

Annette Droddy
Hemphill, Texas
Age 10

“My greatest Appaloosa adventure (so far)!”

Hi, my name is Sky’s Spotted Design, but you can just call me Sky. I’m a five-year-old Appaloosa, and I graze at Somerset Stables in Woodville, Texas. Let me tell you about my greatest Appaloosa adventure (so far).

I was just a regular horse out in the “pond field” getting the occasional “ride”. The one day, while eating my feed, Miss Kay (the lady who feeds me) said “Sky, here is your knew “Project”, Annette.” I didn’t quite know what that meant but when I saw her I thought, “Well, this isn’t going to last very long... just another weak-legged kid.” My “Project” took a lead rope, lead me to the barn, and tied me to the rail. She had me tacked up and ready to go before you could say “feeeeeeed!” We got into the arena and started walking at a pace that I never imagined possible. “Project” had the same fast pace for trotting, but I liked it. Then Miss Kay Feeder told me to jump a CROSS POLE!! I decided she had eaten some bad hay. Yet over the weeks and months “Project” kept coming back, and my conditioning program got steadily more intense. For example, “Project” started jumping me over 2’6” to 2’9” oxers, coups and verticals and maneuvering in beautiful dressage tests.

One day, Miss Kay Feeder had taken me into the barn about two hours earlier than normal. The big six-horse trailer was in the barn with its doors wide open. “Project” got there soon after I finished a large bucket of feed and hurried me into the trailer, saying, “I’ll see you at Pine Hill.” Next thing I knew my friends and I were on a mad gallop to a place called Pine Hill Equestrian Center. Everything happened so fast! I was shuffled into the most extravagant stall I’ve ever seen; “Project” gave me hay and water, and set up my tack and her stuff on racks. I even got to eat while she was grooming. Soon after, she tacked me up, and then I and my friends were ridden onto a big outdoor field with jumps of all shapes, sizes and colors. Miss Kay Feeder told me and “Project” to jump the small log in the front of the field. The first time we went over it a little more than a crawl. “Project” said, “Sky, that’s way smaller than what we’ve been jumping!” I felt my heart leap the next time. We soared over it with hardly any effort at all. Now *that* was fun! We flew over tall, wide coups, long ditches, and huge banks the rest of the day. I was so excited that I didn’t realize I was hungry until “Project” brought me a large bucket of feed and a treat.

The next morning, “Project” came about the same time as the day before. She fed me more feed, but I didn’t mind too much. “Project” whipped out her grooming kit and started brushing me to the point where I looked like the clear pond I grazed by. “Project” tacked me up and changed into the prettiest riding attire I’d ever seen on her and said, “Now Sky, I know you’re going to be great. Just help me get through dressage in one piece and you’ll have an easy time the rest of the day.” I didn’t think those prissy tests were *that* important, but I gave it all I had for “Project.” She said we had a wonderful score.

“Project” let me drink some water, but she mounted immediately afterward. I scurried into the show jumping arena and suddenly felt nervous. “Project could tell. She whispered, “It’s okay. You’re the best jumper out here. Now come on. Let’s go.” I felt reassured and my legs started moving at a brisk trot. We cleared the first jump, and the

rest was a breeze. I came out of the arena, expecting to be done, but “Project” shed her coat and threw on a cross-country vest. Hadn’t I done enough already? Before I knew it, I was hurried into the cross-country starting box and started jogging to the first log and just crept over it. “Project” urged me with her leg as if to tell me, “Sky, this is a cross-country course for goodness sake!” I decided I’d canter for her. A thrill wriggled inside of me. I flew over the coup and brush box, soared over the square box, dashed over numbers five, six, seven, and eight. The last spurt of energy came on as we approached the ninth and final jump. I sprung off the ground, took to the air, landed on the compacted ground and cantered up the hill to victory!

It’s been a few weeks since then and “Project” Annette and I have gotten along even better with each other. I think I’ll keep her. I now have my sights set on the May Pony Club Eventing Rally. Hope to see you there!