

A Kindly Story Part Deux

As they say in the movies, the adventure continues. This month will be 5 years that Beth and I have been riding. I know that because this whole thing started as a 35th Wedding Anniversary gift and it became the gift that keeps on giving and giving and giving, and....March 29th will be our 40th Wedding Anniversary. You do the math.

So what's happened since that first glorious day in April 2004 when I first set foot in the barn at the Mystic Valley Hunt Club. Well, where do I begin?

I'm still alive for one thing! I was sure that riding was Beth's plan to get her hands on my life insurance proceeds. Well, I fooled her. After securing 2 lines of credit to pay for our riding lessons, I have actually progressed to the point where I no longer fall off the horse and I can actually clear a fence once in a while.

I thought I was really doing well until Marissa called me to the center of the ring a few weeks back, during a lesson, and asked for my spurs. No! No! not my spurs. Well! I felt like John Wayne being asked to give up his gun but I complied. Guess what? It worked. I needed to learn to use my leg more..not my spur. That's why she's the instructor and I'm the student.

I know I have helped support the local economy on a grander scale than I had intended. I have come to better understand why "riding" and "horse racing" are called the "Sport of Kings". As you may or may not know, we purchased Kindly on September 21, 2006. The initial investment was modest, the board and feed budgeted for and the cost of lessons was a given. What I did not bargain for was the requisite 4 seasons of *equestrian clothing and footwear*. I never knew how many different style vests and outerwear items there were, made by so many different companies. I was not aware of the fact that these companies change clothing styles faster than I change my socks. I did not know the difference between Rectiligne, Vogel, Dehner, Ariat, Dublin and Mountain Horse boots. That a Butet saddle trumps a Toulouse saddle. That Tad Coffin used to design saddles for Crosby who used to be Miller and now has his own saddle company.

Now you have to understand, Beth is not a very demanding person (did I really just say that) but she has this really cute way of suggesting her needs as she flips through the latest issue of Practical Horseman or Equus or the Dover or Smart Pak catalogue. What is a guy supposed to do?

Suffice it to say that I have not missed making a single purchase from a Dover SALE catalogue, that I am on a first name basis with all the customer service reps at Smart Pak and that Keith and Karen Parkinson, at the Paddock, regularly "close shop early" after Beth and I have visited.

Now, don't get me wrong. It's not all Her. I love a bargain as much as the next person. Many of you have heard about my EBAY exploits. There's just something exhilarating about the thrill of the hunt in an auction atmosphere.

Somewhere in the midst of this frenzy of buying and bargain hunting is Kindly. He is everything we expected and then some. He and Connor switched stalls many months ago and I think both of them have greatly benefited. Kindly is now friendly and approachable. Quite a difference from his school horse days and the reason I continue to enjoy riding.