

News Letter

AMWELL VALLEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2010

CHANGE IN DATE FOR AVTA RENEWALS = \$10 DISCOUNT



It has been suggested and agreed to by the AVTA board that we will now be asking for renewals in January instead of June. We originally sent out memberships in June because that is when we sent out the first ones 25 years ago. Changing the date will make the process much easier for our membership person since it will come at a slower time of year when there is less to do, that is no mowing or maintaining trails, mowing pastures and less riding. You should be receiving your usual renewal applications by mail soon. This year we will be giving you a \$10 reduction in your membership payment for sending it in before March 15th.

The Eclectic Equestrian

By Susan Lax

“Training (and Taming) the Non-Rider Spouse”

For years of owning horses, my husband, Howard, came along, dutifully driving, carrying tack back and forth from tack room to horse, loading trailers up for shows and stopping by the tack store with that “I’m out of whatever” list thrust upon him over the phone while he was at the office.

Howard takes the pictures and the videos of me and my horses, mucks out begrudgingly but does it all the same, drives the trailer and breaks the ice in the water buckets and troughs in the winter.

Howard rode BC, “Before Children,” occasionally tacking up to ride with our friends’ kids in the fields and on the trails at the farm where we boarded because that was more fun than going around in circles learning how to ride instead of simply enjoying it.

Then there were the vacations where I always managed to find a stable so we could hack out. He liked that, too. Traveling in a straight line viewing the scenery, flipping back branches, the random canter, the bouncing trot, until the hour was up and we went back to sightseeing like normal tourists.

But he would never ride on our farm, complaining that unless he could just get on and go, there was no fun in it and he refused to take lessons. “You can’t just get on these horses,” I said, “you have to know how to ride!”

This vacation HE suggested, though, definitely a first. He offered a trip where riding would be the focus, through the countryside of Andalusia, Spain. He had already done the homework, as this would be our Anniversary gift to each other.

“But what about you,” I asked, feeling guilty even though I was chomping at the bit to read the brochure and peruse the web site.

“I would like it,” he said. “Of course, I need to start riding again because I don’t want to get there and be out of commission the very first day because I’m too sore from one day of riding. That means you will have to give me lessons.”

I blinked. Opened my eyes wide. Pinched myself on the arm. He was still sitting in front of me. I was sitting in a chair at the kitchen table. I pinched again. Still, I was not in bed, having just woken from a dream. All these years I had seemingly dragged him around my horses. Something must have rubbed off.

The Training

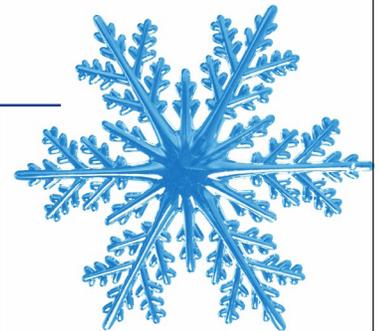
We spent two months getting Howard on Eclipse for lessons by yours truly. Around and around he went in our arena, exasperated every time good old Eclipse felt him lose his balance and stopped. I had them on the lunge line but only used the whip to encourage Eclipse when Howard’s legs gave out. Howard sat easy chair style in the saddle, his legs sticking out by Eclipse’s shoulders.

“Bring your legs back, sit up, hands down, heels down, watch your diagonal, use your leg, sit up, heels down, bring your leg back...”

But he kept at it. Howard also went on the Elliptical machine every night to get fit and build strength in his legs. I was astonished.

Finally, Howard was off the lunge line. He could trot for a bit before Eclipse decided it was enough. Every time Eclipse started to stop,

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WINTER DOLDRUMS PARTY

The **WINTER DOLDRUMS PARTY/THINK SPRING** and silent auction will be on March 6th at the Ringoes Firehouse.

Cost \$22 pre paid and \$25 at the door.

There will be a silent auction. We are looking for donations. If anyone has anything to donate please call or e-mail Gael Gardner at (609) 466-9472 or gael@thegardners.org.

Pat Flannigan
(908) 369-7091



Continued from page 1.

Howard would sit back, of course further encouraging the horse. Over and over again, he let out a huge sigh while slumping in the saddle, when the horse stopped.

After about the twentieth repetition of this scene, I asked, "Why do you do that? When he starts to slow, give leg and urge him forward. When you are playing basketball and miss a shot, you don't stop in the middle of the court, sigh and mope, before running off to continue the game."

I was really amazed that Howard and I were not losing our cool with each other. He was determined and I was amazed at how much he was trying every spare moment he had, coming home early from work when he could to get on the horse before sunset and planning his Saturday and Sundays around the lessons.

Howard was ready to canter, having been off the lunge line and able to keep Eclipse moving at the trot. But Eclipse, the old-timer he is, knows a novice when he feels one and cantering was not going to be easy. I handed over a crop. The good news is, Howard stayed on through the bucking. "Well, I won't have to worry about you losing your seat when we are in Spain!" I said.

The Taming

Howard had the basics down but there was more to riding, especially when we were going to a place we had never been before. I didn't want him to just do it because of me. I wanted him to enjoy the true sport of it. Also, we would be learning Dressage so there was less excitement and more discipline ahead for him.

What he needed now was a final lesson from an upper level instructor. I waited for the right moment. "I think you need a lesson from Jackie on a different horse. There was a momentary, "Nah, I'll be fine" and then a quick, "OK." I didn't know if it was the prospect of so much riding, what he was paying for this trip, or whether he was actually enjoying the learning for a change that made him realize there was no cutting corners on this one.

Howard agreed he would take a lesson with one of my trainers, Jackie Sicoli, on a wonderful horse she uses for lessons, Danny.

Jackie pretty much went straight for the canter. I closed my eyes. "Good!" Jackie called.

I opened them, Howard not only used his aids for a beautiful transition to canter but he was right with Danny the whole time. No more did he have his legs out in front of him, no more was his butt grinding the saddle to and fro to get the horse moving and no more was I wondering how good the doctors are in Spain.

A few weeks before departing for Spain, we pow-wowed about what to bring on the trip. We were staying in Madrid before and after the week at the Epona Equestrian Center and had to determine how we would fit riding apparel and equipment as well as street clothes in our suitcases there and back. Howard had been riding in jeans, my son's helmet and paddock boots and full chaps that he had ridden in twenty years earlier.

I went online and found some very inexpensive full seat breeches. Now how to convince a man who was not much into riding, let alone Dressage, that he needed full seat breeches and half chaps for one week in Spain.

"You will not be comfortable riding four hours on the trail and then another hour for lessons, unless you have the proper clothing. It makes a difference, really it does!" I coaxed, adding that the breeches were less expensive than the ones I ride in so it was not a big investment. "And everyone will wear them," I added sheepishly, knowing that Howard was not a pushover for the threat of "everyone."

But he acquiesced! Our boarders could hardly keep from laughing when they saw him. Though not Cesar Parra, he looked fine. Just not like the jean and work shirt-clad or executive-suited Howard we all were used to. He gave the new outfit a test ride and admitted how much more comfortable he was. Now, that was a miracle!

Off we were to Spain. Through olive groves, cotton fields, and haciendas, we rode about four hours each morning and then had a group Dressage lesson for an hour-plus each evening. Epona's trail horses were excellent guides, healthy and able for the job and well-matched to their riders. We rode different horses for our lessons, also well-suited to help us improve our riding. The horses were pure-bred Andalusians or mixed with the Spanish blood. As much as I loved my persnickety Thoroughbred mare, I longed to take any one of these horses home.

Howard was put in the beginner class in the evenings, the session before mine. Our fellow travelers included a couple from Canada and a young woman from California. She and I were in the advanced class. Howard was in the class with the couple, much to their chagrin, as they told everyone that they were not beginners, had two horses at home and a trainer, etc. etc. etc.

One evening I sat outside the arena with Fernando, Epona's owner, watching Howard's lesson. The instructor was continuously praising Howard. The Canadian couple was having much difficulty, yet Howard was doing a wonderful job. Fernando commented that he didn't seem like a beginner to him.

He didn't look like a beginner to me, either. I was amazed at how he had ridden through the canters on the trail and even became the "water boy". He carried everyone's water bottles and cameras, handing out and packing up everyone's items while on horseback.

Howard learned leg yielding and should-in and mastered his gaits, rhythmically rising to the trot and controlling his cantering. When Howard's instructor once again praised him, the frustrated Canadian gentleman sarcastically mimicked under his breath, "excellent job, Howard."

It seemed to me that going 'round and 'round in an arena was no longer distasteful to my husband. I watched, taking pictures and videos, taking videos and pictures. "Look at her salivating," Fernando said. I looked, thinking he meant the horse was on the bit. "You!" he said in his Spanish accent, "You are so proud!"

I was.

It was a fabulous vacation. I learned so much, improved my riding and was able to come home and partner with my hot mare like never before. Spain was beautiful, the food outstanding and Epona and its trainers were even better than what I had expected.

But Howard was the best part. Riding with him and equally sharing the enjoyment was the blue ribbon on this wonderful Anniversary gift.

Next Issue: "To Vet or Not to Vet, that is the Question!"

HUNTING DAYS

We are close to the end of the Hunting seasons this year, but not quite there yet.

- Muzzleloader - Now until Feb 13
- Shotgun - Now until Feb 9
- Winter bow - Now until Feb 16

Please continue to be courteous to hunters and stay off the trails except between 10 and 2.



Amwell Valley Trail Association "25th Anniversary"

The Amwell Valley Trail Association Inc. is 25 years old this year. The Amwell valley Trail Association is proud of its commitment to the East Amwell community and the environment. Organized in 1985 by a group of citizens who desired to preserve the rural atmosphere of the township, it continues to support an active membership of approximately 250. The trail association is a registered "not for profit" organization. The membership encourages hiking, horse riding, and cross country skiing on a trail system its volunteers maintain all year. The trails are only open to persons living or boarding horses in East Amwell.

Our accomplishments over the last 25 years speak for themselves. The one we are most proud of is the Charles Foster Weeden Memorial Scholarship Fund which is a tax deductible charitable fund, created in memory of Chuck Weeden for his great interest in the young and the environment, both as an educator and a private citizen. He and his wife Mary spent many years here with their family, working on the trails and hosting equine and environmental functions. This fund is open to any student of East Amwell Township, as well as members of the Amwell Valley Hounds Pony Club and the Amwell Valley Hounds Hunt. The student must be pursuing education in agriculture or environmental studies at college or trade school.

We hold two fund raisers each year. A hunter pace is held the first weekend in October. All the proceeds from this are divided between the Amwell Valley Rescue Squad, the Amwell Valley Fire Company and the Charles Foster Weeden Memorial Scholarship Fund. A silent auction is held during our spring dinner. The proceeds from this are exclusively for the scholarship fund. We also enjoy catching up with friends and neighbors at the fire house in Ringoes.

Our Dog Day's of Summer party and annual meeting is held in the summer at a resident's farm, and all members and supporting land owners are invited. This meeting is to thank the land owners for all their generous help and the members and Board of Governors for all their work during the year

The National Recreation and Park Association commended East Amwell Township on its trail system, which has been used as a model for several other townships.

Amwell Valley trail members are ever mindful of the environment. Each year dedicated members work with the South Branch Watershed Association, testing several streams in East Amwell for macro- invertebrates, an indicator of stream health. The Avta is particularly concerned about erosion problems and continually monitors many sensitive areas to correct damage whenever it appears. Other members remove invasive plants and replace them with native species. Many areas have now grasses and plants where there was erosion.

An Amwell Valley Trail news letter is released out six times a year. This, along with our web site, keeps everyone up to date. For the computer buffs we are also on face book. As a member you can post stories, show pictures or run an advertisement. Just log on to avta.net.

The trail system could not exist without the generosity and co-operation of all our landowners. We are the only trail association in the northeast where all our trails are on private property. We work closely with our landowners and respect their land and their wishes. At this significant milestone, we wish to say a big THANK YOU landowners for sharing the fantastic Amwell Valley with the AVTA, hopefully for another 25 years.

Trish Buckwalter, President

EIA REPORTED IN NEW JERSEY PONY

A pony recently brought to a New Jersey stable from a sale barn in Pennsylvania was confirmed positive for equine infectious anemia. Officials in Pennsylvania are investigating the source of the infection. The pony, which had been obtained by an equine rescue group, was euthanized.

Equine infectious anemia (EIA), also called "swamp fever," is an infectious, viral disease that can infect all equidae (horses, donkeys, zebras, etc.) It is not infectious to humans. There is no effective treatment or approved vaccine available.

The disease is spread via blood-to-blood transmission, usually from horse to horse by large biting insects such as horseflies and deerflies. Blood transfusions, unsterilized or contaminated needles, and equipment contaminated with blood from an infected horse can also spread the virus.

Depending on an individual horse's immune system and the severity of its reaction, clinical signs of EIA can range dramatically. While some animals infected with EIA show no signs of illness, others display fever, weight loss, icterus (yellowing of body tissues), anemia, swelling of the limbs, weakness, rejection of feed, and/or sudden death.

To minimize disease transmission, all equidae should be tested for EIA before being brought onto a new premise. The animal should be isolated and observed for 45 to 60 days, then retested before being introduced to the herd.

New Jersey law requires all imported equidae to have a negative official test for EIA within the past 12 months. All equidae traveling on New Jersey roads must have a negative EIA test a maximum of 24 months prior to such travel, and any equidae that change ownership must be tested a maximum of 90 days prior to such a change in ownership. Equidae younger than six months are exempt from EIA testing if accompanied by their dam with a negative official test within the past 12 months.

WINTER WEATHER, WE'VE HAD IT!

My husband is a regional weather recorder for NOAA, the national weather service. I asked him to give me some data about December and January. I added a couple observations from another weather recorder we have.

In December there were 27 days with temperatures below 32 and 7 where the temperature never got above freezing. The coldest was Dec 30th where it was 14 degrees. I recorded winds up to 29 mph that day with wind chill of -18 at times. (I thought it was a mite chilly when I had to go out to feed the horses.)

In Jan up to the 13th it was below freezing 13 out of 13 days and 8 of those were below freezing all day. The coldest was the 10th with a low of 11. Wind chill -21. Since then we have had some days at 35 with the sun shining which felt positively balmy. It is amazing how we react to changes in temperature. My horses spent time on most sunny days taking naps in front to their run-in sheds. gg

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Classifieds

FOR SALE: *Seller very motivated ...* make her an offer !! Following knee surgery I am sadly selling Sid, my 6 year-old chestnut Quarter Horse. Great trail horse, goes first, last or alone. Wonderful on Hunter Paces. Lives in or out. Loves to jump, has been used in child and adult lessons. For sale through no fault of his own -- was \$4,000 will take best offer. I need something really smooth to save me from further surgery!! Call Di on (609) 466-7473 (H), (609) 558-1074 (C) or plantersro@aol.com.

STALLS AVAILABLE FOR HORSE BOARDING - Jan/Feb 2010 \$475/per month 12' x 12' stalls - Rubber mats with 12" quarry dust base. Post and rail fence. All day turn-out or in/out option. Free choice hay. Excellent custom feed. Free blanketing/worming. Retirees or lay ups welcome. All stalls are connected to pastures for walk in/out freedom. Large all weather ring. Round pen. Warm water HEATED wash stall. HEATED Tack room. Direct access to AVTA trails. 155 Backbrook Road Ringoes, NJ Contact: Joan Sank (908) 788-7423

AUSTRALIAN STOCK SADDLE
FOR SALE: Awesome trail saddle!
Black, tooled-leather Kimberly stock saddle from Down Under Saddle Supply

TO SEE MORE CLASSIFIEDS GO TO WWW.AVTA.NET

complete with brass fittings, wool felt and flocking (very easy to tweak to fit your horse), and lots of extras including matching breast plate, premium wool felt saddle pad, suede padded stirrup covers, and two girths. Add carrots and you're ready to go! Measures 17.5" - see www.downunderweb.com/wither.htm for approximate fitment guidelines. Asking \$550. Feel free to trial! Email Nancy njlake@comcast.net.

HORSE TRAILER FOR SALE Price reduced to \$6,500.00 Featherlite aluminum two horse, straight load, bumper pull, step up trailer. Two escape doors, padded stalls, new tires, feed managers, mats. Exterior door to dressing room with saddle racks, bridle hooks, blanket bars, clothing rack. 1992 model, light use, excellent condition with many years of service left. Call Sandy 908-782-0497 or email sandykiser@embarqmail.com

MISSING CAT: Squeaks is an all black female cat, extremely friendly, last seen wearing her collar, has been missing from Toy Box Farm since mid November. Is possible she snuck away in one of the farrier's trucks and is at another farm. If anyone thinks they have seen or have her, please call Brooke (609) 929-7102.

or email realcowgirl459@aol.com

HORSE PASTURE BOARD AVAILABLE
Chivalry Hill Farm now accepting one pasture board client! If you are a well-mannered gelding looking for a pasture buddy and full care without the stall on a beautiful, quiet and friendly farm, this is the place for you! Contact Susan (609) 947-6726 or 609-466-4178 or send email to chivalryhillfarm@aol.com

RINGOES HORSE BARN TO RENT OR SHARE: 6 stall center aisle Barn on a private farm w/direct Amwell Valley trail access. Large box stalls open to 18+ acres of fenced pasture. Tack room, storage area, inside water, electricity. We maintain fencing/pastures; you manage horse/barn care--\$1,350. per mo.+ utilities. Very Quiet and Peaceful Setting. Must See! Also . . . ONE BEDROOM CARRIAGE HOUSE APT. AVAILABLE STEPS AWAY FROM BARN. Call Joanie at (908) 284-4944 or email dgreen-scapes@embarqmail.com

BOARDING NOW AVAILABLE
Stalls \$450 or Pasture Board \$350. Large outdoor ring and round pen with exceptional footing. Vinyl fencing. 24/7 quality feed and care. Owner run. Late night check and hay. Friendly

atmosphere and on AVTA Trails. Lessons and leases available. Call Patty at Rose Ridge LLC 609-333-1146 or cell (908) 763-1538. Patty@roserridge.net

GREAT HORSE FOR SALE OR LEASE:
Charlie is an attractive paint gelding, 11 yrs. old, 15.1, well mannered, seasoned trail horse, trailers, clips, no vices. (Price is negotiable to a good home.) Half lease is \$250/month. On the Amwell Valley Trail System. Contact Sally (908) 797-3104 or e-mail tallyho5us@yahoo.com

BOARDING: Perfect set up for Retired or Rehab Horses Horse Boarding on private farm, all-day turnout, 12 X 12 stalls, excellent, personalized care, on the Amwell Valley Trails. \$350/month. Contact Sally (908) 797-3104 tallyho5us@yahoo.com

COUNTRY GARDENER DESIGN
Specializing in the design and management of farmsteads throughout the tri-state area: renaturalization, herb gardens, perennials, and bulb plantings. Winter is an excellent time to prune! We can neaten up foundation plantings, civilize hedgerows, put your wood lot back in order. 20 years experience in year round property management. CONTACT EVA KARKAS 908-451-8058



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