

## **GFD Film Featured in Article**

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### **Arabian World Highlighted**

By Pat Murphy

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America has gained another diplomat to help bridge the gap between the Arab world and the U.S. And at the same time, the horse world of the Santa Ynez Valley has gained another notable horsewoman.

Jo Franklin is working on an amazing project through her company, Seacastle Films, which is producing a documentary titled "A Gift from the Desert." Its subject matter covers the Near East horses and the content is based on research by leading scholars. The film will be shot on location so that the horses can be shown in their native environments and it will be shown at the Kentucky Horse Park during the World Equestrian Games in 2010.

Franklin, an attractive blonde, is a former producer for PBS, and is noted for her highly acclaimed documentaries, which she has filmed throughout the Near East. In December 2005, in a formal ceremony at the Saudi Embassy, she presented a copy of her Franklin film archive on the Middle East to the Saudi ambassador, Prince Turki Al-Faisal. He accepted it on behalf of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, saying, "This is a valuable gift for the Saudi people that enhances the film archives of the King Faisal Center. I am grateful for this fine collection of cultural footage." It includes over seventy hours of interviews and is an oral history of Saudi Arabia. The 120 hour film is valued at \$45 million.

Franklin's documentary joined a collection of more than one million books, rare manuscripts and audio-visual material in the center's four different libraries. This collection is considered the principal resource in the world on Islamic civilization.

Her other documentaries, which aired on PBS, included: "Saudi Arabia" (1981), "The Oil Kingdoms" (1983), "Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians" (1989) and "Islam: A Civilization and its Art" (1994). About these films, Franklin said, "It is their history and should remain with them. It is my deepest hope that the different cultures of the world come to better understand and appreciate their difference and similarities in an effort toward peace."

Her present project, about the history of Arabian horses, is of great interest to our valley, with its large Arabian horse population. It is sponsored by the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation. Upon completion, it will be aired in primetime in both the U.S. and Near East. It also will be marketed on DVD in English and in Arabic.

Of course, after all these projects, for which she was required to immerse herself in their

culture, Franklin has learned to speak some Arabic and demonstrates it upon request. "How are you? It's a beautiful day," she tells me she is saying. It has a mysterious sound, not similar to European, English or Oriental languages.

In addition to the presentation of the film, about three hundred and fifty artworks and artifacts will be included for display at the Kentucky Horse Park Museum.

"One thrilling part of this effort," she tells me, "is that very prestigious museums that are considered impossible to get to, are bending over backward to take part and lend valuable pieces for our display." Based on past attendance figures for international exhibits and related activities, it is expected that 500,000 visitors will come to see "A Gift from the Desert."

It's exciting to imagine that horses could help to bring two countries together. But common interests and goals can accomplish miracles.

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