

Trail's End  
Winter 2006  
*Jill Owens, Editor*

I'm so appreciative of this editor job: it has kept me connected with NATRC even though I missed most of the rides last year. I have found myself moving more toward dressage, and that's what I concentrated on for the 2005 season. I hope you'll forgive a bit of bragging: my horse and I each won a national dressage award. Gypsy won the USDF All-Breeds award for high-point mustang at Training Level, and I won an Adult Amateur award as her rider. We are now working hard to polish our First Level work in anticipation of the new show season.

Nevertheless, I have found I do not enjoy the process of competing in a dressage show. It is simply something I have to grit my teeth and do in order to track our progress. Why do I keep at a sport whose competitions I despise? I am hooked on the poetry and precision of "dancing with my horse." The physical and mental synchronicity between horse and rider that dressage cultivates is like few other experiences in this life. I was never graceful enough to be a dancer or coordinated enough to be an athlete, but with my horse I can experience the joy of an intense and harmonious athletic partnership with another living being that's right up there with the intimacy of marriage and giving birth to babies.

Still, when I think of finding joy in the competition, it is NATRC that invariably comes to mind. I bargain with myself that if I can earn my dressage scores early in the year, I can ditch those shows and concentrate on riding CP for the rest of the season. When I have one of my inevitable "downs" in the roller-coaster of dressage training, I console myself with thoughts of future NATRC rides. When I start fretting about the time when Gypsy won't be up to the athletic

challenge of the more difficult collected and lateral work, I am comforted that competitive trail is something she'll probably be able to do for many more years. When I am dismayed by the snob-factor in the dressage world, I remember my beloved "family" of fellow NATRC competitors.

Dressage may be my sport these days, but NATRC is my comfort and my sanity. I'll see you out on the trail!