The Irene Kritzer Memorial Support Person of the Year

My mom is the reason I got in to horses. She started lessons and shortly after I was signed up. Soon we had our pony, Sadie. She was a large pony so both of us could ride but very quickly mom's riding turned into being the ultimate horse show mom. She was the best braider you ever wanted to meet, would run to get snacks and sandwiches on horse show prep days, got up at the crack of dawn and got us to the barn on show days for whatever the day had in store. She played wing woman to the trailer, following it and making sure lanes changes, turns, and highway exits were as safe as possible. Mom attended all my lessons and clinics and absorbed information like a sponge. Although not always taken kindly, she would be there to remind me of what I was taught and might need to fix during her ride. I can still hear her channeling her inner Ann Bowie telling me to "Tap, tap, tap". At the shows, mom was everyone's mom, doing a little bit of everything. This could be holding a horse, getting a forgotten number, polishing a boot, or giving a pep talk. The only time she dropped everything was when it was my turn to ride. She was always ring side. Hers was the face I looked for after every class or course. She was honest about things that didn't go well but never told me I was not good enough. My mom was bitten, kicked, slogged through mud, sun burned, stood out in the pouring rain and still she always came back. This continued when I went to college in Philadelphia and joined the equestrian team. I would ride in one, maybe two classes but she would still drive to Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to watch me ride. Mom even flew to England when I studied abroad so she could watch a few of my shows there. Horse show nerves, anxiety, and admittedly sometimes grumpiness were always part of the day but no matter what so was my mother was there for me.

My midlife crisis car was an impulse bought Haflinger mare. My mom’s first instinct was to lecture me on not thinking things through. Once she met the pony she was hooked. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I would get back into the world of going to clinics and shows but I did. For this, I will be forever grateful because it gave my mother and I a few years to recreate our horse show magic. She jumped right back into the role of being my number one fan and my biggest supporter. She talked me down off many ledges and celebrated my achievements. Mom rolled with the punches when it came to nerves, anxiety, grumpiness and was amused at how sappy I am as an adult. This time around there are miraculous things called smartphones exist and there are now videos of my rides. I have racked up hundreds of views on social media and 90% of those are my mom watching again and again. My mom was my biggest fan and my biggest supporter. I would not be the person or the horsewoman I am today without her.

Support people are the heart of what makes horses so beautiful. Mine was and will always be my mom. The Irene Kritzer Memorial Support Person of the Year has been established to honor people in that essential role. The person who makes the hard days bearable. The person who is unwaveringly supportive. The person who grounds you. Please send nominations to beckykritzer@msn.com. This will be an annual award presented at the October Horse Power Farm Cross Country Derby.