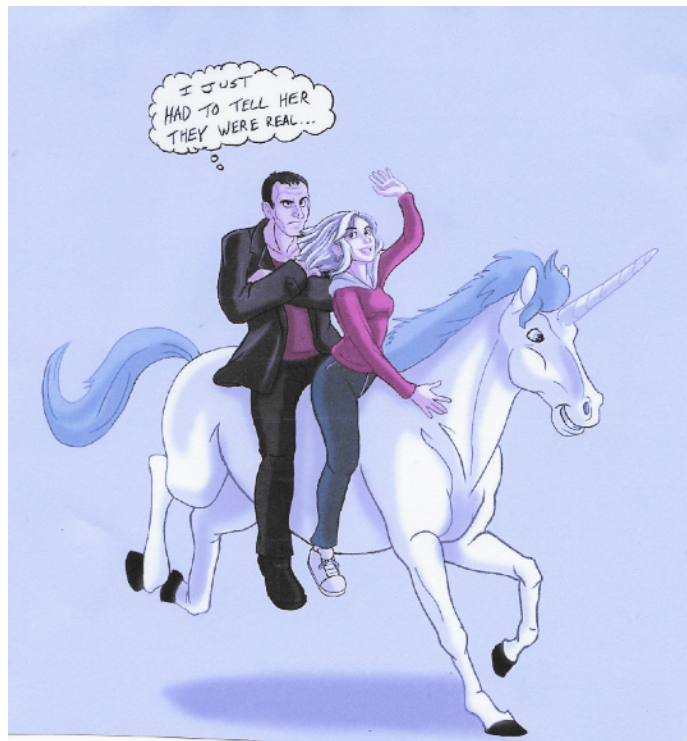




# Joan Rosaire, Goldy, Dr.Who and the Unicorn



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## Joan Rosaire, Goldy, Dr. Who and the Unicorn

I wonder how many of you remember the Dr Who 1968 episode of 'Land of Fiction' where the doctor played by Patrick Troughton faces the Unicorn.

As we know Unicorns do not exist, so who played the Unicorn who appeared in the distance rearing up and charging down on Dr Who.



*Goldy's Boy as a unicorn in Dr Who*

It was none other than Joan Rosaire, Lady of the circus horse Goldy Boy. He had been chosen as he was just about the only horse in the country who could perform without a bridle. As Joan explained, "take the bridle off most horses and that last thing, you'll see is it tail streaming off into the horizon." Joan also goes on to explain that the Goldy boy only enjoys character acts, not bits parts, and she believed he really enjoyed the part.

The question is then who is Joan Rosaire and her Horse Goldy Boy. Joan was born literally on the on the 15 April 1933, in a vehicle driven by her uncle while travelling with Rosaire Circus from Hay-on-Wye to their next venue at Tagarth. It

was also around this time that the circus set up its winter quarters at Wilboughby Farm in Billericay, Essex.

Within a few hours Joan was placed upon the back of a pony by her proud grandfather. Her father and mother then led her around in the presence of the circus company. Undoubtedly this early contact with a pony account for Joan's lifelong love for horses.



Rosaire Circus was formed around 1904 by Joan's Grandfather, Fred and Florence Ross both who later were to become known as Count and Countess.

There is no doubt Joan was a boisterous youngster and it was not long before she was helping out in the Circus or performing small routines such as bouncing around on a trampoline but by the time, she was eight she was performing the 'High School Act' on her pony 'Tishy' which her grandfather had given her. Joan had been training her in secret, teaching her to do various tricks by using reflexes and giving a great deal of praise and reward, not by punishing by hitting but by withholding reward.

Joan soon realised that horses and animals for that matter are more intelligent at picking up body language than humans and if you were not feeling too good yourself this would be passed onto the animal.

By the end of the second World War, Joan was twelve years old and had progressed to riding Voltige and also presenting 'Betsy', she was billed as 'Betsy the Horse with the Human Brain.' However, the family were getting a little concerned about Joan's lack of school so they sent her off during a circus season to friends in a small village in Cheshire to catch up on her school education. Here she also learnt the art of show jumping and much about the rearing and training of racehorses. As you would expect Joan won a few junior show jumping events.

After a couple of years with the family Joan returned to the circus and a turn of events was going to dictate the rest of her circus life. She was driving her mother along a road in Wales near Llanberis, at the foot of Mount Snowdon on their way to Hereford.

It was early in the morning when her mother suddenly shouted, 'Joan, look over there,' Joan who was being taught to drive, all though under age replied if I do, we could well end up in the ditch. They stop and looking into the field saw a beautiful creamy coloured horse – a Palomino. On arriving at the circus Joan decided to return with one of her uncles who was a registered practicing vet to see if they could buy it.

The farmer agreed and sold it for £60.00. It was an unbroken four-year-old mare but did not have name, but Joan soon came up with 'Goldy,' – 'Joan Rosaire and Goldy the Wonder horse were born.



Joan carefully watched other performers to pick up various tips but it was not long before she produced her own program for Goldy and it went something like this:

*They would enter into the centre of the ring, Goldy nods and Joan would say 'Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls this is my friend Goldy. Goldy say hallo to everyone' horse nods 'Now I want you to show them how you do a nice waltz' horse pirouettes, into the centre and nods.*

*'Show everyone how you stand like a Rocking Horse, now rock a little that was a little!! Rock a little more!! OK now let's have a nice march.'*

*'When I take this off (bridle) you won't go away will you?' Show everyone how you say Yes...by nodding your head. Ok... now how do you say NO... Good now show them how you move your lips and speak...whisper in my ear...Oh you feel tired!! Would you like to lie down then?'*

*Horse nods yes. Lies down, sits up, gets up and behaves like a wild stallion!! Rears into the centre. Crosses legs.*

*'Have you finished your performance? Horse nods yes, then I have a little present for you but what do I get for it? Kisses. 'Ok once around the ring and out you go' refuses to go.*

*'Come here to me, would you like to show everyone how you leave the ring backwards? Horse does nothing, repeat last sentence, horse still does nothing... have you suddenly gone deaf? Horse nods yes!'*

*Joan walks to the front of ring with Goldy, he kisses her a couple of times, then backs halfway, she calls him Funny Face, he chases her, then backs out of the ring, nods as Joan walks forward to take a call. Goldy comes up behind her and pushes her out of the ring. They both return and take a final call before exiting.*

If you would like to see Goldy's tricks and others such as removing Joan's Jacket and helping her, put it back on suggest you link into the video where they performed on French TV in 1967 - [www.circopedin.org](http://www.circopedin.org) – It's also interesting to note Joan's French Language considering she all ways said she had limited schooling.

In 1955 Joan, along with her cousin Dennis Rosaire, his daughter and Goldy found themselves in the film 'Women in Love', a British Drama starring Diane Cilento, George Baker, Jimmy Karoubi and David Kossoff.

The following year Circus Rosaire closed down, it was a sad day for Joan even though she had performed in other circus and theatres her heart was with Circus Rosaire.

Over the next five decades Joan and Goldy were going to take the Circus World by storm. There were going to be another five Goldy's. The first, then followed by Goldy's Boy, then Silver, Trampas, Duke and finally Sunny, when performing they all performed under the name of Goldy. It was going to be Goldy's boy who appeared as the Unicorn. Goldy boy was obviously the first foal and the only one that Joan reared. The first Goldy was sired by another well-known local Billericay Palomino horse 'King' who use to parade in the Local Billericay and Basildon Carnivals and as you would have gathered Goldy's Boy was the outcome.

It was in August 1965 whilst performing in Yarmouth, Joan and Goldy Boy made their first television appearance. Joan was selected because in her short career

to date had been a trapeze walker, trampoline specialist, presenter of animal acts, in particular horses.

Just before Goldy boy appeared as the unicorn they appeared in the Rediffusion children's program 'Hullabaloo.'

However, it was Silver that she had the deepest bond, he would curl his neck round Joan's give her a long-toothed grin before ask for an advance payment in the form of mints. Though Trampus was the most talented but not as trustworthy. In fact, Joan states he was a bit of a juvenile delinquent. When travelling they often slept in the same converted caravan, as Joan said they did not like being alone without her.

Joan with her various Goldy's travelled not only in the United Kingdom but all over Europe with the odd visit to Florida. They met the Queen, The Queen Mother, Princess Margaret, Princess Anne, and in 1942 as a young child met King Peter of Yugoslavia, King George of Greece and Princess Romanovsky-Pavlovsky of Russia.

In the entertainment world they met up and performed with Charlie Chaplin, Ken Dodd, Max Bygraves, and Paul Daniels to name a few. It was while they were performing in Switzerland for Circus Knie when she met Charlie Chaplin and following a request, she was invited along to the reception wagon where she had dinner with him.

Joan had become internationally well known as a great horsewoman, resulting in her and her horses being invited to perform in many of the Worlds well known Circus. This included being invited with her horses to take part at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in the musical spectacular 'Gone with the Wind', starring June Richie and Harve Presnell.

The producer's problem though was finding a horse to take Scarlett and Melanie out of the burning Atlanta, home to the safety of Tara. This is what the programme said:

*The producers have entrusted this tricky problem to acknowledged equine expert, Joan Rosaire. Daughter, and granddaughter of circus folk, Miss Rosaire is famous throughout England and Europe as animal trainer.*

Joan though always insisted that she was not an animal trainer but an animal teacher.

On this occasion Joan did not use Goldy, as Goldy was performing with Max Bygraves at Victoria Palace. There was one occasion when Joan was not there and a cousin was deputising for her. Max slapped Goldy with the reins on both side of the neck, he found himself on the floor. Max kept away from Joan for a few days. He did take her for a drink.

Another one of Joan's horses was performing in the pantomime Babes in the Woods at the London Palladium. The star of the panto was comedian Julian Orchard.

So, three shows, three theatres and sometimes matinees as well which meant six shows a day in different locations and as you would expect there were frantic journeys across London and often in rush hour. This just shows how well known and her horses in particular Goldy had become.

There was a short time during the 1960/70s that Joan run a riding school back in Billericay and during this time she would be performing with Goldy in Gymkhanas etc but the call of the circus was too great.

The World's Fair in December 1973 reported that 'Miss Joan Rosaire has no equal in the circus world today and is my idea of the mistress of the horse.'

Well, we could go on and on about Joan and her wonder horse Goldy but we must finally mention that when performing with Goldy at the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1988 in front of Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret. The overall show was hosted by Ronnie Corbett and Bruce Forsyth with many well-known guests. The closing finale hosted by Paul Daniels included Joan performing with Goldy.

In 1998, Joan went under the knife and had a knee joint replacement this followed with her retiring in September 2000 but Trampus, Duke and Sunny continued to live with her at her Billericay Farm. Then in February 2001 shortly after Joan had hung up her boots the World's Fair Newspaper held its third annual circus awards. Jeremy Beadle hosted the presentation and Paul Daniels and his wife Debbie were guests of honour at the Reunion.



There were various awards but the final and most prestigious award of the evening being the Lifetime Achievement Award went to none other than our Joan.

And this is what Don Stacey had this to say about her: -

*'The recipient this year I described in World's Fair earlier this year as one of the kindest, most charming and most loved British artistes and concluded that "she is one of a kind" and most definitely "One of our kind of people." Soon after publication of that tribute, she was to retire after a lifetime in the circus world and a lifetime devoted to her precious animals. There is no more a staunch supporter of Circus and of circuses than Joan Rosaire and she made a happy choice for our Lifetime Achievement Award this year and we were especially thrilled that, despite recent ill health, she was able to accept the award herself from Paul Daniels.'*

Though Joan has always maintained that is her horse Goldy that has made her famous. As she says 'My horses went everywhere with me, come rain or shine. I looked after them, they were as important to me as humans, they were part of my family, I loved them and I think they loved me.'

Joan passed away peacefully on the 21 June 2022. Her funeral, took place on Tuesday 19 July 2022 and rather than a sombre occasion, it was upbeat celebration of a remarkable life. The simple coffin was covered in images of horses and, as poignant reminders of her circus career, her cowboy hat, highwayman's tricorne, a riding crop, a bridle and a rhinestone encrusted cowboy jacket was placed upon it. As expected, there was a gathering of representatives of contemporaries from leading circus families.

The following is opening words of her obituary in the King Pole magazine by Don Stacey:

*'One of the shining lights of the British circus world was extinguished on 21 June 2022 with the death of Joan Rosaire at the age of 89. She was regarded by all as one of the kindest, most charming, most gifted and erudite members of the profession, a great beauty in her time and a most talented horse trainer.'*

Final words being:

***'She was at one time offered sponsorship to train at the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, the highest honour for anybody aspiring to be a dressage or high school rider. In her later years she gave many demonstrations of animal training for interested groups and her act with 'Goldy' was at one time one of the most-booked on the carnival and gala circuit.'***

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You can obtain a copy of the book- 'Joan Rosaire Lady of the Circus' of her career from our Office £8.00.

Ken Porter  
Basildon Borough Heritage Society  
2 December 2022

