



## Mechanicsville Riding Club

### The Hitching Post

Issue 67

DECEMBER 2008

#### 2008 Officers

President	KAREN H
Vice President	DONNA H
Secretary	CINDY G
Treasurer	DEBBIE W

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Publicity – **Diane T**  
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Activities – **Maria S**  
Membership/Telephone Tree – **Joan B**  
Parade- **Nancy M, Carolyn D**  
Activities 17 & under – **Linda L**  
Corporate Secretary- **Paula H**

#### CHUCK WAGON:

Determined by membership roster order

**JAN:** Jane B & Joan B

**Feb:** Jenny B & Theresa B

**Mar:** Judee C & Lorrie C

**Please let us know as soon as possible if you can't supply Chuck Wagon.**

Next Club Meeting will be Jan. 21th at the Mechanicsville Little League Bldg. Speaker will be Mary Rader. she will tell us about her trip "Out West". Social will begin at 7:00 and our meeting will start at 7:30. Hope to see everyone there.

**December Birthdays: Carolyn D, Donna H, Crawford I, Debbie M, Jim R**

#### Heads Up:

ANY MEMBER OF MRC MAY SEEK APPROVAL TO ORGANIZE AND CO-ORDINATE A TRAINING CLINIC OPEN FOR THE FULL MRC MEMBERSHIP. GUIDELINES WILL BE DISCUSSED AT MEETING.

If anyone would like to share their bio please send me your info...especially new members.

It'll help us get to know each other.

MRC Membership bio guidelines:

- Name:
- What is your riding interest or discipline?
- How did you develop your connection with horses?
- Tell about your early experience with horses?
- What are your goals and interests for you and your horse?
- Tell about the greatest achievement for you and your horse.
- How has your riding experience enhanced your life?

**FOR MRC PLANNED EVENTS  
AND PICTURES FROM OUR PAST  
EVENTS**

**PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR  
WEBSITE:**

[WWW.MECHANICSVILLERIDINGCLUB.NET](http://WWW.MECHANICSVILLERIDINGCLUB.NET)



**FROM THE EDITOR:**

It's been a fun year even though I've had my share of freak accidents that have kept me out of the saddle as much as I would like to be. Time sure does fly as we get older and another year is almost gone. The Christmas party was great thanks to Christine and Bev. Special thanks to Kathy for the band "Loose Gravel". That made it a real party! It was fun kicking up our heels. Congratulations to Christine Sweet for being the Champion this year in the Ride Challenge and to Karen Lindley for Reserve Champion.



**"LOOSE GRAVEL"**



**EXCELLENT FOOD**



**OUR 2009 OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT-DEBBIE MIDDLETON  
VICE PRES-DONNA SHEPHERD  
SECRETARY-WANDA HAZZARD  
TREASURER-DEBBIE WILLIAMS**

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**EXCERPT FROM "HORSE-SENSE"**  
I'M SURE SOME OF US HAVE BEEN IN THIS  
SITUATION BEFORE.

>From: Trudy

>Subject: Should I buy a horse I don't really  
want?

Dear Jessica, your **Horse Behavior Problem  
Solver**

book is my new favorite book and I keep it by  
my bed. I can't wait for your book about riding  
problems; I know that it will take over as my  
new favorite when it is published. I know that  
I have more riding problems than my horse has  
behavior problems!!

I have loved horses for all my life (I am 23) and now at last I am in a position to buy a horse of my own. I am so excited!!! I have been leasing a wonderful gelding at a boarding facility near my home and that is where I plan to keep my own horse. It is a very nice place with turnout pastures, and it is run by true horse people, so I feel very lucky. I would be glad to buy my lovely leased gelding but unfortunately for me his owner loves him too and only leased him for the year because she was very pregnant and then had a young baby who needed attention. Now the baby is nine months old and comes to the stable in a basket and watches Mummy ride, so my lease is over, sniff! But the horse's owner is so sweet, she is letting me continue to ride him twice a week, so it's not as though we are parting forever.

Another lady at the barn is retiring with her husband to another country, and needs to sell her mare. She has suggested to me that I might like to buy her mare for myself. The mare is eighteen and very well-mannered. She mostly just hacks out on her, she used to jump but the mare can't do that any more. She doesn't actually have any injuries but she gets very sore in her back and hind legs if she is jumped or ridden too hard. This is where I need your advice. This lady is very open and I know just about everything there is to know about the mare, so if I buy her there will be no surprises. I know that the mare is sweet, and I have ridden her before and I like her. What worries me is that she may not be up to my weight. I weigh 14 stone (that would be about 196 pounds in America) and the lady who owns her might weigh as much as 10 stone (140 pounds more or less) but I doubt that she weighs as much as that. If the mare becomes sore whenever her owner tries to jump her even over tiny jumps, won't she become sore just carrying me around even if all we ever do is hack out and we do most of it at walk and trot? This mare has not got a lot of bone, and she has a very long back that is oh-so-slightly sway. I have asked my vet (well, the vet that my leased gelding's owner uses, if that makes sense) and he is a very kind and diplomatic man but he has effectively warned me off, pointing out that a sway back is a weak back and a long back is a weak back and that this mare becomes sore just walking about with a light rider, so... she is likely to be sore all the time if a

heavy rider is riding her, even if the rider is truly an expert (which I am not). He knows that I enjoy jumping and would like to continue jumping. I told him to please be very honest with me as I am not sensitive about my weight; I just want to know that the horse I am riding can carry me comfortably. The gelding never had a problem but then he is a very cobby boy, with short thick strong legs, lots of bone, and a short strong back. The vet says that this is the sort of build I should look for in a horse and that I should not buy this mare or any horse built like her. I am sure that he is right, but I just want to know your opinion. I feel very badly about this situation, because the mare's owner has told me in confidence that if she can't find the right home for the mare, she will have to sell her to the "meat man" (killer buyer). She thinks that I am the "right home". I don't think so, for the reasons I gave above, but I don't want to be responsible for a sweet mare going for meat, and now that I know what her owner thinks, I will feel that it is my fault if I don't buy her and she is sold to the killers. I think that I should probably look elsewhere for a horse, but I am already feeling terribly guilty about this mare's fate. Please can you give me some advice, I think I know what I ought to do (or not do) but I am not sure how to think about this! Your answers are always so sensible and understanding, I know that you can help me.

Trudy

**Hi Trudy!** You sound very well-prepared for horse ownership, and I think that any horse you purchase will be lucky to have you for an owner.

From what you've said, it seems to me that your vet is right and that you should follow his advice. Look for a horse of the same type as the gelding you've been leasing, and don't buy a horse until you AND the vet are satisfied that it's a sound and suitable horse for you.

You should not feel guilty about turning down this mare. Her age and training and personality are assets, but her soundness and conformation are very big liabilities. You're looking for a strong, sturdy, weight-carrying horse that can hack out and jump - why take on a horse that is probably not even really up to its owner's weight, and can't do the things that you want it

to do? If she were sound and the same type as the gelding, she might make a good horse for you even if she were twenty instead of fifteen, but as it is... this isn't the horse for you. You'll be making a big investment in terms of your money, your time, your effort, and your emotions - take your time and choose the right horse before making that investment.

YOU should not feel guilty. The mare's OWNER should feel guilty, first, for attempting to sell you a horse that is clearly not suitable; second, for attempting to blackmail you into purchasing her by telling you that she'll go to the knackers if you don't buy her; and third, for having so little regard for her own horse. The choices available to the mare's owner are NOT as limited, or as dire, as she has led you to believe. This is not a simple, two-choices-only, "either-or" situation! She can sell the mare - if not to you, then to another rider, preferably someone who is very lightweight, very competent, and not at all interested in jumping. Or, if no one wants to buy the mare as a personal riding horse, and if the mare's conformation and soundness won't even allow her to do light work in a therapeutic riding program (carrying small children at a walk might suit her very well), then the mare's owner can arrange to have the mare put down.

If the owner sends the mare to an auction, knowing that there is a strong probability that the mare will be sold for meat, that will be HER CHOICE and hers alone. This mare isn't yours, and it's not your responsibility to pay for her upkeep. It sounds to me as though her owner is trying to slide out of her obligation to her horse. That's not right. It's perfectly possible and perfectly legitimate for her to end the obligation, but the options are not necessarily going to be easy or lucrative - or even free. Nevertheless, those options, and the responsibilities, lie with the mare's owner. If she can no longer keep her mare, she needs to find her a good home. If her mare can't be ridden, she needs to find the mare a good retirement home. If a good retirement home is unavailable or if it's simply too costly, she needs to arrange to have the mare euthanized. She has an obligation to her horse - her mare deserves to be provided with a good life OR an acceptable death.

The problem YOU are experiencing here is that you are all too aware that the mare is a living creature, and as a lover of horses you feel sorry for her and worry about her going to the wrong home... or to no home at all. I can't criticize you for having a good heart! However, I can help you think through the realities of this situation and the possible outcomes if you take on someone else's problem instead of continuing to look for a horse that you want and can ride. Pretend that this mare is a motor vehicle and look at the situation again. If you were looking for a motor vehicle that could safely pull a two-horse trailer, and someone offered to sell you a small runabout and then insisted that you MUST buy it, else it would have to be pulled apart and sold for parts, would you buy the vehicle that you didn't want and couldn't use? I doubt it. I expect you would say, very politely, "Sorry, thank you for thinking of me, but that's not what I'm looking for, it can't do the job I need a vehicle to do, and it's not suitable for my needs." The bottom line is that you are looking for a horse that can do certain things (remain sound and happy and carry you comfortably on the flat and over jumps), and that this mare cannot do those things and therefore is not suitable for your needs, full stop. Once you think "motor vehicle" and not "animal", and thus remove the emotional factor, it all becomes very clear.

Jessica

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www.horse-sense.org

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**PICS FROM JAMES RIVER**

**ASHLAND PARADE**



**OUR NEW VP AT WORK.....THANKS !!!**



I want to express a special thanks to Kathleen for sending me her writings and sharing with us her horse perspectives. I hope the Club has an opportunity to meet her in 2009.

FROM KATHLEEN DILL

This poem was written to celebrate a horse we found starving in a field. Prissy was a flea-bitten Arab, maybe 15 years old, a beautiful mare with enormous dark eyes, too skinny to believe. She was only ribs, hips and a backbone. We bought her because we couldn't leave her in that condition. She wandered around our paddocks like a pale, sad ghost. She would not eat or drink at all on her own, as though she simply didn't expect that anyone would feed her any more, so at first I had to entice her to eat, hand feeding her six little meals a day. After three weeks, she started eating on her own, still amazed that we would provide for her, and after three more, she began to *accept* that we would feed her once again, and became more and more enthusiastic as every dinnertime approached, whinnying and dancing around for all she was worth. It was another month or so before she began to ask out what time dinner was today, and how come we couldn't do it a little sooner.

It took a full year to bring her back to health, and during that time, Prissy adopted one of my riding students, a fourteen year old girl who simply doted on her, a very dedicated young lady who desperately wanted her own horse. When Prissy was well enough and strong enough, we started using her for lessons for this girl, and in no time, the bond was cemented.

So, Prissy became a Christmas present that year. We presented her to her new person with two giant bows tied to her brand new red halter, and the look of love and excitement between the two was something I will never forget. Last I heard, they were riding in local horseshows, over the trails and everywhere they could get Mom to haul them to.

I can't think of Prissy without honoring her, a mare who came reluctantly back from the dead, a beautiful, sensitive being who took her second chance very seriously and gave back far more than we could ever have given her.

## A Christmas Gift

By Kathleen Dill, 2005

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the dark

Not a pony was stirring, not a dog made a bark.  
The critters were snuggled all bedded and warm  
In their stalls in the stable, away from all harm.  
And I in my jimmies and he in his shorts  
Were snoozing, when suddenly we heard the snorts.

And out by the barn there arose such a clatter,  
A barking and neighing, something sure was the matter!

We jumped out of bed and turned on the porch light.

The bulb blew, but we staggered out into the night.

The moon on the breast of the snow was so bright.

That it sparkled the drifts on the left and the right  
Of the path to the barn. The wind was quite cold  
And brought tears to my eyes, which felt tired and old.

But I squinted a bit, and soon I was able  
To make out a visitor, down by the stable,  
Getting out of his sleigh. Sure enough, there he was.

I could hardly believe it! An old Santa Claus!

"Whoa, now," he called, "settle down there, Old Bess,  
And Bill, you stand still and stop bugging the rest.  
Whoa, Joe and Jolly, stand now, I tell you!  
Just one dad-gummed minute, and then we'll be through!

He put on the brake and tossed out some hay,  
Grabbed up an old feed sack and hurried away  
To the barn doors, which he opened and closed  
just as quick.

I knew at that moment, he must be Saint Nick.  
We pulled on our boots and our mittens and coats

And I leaped down the path like a pair of old goats.

We crept to the door, popped it open to peek,  
Praying, this night, that there would be no squeak.  
The barn seemed quite bright, but 'twas really a glow

From around the old man as he moved to and fro

Down the aisle, stopping quick at each stall  
With a word and a pat to each horse. One and  
all  
Nickered back, greetings hushed as the breeze  
On a warm summer's night through the sycamore  
trees.  
There beside him, tails wagging, awaiting their  
pats,  
Were aussie and beagle, Sweet Cindy and Fats.

As he moved back towards us, I could just see  
him smile,  
And the sack seemed to float as he moved up the  
aisle.  
His face was all wrinkled, his beard full of ice,  
But his looks were of someone all cuddly and  
nice.  
How we longed to call out, but the closer he  
came,  
The less courage we found to utter his name.  
He stopped for a moment and turned right  
around  
And waved at his friends who looked back. Not a  
sound  
Could be heard as heads nodded and swayed,  
Eyes glittered, tails wagged, as all of them made  
Their thanks for the moment as clear as the day.  
Then he waved once again, and we both heard  
him say,  
"Happy Christmas to you, to the beasts great and  
small!  
May your blessings be many! May your masters  
recall  
Your devotion to them, and take care of you well.  
Happy Christmas to you!" As he turned then, we fell  
Back into the dark, down into the snow,  
When we silently watched him get ready to go.  
He gathered the reins and climbed into his sleigh,  
And his horses stood ready to take him away.  
"Let's get in gear," he said softly to Joe  
And to Bess, Bill and Jolly, "Get up now, let's  
go!"  
And we heard on the wind as he drove out of  
sight,  
"Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night!"

Christmas morning we ran to the barn just to see  
If it really had happened. If it really was he!  
The doors had opened all creaky and groaning in  
rhyme.

And the horses all stamped, knowing twas feeding  
time.

Not a single nicker, but loud whinnies around,  
And Sweet Cindy and Fats jumped and barked  
like two clowns.

Quiet greetings? Soft breathing? An old man's  
warm glow?

Not a chance! It was all just a dream. It was so.  
So we filled up the cart and started to feed  
All the horses, quite restless with hunger and  
greed.

When we stopped at the first stall, our eyes  
opened wide

With wonder and shock, for hanging outside  
Of the door was a stocking. "A stocking!" we  
cried.

A stocking all stuffed, too good to be true,  
With apples and carrots and sugar cubes, too!  
We went down the aisle, checking each door,  
And finding them hung all with stockings, twelve  
more.

A full baker's dozen, one for each horse,  
And then, why, two more, with dog bones , of  
course!

From that moment on, there never was a doubt,  
Of what we had seen, as we shuffled about  
In the dark, snow and cold, near Saint Nick and  
his sleigh.

Twas true Christmas to all, and to all a good day!

### **33 Truths about Horses**

1. People who don't take care of their own horses will be the first ones to tell you how to care for yours.
2. You should never buy a cheap girth!
3. A handsome horse that's badly behaved will become a lot less attractive in about 15 min.
4. People who think they have nothing more to learn about riding hit the ground the hardest.
5. Children and ponies are natural allies and often have identical dispositions.
6. The richest horse people often look the poorest.
7. The closeness of a horse is one of the sweetest smells in the world.
8. A solitary ride through the woods is more beneficial than six months with the best psychiatrist.

9. The worse a person rides the more likely they are going to blame it on the horse.

10. The best thing about going to the barn first thing in the morning is that horses don't care how you look.

11. If a dealer insists a horse is worth twice what he's asking he's usually worth half that much.

12. The best way to appreciate how another person rides is to get on their horse.

13. I can recognize another horse person no matter what town, city, state, county or country I visit.

14. You can never have too many hoof picks.

15. It is not always wise to argue with something that outweighs you by 1,000 pounds.

16. I'd rather have a horse with a perfect mind than a perfect head.

17. Eight hours is not too long to be in the saddle!

18. If you think you have left the water on in the barn you have, if you think you have closed the pasture gate you haven't.

19. When someone asks you if you like their horse always say yes

20. The happiest people I know own horses, dogs, cats and at least one deranged goat.

21. If you're looking for the perfect horse you will never own one.

22. Owning a horse can either make a marriage or break it.

23. I'd rather lose my Chap Stick than my curb chain.

24. You shouldn't talk about your first place ribbon to someone that came in second.

25. If someone says that horse has a little buck, it has a BIG buck.

26. If we need rain, schedule a show.

27. I've never warmed up to someone that didn't want to walk down to the stables.

28. A clean stable and a sparkling horse are among life's great pleasures.

29. A FREE horse is not a cheap horse.

30. No matter how badly behaved you are, your horse always gives you a second chance.

31. An expensive horse doesn't make a better horse.

32. I can't stand to have an empty stable.

33. Losing a horse can break your heart, but it will have been worth it.

**IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE TO  
BE A CONTRIBUTOR OR GIVE  
THE EDITOR JOB A SHOT  
PLEASE LET ME KNOW. ALSO  
BE THINKING ABOUT THE  
COMMITTEES AND HOW YOU  
COULD HELP IN 2009.**

**THANKS,  
BUNNY**

