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AREA VII

Shetland Pony & Miniature Horse Association, Inc.

Winter 2012 • January, February, March



WINTER 2012
2012 Officers • Convention News
Calendar of Events • Features
Ranch and Member News

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outstanding 2011 show season!*

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Area VII Shetland Pony & Miniature Horse Assoc., Inc.

<http://www.areaviiclub.com/>

The Area VII Shetland Pony & Miniature Horse Association, Inc., was incorporated on June 14, 1998 by the Board of Directors: President Marjorie Vliet, Director Virginia Flint and Director Jim Curry. It is and has always been member supported and driven, with a dynamic group of people volunteering to run the club.

Area VII's membership is spread across California and Nevada at this time, with members of all ages, with varied backgrounds and interests. Area VII is primarily a club for those that enjoy their Shetlands and Miniatures, with a particular interest in showing.

"We are an informal group of people of all ages who gather together for the enjoyment of friendships made, and the promotion of our beautiful equine. As members of this organization, we help maintain the recognition that our fine Shetlands and Miniatures deserve at the ASPC/AMHR level."

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

- 2-4 Horse Expo Pomona**
Fairplex, 1101 W. McKinley Avenue, Pomona CA
Horse Expo Events: (800) 352-2411
E-mail: letters@horseexpoevents.com
<http://www.horseexpoevents.com/>

MARCH

- 11 PCMHC Spring Fling (AMHR)**
Ingalls Park, Norco CA
Earl O'Bannon: (951) 780-2308
E-mail: miniec@roadrunner.com
<http://www.pcmhclub.com/>

APRIL

- 7 2012 Annual Horse Faire at Heather Farm**
Equestrian Center of Walnut Creek at Heather Farm Park
E-mail: maryrobinada@aol.com
<http://www.equestriancenterofwalnutcreek.org/horsefaire.htm/>

21 & 22 Clay Station HDT Series

Each day is an individual event. Ponies and minis welcome!
Clay Station Horse Park, Wilton CA
Stan & Debbi Packard: (916) 687-7948
E-mail: claystationhorsepark@frontiernet.net
<http://www.claystationhorsepark.com/>

- 28 PCMHC April Showers (AMHR, Classic, Modern, ASPR)**
Riverside Rancheros, Riverside CA
Earl O'Bannon: (951) 780-2308
E-mail: miniec@roadrunner.com
<http://www.pcmhclub.com/>

MAY

19 & 20 Clay Station HDT Series

Each day is an individual event. Ponies and minis welcome!
Clay Station Horse Park, Wilton CA
Stan & Debbi Packard: (916) 687-7948
E-mail: claystationhorsepark@frontiernet.net
<http://www.claystationhorsepark.com/>

20 California Scurry #1

Sargent Equestrian Center
15757 E. Sargent Road, Lodi, CA
Jeanne Williams, (650) 465-8528 cell, (209) 727-0200 office
E-mail: info@sargentequest.com
<http://www.sargentequest.com/>

26 PCMHC May Flowers (AMHR)
Ingalls Park, Norco CA
Earl O'Bannon: (951) 780-2308
E-mail: miniec@roadrunner.com
<http://www.pcmhclub.com/>

25-27 Area 8 National Show (AMHR, Classic, Modern, ASPR)
Ogden, UT
Laurie Villalpando, (801) 985-9720
lvillalpan@aol.com
<http://www.mwmho.com/>

JUNE
8-10 Western States Horse Expo
Cal Expo Fairgrounds, Sacramento, CA
(530) 672-7490 • (800) 352-2411
<http://www.horseexpo.com/>

ASPC/AMHR 2011 Convention Notes

1. The hardship fees for AMHA to AMHR and ASPC to AMHR have been reduced by 50% for this year. If you know any one this applies to, please let them know. It could save them a lot of money.
2. Congress 2012 will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is a one-year contract.
3. Convention 2012 will be held in St Louis, Missouri.
4. ASPC/AMHR Officers for 2012 are: Pat Sanders, President; Stephen Henderson 1st Vice President; Lewella Tembrel, 2nd Vice President.
5. There is a new American Driving Society Committee and I am on that committee. The ASPC amateur program is working on crediting points within that program. Anyone interested please let me know. There are multiple ways to earn points within the amateur program including recreational pleasure drives. These are in addition to awards you can get through ADS.—*Julie Mabie*

ADS Rule Change for Small Pony Division

The small pony division (47-1/4" and under) no longer requires a Navigator. It is now optional. For those who have not driven in ADS sanctioned events, you were previously required to have a navigator. That meant two people in the cart, a driver and a navigator.

This will be a great advantage to small pony drivers. It has been hard to find another person to ride in the cart that did not also want to drive their own pony in the same event. It is so much fun everyone wants to do it! Ponies and minis are not only fun and capable, they are a great training ground for new drivers.—*Julie Mabie*

President's Page

2010–2011 President Jim Curry

My very best wishes to everyone for a happy and prosperous 2012. This will be my last message to our members as president of Area VII, and I want to thank each and every one of our 2011 Officers and members for their support and hard work during the past year. As always, certain members can be relied on to support our activities. I won't try to name individuals—everyone knows who the workers are, and we did have some new members step up and support our activities last year.

I feel certain our club is “in good hands” with the incoming slate of Officers, and I urge all of our members to give them the support they have given me over the years in my several terms as president.

While I do not plan to be as active as I have been in the past, I will continue to participate in our club activities and enjoy the friendship of the many people I have met over the many years I have been a member of our club.

Again, I would like to say “THANKS” to all our members for their past support and hard work in club activities and wish each and every one a wonderful and successful new year !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!—*Jim*



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President's Page

2012 President Larry Weaver

Hello members and horse lovers. Thank you for having confidence in me and electing me as your new President of this fine club. The office of President is new to me, a job that I have not had experience doing before. I was unaware that when you are elected to an office you must take over immediately. Therefore, I was caught a bit off guard at our recent January meeting. I apologize that I was not ready for the task at hand, but I am ready now and looking forward to working with each of you and participating in some fun events this year!

Our next meeting will be held in March. This General meeting is being held in order to discuss a line up of proposed club events and potential dates that will be presented by your Show Committee. Everyone is invited to participate at this meeting. We would like input from as many people as possible so that our events have maximum participation. Suggestions on any club-related subject matter is always welcome.

At our January meeting, the club voted to have the next meeting at Fresh Choice one more time. Even though the food is good and reasonably priced, I have heard from many that the room is very small, crowded and it's hard to hear those who wish to speak. Susan has advised me that there is a Denny's less than five minutes from Fresh Choice with a larger private meeting room. We feel a larger room can be better arranged so that all may see and hear each other. Anyone know of a good place, let me know. We will let everyone know well in advance *if* there will be a change of our meeting place. I hope as many as possible will be able to attend. I would again like to thank Jill Wright for her suggestions on how to make our meetings more productive and run smoother. Our club is blessed with many talented, devoted and caring members. I would like to say that I am a better person for having met each one of you, and I look forward to the upcoming year and serving as your President.

We have a hard-working Show Committee. As we speak, they are working on a schooling show hosted by Area VII, another schooling show hosted in conjunction with the wonderful club in Walnut Creek, the possibility of a "performance only" points show hosted by Bill Madden at the Brookside Equestrian Park, a clinic, a playday with a social event, a year-end event, a pleasure drive at Fort Ord, and an additional driving event in the Woodland area. There is also discussion about another club sponsoring an ASPC/AMHR sanctioned show in conjunction with an AMHA show. If this becomes a reality, I would encourage our members to support that show. *Remember*, even if you are not on the Show Committee, your thoughts and ideas are greatly appreciated and needed. Don't hesitate to *email, write, phone* or *smoke signal* your comments. I would like to see a Special Events Committee formed to promote more social events, such as an end of the year event.

I would like to send out an enormous "THANK YOU" to Jim Curry for his exceptional service to this club and for his many years of tireless effort and accomplishments. I look forward to Jim's valuable advice and support. Take care, and again, thank you to all! Hurray the rain is here!!!! —*Sincerely, Larry*



It's Not About the Water

By Sherry Ward

A friend of mine owns a clever little pony that has a strong aversion to water. He drinks water—he just doesn't step in it! He's pretty adamant about his "druther," and he definitely would druther not get his feet wet! Perhaps you've met him... he's a spunky little buckskin American Shetland named Nikki, and he's owned by Area VII member Joan Clements. Joan loves driving her pony, but if she finds water in the path, she never knows if Nik is going to refuse or jump. Jumping puddles with a cart isn't an approved or desirable pony sport! Joan has experience with broad-jumping pools of water in a roadster, and she doesn't recommend it.

Joan wasn't quite sure how to approach the problem with her water-phobic pony. She considered finding a big puddle and putting on tall boots and trying to lead Nikki around in the water. Like most people, she assumed Nikki had a problem with water, and it is a fact that equines have relatively poor ability to judge the depth of water. It might only be a half inch deep, but they still may avoid stepping into it. Typically, problems like trailer loading and walking over and through obstacles are more of a confidence issue. It helps to remember that prey animals are skeptics by nature.

In natural horsemanship, we often say "it's not about the ____." It's not about the trailer, not about the wash rack, not about the jump, not about the water. If the human isn't a strong and trusted leader, the horse often feels that, to stay safe, he'd better think for himself rather than trust the human.

Joan and I were playing natural horsemanship games with the ponies one day and Nikki balked at a mud puddle in the field, runoff from a storm the night before. The footing was slick, so I suggested we find a better puddle for training so Nikki wouldn't slip and undermine his confidence even further. There was one ideally sized puddle with a gravel base near the barn. I told Joan that hopefully we would not need any hip boots, since I had no intention of going into the water, as that would be Nikki's job!

I took Nik, and while standing *beside* the puddle, I started to *send* him, rather than lead him. This is a game he is familiar with from our horsemanship games. As expected, as soon as he got to the puddle he screeched to a halt. I stayed relaxed, as it's important to not get frustrated, mean or mad. What one needs to be is *persistent*. Prey animals love to out-persist predators, so it takes patience. I retreated from the "obstacle" a bit and then re-sent. I repeated this many times, using pressure during the send that was as gentle as possible and as firm as necessary. The saying is nose, neck, maybe the feet. You send the horse's nose, and eventually the neck will follow and then, eventually the feet will follow the nose and neck!

Nik finally decided that Plan B would be to jump the puddle. He began to understand the objective, which was getting to the other side, so while this wasn't quite what we wanted, his answer was getting warmer. After many repetitions, Nik got a front foot in the puddle. At this point, he expressed his concern by pawing the water vigorously. I just stood in a relaxed mode and let him explore. It's a natural temptation to keep adding

pressure to the animal, clucking and using the stick. But that's just like having someone with a fear of water standing at the deep end of the pool and you try pushing them closer and closer to the edge. It doesn't instill confidence! This is the time to let them think. When they stop trying, it's time to start again.

Since it's the release of pressure that teaches the horse that the answer he offers is getting warmer, one must remove pressure, even if it's just to reward the slightest try. And depending on the horse's personality, some horses need a lot more time to think through the puzzle of what you are asking them to do. Humans are naturally direct-line thinkers, so adding more pressure is the normal response *to get the goal accomplished*. What is meaningful to the horse is comfort, and release of pressure offers him that comfort. It also gives him time to *think* about trying a new option that just might be exactly what you are hoping for! Working with Nikki, it wasn't about the water. Instead, we were trying to help Nikki become a good puzzle solver.

Nikki alternated between splashing and pawing, jumping, and then rushing through the water, and sometimes trying other evasions which I blocked. He even tried "I'll go over the top of you!" instead of getting wet feet. Again, rather than get upset, we just put a plastic barrel there to stand behind, and that reduced my need for defense. Each time he crossed, he got a little reward—being allowed to relax or maybe take a bite or two of grass. He was definitely getting warmer! Then we just needed to put a bit of pressure in front of him as he crossed, in order to convince him to calmly and *slowly* take the crossing. Happily, he began to slow down and think his way through his new behavior. He realized he'd solved my puzzle.

The amount of time that new obstacles might take to accomplish depends a lot on the handler's skills and the equine. In Nikki's case, despite how resistant he had been previously, we probably spent an hour with him on Puddle Crossing 101, and I was very satisfied with this investment.

When humans are learning these horse handling skills, it's best to start with small, simple tasks and obstacles for both human and equine. Timing is important, and at first, rope and stick handling is a challenge in itself. One learns effective blocking skills and improved timing so that the communication with the equine becomes more effective. Breaking the task into smaller steps is helpful.

Continues on Page 10



PHOTO: SHERRY WARD



PHOTO: SHERRY WARD

Water

Continued from Page 9

There is no reason that one cannot stop when the animal just gets a single foot in the water. That's a baby step, but it's progress, so it's okay to stop there and take the task up another day. The next attempt can stop with two front feet in the puddle.

Feeling that Nik understood what was being asked of him, I handed him to Joan and she practiced. He tried some different answers and resistances, but since she also persisted, Nik eventually ended walking calmly through the water at a simple suggestion, which we considered a very good note on which to stop.

With the California drought, Mother Nature hasn't given us any more puddles to work with, but when she does, we will be sure to continue to work on this obstacle (as is wise with any new skill) until it becomes solid for Nikki. The next step is to find new locations for him to practice.

If the equine won't cooperate when you ask him while on the ground, odds are huge that getting on his back or behind him in a cart is *not* going to make it better! This is why the most effective training starts on the ground and teaches the equine the expectations in a way that is safer for him and the handler. Our goal is to eventually find a water hazard and see if Nikki will follow our suggestion to get his feet wet *and* pull a cart through the water in a calm and safe manner. If Nikki becomes Water Hazard Qualified, we will be sure to share a photo in a future newsletter!

Thanks to our 2012 Club Sponsors

We want to thank the following members who have made generous donations to help sponsor our club events this year.

Marilyn Solari

John and Carol Gasparini

Marjorie Vliet

Penny Radulovich

Anonymous

Christine and Emma Caringello

Ken and Julie Mabie

Pat Michielssen

Larry Weaver



Nature's At Peace

By John R. Killacky

Long before the geese flew south, my Shetland pony's winter coat started coming in. I wasn't ready for a change of season, but nature was. And now that the snow has settled in, Raindrop is a fat and fuzzy fur ball. She doesn't mind the cold, but displays far less interest in going outdoors, since the luscious pasture grass is buried beneath frozen tundra. She does love to roll on her back making snow angels, however.



Working outdoors during this time of the year is not an option, so training can get mighty complicated with up to six horses and riders simultaneously in the indoor area during the afterschool and post-work rush hours. This necessitates an interrelated choreography of awareness, patience, and generosity by equines and humans alike.

Loose, but firm hands on the reins. The horses go where your eyes go. We dance together. Occasionally though, ears will flatten, nostrils flare, and the whites of one horse's eyes glare if another gets too close.

I have the only driving pony at a dressage and jumping barn. First, the size differential is comical. Then, it is startling for the other horses to first encounter my little one pulling me in the cart. Many get discombobulated.

Horses are genetically responders and reactors. Anything new is suspect, a first encounter with the unfamiliar unsettling. All eventually adjusted to the cart, until I stored it upright against a wall. Even Raindrop didn't recognize her own cart with its cover on and shafts in the air. In its new position, the cart had to be reintroduced and the horses sensitized all over again.

Winter dictates a number of barn rituals and new utensils. Multiple layers of thermal clothing are essential for me, as well as hand warmers in gloves for my fingers, but also to warm the bit. Tools include a rubber mallet to daily chop up the ice in the water bucket and a miner's light to help clean her hooves of frozen impacted earth. Grooming includes spot cleaning since bathing is not an option for months to come, and making sure she is cooled down and dry post-workout before putting her blanket back on.

My favorite time at the barn is late at night, with no one else around. I love being in the stall with Raindrop as she and the other animals settle down for the evening. The sounds and smells of two-dozen safe, warm, and protected equines are divine. Just being there, in sublime stillness, through her quiet eyes, I am part of the herd. It's at these moments that I experience *Rasa*, a Sanskrit term indicating a profound state of empathic bliss.

Life is good; nature's at peace in our frigid Vermont wonderland.

Rodabi-J V

Rodabi-J Ebony Thrills x



PHOTO: BARBARA NAVIAUX

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Rodabi-J Aztec Angel Ice



PHOTO: CASEY MCBRIDE

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News from our Area VII Roving Reporter

by *Big Dasha Tabasca*

Belated Happy Holidays to all my friends, Two Leggeds and Four Leggeds!

In the last issue of our newsletter, I promised to tell you how the Fall Pleasure Classic Show at Clay Station went. Most of you already know this is an open carriage driving show, and come one and come all, when it comes to size and breed.

Now, Mom had gone to this show just to be a spectator when I was just starting out as a newbie-driving-pony, so that was a couple of years ago. She especially loved the Carriage Dog class. I haven't had to haul around a canine yet, but let's just say I won't be surprised if Mom shows up with one someday, and I just hope he's a lightweight if he's not going to help me out! Mom was really impressed watching the Ladies to Drive class, because it's very large and it has to be judged in three sections. They break up the entries, from the miniature horse (or VSE "very small equine") up to the big draft horses and the judge picks out ones that he or she favors. The ones that "make the cut" go back in for the real-deal class. Mom thought that it was a big deal just to make the cut with so much competition. So to win a ribbon would really be a big nice honor! Anyway, she came home with yet another one of her "notions," and that was that someday I was going to go to this show and represent The Shetland Pony Nation.

Mom didn't put any pressure on me. She just wanted us to try this out and together we'd learn the ropes. I thought that was good. But also I was thinking, with horses there almost twice my height and some of 'em four times my weight, a tough guy like me better not let them see me sweat. And I was hoping that Mom would be watching the traffic, because some of those carriages and carts seemed about the size of eighteen-wheelers to me! But we'd been around them at the Scurries with the big fellas, and we'd lived to tell the tale, so we got all slicked up and headed to Wilton.

We started out in the Pony Turnout class, and since we don't have the fanciest cart, Mom just considered it a warm-up class. When they called my number for fifth place, she thought that was terrific. I was actually wondering why some of those "ponies" were so darn big, and they sure looked like full-size horses to me! How did they get a membership in The Pony Nation?



Since I was carrying the reputation of the Nation on my strong little back, we trotted back into the Working Pony class and I was warmed up and ready to trot. When they called my number for second, I could smell the cookies in my future! Mom seemed a little stunned, but I felt like a rock star with all the folks saying nice things about me when I came out

of the arena! I sure made a lot of new friends fast! Some folks were even saying I should have won! My competition was a mare trained in ridden dressage so I had to reach down for some real mojo!

Well, the job wasn't done, so next came Turnout Novice Driver and another second ribbon. After that one, Mom's driving teacher told her, "no holding back—go for it!" and Mom was really egging me on in Working Novice Driver. Mom knew I gave my best and our judge gave us another second and she was real happy with that. More folks came to say nice things about me. I was smiling inside, and I could count how my cookie bank account was growing!

I got a nice rest and some hay, and Mom had a delicious lunch that was served to the exhibitors. Then, we harnessed up again and we went into that big ol' Ladies to Drive class. Well, guess what? We made the cut in the pony section! So, we went back in with equines of all sizes, and I was all of a sudden feeling like a Rocky Balboa; kind of a contender! I liked being in with the behemoth horses, feeling the earth shake with every trot step they made! I just sort of puffed myself up and showed off, thinking to my own self, "Hey, here comes Dash, and I'm here to represent The Pony Nation!" We did our thing and were parked in the line-up. Mom watched as they called out the ribbons, thinking to herself, "Okay, I'm happy, we made the cut." As they called out the placings, starting with sixth, I could just feel Mom beaming over being in the ring for the final judging and real proud of how I really held my own out there! When the second place winner went by, it was a friend of ours from Scurry driving. Yeah, almost a ton of Clydesdale she was driving, so Mom was congratulating her for a good job when they called first place. Well, it was my number! Mom scared me, cuz she actually just sat there and had to wait to hear my name called, because she just wasn't believing her ears!! Well, imagine how proud I was leaving with the blue ribbon...I figured The Pony Nation was smiling on me!

We finished up our driving on the rail with a class they call MOLDS. It's not about bad stuff growing in your hay. In fact, it's a funny class—Mature Old Ladies Driving Society. Well, Mom is pretty mature, so we took a spin in that class and I won third.

We headed over to another course from there and I did a snappy whiz through Timed Cones without any balls going down. Mom was really tired and hot, so we just headed to the trailer and both of us had a nice cool drink and got out of our show duds. It had been a long day. We never even checked on my time or if we placed at all in the cones. Mom was too happy to care! I was busy enjoying my hugs, and a real nice carrot and cookie payoff.

Clay Station is a fun place to go and a great place to trot around. Mom was really impressed by the friendly and helpful human folks that show there. There just wasn't anything unusual about someone offering to lend a hand if Mom needed it, and there were lots of big smiles and sincere compliments. I hope some of you minis and ponies will come out and help me support the small equines. As far as I can see, there's just no reason to let those big fellows intimidate us! So, let's make it a date to all get all cleaned up and meet there next year for some fun! We might go for two days next time...and you just gotta know, Mom will have some new notions by then!

Happy New Year to all of the Area VII equines and human folks!

You Never know who you



PHOTOS: ALAN MEYERS

I will meet at the shows!!!

- **Can We be Friends??**
- **Well of course we can!!!**
- **Have a fun-filled year.
Larry, Spirit and New
Friend Shasa.**



Rodabi-J Ranch News

My little 3-year-old pinto mare, Rodabi-J Velvet Frost, completed her Halter HALL OF FAME (at the AMHR Nationals in Oklahoma) with her exciting win—Champion 30"–32" Mature Mare. Sharon Housley showed her to perfection, of course, but I was in the hospital at the time, so only managed to scream and CRY (with happiness) when Sharon called me there. Many thanks go out to both Sharon Housley for so carefully hauling and showing her, and to Lisa Schmidt for so beautifully training and conditioning her.

I'm expecting three babies this spring, all from first-foal mamas. I sure hope all goes smoothly, as I am not able to as closely supervise them as I used to be. All are Rodabi-J-bred mares, born and raised here on my ranch: Dainty Diva, Dashaway Diva, and Ginger Peach. At least I have them all in the nursery corral where their babies will be safe from all of the coyotes (I have lots of them).

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE!—*Barb Naviaux*
barb@naviaux.com

News from Step-N-Stone

Things continue quiet here at Step-N-Stone, and that's a good thing. Can't believe that our beloved Star is 30 years old this year! She's been such a great producing mare—Star Fire and Midnight Star are her two HOF offspring. The filly she gave us three years ago, Dreams of Glory, is, in our opinion one of her best. Glory's sire is Silver Feather. Oh, how we would love to do that cross again. Know it's a long shot, but if Star cycles this year, think we're gonna go for it. Have heard of older mares producing well into their 30's, so who knows?

Wishing the best to everyone in the show ring, breeding sheds and foaling areas (and man, do I envy you that are expecting foals this year. Maybe one for us next year—we'll see).—*Howard & Shirlee Busbee*



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News from Jim Curry

As many of you know, I have made several changes in my life recently, and time will tell if I have made the right decisions. After much thought, I sold my tack trailer and inventory and will no longer be attending the shows as a tack vendor. I will still do special orders on harnesses.

I have also sold many of my horses and ponies and hope to reduce the numbers to no more than five, but may actually only keep two depending on the size of property I purchase and the time I plan to devote to my other activities. I will still be judging shows and have signed contracts to judge several in 2012, including the AMHR Nationals.

I hope to finish Splash's harness training. I started him several years ago but just didn't seem to find the time and desire to continue. I would also like to train Cover Girl in harness in addition to completing her HOF requirements.

I have to decide weather to run again for director of ASPC/AMHR as my term will be up this year. While I enjoy serving and hope I have done a good job representing our area for the past several years, it is time-consuming and can be stressful. Life is full of decisions and only time will tell if we make the correct ones.

I would really like to breed a few mares. I have three I bred or purchased as foals especially to cross with Splash, but the economy is not conducive to sales at this time. As you can see, I have many more decisions to make, but one thing is certain—I will continue to be a member of our Area VII club and enjoy the many friendships I have made over the years.

Whatever is decided one thing is certain...I wish all our members a very happy and successful new year!—*Jim*

Radulovich Farms Good News...

Wendy Darling, my 9 month old granddaughter's first Christmas, enjoying eating her new pink toy horsey and later sharing her Christmas meal with her new pink toy horsey. I am pretty sure she liked chewing on her horsey the best.

Happy New Year and Many Happy Horses to all!—*Penny R*



My first foal of 2012—A beautiful appy colt with a big blanket



Fantasia Farms News

2011 was certainly a year of mixed emotions. While we were blessed with safe travels and one of our most successful show seasons ever, our hearts were and remain deeply saddened by the loss of our dear friend Carole Ann Ford. Carole Ann was an amazing individual with so many wonderful attributes, and we will cherish her memory.

Huge congratulations and thank you to our clients. For the second year, we went on a 30-day road trip to Tulsa and Ft. Worth for the R National and A World shows. The trip was certainly not for the faint-of-heart, but once again proved to be well worth the time and effort. It is such a privilege to show really nice horses for really nice people. We were rewarded for our efforts with 46 Top Ten awards—34 of these were Top Five—including a Reserve World Grand Championship, four Champions, 8 Reserve Champions, 9 thirds, and 9 fourths. The best part is that the majority of the twelve horses we took—showing 9 at each show—are owned by their breeders. It was a truly special moment when I was able to call Barb Naviaux to tell her that the beautiful mare that she bred and raised was named National Champion in halter. Mary Moldowan was speechless when she received the call to report that Willowist Montage—bred and raised by Mary—had just earned the title of Reserve World Grand Champion Classic Pleasure Driving Horse. (This horse (double registered AMHA/AMHR) will be available for breeding to outside mares this year—give me a call if you are interested.) Hard to pick a favorite moment when so many were great—but high on my list is Jim Curry's Reserve Champion driving win with the Levenstam's talented Flying Tail Farm Forget Me Not (another bred and raised by owner). Jim also showed this horse to a Top Ten in a huge tough halter class. Thank you my friend!

Space does not allow me to list all the people who were so instrumental in the success of these undertakings—but you know who you are and that I love you and am eternally grateful. I would like to extend a special thank you to Rochelle Hutter for sharing her wonderful daughter Sarah with me. Sarah was on the road for the full 30 days and did an amazing job in and out of the show ring. We were joined by the hard-working Emily Buck in Ft. Worth, and boy, were we ready for some reinforcements! If you show halter and performance at R Nationals, your days can get long and time to sleep is seriously limited. I might add if you want to have really shiny chrome wheels on your cart—ask Emily!

We hope you all have a healthy, happy New Year—please count your blessings, seize the moment and hug your loved ones—two and four legged.—*Sharon Housley*

Big News from the Nelsons

For those of you who haven't heard, Mark got a pony for his birthday!

Here's how it happened: Mark's birthday was the weekend of the Fort Ord Drive last October. When Nancy Turner asked me, a few weeks before the drive, what Mark wanted for his birthday, I flippantly (I thought) replied, "a pony." Well, she took me at my word and made it happen!

Julie Mabie has leased Whisper's Putting on the Ritz, aka "Spats" to us. Nancy has given us a cart and a harness on indefinite loan, and has generously offered to cover our

feed bills for a year. Nancy contacted Judi Bank, my friend from the Metropolitan Horsemen's Association here in Oakland, and talked her into letting us keep Spats in her barn at her house in the Oakland hills at no charge. When we were ready to head home the day after the drive, Julie gave us a few days' worth of feed, and Nancy loaded Spats into her trailer and drove three hours out of her way to deliver our pony to his new home.

So now we have a pony, and my, how our lives have changed! We have learned that we can haul two bales of hay or three bales of shavings in the back of our Toyota station wagon. It's ten miles from our house to Judi's, and Mark makes the trip twice a day to feed Spats and clean his stall and paddock. Mark says Spats is not a "morning pony,"—he is very grumpy until he's had his breakfast, and is much friendlier in the afternoon. That's when he gets groomed (thanks to Julie and Nancy for the grooming goodies) and walked or worked on the longe line or ground-driven (thanks to Sherry Ward for the new comfy saddle pad and breast pad for Spats' harness)—and he gets carrots, which he adores. So far, I get my pony time on weekends and holidays.

Mark discovered that the nearest source of hay is Golden Gate Fields, the racetrack a few miles from our house. The first time he went there, he told the nice man from Texas that he needed some hay because he'd just gotten a pony for his birthday. The nice man from Texas said, "You give that sucker right back! He ain't nothin' but money!"

Fat chance.—*Michele Nelson*



PHOTO: MICHELE NELSON

Sunday Driving—Mark and Spats

News from Whisper Equestrian Center

Wow! We sure hit the floor running. The last months of 2011 were fantastic.

In October, we had our first Area VII Whisper Equestrian Center Fort Ord Drive. We had nine drivers total—seven Shetlands, one mini, and one Welsh. The weather was perfect and we had a great BBQ after the drive at Whisper Equestrian Center. Mark Nelson celebrated his birthday, and as we all now know, he was presented with Whisper's Putting on the Ritz, aka "Spats."

November was the ASPC Convention in Portland, Oregon, and then we were on to Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. Not much time to rest for sure. January was catch-up month, or so we thought. A very strong wind came through our ranch and toppled a few trees as well as broke a few large branches. Ponies, buildings and fences are fine and we now have lots of wood chips in our arena.

In 2012, our goals are to reduce our Shetland pony herd and have more time for our clients and our remaining ponies. We hope to have a few driving clinics and play days this year, as well as more drives at Fort Ord.

We are currently working on our pony camp schedule and planning for our Fun Extravaganza show, as well as the Santa Cruz County Fair Pony Show. We hope you will join us in having more pony fun in 2012.—*Julie Mabie*



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