

Q & A with Genevieve Cortese

The star of ABC Family's equine drama Wildfire takes time out to chat with HI Staff.

By Kimberly Abbott

Genevieve Cortese, star of the hit television series *Wildfire*, took time to talk with Horse Illustrated's Kimberly Abbott about life on the set.

HI: With *Wildfire* being your television debut, how did you become Kris Furillo?

GC: I read the script probably in 2004 and was immediately attached to it because my character, Kris Furillo, rides up Mount Diablo, and it's about the Bay Area. I grew up riding up Mount Diablo. I really got the geography and got where she was from, and she reminded me of my mom. My mom is a really cool, independent, free spirit. I understood where [Kris] was coming from. So I started immediately getting back on horses and training before I even knew I had a chance. It was a long process because they started auditioning, and then I had to wait a month. I went back in for ABC Family and read there, and I think a day or two later I got a phone call saying 'they love you,' and this was on Friday, 'but it's between you and another girl, and you won't know until Monday.' It was like the worst feeling ever, but it ended up working out because it was between me and Nicole [Tubiola], and Nicole got Dani.

HI: What did you need to learn when you first started?

GC: It was basically warming up the muscles again because I hadn't ridden in a while. I find it very much like yoga. It's so Zen, and you center yourself, and you learn to breathe with the horse and become one with them. You feel very grounded.

HI: What do you like most about working with horses on the set?

GC: I really love riding Houdini. Our trainer would make me close my eyes, and I wouldn't use the reins. He would use his hand motions to get [Houdini] to canter and to do crazy eights and for me. It just felt like a really wonderful bonding experience. I don't know if Houdini felt it, but I did.

HI: How do you film a stunt in which someone is supposed to get hurt?

GC: There are a couple of ways. In one episode, I'm racing and the horse does a somersault. We used footage from an actual race, and we used my stunt double for the racetrack sequence. The fall was actually me, but we didn't do it from a horse; I stood on a ladder and jumped.

HI: What happens when you or *Wildfire* or any of the horses have a bad day?

GC: There have been situations where things happen. Nana [Visitor] did a stunt, and she was kicked in the head by the horse, and she got a concussion. She was supposed to get hurt [in the episode] and was just in the wrong spot at the wrong time. With horses you just can't tell what's going to happen.

Tricks sometimes don't happen the way that we'd like them to, but I can't say that there's ever been a really bad day. We've been really fortunate to have everything go as planned. We have one horse that I use that's less fiery than Finder, so if for some reason he's not giving us the right attitude then we'll use Finder. So there's always a plan B.

HI: When and where is *Wildfire* filmed? What is the filming schedule like?

GC: [*Wildfire* is filmed] in Albuquerque, N.M. It's about a five-month period, and we've shot from June to September, and September to December, and then we had a hiatus until July. It just changes all the time. Normally, if you're on another network show, it would probably take eight days, maybe more. We shoot it in seven days, and then there are usually about two six-day episodes a season. That's just a way to save money, and we do our best to contain it. We also have to go in and do the voice-over work. If a horse whinnies during our line, we have to go back and do that, and then there's post-production where everything's been shot and completed.



See the full interview in the April 2008 issue of Horse Illustrated.