

Bringing Childhood Memories to Life

From the time she was 9 years old, Stephanie Crane (Miyakoshi) of Los Angeles spent summers on Mackinac Island -- riding horses, working downtown and even playing a role in *Somewhere in Time*.

Her paternal grandmother owned a cottage in the Annex where Stephanie was allowed to keep her summer “leased” horse in the barn and pasture with the family’s riding and driving horses. She would saddle up her horse to “explore a different trail each day.”

“During my early teens, I rode my horse all over the island, including down the road for a dip in the lake and up trails to Fort Holmes that I later learned weren’t really trails at all – just a bunch of new paths made by kids on horseback,” Crane says. “What an adventure for a kid!”

Crane’s special memories growing up draw her back each summer. “Although Los Angeles is my base camp, I feel like I’m coming home when I return to the island,” she explains.

She credits MHA with helping her recreate cherished childhood memories along with her 14-year-old son, Brand Crane Miyakoshi. This summer marked their third year of leasing horses through the MHA Lease-A-Horse program.

“As a member of MHA, I am able to relive my childhood of exploring Mackinac’s trails by horse,” Crane explains. “More importantly, I am now able to share that same experience with my son, Brandon, who has the opportunity to live it himself and create his own memories.

“I treasure the time we spend together “lost” on the trails. Our favorite trails are Tranquil Bluff and Morning Snack, which are the trails my grandparents Crane rode with the Goodwin’s, Croghan’s and Mary Milton.”

The long-term lease program allows people to spend more time with horses and helps offset the costs of caring for horses in the 4H Horse Club program. MHA riding lessons are provided by experienced riders whom share Stephanie’s love of horses and the Island.

“It’s a win-win for everyone,” Crane says. “These horses become “our horses” during the lease term and we treat them with love and respect. Brandon has learned how to truly care for a horse because we have an opportunity to brush and bathe them. Plus, we get to give them carrot treats after a ride.”

Crane's family has a long history on the island. Her maternal grandparents, Ruth and George Clark, lived downtown on French Lane in a cottage that was once a log cabin. "My grandmother Ruth worked every winter making pillows, aprons and quilts for the Christmas in July Bazaar to benefit the Medical Center. She loved the Island and she showed it by giving to others," she explains.

Her paternal grandparents, Niana and Van Courtney Crane, owned Maplewood in the Annex, which was built by her great, great uncle Colonel Henry Davis, in 1894. "My grandmother had the sweetest little driving horse named Queenie, which was not a tall or beautiful horse, but an older, well-fed little Morgan," Crane recalls. "As kids, we would try our best to make Queenie look regal on her trips downtown by placing a colorful red or yellow plume atop her head, but that would soon lean to one side making her look quite silly when a fancy Grand Hotel carriage and team would pass by."

The Clark and Davis families joined when Stephanie's parents fell in love in 1960. "My parents met here one day at the shore of the Straits of Mackinac when the Britannia passed by with Queen Elizabeth aboard," she explains. The family sold the Annex cottage in 1982, but returns each summer to spend a few weeks on the island. This fall, Crane purchased the 1885 Hubbard's Annex Cottage on Grand Avenue with her cousin so they truly have a home on the island again..

"What's really amazing is how our world has changed so much over the past 30 years, but the Island views, trails and fragrant woods have remained the same," Crane says. "When I learned about MHA's mission to preserve the horse culture on Mackinac Island, I realized this mission was near and dear to my heart.

"Our few weeks on the island are fleeting and precious so we create memories that make it last until we return the next summer. For that, we are grateful and want to show our support for MHA and all it has to offer."