

# Adult Rider of the Month

## PEGGY POWELL

by Kathy Holcomb

Find your way to the little ranch hidden behind one of Poway's many hills, drive down the lane marked by a sign warning, "Carrot Holders Only Beyond This Point," and you will enter the world to which Peggy Powell escapes for "fun and fitness."

Peggy is a working student at Jeremy's Ranch, arriving at 6 a.m. sharp every weekday morning to groom and grain 12 horses, then ride from one to three of those horses. Three times a week she joins fellow riders in an early morning leg strengthening class in the stable yard. By 10:30, she heads home to her other job: Peggy is also the mother of seven children ranging in age from 8 to 32, has three grandchildren and is 51 years old.

"I'm the KoolAid mom on the block," Peggy laughed. "Our house is where all the kids come after school, because I make the popcorn and the KoolAid."

Though Peggy's family had leased a horse in Poway and had ridden friend's horses, Peggy began formal lessons only last November. Her 17-year-old daughter, Beth, was the first student at Jeremy's Ranch when Stephanie Kacinski taught riding to each of Peggy's four other children who still live at home. When Stephanie offered a "Ladies Special" for morning lessons, Peggy took the bait.

"I loved it. I soon realized how overworked Stephanie was, so I offered to help," Peggy said. "Now, that's how I pay for my lessons." By December, Peggy had quit her job as a cook for the Kountry Kafe in Poway. When asked about bringing home a paycheck versus working for lessons, Peggy reflected, "When I stop to think about it, I probably get 'paid' more here. In fact, if you consider this as therapy, it's worth about \$100 per hour!"

Peggy knows each of the 12 stable-owned horses as if they were her own children. Misty, Bob, Benjamin . . . All but four share a spacious pasture. The star of the barn is none other than Jeremy, himself, for whom the ranch is named.

"When Stephanie first bought Jeremy, he bucked her off all the time. But he turned out to be the best horse," Peggy said. "He jumps 5 feet, fixes his own leads. He can make anyone look great. John and Stephanie originally bought this property as a retirement home for him."

When their job situation became tight, Stephanie carefully selected a few other school horses and renewed a teaching career. All the horses on the ranch belong to her; there are no boarders. The focus is on all-around good English horsemanship for fun. No showing. Stephanie holds high standards for her students and isn't against showing, but won't promote it.

That's fine with Peggy, who has no interest at all in showing. "Too expensive," she says. Her own goals are to learn to ride better and better and someday own a riding stable of her own, to pass on her knowledge to children. She takes advantage of every opportunity to learn all she can about horses. She said she watches the farrier and veterinarian, pestering them with questions. "This is like



*Peggy Powell schooling over jumps at Jeremy's Ranch*

getting a college education in animal husbandry!"

Misty is Peggy's favorite mount and she rides the mare daily. "Misty is in her late 20's. Our combined age is nearly 80! But she's so energetic. She's easy to ride. She just goes. She's happiest when she's cantering. Some people don't like to ride her because they think she's too fast. Once she gets going she doesn't want to stop. She and I get along real well together."

Stephanie claimed that Misty didn't know how to jump before Peggy began riding her and that Peggy taught her. Peggy shrugged modestly. She's modest, too, about being right in there, holding her own against much younger riders during their leg strengthening class.

"The exercises are especially for horseback riders," Peggy explained. Fellow student, Sheila Mealey, seemed able to post without stirrups effortlessly. Persistent probing finally found the reason: Sheila practices martial arts. She agreed to teach the workouts and soon earned the nickname "Sheera, Princess of Pain." Peggy demonstrated some of the exercises, including the torturous duck walk. "But I can post without stirrups much better since the month and a half of exercises."

The people at Jeremy's Ranch are like family to Peggy. In fact, while her husband was home getting the kids off to school, Peggy was fixing breakfast for the early risers at the barn. She's that kind of caring, giving person.

"Peggy is always happy and laughing and smiling," said Sheila.

"Yes, Peggy is always smiling," said Stephanie. "She just has fun. That's the whole point of all of this and Peggy is just terrific!"

—RIDING