

Trail's End
Fall 2007
Jill Owens, Editor

Well, this is my farewell issue. What began as a one-year commitment has stretched into nearly three, though I must say I have enjoyed the assignment and have no regrets.

Every time I receive ride results for *Leadline* I see unfamiliar names, so perhaps there is someone new to the sport who would like to get more involved. Take over *Leadline* and be the first to get the news, ride results, etc.! I invite anyone who is interested in the job to contact me or a member of the Board. I will help in any way I can to facilitate the transition, as Helen Steenman did for me.

Readers of this column have followed my adventures with Gypsy as I worked to balance my emphasis between trail and dressage (finding myself moving ineluctably toward the latter); struggled with her stifle injury and the precarious soundness that has followed; and embarked upon the path of taking my horses barefoot and the resulting decision to discontinue trail competition rather than settle for shoeing.

This year, we managed to get through another season of dressage competition, and Gypsy and I won another national championship: the USDF All-Breeds award for mustangs at First Level. Keeping her sound was dicey the whole time, and Second Level work is even harder for her. So I went in search of another career for her and found one: carriage driving. She seems pain-free, is good at it, and she likes it. Ironically, with driving as cross-training, Second Level work is coming more easily to her now!

NATRC has been a very important influence throughout the journey. I have learned that trail work is not only indispensable for our sanity during dressage training, but also can be a very handy context within which to train. Now, instead of practicing the lateral work and lead changes on the ranch roads, we're apt to be out

working on the finer points of driving.

Meanwhile, I've been searching for a dressage horse. Just recently, with much support from my good friend and foundation trainer Susan Dockter, I brought home my future partner: a 2-1/2-year-old Trakehner-cross colt—with the conformation, movement, and temperament to succeed in the sport. He's barefoot, with great feet, and not a bit spooky. I can think of no better beginnings for him than a season of NATRC competition, so in a couple of years, look for Pokani and me out on the NATRC trail!

Happy trails to you...
until we meet again—