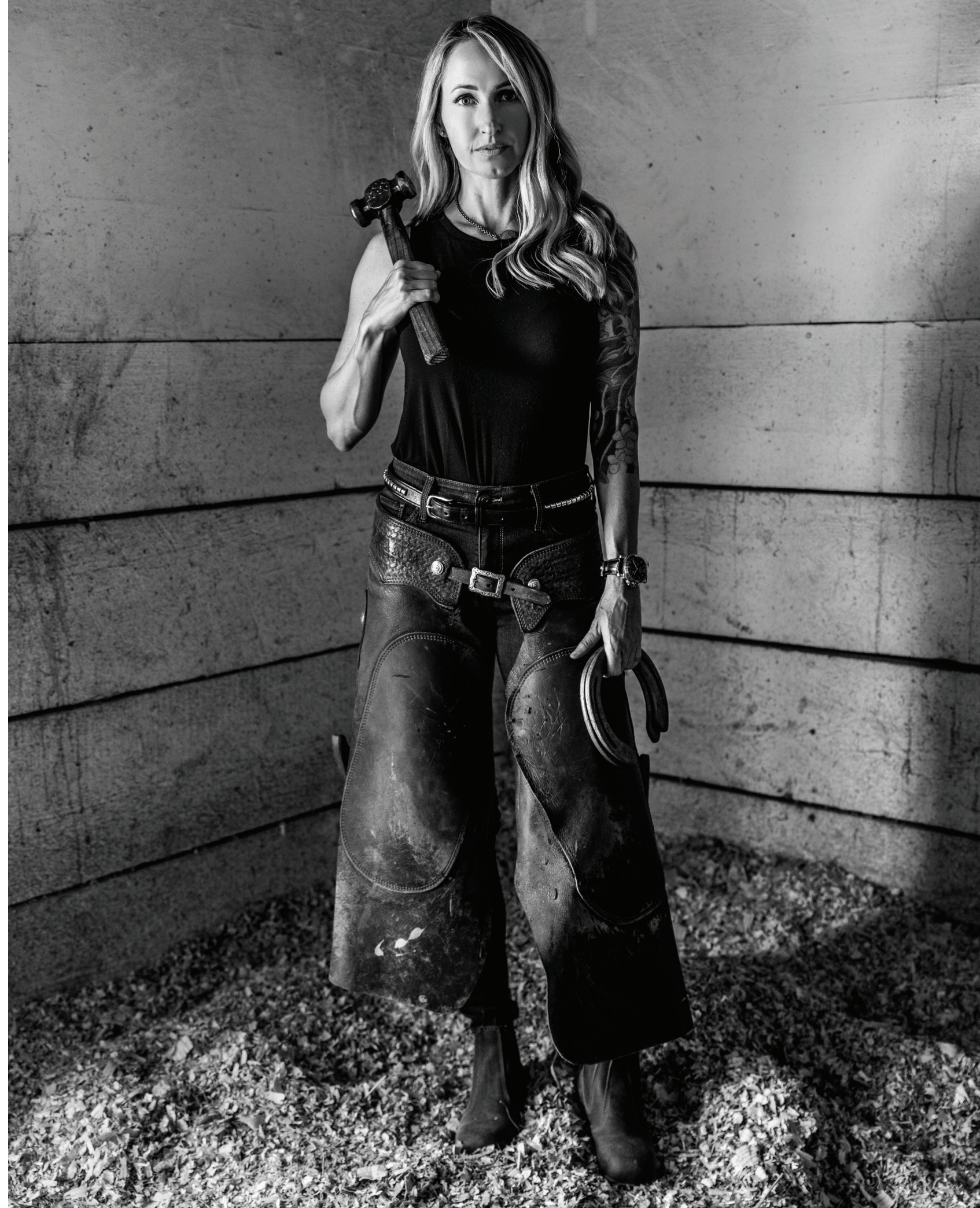


real horsepower

FROM FARRIER WORK TO PORSCHE RESTORATION,
MAILANI RACHAEL DEYOUNG PURSUES
HER PASSIONS AT A FULL GALLOP.

Written by Diane E. Barber | Photographed by Shane O'Donnell





Mailani Rachael DeYoung lives life with gusto, driven by unbridled passion, authenticity and her personal mantra, “Do not let yourself or others keep you from doing what you really want to do.” Working as a farrier in a male-dominated industry, coupled with physical limitations that would result in a sedentary life for most people, Mailani’s unwavering spirit pushes her to defy those odds.

When she was 17 years old, Mailani broke her back snowboarding. Ten years later she was diagnosed with Ménière’s disease, a disorder of the inner ear that compromises her hearing and balance. She was also recently diagnosed with hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (hEDS), a rare, genetic, connective tissue disease that can cause unstable joints, skin problems, and digestive and heart issues, among other symptoms.

According to Mailani, people with hEDS are typically debilitated. “It is a huge personal accomplishment that I can do such a physical job,” she says. “We are all stronger than we think we are. Usually what stops us is our own self-doubt. It feels so good when you can push through it!”

Mailani’s family relocated to Hawaii from the South Bay via Santa Cruz when she was very young. “My parents were hippies and moved to Kauai to open a health food store,” she says. “They decided to come back to L.A. for better schools.”

When the DeYoungs did return to the South Bay, they bought horses. “Our horse farrier was retiring and knew Dad was good at metal fabrication and restoring Porsches, so he offered him the business. He agreed to buy it and went to school to learn the trade,” she shares. “I made my first horseshoe when I was 11 years old.”

Hooked on the craft, Mailani spent summer vacations working with her father, Keith, until her snowboarding accident. “Because of the physical demands of horseshoeing, I felt I had to find another career. So I went to college and earned a B.A. in photography,” she says. “I taught at the Palos Verdes Art



Center but still wanted to shoe horses. I asked my dad, ‘Do you think I can ever shoe horses even though I broke my back and I am a girl?’ He told me I could do anything I set my mind to, so I started apprenticing with him.”

The joy of Mailani’s chosen career far outweighs the dangers. “I have had horses flip over on me, I’ve been bruised, and I’ve suffered broken bones and burns. But the rewards of helping horses every day make it all worth it,” she says. “We care for a couple hundred horses as if they are our own in Palos Verdes and Catalina Island. We have also cared for elephants, rhinos and giraffes at the L.A. Zoo. This is not a job. It is a lifestyle that I love.”

Her father not only ignited her horseshoeing career but also her love for Porsches. “My dad was always working on Porsches when I was growing up, and I helped him on weekends,” she says. “I thought it was so cool that I got to be picked up at school in a ‘race car.’”

Mailani got her first vintage Porsche when she was 23. It didn’t run but was still a dream come true. Because of that car, she got involved in the Women in Porsche organization, eventually becoming a brand ambassador.

“I met a woman at an event whose life paralleled mine. Her father also restored Porsches. We worked on my car

together while she was starting the international organization, which is all about sharing a passion for these cars, being inclusive and women’s empowerment. It is so great to know there are other women like me!”

In 2010 a Porsche North America representative crossed paths with Mailani at a swap meet in Anaheim. “There was a man who was scouting for commercials asking people if they were everyday Porsche drivers. When a man next to me said he was not, I said, ‘I am an everyday driver! I just bought myself a 911 for my 30th birthday.’”

That led to an on-camera screen test and filming a commercial horseshoeing alongside her late dog, Ludo. She has since appeared in additional commercials and the brand’s internet marketing.

Giving back is also a calling for Mailani, who is currently training with Operation Underground Railroad to be a voice for victims of human trafficking. Recent high-profile cases and her mother Christine’s influence sparked her empathetic interest in wanting to raise awareness and make a difference.

“My mom is always helping people and often puts the needs of others before her own,” she shares. “She is also one of the smartest people I know. She inspires me to be the best I can be and to help lift people up.” ■

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