



News Letter

AMWELL VALLEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2011



An Overview of 2011 *By Gael Gardner*

WHAT A YEAR THIS HAS BEEN, A STRANGE ONE TO SAY THE LEAST! I felt that we had had a lot of rain and we seemed to have to open and close the trails repeatedly all year. I have just checked records with my in-house meteorologist, Fred, who is a record keeper for the NOAA weather service.

Here are a few figures you might (or might not) want to think about.

January had 29" of snow. I remember that it was so deep that I didn't even try to go sliding because I wasn't sure I would be able to get back up the hill.

April - just as soon as we were about to be able to open the trails - it began raining. We had 17 days of rain 7.5".

May we had 10 consecutive days of rain totaling 4.7". June and July were pretty dry months, though July was a hot one. The temperature hit 101 one day and was in the 90's for over a week. I finally got out to do some much needed mowing of trails which were mostly passable. It was a good thing I did too because along came August!

To say August was wet is an understatement. It rained 14 days and we had 17.5 inches!!!! Irene caused an awful amount of damage and power outages. North Hill Road in Ringoes where I live was out of power for 11 days. It quite hot too! The blessing was that at least we could get 'cleanish' in the pool. And we had enough back up power to have water for the animals. I guess it was a heads-up for people who didn't have an independent power supply.

I thought, "ah here comes September!" and it did with another 15 days of rain totaling 8.6".

October did it to us too with a surprise snow storm (5-7") where we lost limbs and trees because they were still in full leaf. We were without power again. This time on North Hill road we were only out of power 8 days. For the first few days we used our wood stove for heat, but then we had a little chimney fire and I shut down the stove. I found that not being able to get warm was more difficult than not being able to get clean.

November - 4.0". Could it be that the early winter will reward us with a few weeks of drier weather before we are back to January again?

By the way we have had 67" of precipitation this year with December yet to go. Meteorologists say that global warming presents itself as unpredictable and unusual weather patterns. We have had that this year and so has most of the country, some places as we have read, have had it much worse than we did, so for that we should give thanks.

So if you got frustrated and cross with the AVTA for opening and then closing trails this year we apologize and will have to blame the weather.

I have to thank Tory Januik for being so conscientious about posting trail information on our web site, Facebook and by sending out emails to those of us who have it. I don't know any way to reach those who don't have email except by phone calls. Would anyone like to volunteer to be in charge of phoning? If so call me at 609 466 9472 and I will supply a list.

GO GREEN!!

We would like to send the newsletter by snail mail only to people who would prefer it that way. So if you do please email Gael at gael@thegardners.org so that she can put you on her mail to list.



AVTA HUNTER PACE CANCELLED

Unfortunately, our fund-raising hunter pace has fallen victim to a great deal of truly dreadful weather. It was far too wet to mow and clip the hunter pace route, and at the moment there were places where the mud would be knee deep for a reasonably sized horse! As we do each year, we planned to set aside a generous portion of the proceeds of the hunter pace to support the fine work of two organizations of real importance to the valley, namely the Amwell Valley Rescue Squad and the Amwell Valley Fire Company.

We may have lost our principal fund-raiser, but the board was determined to show its appreciation for the vital work that both organizations do in the Amwell Valley. In that spirit, the board voted to award two gifts of \$300 at its recent board meeting.

If any individual members wish to make gifts to either or both, the board is confident that the organizations will be grateful. Their addresses are as follows: Amwell Valley Fire Company, PO Box 50, Ringoes, NJ 08551, and Amwell Valley Rescue Squad, PO Box 147, 1141 Old York Rd., Ringoes, NJ 08551. Mary Murren

I would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who volunteered to help, be they new recruits or the faithful band of regulars who sign up early in order to ensure their favorite job. We all know what a fun day it is and I appreciate every one of you. Thank you. I will be back to hound you this time next year! Put the first Sunday in October in your 2012 See you all next year if not before. Di Huns

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE KNOWLES TEAM

for their win at the AVH Triple Crown Challenge!!! Sharon and Mike Knowles are AVTA members who board their trail horses, Tia and Al at Centre Ridge Farm.

Remember the Hunting Dates!

Deer Hunting 2011-2012

Bow hunting - September 10 to Feb 18 including Sundays.

Shotgun or Muzzleloader - November 28 to Feb 11

When riding during Hunting season, be sure to:

1. Always wear **Blaze Orange** on the trails.
2. Use trails from 10 am to 2 pm only.
3. Wear or carry bells so that hunters can hear you coming.
4. Be aware, in areas with signs that say semi wild, that hunters can hunt small game on Sundays.



“Just because the sun is shining after a period of rain, doesn’t mean the trails are rideable”

It takes **several days (or weeks)** to dry them up after significant rainfall. Please have common sense and courtesy to the landowners and their property. Damage to the trails could result in no access for riders or hikers.

WINTER DOLDRUMS PARTY

We are going to have one! Where is the question. It could be any one of the following dates Feb, 4th, 11th, 25th or March 3rd

If anyone has a suggestion of a new place to have it, somewhere not too far from Ringoes please e-mail Trish Buckwalter at tbuckwalter@embarqmail.com or call Joan Sank at 908 788-7423

We will not be having an auction this year. Gael is tired. Again any suggestions are welcome!

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

DON'T MISS YOUR NEWSLETTER AND NOTICES.

For our e-mail members, Please add Tory's email address

TJ801@aol.com to your address book so that our AVTA e-mails do not go to spam.



What I Did Over Summer Vacation

by Blue Cloud

Last Spring, my Mom's friend, Tony Alimecco, told her he took his horse, Grown Hog, to a three-day horsemanship clinic at 7 Springs Farm in Pittstown, New Jersey. His clinician was Pat Puckett, a Vaquero style horseman. Tony said he and his horse learned a lot from Pat, so much in fact, that Tony signed up for another clinic this October. Mom looked up 7 Springs Farm on the internet and saw that they offered colt starting clinics. Since I turned two on May 8th, Mom thought it would be fun to sign me up for a 4 day colt starting clinic that ran August 24th through August 28th. She even bought me a brand new purple halter and my own bit for the session! I wasn't sure what to expect at the clinic, but Mom would be with me every step of the way and we were both looking forward to it.

When Mom and I arrived at 7 Springs Farm for our first day of class, Mom looked at me and said, "Son, you're about to enter the Taj Mahal of horse farms!" What a barn! Huge, airy box stalls with Dutch doors, a wide rubber tiled aisle, two wash stalls with water pressure that would power wash every speck of manure and dirt off, an air conditioned bathroom and a kitchen!!! It was horsey and human heaven combined! An enormous indoor riding ring adjoined the barn and country music piped through speakers for the spectators and students to enjoy until the clinic started. A round pen was set up at the far end of the indoor, too.

There were ten of us in my class but I was the only one who had never been bridled, saddled or ridden. One girl had a 9-year-old Quarter Horse mare who would rear, so she brought her to the clinic to re-start her. Another girl had a Percheron/Thoroughbred cross who would buck (YIKES!), so she brought him to the class to work on that. I wasn't concerned that I was a true beginner because Mom always told me that I was an old horse soul in a young horse body. I just had to have my memory jogged from my previous past-life as a horse and we'd be golden. It was neat meeting a bunch of other horses! I made fast friends with a Friesian. We looked like salt and pepper together.

Our clinician was Bryan Neubert, a really, really kind and patient man. He started the clinic by having our owners climb up a side of the round pen so they could maneuver us to stand parallel to it so that our owners could rub us and safely put a leg on us or sit on us while holding on to the round pen panel for easy dismount, if necessary. He saw that Mom was having a hard time just "balancing" on the round pen panel, let alone getting me to sidle up next to it. "Do you need some help?" he kindly inquired. "I've never been good at monkey bars!" Mom replied. And with that, Mr. Neubert worked with Mom and me so that I stood next to the panel and Mom could touch me, rest a leg on me and even sit on me! After Mom sat on me a few times, Mr. Neubert said, "Well, I think he's

ready for a saddle." Mom showed me the saddle pad (nice and squishy!), and then the saddle (it smelled like my pasture mate, Bonnie!) and tacked me up. Mr. Neubert held my lead rope while Mom put her foot in the stirrup to mount up halfway, hovering over the seat. She did this a few times until Mr. Neubert said, "I think you can sit on him now" and so Mom did. All of this happened about an hour and half into the clinic. Mom was so excited, I felt like a big boy and Mr. Neubert said, "He's a nice horse and he's only going to get nicer." He kept telling Mom, "He's special." Mom answered, "Yes, I know!" but I thought, "No, I'm just me, Blue Cloud."

The rest of the clinic was so much fun! Mom and I trotted, I learned how to steer (although Mom would giggle that I walked like I was drunk), I chased after a grain bag at the end of a rope to mimic chasing a cow. I walked over a tarp. I stood on the tarp. I *bit* the tarp! (Mom's getting me a tarp for Christmas.) I stood on a wooden plank and liked how my hooves sounded as I walked on and off it. I loaded into a trailer and then ate the hay that was in the trailer until Mom told me snack time was over and led me out. We did drill team exercises where we trotted in figure eights or separated into two lines and then trotted through the middle. Mom laughed, "We're salmon swimming up-stream!"

Hurricane Irene hit Saturday night and the effects were felt on the last day of the clinic. Mom was trapped at home with a tree across the driveway and at least two feet of water in the roadway since the brook at the base of her drive had overflowed. She called 7 Springs' barn manager, Lara, to tell her she couldn't make it out of her driveway but would keep trying. Lara told her I was fine and that a nice Amish guy, Mark, could ride me. Mom liked how Mark had handled the horses he rode for other people during the clinic, so she agreed to it. Mom eventually showed up and we finished the clinic together.

I hope to go back and do a horsemanship clinic with Mr. Neubert next year at 7 Springs Farm! Mom might even take my half-brother, Doux, next year to the colt starting clinic. If you're looking for something fun to do with your horse, take him or her to a clinic at 7 Springs Farm. The owners, Arnold and Sue Witte, and their staff are so friendly, the facility is top-notch and you'll have fun with your horse while learning a thing or two!



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Self Care Boarding Available

Horse Boarding on small private farm in East Amwell. Includes entire barn (3) 12 X 12 matted stalls, turnout onto grass pastures, on the Amwell Valley Trails. \$500/month. For more details, contact Sally (908) 797-3104 tallyho5us@yahoo.com

Boarding Available

Box stalls available at quiet farm with individualized care. Green pastures, heated tack room, hot and cold wash stall, lighted outdoor arena, adjacent to trails. Owners on watch 24/7. Chivalry Hill Farm. 609-466-4178. info@chivalryhillfarm.com www.Chivalryhillfarm.com

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(908) 237-0204

Barn Representative & Scholarship Program

GAIL CAHILL
(609) 466-4210

Landowner Relations
JOAN SANK
(908) 788-7423

Newsletter
HEIDI JENSEN
hjensenma@yahoo.com

GAEL GARDNER
gael@thegardners.org

Trail Managers
TRISH BUCKWALTER
(908) 782-7238

GAEL GARDNER
(609) 466-9472

MARY MURRIN
(609) 895-1040

Website
TORY JANUIK
webperson@avta.net

AUDREY MEAGHER
(732) 667-3389

AUDREY MEAGHER
(732) 667-3389

DI HUNS
(609) 466-7473

STEPHEN BUXTON
(609) 466-1966

EARL HARTMAN
(908) 782-6566

BLAINE HUMMEL
(609) 466-2907

PHIL JACOBY
(609) 466-0933

BRYCE THOMPSON
(609) 466-2649



46 North Hill Rd.
Ringoes, NJ 08551