



In 1998, Nightwinds Savannah was foaled at the farm of Pat and Colleen DeVry close to Lloydminster, the offspring of sire Dakotas Keyanti and dam Midnight Baroness. The DeVrys had made more than one attempt to produce an endurance prospect for Kathy Irvine and this was her favourite so far. The foal had outstanding definition, a beautiful wide head, and a sassy attitude but, although suitable in every way, it had one fatal flaw in Kathy's mind, it would grow up to be a mare.

The next two years took them in separate directions. Savannah was sold to a young family and Kathy moved away. They met again in the paddock at DeVry's farm. There she was, off by herself, with the most sour expression Kathy had ever seen on a horse. Her family had moved away to the city and, unable to keep her, sent her back to the DeVrys. Kathy was confident that with some grooming and training she could sell her, so a deal was struck. Savannah was long on wind and definitely had the makings of an endurance horse...just not hers. All Kathy needed to do was put a few successful rides on her and find her a good home.

Savannah proved to be a training challenge, but in a good way. The trick was keeping her settled and slow enough to build up enough vital bone and tendon structure to match her natural endurance. She was still 'for sale' but Kathy hadn't actually advertised her, the price seemed to keep going up, and the appropriate options for placement were dwindling.

In 2006, Kathy was crew for another Alberta rider at the World Equestrian Games. When she came home from that event the question was on her mind, "Why not me?" The World Equestrian Games in 2010 would be in Kentucky, on continent, and she had a horse who could likely do 100-mile rides, so maybe Kathy could too.

The following spring Savannah and Kathy completed their first 100-mile ride in the desert near Oreana, Idaho. It was during that ride, on the last loop, in the dark, that Kathy knew she had the best horse she'd ever owned. She aimed her toward the glow sticks that marked the night trail but it was Savannah who flew over the rocks, washes, and holes that Kathy couldn't see. With that milestone under their belts, the decision was made, they were bound for Kentucky.



So far Kathy and Savannah have completed two rides in under 12:20 which is Certificate of Competency time as required by the FEI. The ride that Kathy is most proud of was a 5-day, 250-mile competition back in Oreana where they placed 2nd overall. They have been to endurance competitions in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Idaho and Montana, built up a resume of over 2,000 competitive miles and received the most coveted Best Conditioned award at more than one event.

This year to-date, they have attended two rides, one a 2-day (50 miles/day in Manitoba), and an FEI 100 in Alberta. They hope to complete another FEI ride in Montana in June. Last time Kathy checked the standings, she and Savannah were sitting in the middle of the pack vying for the 5 or

6 positions open on the Canadian Endurance Team.

Kathy feels that even if they don't make the Canadian Team, the honour and thrill of having such a brave and sure-footed little horse as a companion, brings home the expression, "It's not the destination, it's the journey." And all this from a horse who did indeed grow up to be a mare.