

# A TALE OF TWO HANAS

*The story of an unexpected bond between a strong young lady and a special Arabian filly.*

by KRISTI HOPP

What is it about Arabian horses that touch the soul of their people, and better yet, inspire them through trying times? Perhaps because Arabian horses are amazingly sensitive and intelligent; and while biased, most of us agree that they are much more so than other breeds.

In November 2016, Steve and Christina Poore purchased Orrion Farms in Ellensburg, Washington, and aspired to establish a new breeding program to further promote their newly founded love of the Arabian horse; and in keeping with the farm motto of "Past, Present & Future," the new generation for Orrion Farms began.

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Hana Hooper and Steve and Christina's daughter, Avery, had been best friends for years. The girls met in seventh grade science class, and Hana remembers, "I thought she was really nice, so I invited her over to make dumplings at my house. Both of us were kind of shy, so I think we became friends because we were so much alike." They remained close friends through the remainder of their high school years, determined to remain so despite being separated by different college choices.

*Lauren Ebert*



Hana chose Hamilton College in New York and began her Freshman year with vigor. One day, however, she remembers, “I got super out of breath when walking up two flights of stairs to my math class and realized something was wrong.” Having joined the rugby team, she became similarly alarmed when, without reason, she could hardly run two laps around the field without getting out of breath.

The serious nature of her increasing problems with breathing came full circle when, Hana recounts, “I was at a rugby game and suddenly could not stand up. I threw up and had a terrible headache.” The captain saw what was happening and rushed to get her to the hospital. Following a CT Scan, the medical staff concluded Hana was suffering from a bad migraine headache and sent her home.

Once home, it became clear that this wasn't just a migraine. The vomiting continued, and she began to experience problems with her vision. Her mother, Ali, was concerned enough about Hana's health that she flew from their home in Seattle to New York and took her to Galisano Children's Hospital in Syracuse. It was there that they found out that Hana had actually experienced a stroke as a result of a blood clot and that she was suffering from severe heart failure.

Everything happened in rapid succession after that. Hana was immediately placed in ICU, but then med-flighted to the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle for further evaluation and treatment. Ultimately, Hana was diagnosed with a condition called Familial Cardiomyopathy, and was in dire need of a heart transplant.

“When the doctors told me I had heart failure, I did not even realize what that meant. It made me have to think, and I had to accept that I might not make it to my 21st birthday.”

The entire Hooper family was struck by the diagnosis, and it was their strength that has allowed them to go from day-to-day, dealing with the mounting complications and greater urgency for a heart transplant. Due to the strokes associated with the disease, it has now claimed Hana's vision, and she is clinically blind. Despite the challenges, Hana and Avery's close friendship has flourished, and the Orrion family, in a show of support, inspiration and strength for Hana, came up with a unique way in which she was quick to embrace.

Under the guidance of their farm manager, Doug Leadley, one of the first acquisitions was a Dakar El Jamaal daughter by the name of HB Dominique El Dakar, who was heavily in foal to the young sire S.M.A. Magic One. The resulting filly was the first official foal born to the new Orrion Farms, and its owners knew that this first foal would have to carry a name with significant meaning. With their daughter's dear friend facing her life-threatening health challenge, they saw it as a fitting opportunity for their foal to carry her name. OFW Hanas Magic One was the only—and perfect—name for the newborn filly.

Once her name had been revealed to the Hooper family, a visit was arranged. Hana didn't have a horsey background at all, but had always admired them from afar. She wasn't afraid to meet her equine namesake

and took it all in with great enthusiasm. “I absolutely loved meeting Hana the filly. I was so honored to have a horse named after me. It made me feel really loved and really good.” She remembers the filly was out in a field with her dam, and when they came through the gate, the horses came right up to them and wanted to be petted. “She is such a sweet horse. Due to my vision issues, I could not see her, but I could feel her soft fuzzy nose and how loving she was.”

There is no doubt that animals, and in this case, a special Arabian horse, offer healing therapy to humans in trying times. OFW Hanas Magic One could instantly sense Hana's needs were special. “She allowed Hana to feel her way around her face without being phased and just stood





perfectly quiet to be brushed,” recall Steve and Christina. “We have seen first-hand, how the patience and love of a horse positively affected Hana,” they share, “and we are committed to helping equine therapy organizations offer that same opportunity to others.”

Today, Hana’s life hangs in the balance as she waits for the opportunity to receive a new heart. Since the Familial Cardiomyopathy was first diagnosed, Hana has suffered a number of strokes that leave her with more challenges to overcome as she waits for her new heart. In addition to the devastating blindness, Hana has had to relearn how to eat, walk, talk and even, she jokes, “how to put my shirt on the right way!”

Despite the massive complications, Hana is assured that she will receive that magical heart transplant. She says the experiences have made her more confident as a person, and that meeting so many doctors, therapists and new people in this past year has made her a better communicator. Hana also shares, “Being blind has made me care less about what people think and what I look like because what really matters is on the inside. It has also caused me to want to make a bigger impact on the world. I am still working on how I would do that.”

Currently in Los Angeles, California, waiting for that critical heart transplant, Hana and her mother are buoyant that her Status 1A, which is the highest tier of transplant urgency, will happen very soon. She keeps her memory of meeting OFW Hanas Magic One close, and dreams of someday meeting her namesake again.

When I asked Hana what, if anything, she wanted to share with others, or what they should know about Familial Cardiomyopathy, she stated the necessity of increasing awareness to a lost age group in critical medical care. When facing long-term hospitalization, the Hoopers learned that Hana, at 20 years old, was just past the cut-off age to benefit from Make-A-Wish Foundation or Ronald McDonald House charities and was just too old to be treated at Children’s Hospitals.

Frustrated by the roadblocks imposed by age alone, Hana shares that she “is at an in-between age, over 18, but not quite an “adult,” who needs adult care but children’s support. Also, my heart issues were not initially recognized because I was so young. Everyone thought I was a new college student, away from home for the first time, living in a dorm with a bunch of germs ... and my symptoms were treated as such.”

Another key aspect that Hana and her parents would like to portray is how important registering to be an organ donor is. Currently there is 115,000 people waiting for a lifesaving transplant and an alarming 22 people, on average, die each day because the organ they need is not donated in time. They encourage everyone to visit [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net) and become a registered donor.



Perhaps as a matter of further inspiration and strength for Hana’s recovery, OFW Hanas Magic One made her second horse show appearance at the 2018 Region V Championship Show and was named Champion Yearling Filly. Indeed, a significant accolade to the start of her promising show career; her future looking bright. This all adds a shining ray of hope to Hana Hooper, who faces these life obstacles with incredible strength. ■