

Inky, a pony that races for a larger reason

by Hope Holland

The story of Inky, a pony of definitely Appaloosa or POA genetic background, begins when she came to Days End Farm(<http://www.defhr.org/>) as a rescue. It needs to be said that Inky was a pony suffering from neglect, not abuse.

In the words of Sue Mitchell, Development Director at Days End Farm Horse Rescue, located in Lisbon, MD, 'The only common denominator that every single horse that arrives at our door shares is they each had the cruel misfortune of winding up in the hands of someone who neglected them, often to the point of abuse.'

Two long time supporters of Days End Farm were smitten by the pony's plucky attitude and willingness to meet her rescuers more than half-way. Rege DeVorsky and his companion, Jeanne Leone adopted Inky. They decided that Inky needed a bit more work on being shaped into a good riding pony so they sent the pony on to TaylorMade Farm in Damascus, MD and there all of the pieces started falling into place for the rest of Inky's story.

Taylor Made Farm is a large place with lots of directions that are available for a horse to take. They are large enough to have room for outside courses as well as a lovely big indoor arena and a huge outdoor arena on top of a hill that has a view of the entire farm. They have dressage arenas, hunter courses and even room to drive a horse around the property if you so desire.

Trainer/teacher/owner Robert Taylor works with all of the horses that are brought to the barn for training. Taylor is also Master of the Goshen Hunt and is an avid fox-chaser with a long history of fox hunting in his family. He did a bit of show jumping in the British Isles as well. He is a man who has miles of experience, starting with his beginnings in Ireland, through his education in England and then on to Australia where he was involved with mounted Pony Club Games.

It was the mounted games that took him to the Royal Welsh Horse Shows in Wales in 1990 where he met Kathy, who would become his wife. Kathy was a United States Pony Club coach, just as Robert was a coach for the Australian Pony Club team.

Kathy's background was much like an American version of Robert's. She fox hunted, did the hunter shows and was an avid Pony Club advocate. It did not take long for the two to decide that their future should be spent together and daughter Mackenzie and her younger brother, Hunter, followed in short order. When the chance to purchase the large property that is now called TaylorMade Farm came available it was quickly snapped up and the scene was set for Inky to arrive from the wings.

As Kathy says, 'We worked with Inky and another horse, Georgie, that Rege had adopted from Days End. Both Rege and Jeanne are really the nicest people. They have a farm that is just filled with adopted animals and they take wonderful care of them.'

'When we got Inky, she was polite and came along nicely.' Kathy continues, Inky seemed, well, pretty intense for just a riding pony but she was mannerly and worked properly.' It wasn't until



Mackenzie outgrew her games pony that the thought of Inky entered Kathy's mind again, but it seemed that Inky was definitely waiting her chance to walk onstage.

'I just had a feeling that Inky would make a good games pony,' Kathy says. 'So I called Rege and he said, 'Sure, give it a try. If it doesn't work out she can always come right home.' We got Inky a couple of days before one of our winter games sessions and it was just magic when Inky got the idea of what it was all about. It was as though someone had said "Poof! You're a games pony." and Inky answered, "Why, yes, I am!" Mackenzie fell in love with Inky and Inky fell in love with being a games pony all at once.'

Games pony sounds a bit tame for what a pony that seriously plays the Pony Club Mounted Games really does. There are some 40 different mounted games that a pony can be called upon to deal with. They come in all types, including the tamer poles and barrel types of races. There are races which call for the rider to mount and dismount several times during the race, races which call for a rider to swoop down upon an object, pick it up and carry it off while mounted; races which call for a rider to ride down a line of balloons that are pinned to a rail on the ground and pop the balloons literally under the pony's hooves.

This is not a career for the equine faint of heart. Involved in the game itself is the fact that the child rider is working with a team of other children all of whom are counting upon one another to make great rides in order to win that go-round. The pressure is intense and sometimes the rules of gentle riding can go out the window. Mistakes are made, heels bump into pony's sides and reins are caught a bit short. The sensitive pony that takes life too seriously just won't be at home in this milieu.

Inky seems to understand the game itself and puts her all into the winning of each go-round. She approaches the competition ring with the look of a fine Thoroughbred on race day. She is calm, but she is intense and ready for the testing.

In the words of Mackenzie Taylor, 'Inky is a dream pony! She is everything that a pony should be and she will try whatever you ask of her. She jumps, she does the games, she is right there with you all the way.'

That sort of resounding praise alone should be enough but there is more. In last year's 2008 Prince Philip Cup held at Rolex KY, Inky and Mackenzie were an important part of the team that won the highest level of Junior Mounted Games Competition for the nation. The whole team came home covered with blue ribbons that pinned onto the bridles and pony-sized blue ribbons that hung round the necks of each pony.

And yet, there is still more. In the words of Mitchell, 'Horses like Inky help us dispel the myth that rescue horses are unsafe or not capable of extraordinary things like winning a Cup at Rolex. Entirely too many uninformed people think a horse must have done something unacceptable to wind up in a rescue facility.'

And so it goes on. Inky, the pony who loves games and a little girl is now the poster pony for those horses whose lives spiraled into bad situations that left them stranded in rescue farms, looked upon with suspicion for usually no reason whatsoever.



When Inky goes to work she carries with her the stories of literally thousands of horses across the nation that could be leading lives of service and of pleasure for owners who have yet to find them. This seems a heavy load for one pony to bear, but like everything she does, Inky puts her heart and her good pony mind into the job and does it to the best of her abilities, which are very good indeed.