

# Owner of the Month: Anne Kearley

BY LESLIE THRELKELD

*When local veterinarians told 14-year-old Anne Kearley the Mustang she calls Indiana Jones couldn't be saved from a hock infection, her father reminded her, "he's tougher than most, give him a chance."*

ANNE HAD TAKEN A CHANCE ON THE BRANDED NEVADA MUSTANG WHEN HE WAS PURCHASED THREE YEARS EARLIER. He had done some trail riding, but the young horse was slow to trust people and just getting a halter on him was a production.

"I taught him to drop his head when I put pressure on his poll. That is when I slide the reins past his eyes without him noticing," said Anne, who is now 15. "He still trusts me more than others. During Pony Club Horse Management checks, I have to hold him while judges inspect his stall and how well his halter fits."

Like many Pony Clubbers, Anne has dabbled in a multitude of disciplines, from mounted games to dressage, but lately she has gravitated towards eventing. "Eventing is a more exciting challenging for Pony Clubbers because it offers a multi-discipline field where they can exercise their education and ride regularly too," said Anne's father, Dick Kearley. "The extent of a Pony Clubber's knowledge is impressive."

So, when Indy was "three-legged lame" at the trot when Anne returned home from vacationing with her mother, she dismounted immediately. Watching his hock swell before her eyes, she called a local vet who, within the hour, was advising euthanasia.

"My mind was reeling," Anne said.

Instead of loading up for Pony Club Nationals, Anne and her family found themselves hauling Indy to Peterson and Smith Equine Hospital in Ocala, Florida where the joint was flushed with antibiotics, and Indy was hooked to an IV. The veterinarians' prognosis was guarded; they said he may never be sound, much



**ABOVE LEFT:** Anne Kearley and Indy enjoying each other's company; **ABOVE RIGHT:** Anne and Indy share a unique bond on and off course; **RIGHT:** Anne and Indy studying up for those Pony Club ratings. PHOTOS

COURTESY MARY KEARLEY



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less jump again. "But after all he had done for me, that was okay," Anne said. "As long as he lived."

After returning from the hospital last summer, Indy was put on stall rest and remained on heavy doses of antibiotics. Annie and her father massaged the joint multiple times a day, and soon they could start hand-walking him. With time he got stronger walking and trotting alongside the golf cart and was enjoying regular turnout by October.

"He came through it against all odds," Dick said.

On January 8th, Anne and Indy won first place in Beginner Novice Rider at the Ocala Winter I Horse Trials. This event was the first time the Mustang had ever run a full cross-country course. "He was hesitant at first. His Mustang instinct looks for 'lions in the jumps,'" Anne said.

"He is always looking over his shoulder. I knew I just had to be firm but reassuring."

Anne's long-term goal with Indy is to compete in at least one Training level event. This year, however, they will stick to Beginner Novice: "I think it's really important to master the lower levels and not move up too fast," she said. "I don't want to overface him."

When asked about plans for her own future with horses, Anne said she wants to be an equine chiropractor and plans "to be the 70-year-old woman who still foxhunts."

Anne says Indy still exhibits a strong Mustang personality: "One minute he acts like he loves you, the next he doesn't need you." But we all know, little girls and horses need each other, and a fighting chance.