark spring auction (which actually may have appeared by the time you read this article).

Many collectors are frustrated with the fact that Julie sells all her models through auctions. However, when Julie sold her models at set prices, she found that some buyers re-sold them at as much as 300% profit. Perhaps some buyers still do that with Froelich models today, but now Julie is getting compensated for it. Indeed she sometimes wonders "Why is this person bidding so much? I don't think it's worth it." But she knows a particular model may be more valuable to the buyer than to her, whether for personal or material reasons. However, don't get the idea that Julie's work is not all it's cracked up to be. Of course, every collector has his own taste, but hardly anyone could fail to be impressed with Julie's work. Her models are perhaps the most anatomically correct of any in the hobby, right down to the very, um, realistic female genitalia. A perfectionist, she borrows from Orson Wells to acknowledge "I will sell no horse before its time." She constantly tries to improve her work with each new creation. "I strive to better myself yearly, not to find a new short-cut. I strive to make my work more enduring, not brag about how a model I created fell apart in a heap after its maiden live show. I strive to increase my knowledge, my hand, my eye, my appreciation, and my diplomacy in dealing with others." Unfortunately, Julie has suffered for her dedication. She was poisoned by inhalation of epoxy dust, and due to years of Dremel Moto-Tool vibrations charging through her hands, was diagnosed with having Raynaud's Syndrome. She has since changed her remaking methods but still uses a Dremel, though one with a flexible shaft that eliminates vibrations.

Though she works on five to six models at a time, Julie says a single model can take anywhere from 24 hours to two years, depending on the extent of remaking and her other involvements at the time. She's worked strictly in acrylics for 18 years, though earlier models were done in oils and enamels. Over 1000 Froelich models have stood (most still standing, hopefully!) in the world today; some are customs, most are 3-D creations from personal whimsies or pictures taken from her "enormous horse library" which includes 12 equine magazine subscriptions and various hobby magazines.

To those who feel a Froelich is simply unobtainable (her record high price: \$850 for an ASB RRH), Julie, like many other remakers, insists "If you can't afford it, do it yourself! You'll be happier (with your own work); you need self-satisfaction." She has even upon request given aspiring remakers a few typed pages filled with tips. "I feel there's plenty of room in this hobby for more people.... I try to encourage them," she states. She doesn't worry about possible competition resulting from her advice—"Only in showing does competition bother me."

While Julie has served as an influence for many, she has been influenced by others herself. "Sue Rowe always has wonderful ideas," she comments admiringly, and she looked to artists like Judy Norquist and Rich Rudish, Lynn Madrich and Pamela Du Bolay. Perhaps Julie should give the most credit to Kathleen Maestas for creating her dream horse years ago, whose price (unaffordable to a young Julie) induced her to copy the



21st Century Boy silver dapple show Shetland, a fine example of Julie's talent.