

Three Feathers Native Curly Horses

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How a few sweet, innocent curls can change your life...

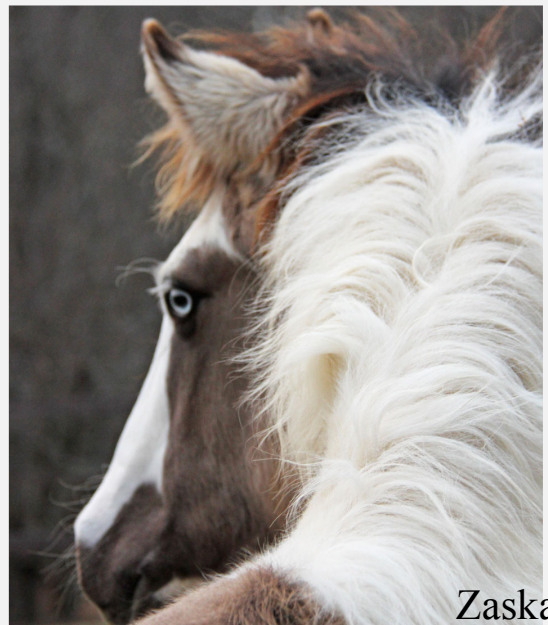
The fateful day began like many others at that time in my life. My son, Trevor (whom I was homeschooling at the time) and I were on a field trip to the Kentucky Horse Park, which we are lucky enough to have here in our home state of Kentucky. We decided to go to their popular “Parade of Breeds” show where they showcase several different breeds from around the world, many dressed in native costumes and as they tell the history and unique characteristics of each breed. Arabians, Gypsy Vanners, Kiger Mustangs, Paso Finos and Percherons all paraded by us in beautiful costumes displaying their unique personalities and conformations. Then, an unusual horse came into the arena, one I had never heard of or seen before – the American Curly Horse. I listened closely to the announcer as he told the history of this breed as having been used by the Native Americans and cowboys early in our country’s history. As it cantered gracefully around on display for the spectators, he described their unique characteristics - how they were a hardy breed and especially known for their calm friendly dispositions. And then, the announcer said those magic words, words that I had no idea how they would change our family’s lives – FOREVER. “And that unique curly coat is noted to be HYPO-ALLERGENIC for people with allergies to horses.” Well, I had to almost play the words back again in slow speed in my mind to make sure I had heard him correctly. Then, I nearly leapt from the bleachers in a single bound and couldn’t get over to the announcer’s booth quickly enough to see if I could get more information, where he handed me a brochure on this



newly discovered type of horse. I had to learn more!! I had always loved horses, as do many young girls. I went to horse camp (above) every summer where we learned to groom, saddle and take care of our horses and rode long trail rides every day. I even won blue ribbons at the shows at the end of camp. I had a horse of my own for a few years between our family moving around the country during my early teen years. In college, I decided to take equitation classes (left) each semester as my “fun” class for myself as a release from the lectures, labs and textbooks. These

classes I took in all my college days! But, they came with a price. By this time in my life, I had developed an extreme allergy to horses. My riding class mates would laugh at me as I came to each class with all of my pockets stuffed full of tissues. By the end of each class I could barely breathe, as if someone had their fists clenched around my lungs, and my nose and eyes were running so bad I could hardly see. Classes were every-other-day, so about the time I was beginning to recuperate, it was time for my next class. So, I went to an allergy specialist to see if anything could be done for my problem. I was considering a career with horses at the time and had even been offered a position working with the world famous *Lipizzaner Stallions*. The allergy specialist was so excited as he watched the area they tested on my arm for horse allergies swell beyond anything he had ever encountered before. "WOW! I have NEVER seen anyone this allergic to horses before!", he said with excitement. Doctors should really be required to take a course in bedside manners or how to talk to patients! While he was enthusiastic to witness my amazing reaction, I felt as if I were shrinking smaller and smaller with each comment he made, feeling my dreams of a life with horses slowly ebb away.

Now years later, sitting on that bleacher, hearing those words from the announcer, a glimmer of hope...could this be true? I had to find out!! So I set off to learn all I could about this newly discovered type of horse. After combing the internet and making a few phone calls, we finally located a farm in a neighboring state that had this unique breed. We made arrangements to set off for a visit, to see if I could really touch one and not suffer the consequences. We had family and friends with horses who were always offering to let me come out and ride, etc. but I knew I would pay for it for days if I did, so I rarely took them up on the offer. I always had, in the back on my mind, that I would have horses again in my life – my body was just going to have to get used to it and get over it!! But, maybe, just maybe, I wouldn't have to go through the suffering. So, there they were in front of me, several beautiful curly horses all adorned in their winter curly coats. It was hard to drop my guard that I had built over so many years – look but DON'T touch! So, I reached out and put my fingers into the soft curls and it felt so good to have my hands on a horse again and to get close and smell them again! I loved, petted on and even hugged them with no reaction. I was THRILLED!! OK- we have to find some of our own now!!! So, the search began to get some curly horses of our very own!



The plan was to get a couple of horses, enough for everyone in the family to have a mount to use for trail riding, etc. We decided on two mares, both from several states away. They were – Maizzie and Katee, and we had them shipped to our farm. I can't even begin to describe my feelings as the horse trailers came up the drive carrying my long lost dreams, now about to be fulfilled! Love at first sight! And little did we know at the time, the new path these two lovely girls would set our lives on! Maizzie came to us in foal and within a couple of months of her arrival we had a new little curly baby on the farm as well. Our little MeSesko was so sweet, loving and so much fun, we knew we would have to have MORE babies!! So, sometimes when I look at her all these years later- I lovingly "blame" her for all the changes in our lives since her arrival! So much for the plan to have just a couple to ride! Now we are already into breeding them!

At that time, we had a lovely small farm with just enough pasture for a handful of horses and nice woods with trails for some riding. But now we are going to need a bigger farm so we can have MORE of these wonderful curly horses!! So, I “blame” the horses for our move to our new farm! We had to have more land so we could have more babies and more room to ride and play! And what a joy each step the journey has been! We cherish being there as each new baby comes into the world and getting my hands and nose into those precious, sweet, soft new curls is a joy beyond description for someone who was unable to be near horses not so long ago! Every precious minute we get playing with them, riding them or even just going out into the pasture and hanging out with them for some love and scratches is such a blessing to us all, curly horses made my dreams come true. But, they also have had a great impact on the rest of our family as well. My husband Louis (left with Nagi) had horses in his family early in life. They were not handled regularly and so had to be run down with a motorcycle to even catch them and then once you got on them you were never too sure of what you were going to get. He didn’t see the fun or benefit of having horses in his life, so he opted to get a dirt bike at a young age instead and that was his choice for exploring the country side where his family lived. Once we were married and had our son Trevor (center with Cikala), we would tease him and tell him Mom wanted horses and Dad wanted to get motorcycles and we would ask him which one he preferred. Being an animal lover, most of the time he sided with me on the horses! On far right, is TFN Warrior’s Cica Tahalo, who stands in England.



My husband gave into my dreams of having horses when we discovered these wonderful curly horses, but he wasn’t overly excited about them given his past experience with horses. But, how quickly that changed!! He was completely enamored with them – mostly the relationship aspect. He had no idea you could have such an amazing partnership and even friendship with them like we do with all of ours. We both have had a wide array of animals in our lives, even taking in orphaned and injured wildlife, but there is something special about a relationship with HORSES! I can’t explain it to someone who has never had horses in their lives, maybe that a 1,000+ lb. animal would choose to have a relationship with you, even to the point of letting you climb on their backs and letting your guide them, when clearly they could choose not to! He was a natural with them right from the start. I almost couldn’t believe my eyes when he quit reading golf magazines and started reading horse training books and magazines!! He wanted to spend every free minute on the farm with the horses! When we moved to our new farm and couldn’t find a new farrier to our liking, he took it upon himself to study and learn natural hoof trimming and now does all of our horses hoof care himself and they have never looked better or been healthier. (No horseshoes on anyone here one the farm – all barefoot!) And, even our son Trevor loves time with the horses and never begrudges his time spent doing chores around the farm for their care – fencing, bush-hogging, feeding, etc. He has no regrets having the horses in our lives even choosing to muck stalls this past Christmas morning before we ate breakfast and opened our gifts. Even as I write this now, both Louis and Trevor are out repairing an old barn on the farm where we store the tractor. Yes, the horses have brought extra work and expense into our lives, but none of us would trade going back to not having them in our lives. They are part of our family and I am so lucky to have had, not only my own dreams of having horses in my life come true, but to also have a husband and son to share all the smiles, laughter, joys and blessings that having horses in your life brings – which is especially true with CURLY HORSES! Con’t on page 22.

God must have blessed our early decisions on our choice of horses and breeding stallions as we couldn't have been happier with the babies we have had over the years here at Three Feathers. We really had no plans of taking on owning our own stallion, but we hit the mark first time out with our very first stud colt, Nagi, pictured below (TFN Nagi Hanhepi Wo To) and he be-



came our herd stallion. He was so perfect in every way with his beautiful conformation, strikingly handsome black and white tobiano coloring and awesome personality. He is simply stunning and such a sweet boy! He has given us many beautiful curly babies over the years and we are looking forward to many more! Many people have hard time believing the stories we tell of him sometimes, not believing a stallion can be so calm and so well-behaved. Like the story of when we were first training him to ride. We had done ground work with him in the arena 2, maybe 3 times. At the end of those sessions, my husband Louis got on his back and just sat on him for a few minutes to get him used to someone being on his back, which he was perfectly fine with right from the very first time. On his second and third sessions, Louis made him walk a few steps around the arena and he did great – so calm and willing. By his 4th session, he was doing so well and Louis was so confident of him, he threw the lead rope around his neck to make reins (No bits on our farm – all are ridden bit less) and took off on him for a ride around the farm – bareback. Not a minutes problem out of him, you would have thought he had been ridden for years. And there are so many more. He is extremely calm, willing and obedient. Even when time for breeding the girls, he is easy to handle and does as we ask him too. He is a very smart and sensible guy too. He also has a wonderful playful personality as well. He is like a big puppy dog – he will follow us every step we make and try to “help” with any project we are working with around the farm.

Everyone who visits the farm is always in awe of all the horses, but especially of Nagi and how sweet and calm he is which is totally unexpected being a stallion by most people. We can't say enough good things about Nagi and are so honored to have him in our lives as part of the family here at Three Feathers. He has passed these wonderful traits on to his offspring as well and many have went on to other wonderful homes across the country and even the globe. To date we have yet to geld any colts as they have all went on to be breeding stallions in other programs themselves. It has been hard to part with them all, and I shed tears as I watch each of them leave our farm. But, if we can help make others

dreams with horses come true, like they did for me, it is a blessing! They are all special, but, some you realize you just cannot bear the thought of ever leaving!



Like our Cikala (below Left) who went all the way to England, but through miraculous circumstances came back home to us this summer. Don't think I could bear to part with her again! And little Cica (above) that came with her, the first foal out of our stallion Tahalo in England – we are so lucky to have her with us now too! And our little Zaska (below Right, with Lewis) born here this year – she is one unique little gal! A grulla dun pinto with blue eyes and has such a sweet fun personality! But, if we keep these beautiful girls, we can't breed them to our stallion since he is their sire. AI is an option, and we have done it before successfully, but so much trouble and expense. What to do about this dilemma?! We certainly in our wildest imagination never thought we would have more than one stallion on the farm. But, once again the love of these horses has led us down a different path than we had ever planned or expected.



This past November we had the wonderful opportunity to add a beautiful little stud colt to the herd and we went for it!! Cahota (below) is a smoky black (black with a crème gene) and while we love this time with them when they are youngsters, we can hardly wait for him to mature to be old enough to breed back to some of our lovely girls out of our Nagi!! My mind races with the possibilities!! Adding one stud colt was like adding 4 new mares to our program! These beautiful sweet girls can now stay with us and add to our breeding program! Smiles and happy dance!!! With his sweet and calm personality, his great build and family lines plus his black coloring along with the crème gene to add to our colorful mix of pintos and buckskin girls -my mind races with the fun possibilities!! Plus, we are hoping for some beautiful little black curly babies as well since we can also breed him to our black mare, Katee, Nagi's dam who is still with us! I can hardly wait!!

And so, the blessings and changes in life's path these amazing horses have brought into our lives still continue and we are truly thankful for each day with them. They have blessed our lives in so many ways, and even the lives of many others as well. We have also made wonderful dear friends from all over the globe through them that we cherish. Yes, they came into our lives due to my allergies. And since that is the case, I will consider my allergies a blessing! When telling people about curly horses and our experiences with them, I ALWAYS tell them that, yes, their unique curly coats are wonderful and the fact that they are hypo-allergenic is amazing and dream fulfilling.....BUT, even if I did not have any allergies, after having had this breed, they are the ONLY breed for our family because their personalities are the most amazing thing about them!! To close, I would like to share a recent special moment with you. A few weeks ago, my husband Louis came over to me pulled me close and gave me a kiss and said, "Thanks!" And when I asked him what for, he replied, "for bringing horses into my life!" How sweet is that?!! So, I guess my allergies ended up being a blessing to him as well! ☺ I am a lucky gal in so many ways!



Wishing all of our curly friends many wonderful blessings for the New Year! Feel free to stop by our website to see more pictures and read stories of our curly family here at Three Feathers! Or if you are in Kentucky – come by and say “Hello!”

Blessings!

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www.three-feathers.com

<http://www.kyhorsepark.com/>

