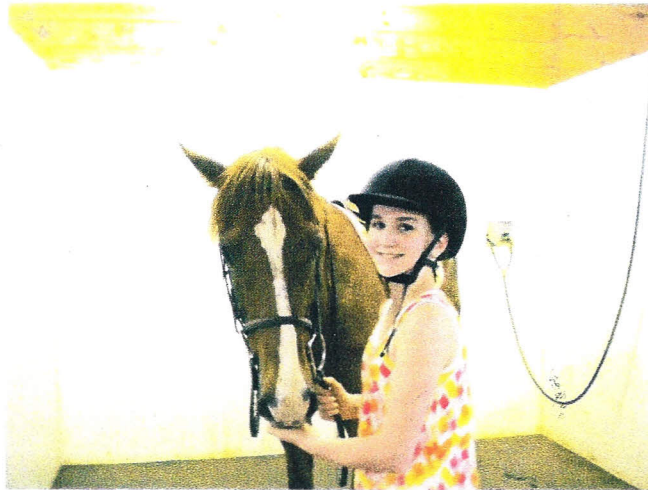


Everybody Loves Raymond



When I first met Ray, it was love at first sight. Ray, a chestnut Thoroughbred is an ex-racehorse related to Northern Dancer. He's also my best friend. If I don't have anyone, I know Ray will always be there.

The first time I met Ray, he was owned by Debra Peters. He was out grazing in the sunlight by the fence and Emma and I went ran to brush away the flies swarming his face. The winter following that fall was Ray-less for me, since I didn't ride him at Hidden Bridge. When spring came, Keedle brought Ray in from the pasture and voila! Ray was as skinny as anything. The Peters' horse, Oliver, who I first jumped 3-foot on, now can't even be ridden if that shows you what great care they take of their horses.

"Ray deserves better," I always thought. I can honestly say that I never expected it to be me.

The next move, to the farm on Aiken Road, I rode Tara and Simon most of the time. When I finally turned 11, I started thinking about buying or leasing a horse. I went to Keedle and asked her if she knew anyone that would have a cheap hunter/jumper for sale. She thought about it and replied with, "I already have a thought." "Who's that?" I asked. "Ray," she said. That day was the day I met my best friend, my Ray-Ray. I got on him and though he wasn't perfect, he was pretty close.

Now we're so much farther in skill, and I know him better than any horse here. We've jumped higher, he's gotten more experienced, and his price has gone up, but I don't care, I'd give anything for him.

In conclusion, Ray's gentle brown eyes make me melt and his canter makes me feel like I'm flying. And as I said in a recent lesson, Ray's not a kidnapper, he just stole my heart.