



# FOX PENNY FARM:

## Producing Sport Horses and Future Competitors

by Dorrice Hammer



**T**he 65 acres of Fox Penny Farm are situated in a serene, private bowl of meadows surrounded by hills, close to Windsor. It is the home of Jay and Susan Foster and their daughter Kelly, their two Jack Russell terriers, Sampson and Pepper, and thirteen horses, at last count.

Kelly started riding at age four, when the family lived in Meriden, NH. She continued when her father's accounting firm, transferred him (and effectively, the whole family) to Florida in 1989. Kelly had her own pony by age 10 and had reached a high level of hunter/jumper competition. At age

Left to right: A winter view of the Foster's home and barn with Mt. Ascutney in the background photo by Stuart Farnham. Kelly riding Fox Penny's homegrown TB cross Mutual Benefit (Ben). Kelly with Fox Penny's homebred Irrefutable "Cody." He is sired by Denny Emerson's Reputed Testimony and by Fox Penny's dam Glacial Shade (Mara). He has been successful at the Preliminary level in eventing.





Above: Jasper, poking his head through the fence. He is of unknown pedigree but quite the character and not for the timid to ride. Susan Foster next to her new RTV, a Christmas present. This past winter the RTV has been a godsend. It's enabled them to get all over the property to feed, water, and take care of the horses which they do two to three times per day.

12, she decided to concentrate on eventing.

Eventing has been called an equestrian triathlon. It is a competition in which one horse and rider perform a dressage test on the first day, a cross-country test at a gallop over jumps the second day, and a show jumping test in an arena on the third day. Competitors are scored individually, with penalties added to the final score. The rider with the lowest score wins. Horses must be supple, fit, and balanced for the tight turns and short distances between fences. The rider must communicate quickly and effectively with his/her mount to ensure a polished, powerful, winning performance. Challenges galore and many adrenalin-spiked thrills are typical of this competition. Eventing is the only high-risk Olympic sport that allows both men and women to compete equally without separate divisions. There are six levels of eventing, from beginner novice through advanced. All ages compete, from youngsters from ten on up.

Since making the decision to become, first and foremost, an eventer, Kelly has moved up to the advanced level. She has had the opportunity, as she progressed, to train with Jack LeGoff, former USET Event Team Coach, as well as many other well-known riders and coaches. Kelly also became a serious dressage student, competing in dressage shows up to the third level.

As she rode and competed, she also started and trained a number of horses. She would turn "green," or just-backed horses that someone has only sat on but not ridden, into experienced competitors at various levels of eventing. With her more advanced horses, she has earned significant awards and recognition. Her thoroughbred mare, Shawmut, was a USCTA Area 1 Training Champion and had qualified for the championship four consecutive years. She was also a Zone 1 AHSA Training Champion. Kelly had much success on her mount Copper Spiral in Young Riders and Trek, her Dutch Warmblood/Thoroughbred cross, who qualified for the DeBroke Trophy and was Zone IV Intermediate Reserve Champion for the AHSA. He is what Kelly calls a MER horse, for Medium Effort Required. Kelly also qualified her home-bred Hanoverian/Thoroughbred mare, Greyfell Sovran, for the DeBroke Trophy. She received the Area 1 Training Rider Championship and placed 6th as Training Rider Champion nationally with her two Training Level mounts, Gabriel and Ezekiel.

Kelly has now had over 30 years experience riding, competing and training horses. She gets the horses she works with off the track, from calls about rescued horses or from owners whose kids have lost interest in their horses. Once she took a pony home from an event.

In 1988, Jay was transferred again, this time to Vermont. Susan and Kelly officially started Fox Penny Farm at this point, naming the farm after one of Kelly's ponies and a friend's horse she had been riding. Susan handled the business side of





*Ella MacMaster on the outdoor arena with Posse, an adopted off the track thoroughbred from PA Racehorse Rehoming Rehabilitation and Rescue. Now a senior in high school, Ella started training with Kelly when she was ten. She plans on becoming a vet.*



things, being an accountant herself. Kelly was becoming well known in the eventing world and was taught at this point by Joe and Patty Forest.

The family bought a log cabin on the site of their current house in 1993, complete with squirrels, bats, and snakes inside. They more than doubled the house size as they started rebuilding. Their horses were at a neighbor's until they built their barn in 1997. Then all the horses came home, including Casey, Kelly's original pony, who had developed such severe allergies and hoof problems in Florida that he had to be shipped north to recover.

When asked if she boarded horses, Kelly maintained that it didn't pay. She would need to charge \$600-\$800 per month for each horse to make ends meet, as the work

is so labor intensive. As it is, 13 horses are a lot of work and Kelly is fortunate in having Jay handling pasture manure with his front loader and Susan feeding hay with her new RTV, a Christmas present. The Fosters joined the Vermont Farm Bureau when they connected with Nationwide agent Stuart Farnham, who now insures the facility, home, and liability of the Equine Business.

Fox Penny Farm offers students an opportunity to train with an accomplished trainer and competitor in a nurturing environment. It was a natural progression for Kelly to begin teaching, transferring all she'd been taught or had picked up on her own to students eager to learn. Kelly had originally wanted to become a veterinarian, but shadowing a vet soon convinced her that such a job wouldn't



*Kelly prepares to help Ella MacMaster mount Posse. Student Anna Brown with Fox Penny Farm's pony named Trixie. Anna won her first recognized event at the beginner novice level on this pony at GMHA in the fall of 2016. Green Mountain Horse Association.*





leave her enough time to ride and compete. She became a certified instructor with the American Riders' Association. Adults were her first students.

For lessons, Kelly leased an indoor arena in Brownsville, an arrangement that lasted 10 years. Kelly found herself increasingly doing more maintenance work on the building than she had bargained for, so she brought her horses home and is now looking for another arena. She has an outdoor ring at home, but severe winter cold has frozen the ground into difficult footing for the horses, so cantering and jumping will have to wait for some thawing. In milder weather, students can also enjoy the large, open field complete with stadium jumps, where they can gallop over cross-country jumps as well. Trails for wandering through the countryside surround the property.

Kelly runs summer riding camps and teaches once a week at present. The horses' welfare is a prime concern. It's evident in the young riders that she's been training and mentoring over the years. Both Kelly and Susan spoke very highly of Samantha Colt, a 20-year-old former student of Kelly's with a great willingness to learn. She could ride anything and was paid to ride others' horses, also did clipping, braiding and wrapping to earn extra money. A large stable has now hired her as its barn manager, impressed by her skills and hard-working attitude. Ella MacMaster, a current student who is a senior in high school, started lessons with Kelly when she was 10. She excels in everything she tries and has her eye on becoming a vet. She leases Dallas who most riders have a difficult time with, but not Ella. Another student, 6th grader Anna Brown, started with Kelly



A view of the barn and the house with a pending snowstorm forecasted. The barn was built in 1997 and the house was formally a log cabin.

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at age six. She is a fearless rider and a natural athlete who is expected to rise to the highest levels of competition. Kelly's students start by shadowing the older students and training with them, earning the costs of showing and competing by working in the barn.

Kelly's passion ignites her riding students, with each doing her best to take in all she's being taught. Both Anna and Ella showed up on a damp Saturday morning to do farm chores, prep, and exercise their charges in the outdoor arena. She affectionately teased Anna about her lack of gloves while helping her step up to Fox Penny Farm's pony, Trixie. As the two entered



*Left to right: Kelly fixing Cody's fencing. He has a knack for taking out the slip board fencing but never going out of the paddock. Kelly with her parents, Susan and Jay Foster. Anna riding Trixie. She will come as often as 5 to 6 days a week when she is not in school. Kelly with Sampson, the Foster's older Jack Russell. The Fox Penny Farm sign.*



the arena she cautioned them about the frozen conditions.

Her nurturing nature extends to her family of horses. Kelly playfully scolded homebred Irrefutable Cody who regularly uses his nose to push the fencing down on her paddock. "The funny thing is he won't leave the paddock but he'll keep knocking down the fence," laughed Kelly. Susan added, "He has a knack for taking out the slip board fencing but never going out of the paddock."

It seems each and every horse and pony has a detailed story, and most are humorous. Watching Kelly interact with both her students and her horses, you know you're in the presence of a talented teacher, mentor, and caregiver. No wonder no one wants to leave this gem of a farm tucked away in Windsor. ■