

Cindy's Memory Lives On at Tualatin Horse Farm

BY REID IFORD, TUALATIN LIFE

In some ways, the superficial ways, it's like so many other horse stables and arenas that dot our region. But where it counts, in its heart, and soul, and spirit, it is unique in ways of which someone unfamiliar with the story would be completely unaware.

Cindy's House of Horses, located near Highway 99W between SW Hazelbrook Rd. and the Tualatin River, is everything you would expect of a well-equipped horse riding and boarding facility. There is a big indoor arena, a barn for hay, 16 large, clean stables, outdoor corrals, and a treed trail area on the banks of the river.

But it's what you don't see which makes Cindy's so unique. And that is a direct result of the efforts made by owners Susan and Bob Robles to honor the memory of their daughter, Cindy Pastor Riley. Cindy passed away when she was just 37 years old as a consequence of a serious heart condition, cardiomyopathy. Cindy had loved and ridden horses all her life, but it was in how she dealt with her illness that her true spirit could be seen.



Cindy Pastor Riley

"She refused to lay down in a bed," says her mother, Susan Robles. "She said she wasn't going to live her life that way. She only had so much time, and was going to live life on her terms. She had her horse, Ryan, and even though she could not ride, she came to see him every day."

"She refused to let the disease control her life."

The middle of five children, Cindy took her first ride on a horse when she was no more than three years old, and she was instantly bitten by what her mother calls "the horse bug." She rode every chance she got, and 40 years ago when the family bought the 5-acre property on the Tualatin River, she immediately made friends with a girl up the street who had several horses. There was one horse in particular she loved to ride.

"She rode that horse so much that eventually she talked the owner into selling it to her," says her mother. "We had moved here so we could have horses, and Cindy wasn't content until she had a horse of her own."

Cindy's older sister Vicki owns and operates Silver Wings Stables in Spanaway, Washington. It was she who suggested to Bob Robles that he expand on the family's love of horses and build the arena and stables, turning the property into a proper horse facility.

When it came time to name their new venture, the choice was a simple one for the Robles family.

Cindy's influence is found in so much more than just the name. Families, and especially children, are always welcome at the facility. With the greater focus on professional level training for competition found at many stables, arrangements are not always made to serve young children and beginners.

But Susan will quickly tell you the biggest accommodation is made for the horses themselves.

"The horses we have here are all happy horses," she explains. On this beautiful summer day all the horses are running around outdoors. One of them drops onto the dry ground and rolls onto his back, wiggling back and forth. "A horse will not lay down and roll unless he is totally sure that nothing will hurt him," Susan says. "Laying down and rolling shows they feel comfortable and safe here."

"And look at that shine and the healthy gloss on the coat of that bay," she says, pointing to a spirited horse prancing around his corral. "He gets to

move around all day, eat, lay in the shade when he wants. He gets to be a horse, and that makes them healthy and happy."

"One of the things I love about Bob and Susan is they let horses be horses and people be people," explains Cindy's resident trainer Allison Girmai. "It's not glamorous, but it's really special, and they embrace kids. That's very much a part of who their daughter was, and what she stood for. They are very supportive people. When someone is down, they always lift you up. They really care about people. That's what makes this barn so unique."

Allison, or Ali as she is known to the Robles and her friends and students, recently left her longtime position as a school teacher to begin working with horses as her full-time career. She has finished her training to be certified as an equine specialist, which qualifies her, individually and working with other specialists, to use horses to help people with psychological therapy, learning, personal growth and development.

In addition to her regular horse riding classes, she will be incorporating more and more of her specialty training at Cindy's, with the goal of working with all ages, but especially teens and veterans.

"When someone comes here for lessons, for themselves or their child, the first thing

Ali does is ask them some questions to determine what it is they hope to take away from their experience here," Susan says. "Do they just want to ride and have fun? Do they have a goal of competing at some point in the future? Do they want to learn to care for horses? Once she knows what they expect she tailors the classes to meet their needs. Ali does a wonderful job and helps us here in so many ways." Classes and rides are available for children as young as three.

The indoor arena is 60' x 144', which Susan says is necessary to meet the varied needs of riders and trainers. The 16 stalls are 12' x 12'. Again, Susan says this is the minimum size needed to meet a horse's needs and make it comfortable. Everything is cleaned daily, and when Tualatin Life visited the facility was spotless inside and out.

"We even have our own well-water on the property, so the water our horses drink is clean, with no chemicals," Susan adds.

"We have seven horses of our own, and eight horses we are boarding," Susan says. "My horses always stay outside, so we have room for eight more horses in the stables. We do not allow self-care here. This way we can ensure the horses all receive proper care, and the facility is always kept clean."

"I've always thought of this as a working barn. People come here to ride. It's also a great place to retire your horse, if for instance your daughter has grown up and headed off to college, and you can no longer care for her horse yourself. Here you can be sure your horse gets great care and good treatment."

Professionals who work with horses agree. When the Wells Fargo Stagecoach makes an appearance in Portland, they house there eight horses at Cindy's, citing the wash rack, light, heat, hot and cold water, and of course the clean facility and excellent care.

Cindy's House of Horses is located at 11105 Southwest Hazelbrook Rd., Tualatin. Borders can access their horses from 7 AM to 10 PM. People interested in boarding their horse, or taking classes with trainer Allison Girmai, can reach Cindy's by calling 708-567-6497.



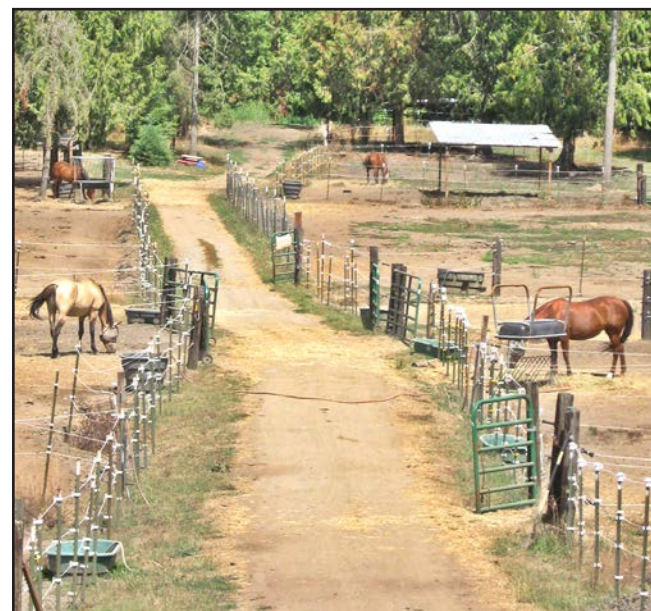
Lessons at Cindy's House of Horses is sometimes a family affair.



Susan showing her love for one of the horses boarded at Cindy's House of Horses.



Two neighbors just hanging out.



Paddocks where horses are turned out every day.