SADDLEBREDS WITH SECOND CAREERS:
AN ALBUM OF ATHLETIC HORSES WITH HAPPY OWNERS

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SECTION FOUR: S-Z

Please see Preface in Section One for information and suggestions concerning ground schooling, re-training and reconditioning, and see List of Resources for more information

Saddlebred owner photos and stories continue on next page

Sawyer, Mary and So Risque



Gelding by Powerful Charm (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). He out of Powers Divine by Kourageous Kalu (Stonewall King). So Risque is out of So Worthy by Worthy Son (Valley View Supreme). She is out of Acapulco Princess by Flight Time (Wing Commander). Tail female: Stonewall King, Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Black Squirrel.

Yet another sporthorse-suitable Saddlebred presents itself here. The gelding is fat in this photo (evidently has been living on somewhat lush pasture, although what's visible in the background here is wild oats and wild rye with scattered lupin and milkweed -- plants that are not nutritious to horses yet are typical of central California pastures in mid-summer).

Although the aphorism is that "fat covers a multitude of sins," here there are no sins to cover and the conformation judge must simply be able to see through the flesh to the bone structure beneath. I'm pleased with the broad, crisply structured knees and hocks, long and very powerfully muscled rump, and good coupling. The overall body balance is level, a great advantage in all styles of riding except racing and cutting. The topline is just fine; this is not a picture of a horse that has been participating in traditional shows for a long time, if ever.

On the next page we see the horse in fit condition. Generally speaking, a pasture-fat horse will lose weight (this horse needs to drop about 200 lbs.) and its underline will tighten up with less than a month of regular work.

Mary competes with this horse in dressage and the photo shows correct cadence with good forward energy and no tension. She also pleasure-drives him.

Right: Mary and Risque in a dressage test. I appreciate the absence of flash/drop noseband and Mary's light touch on the reins. The cadence is correct and the horse well-balanced from back to front and thus light on the forehand.



Below: A cute antique baggage wagon modified with aluminum shafts attached low to the surcingle for added safety. The breast collar is designed to prevent rubs.



Schue, Kendall and Frozen



Eight year old, 15:1 hand mare by Attache's Thunderbolt by Attache (Wing Commander). He out of Sweet Sharon Supreme by Valley View Supreme. Frozen is out of The Heir Show by Supreme Heir (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme), she out of Attache's Leading Lady by Attache (Wing Commander). Tail female: Edna May's King, King's Genius, Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Montrose, Black Squirrel, Peavine, Black Hawk 1833 (Morgan). (Photo by Sarah Schaaf).

Kendall writes to say, "I'm so glad to hear about the interest in exploring the American Saddlebred beyond saddleseat. I have a...mare who I use for Eventing. She just started competing this year and is doing great! My coach, who has never worked around Saddlebreds, loves her. We get compliments everywhere we go. She's game, bold, and beautiful while still being incredibly handy and athletic. Essie tends to go double clear in both the Stadium and Cross Country, but we are still perfecting the dressage. Anxiety is her biggest struggle but we have significant improvement every outing. I love the ASB as a sport horse and would absolutely get another!"

I expect Kendal and Essie will benefit by reading the preface to this Album, which contains detailed suggestions on how to reduce the anxiety that Essie has struggled with, which may stem from one or several sources. The other thing that

Photos this page: Kendall and Essie during the Stadium phase of an Event. The mare is lovely, but travelling crookedly in both photos (Photos by Sarah Schaaf).





Kendall needs to address is Essie's tendency to travel crookedly, which is apparent in both potos on this page. The mare prefers to carry a right-hand body bend all the time and consequently to overweight the left hock and fore hoof. The rider will feel heaviness in her left hand and against her left leg, and the mare's lateral work will be uneven. See the resource list at the end of the Preface for resources to understand this and fix it.

Siderman, Lisa and Cento



9 year old gelding by Cienfuego's Love Affair by Winsdown Hi Octane (King's Genius). He out of Manhattan Love Affair by The New York Times (Wing Commander). Cento is out of Joyful Song by Sultan's Santana (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). She is out of Lindlane's Honey Bunny by Wing Commander. Tail Female: Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Bourbon King, General Knox (Morgan) and Rysdyk's Hambletonian (Standardbred)

Genius Northern Tuxedo



13 year old gelding by Vanity's Prince (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). He out of Dee Jay's Color Me Beautiful by Color Command (Kalarama Rex). Tuxedo out of Genius Diamond Jubilee by Genius Rise 'N Shine (Highland Denmark/Black Squirrel). She out of Jubilee's Jolene (RexMcDonald). Tail female: Jean Val Jean, Bourbon King, Rex McDonald, Peavine, Diamond Denmark, King William.

Stonewall's Northern Smoke (Smoke) 6 year old gelding; pedigree not available.



Lisa has corresponded with me numerous times over the years and here I present some of her very astute picks for her sport of choice, Enduro. All three of these horses present stout build, wide strong couplings, long shoulders, and crisp, well-defined shoulder-bed. They have long arms, long forearms, and long, well-muscled pelvis. Tuxedo's neck is proportionally the longest and Smoke's is the shortest, i.e. his neck is similar in length to the average Quarter Horse. A Saddlebred with this build will never be suitable for the Park or Pleasure divisions -- the so called "big divisions" -- in the Saddlebred showring. But Enduro suits him well, as would also real ranch work involving cattle sorting or roping.

In the photo on previous page, Tux's back shows some strain, plus a mark from ill-fitting tack. I take it that the photo was made not long after she bought him. The best point about Tux is the very long thigh; observe the short, muscular gaskin, and yet the hocks are set low. This is because the horse has a remarkably long thigh, a great advantage anytime trotting is going to be called for, i.e. dressage or enduro (and also in Park or English Pleasure). Tux has a laid-back shoulder in contrast to Smoke, whose shoulder is more upright. Tux stands just a little bit short on the leg, whereas both Smoke and Cento are leggier. Cento's back is the longest of the three but not enough to worry me, especially since the withers carry back a long ways.



Left: Lisa and Tux on the endurance trail amidst Western scenery.

Below: Cento trotting free. Notice the gelding voluntarily moves in collection, with coiled loins, raised freespan and the base of the neck raised. Raising the base of the neck causes it to arch. The photo catches him in the moment of suspension.

After Lisa acquired him, Tux became an Endurance champion, and she's had much success also with the other two geldings pictured here.



Springer, Jen and Sugarman 14:2 hand, 9 year old gelding .

by New Reality by Merchant Prince (King's Genius). He out of Ethel Mertz by Foxfire's Prophet (Supreme Sultan/ Valley View Supreme). Sugarman out of I'm So Beautiful; her pedigree not available.



Below: Prince of Success, 8 year old stallion.

by I'm the Prince by Merchant Prince (KIng's Genius). He out of Crowned by Foxfire's Prophet (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). Prince of Success out of My Secret Success by Sultan's Pride and Joy (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). She out of Indiana Flame by Indiana Peavine (Montrose). Tail female:



Bourbon King, Princess Eugenia, King's Genius, Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Mambrino LeGrant, Black Hawk 1833 (Morgan), Blackburn's Whip (QH ancestor).

Wait for the Magic, 9 year old gelding



by Magical Me (King's Genius). He out of Makin' Magic by Fire Lane (Valley View Supreme). Wait for the Magic is out of Mighty Tempting by Merchant Prince (King's Genius). She is out of Showcountry's Angel Fire by Foxfire's Prophet (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). Tail female: Rex McDonald, Peavine, Blue Jeans, Clark Chief, Star Denmark, Diamond Denmark, Abdullah (Standardbred ancestor), Blackburn's Whip (QH ancestor).

Below: Annwyn's Bold & Beautiful, 15 year old mare by Unlisted (Supreme Sultan/ Valley View Supreme), he out of Ring Girl by Center Ring (Wing Commander). Annwyn's Bold & Beautiful is out of Preferred's Femme Fatale (pedigree not available).



Jen provides a lot of information and ideas about Saddlebred horses for sport use, which I will share beginning on the next page. First though, to remark upon the conformation: all four horses are excellent choices. Prince, the stallion, is superb. Of the four the weakest is Magical Me, with a longer back and somewhat narrower coupling, but there will be no problem in bringing him along since, like the others, he was line-driven to break him in but not trained for the saddleseat showring.

Jen selected Prince specifically to have him trained for upper-level dressage. She seems to have a lot of savvy about the dressage show world, saying "my expectation is he will enter dressage competition at 3rd or 4th level in a few years...because he's a stallion with mare owners potentially watching, I don't want him to enter in the dressage ring without being really ready. So for now his job is to have fun and love life as he develops work ethic. Right now he's having fun going to stock horse association shows and dwarfing Quarter Horses as he wins Ranch and Cow classes. He's a very levelheaded thinker, funny, loves puzzles, not spooky, not hot, not obnoxiously studdy, and loves his trainer."

Jen says that the bay gelding Magic is currently being ridden and trained by herself for dressage. "He will be ready to show out next year in Training Level or maybe First. He is VERY wide in front and that is why I selected him as a dressage mount, plus his short back and the pelvic angle [which is somewhat steeper than average for a Saddlebred]. He was very difficult to fit with a saddle because of the short back and laid-back shoulder." Here Jen and I differ concerning this horse; he does not have a short back. Nor would I select a horse for dressage use because of the width of his chest, but rather for the width of the coupling and after that, the barrel where my leg would lie.

Jen goes on to say that she believes this gelding will have a great passage, and I agree with that. However Jen seems to think that talen for passage is rare in Saddlebreds; my experience has taught me the exact opposite, that the Saddlebred is one of the few breeds with natural passage.

Jen says that Magic is very busy -- to the point of being fidgety, and that he tries really hard. If Jen will study the suggestions made in the Preface to this Album and take advantage of some of the resources listed, she will find solutions to these problems. The fidgetyness is simply a side effect of the horse's high intelligence -- they notice everything -- and his intense desire to please.

Jen refers to Sugarman as a "pony" but in reality, there is no such thing as a pony outside the rulebook of the now-extinct American Horse Shows Association, which defined horses of 14:2 hands or less as "ponies". The Icelanders do not refer to their horses, which rarely exceed 14:2 hands, as horses -- because that is what they are.

Jen reports that Sugarman is "very pigeon breasted". This means he has a prominent sternum, and it also means that his forelimbs are structured to set back a bit further from his chest than in most other breeds. Jen thinks that this is a disadvantage; in fact it is an advantage for every type of athletic endeavor. She reports that the animal seems stiff and she has been working to loosen him up. I would encourage arena figures that incorporate frequent changes of directions, performed at a walk that is full of life but not hurried. Avoid trotting, but do work on transitions from halt to walk, walk to trot, and back again; and teach the gelding to step back, one step at a time.

Jen writes, "what I expect of Sugarman is he will be very fancy with his [high motion and sharp hock flexion]". This will, of course, diminish when she gets him stretching over the topline. She says she has already felt him get "round" underneath the saddle a few times, and "it's really wonderful." You bet. She says that his temperament is "very sweet and willing; he's game but spooky..." Once again for this I suggest a thorough perusal of the Preface. She concludes, "this horse loves having a rider on his back -- if he didn't we would both be dead LOL" I can only add -- let's hope it never comes to that.

Jen's last report concerns the bright chestnut mare Annwyn's Bold & Beautiful. She writes, "Annwyn would not have fit in the showhorse world except

maybe as a working hunter...she is the reason I became a dressage rider as when she was born I said, 'What am I going to do with THAT?!' -- because her neck came out of the middle of her chest. To which I reply: Jen, I've studied the photos you sent of Annwyn and she carries her neck beautifully. Perhaps this occurred as she matured, but I will also remind you that there are many full-blooded Quarter Horses -- especially those who have been trained as working stock horses -- who carry a very pretty neck with a high arch. This happens in horses of all breeds, builds, and types when the animal learns to raise the BASE of its neck, making what in my books I have termed a "neck-telescoping gesture." To get the horse to raise the BASE of the neck is the object of riding "long and low"; it is part and parcel of the reason the horse becomes able to "stretch over the topline." As the fitness of the longus colli and other muscles which effect raising the base of the neck increases, and as the horse increases in core fitness so that it can coil the loins and round up through the freespan, it will start to volunteer a strongly arched neck. The skillful trainer then can induce the horse to stack its neck upon the base to achieve the high arch seen in the Grand Prix horse (see in this Atlas under Johnson, Caroline; Leifheit, Darryl; and Swimmer, Jody).

Jen reports that Annwyn's training is 3rd to 4th level, and that "if we get our rear in gear we will show 2nd confidently next year." She says that the mare is "built like a Mack truck in the front with a huge shoulder and good width, however, her legs are short and get in the way when she tries to reach." No, Jen; the problem isn't the shortness of the horse's legs. If that were the case, she would be clumsy at liberty too. In most cases, horses that interfere (brushing, speedycutting or stepping on the heels of the forefeet) do this because the breakover is late. Late breakover has two causes: one, that the fore hoofs are out of antero-posterior balance (long toe with run-under heels). And two, that the horse is being ridden on the forehand. Try deliberately working the mare under-tempo; slow way down. This gives the animal time to balance itself with each step. Emphasize bending exercises, because these also help to teach the horse how to balance from aft to fore. "Contact with the bit" is not to mean that we train the horse to lean forward, stiffen its neck, and pry on the rider's hands -- but many dressage riders think that's what "positive contact" means and they ride their animals accordingly. Instead, contact is your ability to feel the movements of the horse's tongue, and thereby to control the placement of its feet and the distribution of its energy.

Jen writes that Annwyn's biggest problem "is she is so smart she gets anxious like a dog that does all the tricks for a cookie." Again: see the preface for suggestions that will help with this. Jen says the mare is "also very sensitive; if I move my butt cheek out of position she is moving laterally in the opposite direction of what I want...tension is our never-ending struggle." My own Painty Horse, a 3/4 Saddlebred, was like this also; a stockman friend once remarked, "Painty tries to hard he gets himself into trouble." So I know what Jen and her mare are both going through. The solution is subtle and has much more to do with our relationship with the horse than with physical conditioning, "levels", exercises, or whatnot. It is of supreme importance to control the mare's focus of attention. When that is achieved, calmness and obedience follow immediately. See "The Birdie Book" in the list of resources to learn about this.

Jen concludes by saying, "I've looked at dressage horses for several years after riding saddleseat for 35 years. The bloodlines I feel are conformationally fantastic for dressage are the Merchant Prince horses. But they can be kind of hot, so a cross with Foxfire's Prophet proved to make for great conformation along with trainability. The [steeper] pelvic angle that Merchant throws is a great asset.

"I've also seen a lot of Callaway, Yorktown, and Stonewall-bred horses that have the big chests, shorter backs and good pelvic angles. Saddlebreds can be long in the back, flat in the croup and narrow as a two-by-four, which makes it tougher to do certain dressage exercises."

Summerall, Jill and Memories Entwined (Timothy).



10 year old gelding standing 16:2 hands, by Entwinement (Wing Commander). He out of Sultan's Sultress by Supreme Sultan (Valley View Supreme). Memories Entwined is out of Classic Affair by Classic Memories (King's Genius). She out of Spring Valley's Deliverance (Rex Peavine/ Rex McDonald). Tail female: Jean Val Jean, Black Squirrel, Bourbon King, Annie C., Montrose, *Glencoe (Thoroughbred).

"I was there," writes Jill, "when Timothy was born, but did not know then that he would eventually become mine. Everything he knows, I taught him. I bought him to use mainly as a trail and pleasure-riding horse but he has shown in saddleseat, barrel racing, and he loves jumping downed timber in the woods. He has taught kids ready to take the next step up, and has done lots of non-competitive endurance riding. One of his favorite things to do is go swimming -- no matter what time of year it is. I tell everyone he is my beautiful seahorse LOL."



This is indeed a big stout horse and suitable for everything Jill has mentioned and more. He could drive and I'll bet he'd love learning how to push cattle around. He has excellent coformation and plenty of bone even at his large size. I wish there were more of them out there like him -- this is what a general-purpose pleasure riding horse should look like.

Swimmer, Jody and Hart's Divine Memories (Wrapper)



Above: Gelding by Royalty's Triumph (Wing Commander). He out of Heaven Ever Aptor (Wing Commander). Hart's Divine Memories is out of Queen Cobra (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). She out of Fort Chiswell's Retained Assets (Wing Commander). Tail female: King's Genius, Lou Berry.

Right: Gelding by I'm a New Yorker (Wing Commander), he out of Sentimentalist (Edna May's King). New York City Slicker is out of Callaway's Dash of Class by Sultan's Collector's Item (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). Tail female: King's Genius, Montrose, Rex McDonald.



Above: New York City Slicker (George)



I am not a fan of some recent trends in competitive dressage, but there's no way I wouldn't cheer for Jody and her horses. Wrapper's conformation (previous page) shows a tremendous horse -- the epitome of power, substance, and topline. And what a beautiful, noble head and expression! He's a great mover with superb suspension at both trot and canter, as the photos on this page demonstrate. This is the sort of Saddlebred that the reader must look for if the desire is for a sporthorse with "international" potential.

Left: Jody and Wrapper in a correctly cadenced pirouette on right lead. Below: The pair at a big, booming trot showing tremendous power. (Photos this page: John Borys)



Jody calls her other gelding George "the piaffe king". The conformation photo was taken somewhat early in his training, the horse still showing the typical stiff back and neck and long-toed hoofs which force the pasterns to stand more upright than nature intended. But talk about transition and transformation -- the photo (next page) shows them six years later in a contemplative moment of passage. I have ridden many Saddlebred horses in my time, and will attest that the majority of them possessed natural passage -- requiring training and refinement

to be sure, but the enormously springy, elastic "feel" was there from the first ride. Saddlebreds also typically have the most amazing, long-striding, balanced and elastic canter that is equal to or better than that produced by the best Thoroughbreds or Warmbloods. Such is their balance and ability to relax at this gait that teaching them figures and pirouettes is easy.

I consider, however, that the most important photo in this set is the one at right. You may attend many horse shows and yet see few people who know how to reward a horse for good performance -- and who give that reward generously and consistently. Notice Jody's relaxed arms; she is not thumping on the horse, smacking his neck or butt loudly -





- a gesture often seen which is really intended to impress onlookers. Jody's delighted expression is not pasted-on, either. Her fingers are soft and she touches the horse in a way that conveys that she cares about him. The great American horseman Tom Dorrance used to tap his chest with softly curled fingers when he would see this. "It comes from the heart," as he always said.

At left: Jody and George at passage. Above: quietly and softly rubbing George's neck (photo by Christine Quinn)

Tevis, Ruby and Wine'N Dine



Gelding by Calif First Night Out (South African) by Enja Hell-of-a-Night (Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald). He out of Vida's Mistress USA by Mr. USA (Stonewall King). Wine 'N Dine is out of Belle Divine by Belle Reve's Renaissance Man. She out of Simply Divine by Radiant Sultan (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). Tail female: King's Genius, Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Wing Commander, Edna May's King, Blue Jeans, Mambrino LeGrand

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This is a big, correctly conformed gelding with an enormous barrel -- a good thing since Ruby herself is tall and long-legged. The gelding has an exceptionally long shoulder and the usual Saddlebred long arm and forearm to go with it. The hocks and knees are correctly formed and broad. The pelvic angle slopes, which assists in coiling the loins, and the thigh is long, giving the long, sweeping stride desired in dressage (and also in five-gaited competition). The hoofs are very healthy and correctly balanced.

This horse was bred from South African stock. Ruby reminds us, "American Saddlebreds were brought to South Africa in the mid-20th century, and since then these horses have been developed from that original stock. Therefore, South African Saddlebreds tend to reflect characteristics of older bloodlines, having more bone and a broader frame." I would add that this also tends to be true of Canadian-breds. This is inside info for those who can afford the importation and quarantine expense, and a heads-up to look for Canadian or South African blood in a prospect's pedigree.

In the photo at right, Ruby is not trying to get the horse “under” the bridle or in anything like a rollkur posture; rather, she’s playing the reins out as part of a technique called “showing the horse the way to the ground.” This is an old classic exercise which helps the horse learn to stretch its topline and raise the base of its neck. The trot is lovely: cadenced and elastic. Below, the pair in a dressage test. The photo catches the moment of half-halt before the half-pirouette.



Photos this page by Lisa Dean



Todd, Joan and CH Emily Grey

Mare by Winsdown Hi Octane (King's Genius), he out of Jammin' the Blues by Admiral's Windjammer (Wing Commander). Emily Gray is out of Magnificent by The Commander's Image (Edna May's King). She out of My Victoria by Wing Commander's King (Wing Commander). Tail female: Rex Peavine/Rex McDonald, Washington Denmark, Mambrino LeGrand, Muley (Thoroughbred)(Photo by June Jacobs)





Left: Joan and CH The Lady Grey

Mare by Slama's Storm (King's Genius), he out of Santana's Summer Storm (Supreme Sultan/Valley View Supreme). The Lady Grey is out of Emily Grey (the mare in the photo and pedigree above)(Photo by Shiuflet Studios).

Joan is not only a rider but a breeder of Saddlebreds; Slama's Storm is her stallion and CH Emily Gray is the mother of all the geldings shown on the next few pages. All are correctly conformed horses possessed of a

Sir Earl Grey

10 year old gelding by Slama's Storm out of CH Emily Grey (see pedigrees previous page).

Right: Sir Earl Grey winning a Saddleseat hunter-on-the-flat or hunter pleasure class (Elizabeth Reimer, up; photo by Jonathan M. Landry).



Below: The same horse in a lower-level dressage class. Rider and horse are in canter on the left lead.



structural frame that bespeaks athletic potential. The Saddlebred Western Pleasure photo on the previous page is still in a conventional show context and the mare is lovely, but the important point is that this represents the beginning of Joan's own transition and transformation. The ver athletic jumping photo shows, in Joan's words, "my much beloved and phenomenal mare, CH Emily Grey...I had her almost her entire life -- bought her as a four year old and owned her until the day she decided to leave this Earth, on her own terms, as always."

The show-hunter image at right is a "before" shot, while the dressage photo of the same horse was taken after further change in Joan; as she says

The Jazz Player (Marty) (by Slama's Storm out of CH Emily Grey)





very simply, "we ride dressage now."

I do not have a performance photo of her grey gelding Marty, but the "before" and "after" images (next page) say it all; indeed it is hard to believe that they are pictures of the same horse. While the internal skeletal frame and the animal's innate proportionality must always remain, the change in emphasis from high-headed and hollow-backed to the "roundness" called for by the sporthorse disciplines produces astonishing physiotherapeutic effect. Gone in the "after" photo is all sign of angularity or stiffness. Transition and transformation may take several years, as the color change in this gray horse indicates, but the end result is a confident, easy to ride horse that is a true pleasure to ride, and that is capable of a wide variety of activities.



Joan and her daughter and granddaughter ready for a trailride. Joan is aboard Marty; the other horses are also Saddlebreds or part-Saddlebreds. The child is suitably mounted on a horse of just the right size and type. This is the most important photo sent to me by Joan. No formal training can equal the value of simple “buddy-up” time. Horses know when they are loved, and especially, when they are valued for something above and beyond what they can do for the human in terms of performance or winning at shows.

Valley, Susan and Too Attached (no pedigree available)



This is a substantial, conformationally very correct and beautiful horse. As in many other cases that make up this Album, the story of Susan and Too Attached begins in the show ring (photo next page). Although I do not have a report on it in Susan's own words, at some point this apparently began to overlap with some trail riding in the great outdoors -- as we have seen over and over again, this is a great aid in fostering trust and affection between rider and horse, as well as affording the horse at least some relief from the constant showring demand for high head and high knee and hock "action". In the last photo, we see the pair -- now almost unrecognizable -- participating in an arena trail class. Teaching the horse to understand and enjoy working with ground poles, bridge, circus platform, "pool worm" obstacles, push-balls, and even the teeter-totter is a joyful process when the horse is brought along one step at a time with each novel object.

I certainly enjoy goofy costumes, but can we not dispense with the painted-in "wild" eyes? This is Susan's own submission to an online photo contest. By the magic of Photoshop I have replaced the painted-on eye in her conformation photo, but left this one so you can see how it's done. . I have had to do this also with a few other horses in this Album -- the owners themselves will know which those are. Nobody involved in sporthorse activities is guilty of this; only those who come from the saddleseat world, where photo doctoring looks perfectly "OK" to them-- until the day comes when it doesn't. Doctoring merely adds to the impression of people outside the saddleseat world that if the breed isn't innately crazy, the people involved with them want them to be. Those to whom painted-on eyes, painted-on tails, and photos that have been tipped and then cropped so that it falsely appears that the horse is "light in front" -- need to realize that these goonish and crude alterations are, in fact, obvious to intelligent people who might otherwise have been interested in buying a Saddlebred.

Some people sneeringly refer to this as "trick training" and may even claim that it will ruin the





horse for ordinary riding or for whatever form of showing. My own experience is that nothing could be further from the truth. The result of educating the horse so that he can confidently work with all kinds of "toys" is that he becomes much more able to focus -- to stop and think before reacting in fright. He thus becomes much more obedient, and much calmer and more sensible in all situations, i.e. on the trail or alongside trafficked roads, for example. Horses are highly intelligent animals with potentials that many owners might never otherwise come to appreciate.

Left: Out on the trail. Susan will hopefully dispense with the running martingale, which ultimately does nothing but interfere with the rider's ability to turn the horse.



Above: Too Attached in an Arana Trail or “trail obstacle” competition. No eyeball doctoring on this photo, and the horse is in lovely, round carriage, with lively interest and attention to the ground poles and bridge.

Walezer, Theresa and Camron’s Last Flight, 6 year old stallion (pedigree unavailable)



Jana, mare, 21 years old (pedigree unavailable)



Theresa writes the following concerning her cluster of Saddlebreds: “I rode Quarter Horses and Thoroughbred crosses my whole life, until, through a complicated series of events, a Saddlebred (and his dam) came into my life when he was just a few weeks old. Within a few weeks I realized that this colt...was an order of magnitude better than any other horse I had ever worked with. We liked him so much we bought his younger sister before she was even born. When the dam became available for purchase, we bought her too. Shortly afterwards we discovered that she was pregnant, so we now own a little brother to the other two for a total of four Saddlebreds.

“These horses are all forward, light, and energetic while also being easily controllable and unflappable. They try hard to please...a reflection of how much these horses are engaged and willing partners.

I know that Saddlebreds have a reputation for being hot and “nutty”. Our horses are sensitive and forward, but they are also emotionally steady, not getting wound up or upset very easily. You know you are sitting on a lot of horse, but the horse feels totally controlled and safe. I have never experienced this feeling of quietly contained energy or “vibrancy” before -- I didn’t even know it was possible. Now though, I don’t think I could ever go back to Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds. I’m totally spoiled by the brains, personality and temperament of these Saddlebreds.”

I must say that Theresa’s description of “controlled energy” and “vibrancy” is totally apt and one of the best descriptions of this Saddlebred characteristic that we received.

Theresa is operating what amounts to a backyard breeding program or small-operater farm, so conformation is important. Her stallion is put together nicely and I think probably taller than he looks in the photo, since the image was made with the lens of the camera angling down on the horse’s back. The image of the stallion as received required, in addition, some manipulation in Photoshop to remove the distortion characteristic of pictures taken with a cell phone camera. Conformation photos are much better and “truer” when taken with a real camera, digital or analog, that has zoom functionality. The photographer should stand back twenty feet or so from the animal and aim the lens directly at its heart, so that shoulders and rump are equidistant from the camera. Then zoom in slightly; this assures a perfectly “flat” image with no distortion.

The same problems apply to the photo of Jana, Theresa’s broodmare; but after correcting the distortions it appears that she is a good match with the stallion in terms of conformation: she has a bigger hindquarter and also a longer neck, and an absolutely spectacular shoulder. She needs the forefeet attended to, especially the left fore, which is badly under-run in the heels. Any horse that has to get about on “duck flappers” has hoofs that are so out of balance that lameness is not far behind.

Rex the long yearling (photo next page) is going to come out to be a big, strapping horse. This phase of a horse’s life is sometimes termed “the uglies” because, essentially, it’s a horse’s time of being half-grown, like an ungainly teenager; and horses destined to be larger are usually the most ungainly. I’m also somewhat concerned by the big knot on the lateral aspect of the left hock; this appears to be bone spavin. Sometimes such a development will disappear with maturity; the growth plates in and around the hocks do not fuse until the animal is four years old. So, even if the horse shows no signs of lameness, I would keep my eye on it.

The trailride photo (next page) shows Theresa and family having a great time riding on a logging road somewhere up in the mountains. Theresa’s mare is only three years old and that’s about as soon as I would want to see any horse doing very much under saddle. Remember that the last skeletal bones to mature are the vertebrae of the neck and thorax, and that’s what we are sitting directly upon.

Right: Rex McDonald's Flight, colt, 15 months old (pedigree unavailable)



Below: Theresa astride Lexington's Flight (Lexi), filly, 3 years old (pedigree unavailable)



Although the feet are cut off in the photo, this filly appears to have very correct conformation, with a great loin copling and, like her mother, a spectacular shoulder. I like the filly's well-carved head, too.

Wetter, Sheila and Miss Spitfire (mare; pedigree unavailable)



Below: Sheila and Miss Spitfire at a fast, smooth rack on an unpaved road in arid back-country.



Sheila's preference is for gaited horses and the image at left is a very good picture of a horse racking. The rack is sometimes called the "single-foot" because in it, the horse always has at least one foot on the ground. This factor contributes to making the gait smooth, so that there is no need to post as to the trot. The rack can hit speeds over 25 mph, although no horse can sustain that very long. Generally speaking, travellers in the 19th century who used these horses to get from one town to the next went at an average speed of around 8-10 mph, much faster than a walk and faster also than most horses can sustain at a trot.

As to conformation, the black mare is ruggedly built, with a short back and hindquarters that are long and powerful. The hocks are superb, although the knees are higher than in most Saddlebreds.

Wetter, Sheila and Velvet Dancer (mare; no pedigree available)



The red chestnut mare on this page has less bone substance and is not as powerful behind, but has longer forearms and lower knees. The neck is longer also. Both mares have huge deep chests, high withers, and long shoulders. If anyone was in doubt as to what the term “shoulder-bed” means, this mare exemplifies it. The shoulder-bed is the fore surface of the shoulder where it blends into the neck. A good shoulder-bed is deep and reflects a considerable difference in side-to-side width of the neck vs. the chest, i.e. it implies a wide chest, and more importantly, great freedom of motion through the shoulders.

A related conformational point is called the “rein”. This is measured from the base of the withers to the point of breast. The rein on my 3/4 Saddlebred Painty Horse was so great that even a breast collar made for a very stout-bodied Quarter Horse was too small for him. A 76” blanket was snug on him also, and this would also be true for both of these mares.

Sheila apparently is an Enduro competitor and I’d be pleased to hear how they have fared in this sport. Well, I imagine; for many Saddlebreds still retain the stamina and toughness of their 19th-century forebears.

Whipp, Simat and Right On Forty-Third Street (Sable)

14 year old gelding by I'm a New Yorker (Wing Commander). He oout of Sentimentalist by Denmark's Bourbon Genius (Edna May's King). Sable is out of Callaway's Wish Me Well by Will Shriver (Wing Commander). She out of Wish Me Well by Kourageous Kalu (Stonewall King). Tail female: Rex McDonald, Chester Dare, Kathryn Haines, Alexander's Abdallah (Standardbred), Bellfounder (Norman/Hackney), Sir Archy (Thoroughbred)



I don't have a side view conformation photo of this horse but certainly want to present the front view, which shows a perfectly constructed breast of just the right width. The knees and hocks are broad and correctly formed. Simrat is probably about 5'9" or 5'10" tall; note how well the horse's rounded barrel takes up her leg -- not so wide as to be uncomfortable, but wide enough to make relaxed contact of the leg easy. The fore hoofs show the dip in the center of the coronet band, directly over the toe, that usually indicates some previous episodes of laminitis. Simat reports that this horse sustained a torn impar ligament and is not fully sound. He is now semi-retired and used as a parade marshal's horse.

On the next page is Fairview's Harper (Harper) during dressage schooling. This mare is less substantial than Sable but perfectly adequate for someone of Simat's height and weight. Simat is a very good rider and the mare is moving with lively energy and correct cadence in both photos. In the trot image, note how the left hind has grounded before the right fore. This is not a fault when there is good engagement of the hindquarter, as there is here. Rather it is proof that the horse is light on the forehand. It is not that the hind hoof grounds early; it is that the fore hoof grounds a fraction late. It cannot ground any sooner, because the whole forequarter has been cantilevered up by the coiling of the loins.



Fairview's Harper (Harper)

15:3 hand, 4 year old mare by Brookhill's Apollon (Wing Commander), he out of This Is Good (Wing Commander). Harper is out of Her Royal Cosette by He's Born to Royalty (Wing Commander). She out of Heavenly Watch by Sky Watch (Wing Commander). Tail female: Valley View Supreme, King's Genius, Anacacho Denmark (this mare is inbred pedigree, tracing to Wing Commander in all four lines).

I appreciate Simat's use of a Baucher snaffle and the absence of flash/dropped noseband. Her elbows are bent and her hands are consequently carried correctly above the pommel. She does not pull and she has not taught this horse to stiffen its neck and lean forward -- she does not mistake this for "contact". Instead, she feels the horse's tongue and through the mouth, the position of the horse's feet. The feel is elastic and the overall picture is one of harmony and unity.



Above: Simat and Harper at a working trot. Right: The pair at a light, easy canter on the right lead.