

TULIPSPRINGS EVENTING

Playground for Area Eventers



Ian Stark (in background), instructing at the TulipSpring's first clinic in 2007.



TulipSpring's owner, Carol Curry competing in a costumed Pairs Class, with Adam.



TulipSpring's cross-country course ranges from Beginner Novice through Preliminary.

Behind every horse person, there's a story—and it's never *just* about horses. The person behind TulipSprings Eventing of Kennewick, WA is Carol Curry. Behind her is a strong family and a back story of its own.

Carol grew up in Kirkland, WA with a love horses and riding. She spent several years on the A jumping circuit and also enjoyed eventing. When she was in high school, her family moved to Kennewick. Like many of us, she left home for college and to pursue a career. As an electrical engineer, she got into a high tech marketing fast track. In her words, "I was a high tech Silicon Valley geek." Throughout her career, she remained involved with the family's Kennewick-based real estate business.

Like so many of us, Carol returned to her roots when her parents' failing health made family a priority. What was supposed to be a short-term stay turned into a life-changing opportunity.

"I just wanted a little more land to gallop my horse on," Carol said. "But my nephew, Jay, (a realtor with ReMax in Kennewick) outdid himself." Jay came upon the 53 acres that is now TulipSprings. While the buildings needed work, the land was good, solid ground for an eventing course. The big, old barn was worth saving, as was the 1940's farmhouse; other structures were torn down to clean up the facility and prepare it for its new purpose.

Carol's brother CJ and his wife, Sally, were also instrumental. "My brother and Sally are the reason this whole thing happened," she said. CJ and Sally managed the subcontractors who helped transform the wreck of a farmhouse into a charming B&B.

"It's like a private camp. Imagine a slumber party and riding weekend, with cross-country in your backyard."

"They are special people," Carol said. "They continue to help whenever something needs to be done."

Carol's original idea was to throw a few logs down on the property and call it good. But a chance meeting with Captain Mark Phillips at a fund-raiser for Olympic eventer Amy Tryon, changed things. "Captain Mark was interested in what I was doing. He lectured me about doing it right and inspired me."

Carol contacted cross-country course designer Mogie Bearden-Muller, who was fairly new to course designing at the time but had been involved in top projects such as Rebecca Farm. Mogie also insisted on 'doing it right' and recommended building courses that ranged from Beginner Novice to Preliminary. Mogie consulted with Captain Mark, who made a few important improvements, especially at the main water and bank complexes.

The next step was to hire a builder. Carol wanted Bert Wood, who has built courses for Woodside, Galway, and Rebecca Farm, but Bert had a waiting list. "I was told I would have to wait three years," Carol said. When Carol relayed the news to Captain Mark, Bert called her back 24 hours later and soon after started building her course. "Bert and I turned out to be good friends," Carol said. "He's a master at what he does and a really special guy."

Bert began course-building in the fall of 2007. When the project was 90% complete, Carol held her first Ian Stark clinic. The course was completed the following spring. While there were "lots of things not ready" the footing was wonderful (turf based on sand) and the course was top notch. Carol's still working on improvements like better paddocks and stalls. "The cross-country was my first priority," she says. "I figured that if I

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Lauren Davis Baker



Eventers Cindy Covington & Kerry Clark competing in the "mounted" Easter Egg Hunt in 2008.



Ian Stark (center) instructing a clinic group. Ian is now a 'regular' at TulipSprings.



Carol Curry and her homebred, Mo, soar in a Leslie Law clinic.



got the course right, the barns and other amenities could catch up over time. Five years later, we are nearly finished with the 'to-do' list around the barn!" Significant improvements have been made since TulipSpring's opening in 2007.

Carol admits that while she "kind of fell into" hosting clinics, "It's what I most enjoy." Indeed, Carol hosts clinics with top-notch eventers such as Jimmy Wofford, Buck Davidson, and Leslie Law. "I enjoy managing that," she said. "Everyone goes away happy."

Carol also enjoys hosting trainers and their students. The renovated farmhouse houses trainers and their students who come to school. "They'll take it over for a weekend," she said. "It's like a private camp. Imagine a slumber party and riding weekend, with cross-country in your backyard."

When Northwesterners west of the Cascades are cursing the mud, TulipSprings has the footing. Carol's biggest business comes from February through May, when eventers want pre-season training but don't have secure footing at home. This year her weekends are booked through early May and eventers are now reserving mid-week schooling sessions.

For Carol, "It's not so much about showing, which I feel puts pressure on people and their horses. Most of us are amateurs and want to have fun in what we're doing."

Indeed, Carol's main emphasis is on enjoying the relationship she has with each of her horses (primarily her homebreds Woody, Coco, and Mo)—making the best of each horse. When talking about her earlier, competitive years, she said, "It wasn't my true interest. I didn't want to get bigger, fancier horses and more ribbons. It was more about the experience with each horse." She now describes herself as "a pretty competent amateur," who

enjoys sharing her experience with a few special students, but does not want to compete with serious professional trainers.

So far her 'special students' have included a professional cattle roper; a World Record barrel racer; a leading national jockey; and a second generation race horse trainer. "They are all premiere horsepeople in their area of expertise—and they learn our sport so quickly and with such great enthusiasm." Carol notes that they also have great inside leads to excellent horses—which is a terrific side benefit.

Carol likes to host clinics and camps, "Because they're the situations I like to ride in. Riding with world-class coaches and sharing that with other riders is rewarding," Carol said. "Out here in tumbleweed territory, it's a chance to stay connected to Area VII eventers and offer something of value."

Enjoying and appreciating life are top priorities for Carol. "I want to keep balance in my life," she said. "Appreciate where it all comes from. Become even more true to who I am and truly enjoy each horse, bringing out the best in each one. I try to be

thankful every day, to be blessed with this facility, great horses and people, and especially my family."

Through TulipSprings, Carol hopes to share her sense of relationship with the horse, with others. "It's the most important thing about riding," she says. "If riders come for a clinic and have a peak experience that helps connect them to their horses and their friends, then I've added value."

What's next? "Well Captain Mark has been promising to give a clinic at TulipSprings since 2007. He has always said 'after London 2012.' So, stay tuned to the TulipSprings 2013 calendar. Carol would love to see Captain Mark's name added to the roster of world-class eventers she has hosted.

About TulipSprings

Contact: www.tulipsprings.org
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Located: Kennewick, WA

Courses: BN through Preliminary

Stadium Jumping: Professionally built course in a Grand Prix size arena

Dressage: Permanent full size dressage court

Schooling: An approved trainer or supervisor is required.