

**YOUR OPINION COULD BE WORTH \$1,000!** Help us out by taking a short survey and enter to win \$1,000! **START**  
safecount.net

Find what you are looking for ... Search

Comment, blog & share photos  
Log in | Become a member

HAWAII'S **Complete** SOURCE

Posted on: Thursday, February 20, 2003

# Equestrian opportunity of a lifetime

By **Zenaida Serrano Espanol**  
Advertiser Staff Writer

When Dana Ishii graduated from Kahuku High School in 2001, she had no idea that destiny would lead her to a job thousands of miles away at the Chateau de Versailles in France. The 19-year-old was one of 10 women accepted last fall into the new Academy of Equestrian Arts, a two-year program in Versailles for riders worldwide.



Dana Ishii, here with Falkland, says living and working in France is like a dream.

Walton Ishii

Ishii, the only American selected, joined women from Finland, Russia and France.

"Every day we work and see the Palace of Versailles," said the Kahuku High valedictorian, "and I can't believe each day where we are."

The group is the first to attend the academy, which offers training in diverse equestrian pursuits.

"It's partly a school, but it's also like a tourist attraction," Ishii explained.

In addition to courses in drawing, sculpture, music, dance, martial arts and fencing, the academy presents shows that include the riders' and horses' morning training sessions, set to background music and full-fledged choreographed performances. The 10 riders are preparing for a Feb. 24 grand-opening show.

The experience is like a fairy tale, Ishii said. Her two-year training contract covers tuition, and each month she's paid about 900 euros, roughly equivalent to dollars.

"I never really thought that I would be getting paid to do what I love, and I just really enjoy working with horses," Ishii said. "If I wasn't paid to do it, I'd definitely pay to do it."

The academy was founded by a French director, choreographer and horseman known as Bartabas, thought of by many as France's king of equestrian theater.

Bartabas aims to revive the Chateau's Grand Stable, the historic home of the School of Versailles, where Louis XIV's Royal Cavalry once trained and which disappeared after the French Revolution. In its heyday, the stable and its outdoor arena hosted many royal festivities, including theater and opera performances.

Ishii said the opening of the academy and the coming shows have caused quite a stir in Versailles.

ADVERTISEMENT

**Featured Jobs** Powered by **LinkedIn**

- Director of Software Engine...**  
Cresta Partners [Apply now »](#)
- Director of Engineering**  
MuleSoft Inc [Apply now »](#)
- Director, Storage Software ...**  
NetApp [Apply now »](#)

Looking for a job? LinkedIn can help! [Learn More](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

**Save up to 30% off weekly car rentals when you add where2®GPS.**

**BOOK NOW**

**AVIS**  
We try harder.

"Apparently it's a really big thing over here," Ishii said. "Everyone in France is excited."

Ishii's mother, Lynn, is also excited for her daughter's once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"I think it's wonderful, the opportunity to go and live someplace else for two years and do something that she loves to do," said the Sunset Beach resident.

Lynn Ishii said her daughter had an affinity for horses from an early age.

"She was interested in horses from the time that she could talk," Lynn Ishii said.

Dana Ishii was 8 when she got her first pony, Pilikia, and she began to take lessons shortly after that.

"I just enjoy working with horses," she said. "They're forgiving and willing to please."

More than a decade later, Dana Ishii has become skilled at dressage, the equestrian discipline that involves guiding a horse through increasingly complex maneuvers by slight movements of the rider's hands, legs and weight.

Lynn Jendrowski, Dana Ishii's instructor from 1998 to 2002, said Ishii was an excellent student.

"She's a very talented rider, and she picked up things easily," said Jendrowski, a former Hawai'i resident now living in Blacksburg, Va.

Ishii has been in France since Dec. 1, and although she's enjoying her time there, she does have a few complaints, including the language barrier (she barely speaks French), and the nippy temperatures.

"It's been very cold," she said. "We had snow a couple times and our pipes froze, so we didn't have water for a couple days."

Being away from her family has been another struggle, so Ishii feels fortunate to have five weeks of vacation each year. She hopes to spend her free time back in the Islands.

"I wish I didn't have to be so far away from home," she said. "I'm very much an island girl."

Nevertheless, Ishii is grateful for the opportunity. She has made new friends and has spent her days off with them, visiting landmarks such as the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower, and, of course, shopping all over Paris.

"To be almost 20 and be paid to live in France, take all the classes that I'm taking, train horses and be a part of this show, you know, it's really neat," Ishii said. "The riders are all very good, and I feel lucky to be here and honored to be chosen."

Reach Zenaida Serrano Espanol at [zespanol@honoluluadvertiser.com](mailto:zespanol@honoluluadvertiser.com) or 535-8174.



**Crate&Barrel**  
Free shipping on select purchases totaling \$99 or more.

Shop now ▶

©COPYRIGHT 2010 The Honolulu Advertiser. All rights reserved.  
Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights , updated March 2009.