

"I was having zero luck with her," Amy recalled. "I knew we had to keep going and went into the championship. I had the drive of my life. I was really excited, but didn't know how excited Mayo was. He put the neck ribbon on, jumped into the cart and hugged the living daylights out of me. It's nice to see your trainer get that excited."

"Mayo is so dedicated; he works really hard. He loves his family, his horses and takes pride in what he does. He's always looking to make things a little better."

Mary and Jim Yonker have been friends and clients since Mayo went out on his own.

"He's one of the hardest-working people I know – and terribly honest. He has so much honor, such high standards. I can't say enough about his integrity," Jim said.

"He has a very good philosophy about his horses," Jim continued. "He doesn't try to make one into something it's not. He has the horse's best interest at heart. And when he sells a horse, or puts one out there for sale, you can bet your bottom dollar it's a safe mount for a kid or adult."

"We've become such good friends, like brothers. He's really important to me."

Mary agrees. "Mayo is one of the most giving people I've ever met. If you need something, he's always there. His barn is different. Everyone gets along. Mayo likes to have people around and makes it fun for everyone. When we go out on Saturday to ride, many ride at the same time. Mayo may have one rider in the ring; Jessie and Richmond might have someone in the arena at the same time."

Perhaps the family with whom Mayo's name has been most closely associated is the Russells. Mayo spoke of the couple who are among his closest friends and confidants.

"Joe is a special person for me, he helped me in a lot of ways," Mayo said. "He was one of the first clients to bring me horses to work."

"Bette is like my Mom. Joe filled out the paperwork for my citizenship. Bette taught me how to read and write English and the questions and answers for the citizenship test. I'll never forget what they did for me."

The Russells bred and raised the stallion, The Last Don. Joe showed the youngster in-hand; later Mayo took over his under-saddle career. While the stallion has a nice show record under saddle, his lasting contributions to the Saddlebred world come through the horses he has sired. Joe and Mayo have teamed up to win numerous in-hand titles. In 2012, Jessie tailed her father and For The Win when they earned the ASR Futurity of Kentucky Yearling World's Championship. Mayo and his staff have made many of The Last Don's futurity colts into successful performance horses.

Joe says Mayo "does have a knack for working with young horses. That calling carries over to his customers."

Mayo knows his clients like to go to shows and have fun. Being competitive is a plus. If you didn't win, he asks, 'Did you learn something? Were you out-horsed? Did you have fun?'

Jessie was still in pre-school when Mayo and Nealia separated. After Nealia moved to New Jersey, Jessie spent most of her time on the east coast, visiting and riding at Mayo's whenever possible.

"I used to follow the older girls around and probably was the most annoying kid you've ever been around. I wanted to ride like them all the time," she said, looking back on those 'growing up' days. She developed a passion for equitation as well as the performance side of the business.

"Trainers' kids don't have the life people think we do," she said. "We are like a second set of hands. I never had a horse show mom like everyone else. I'd get myself and my horse ready, help clean tack, set up at shows, get hay, etc. Mom didn't have lot of money for me to compete against \$100,000 to \$200,000 horses we show against. If she found a horse for me, it wasn't very experienced."

Jessie persisted. She concedes that, when she was younger, she didn't have the 'body' for equitation.

"Mom put me in every class to fill it,"



Mallory Moctezuma celebrated her lead-line ribbons with her big sister.

she said. "Suddenly my legs grew long, I got slimmer and people started noticing my horsemanship. I had to work ten- to fifty-times harder than many others who had meticulously-trained horses."

She had one advantage as a trainer's kid. People respected her parents – and took an interest in Jessie's career.

"I have been blessed to ride with some of the top instructors," she said, explaining that she spent time at some of their barns and others worked with her at shows. "The Crumplers, the Mattons and Barbe [Smith] molded me, teaching me their special tricks and giving me confidence and a belief in myself."

"I spent time in Kentucky with Kim and Fran [Crumpler]; at shows they treated me as if I were their kid. Scott and Carol Matton brought out my inner-competitor. I'm a very emotional person and Scotty made me work – and cry. He dug out the aggressiveness I didn't know

I had. Barbe [Smith] helped my confidence, to put my head on straight. She kept me in equitation – and helped keep Mom and me from killing each other. I went to Lillian [Shively's] a couple of times when I was younger and in my second to last year in equitation. There I learned how to be a team player, how to watch other riders and improve yourself by watching everyone else."

Jesse credits David and Kristen Cater, Michael Craghead, Heather DiGiannantonio, Lisa Jensen Richardson, Donna Smith, Missy Hughes Smith and John Whalen for having positive influences on her riding career and life.

On her visits to Mayo, he "would put me on young horses. Mom almost had a heart attack about that."

Mom is Nealia McCracken of North Wind Stables in New Jersey. Nealia's work with Saddlebred Rescue gave Jessie the opportunity to evaluate, work with and rehabilitate horses. She literally worked with dozens of rescue horses with a goal of making them useful citizens for a family or for an Academy program. Jessie says that "helped me learn patience and appreciate the things in front of you."

For most of her equitation career, Jessie competed against the best of the best while riding a pleasure equitation horse. In 2004, she won the 13-Year-Old Saddle Seat Equitation World's Championship and a reserve in the junior championship. She won Louisville's 14-Year-Old Saddle Seat Equitation title and remained in top ribbons at regional shows as well as on the national scene.

In her final junior exhibitor season, Jessie showed Top Beat (Elvis), a five-gaited horse. She schooled him for equitation for six months before hitting the show ring. They won their age group and the Saddle Set Equitation 14-17 Championship at Lexington and were reserve in the UPHA Senior Challenge Cup National Championship at The UPHA/American Royal. She twice went to South Africa as part of the World Cup of Saddle Seat Equitation team. In 2008, she captained the winning three-gaited team and rode on



Richmond showed The Hathaway Man to win Midwest's Junior Five-Gaited title in 2014.



*Garrett and Patrick Weiler both showed CH Honest Impression in Hackney Pleasure Driving Competition. Pictured are Patrick and Garrett Weiler, Beverly and Dick Hegner (former owners of CH Honest Impression), Jessica Moctezuma, Amy Weiler and Mayo Moctezuma.*

the champion five-gaited team two years later.

Not only did Jessie show Top Beat in equitation, they were successful in three-gaited competition as well. That year, the United States Equestrian Federation named her its Junior Exhibitor of the Year.

Jessie completed two years of college, but the love of horses and dream of being a trainer never left her. In 2010, she tied reserve in the USEF Adult Saddle Seat Finals at Lexington. She realized she needed to make some changes in her life.

"Dad told me I could come up here and try to find a job, but not work for him," she said quietly. "I showed for him a little, and talked with people about a job. In February, he said, 'You should just work here.'

"I realized I am my own person. I think I have worked longer for Dad trainer-wise than anyone else. He's given me a lot of great opportunities and always is there to help me any time I need it. Whatever he didn't get along with, I got – and the other way around."

In 2012, the third member of the Moctezuma Stables team moved to Illinois. Jessie had admired (Wyatt) Richmond DeHart from the time she was 10 years old.

"I was walking around Louisville and I saw this young boy putting up (tack) curtains. I thought he was the hottest guy around. Ever since, I followed him around. I became friends with his sister so I could hang out with him," she said, adding "he doesn't remember me (from those days.)"

When she was 15, he began to take notice. His father, trainer Wyatt DeHart of DeHart Stables in Finchville, Ky., told him, 'Jessica has been following you around for years. I think she likes you.'

"He came up to me Friday night at Junior League. We dated a few months, however, I was in New Jersey and he was in Kentucky. In high school, that didn't work out.

"When we went to the American Royal in 2011, Dad asked me to stay in the truck with the horses until he found out where we were stabled. He came back and told me,

'your husband is right next to us.' When I was bringing horses up, there was Richmond playing the guitar at Harris Stables right next to us."

As they talked, each wondered why they broke up in the first place. They had been through many similar experiences.

"Nine months later, he moved to Illinois and came to work for us. He brings such a different aspect to our barn. He has been around breaking babies more than Dad and I have; the number we

would do in three months Richmond would do in a week. He has such a way with young horses, with tough horses. He's very much a horse whisperer. He's helped attract more open and ladies horses to our barn."

Richmond comes by it naturally. As the son of Wyatt and Dawn DeHart, he came up as a trainer's child. He was born while his father worked for Dr. Alan Raun at Reedannaland. As a youngster, he showed primarily Hackney Ponies. In 2003, he rode Boxford Courageous Spirit to the Junior Exhibitor Road Pony Under Saddle world's title. It was his first.

The DeHart family moved to Minneapolis where Wyatt worked for Ken Smith. When Richmond was 11, they moved to Finchville. Here he learned about breeding programs, working with colts and showing. After graduating from high school at age 17, he took his first 'outside' job, working with Tre Lee.

"Tre took me under his wing," Richmond said, adding he was more of a colt man for Lee. "I groomed horses and would help break colts in the afternoon. I got to see and be part of a lot of really nice young horses. I got to see what those circles were like."

His first opportunity to work a string of horses came when he was with Carl Fisher and Peter Palmer at Meadowlake Farm. He says, "They gave me 14 or 15 of every shape, size, color and age and let me go to work. They let me figure it out on my own but were there to help if I needed it. I learned not to rush a horse; what might make a good two-year-old might make a better three-year-old if we didn't rush."

When Brian Chappell needed an assistant at Ricky Cook's barn, he brought Richmond in.

"That was a crucial time in my life," Richmond said. "Brian needed someone who wanted to work colts. I was more than willing to learn to do things his way. He taught me more about

horses than anyone else had. Working for Dad was special, but Brian and I had a good connection from the start. He's more like my big brother."

Richmond pegged that time as "the first year me and Jessie started dating. We had a long distance relationship. It was either time for a change or for me to do something different. I left there about a month before Ricky closed his doors and moved to Illinois right after Louisville, 2012.

"This is the first barn where I was introduced to a full operation. Horses range from two to 25-years-old; 'children' from three to 80. It's my first experience having amateur horses of my own to work. We have a team of three people working 45 horses. If I don't get along with one, someone else will. Jess's strong points are probably my weak points. She can pinpoint the fine, little things before we get to a show."

Richmond says he "didn't know Mayo well when I came there to work, although we were acquainted when Jess and I were dating. He's a very family-oriented man, but the business always comes first. As a boss, he's very easy going, lenient and wants everything to go well."

Richmond and Jessie aren't finished work when they leave the barn. The two live a few miles down the road and are getting a small breeding operation started.

"Mayo is encouraging us to keep doing that. He's happy to see us investing in this breed," Jessie said. "Elisabeth Goth bought the first horse we sold from our program, an untouched weanling, Kissed By Royalty."

Although the 2015 season has barely started in the midwest, fans have gotten a good preview of the season to come. The Moctezuma team started the season in winning form. As of early June, they had attended three shows. Among the wins: Lisa Balcerak and the lovely Pola Negri, Garrett, Patrick



*Moctezuma's junior exhibitors had a great show at FASH this year. Patrick Weiler (left) drove Captain Proud to win the AHHS Roadster Pony title and grand championship. Cassidy Vote and Moonstruck In Kentucky won the Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure Championship while Garrett Weiler (right) won the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited blue with Nubiana and the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited park qualifier and championship with Ro and Mes Sartori.*

and Amy Weiler with multiple mounts and ponies, Richmond with Rocco's Callaway's When the Stars Go Blue and Jessie with the Russell's three-year-old Quite The Catch (The Last Don x Becoming).

Mayo has another passion. Of course, it's family first, his horses, but Jessie says another love is "cows. He's had cows his whole life. Today, he has about 15 Angus at the farm. He loves his mamas; he sells the boys but normally keeps the girls."



Mayo's other passion is his Angus cattle. He is justly proud of his registered bull.

A cow is what landed Mayo in the hospital for surgery.

"One of his cows charged him; Mayo tried to jump the fence but didn't quite make it," Amy recalled. "He was trying to pull himself up on the fence and finished whatever damage already was in that shoulder."

He was out for about six months. Jessie and Richmond simply carried on.

"We wanted to make Mayo proud," Jessie said. "I hope we did."

Each of the three trainers works his or her own string and gives lessons to those customers. Jessie also heads a successful Academy program. Mayo's wife, Erika, and other children, Eric, almost 11, Mallory, 8 and Wyatt, 6, help out. They like horses, but are not involved in riding. Rather Eric and

Wyatt do karate and Mallory's passion is ballet.

However the work is divided, it all comes together for the clients. Susan Bekenstein has been part of Mayo's barn family since 1993. Her lifelong passion is horses: she bought her first when she was age 35.

"When I first started with Mayo and Nealia, I watched him work horses and the bond babies have with him," she said. "He has a sense of when youngsters are ready to start whatever work they're going to do. The horses make an easy transition from not being ridden to being ridden or driven. They trust that the world is good and nothing bad will happen. It makes my heart feel good."

Today, Susan is part of three ladies who are "joined at the hip," she said, explaining she means they usually compete against one another. "We've never had any undercurrent of jealousy or thought we shouldn't show against this one or that. We go in, do our best and have fun. Mayo sets the atmosphere of good sportsmanship and fun. Jessie is very much the same. And with Richmond we have a great training team that's having a lot of success. I don't think there is an empty stall."

Rocco Litrenta has been with Mayo for 26 years. He says Mayo "is a wonderful man who gives you your money's worth. He's honest and does a good job, and with Jessie and Richmond there it's wonderful, like paradise on earth!"

Cassidy Vote and her parents, Wendy and Greg, make a two-and-a-half-hour drive from their home to the barn. They have purchased a town house not far from the farm so they can spend Saturdays and Sundays with their horses. At FASH, Cassidy won the Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure Championship title aboard Moonstruck In Kentucky and was reserve in the 14-17 Show Pleasure Championship with



Mayo and Jessie escorted Amy Weiler back to the barn after her winning ride aboard Design Star at FASH earlier this year. They won both the Adult Five-Gaited Show Pleasure qualifier and championship.

her newest mount, New York's Single Lady.

"When you find the right person, the right people, you can't replace that," Wendy said. "One reason Mayo is special is that he's really down-to-earth. He listens to the client and sees everything and is very upfront about where your horse is. We enjoy the laid-back, family atmosphere."

Joe and Bette Russell have more performance and futurity youngsters coming along. And new clients are ready to walk in the door whenever there is a space for them.

With all his success, Mayo remains a very humble, unassuming man. He is proud of his coming from the Mexican mountains without an education, getting his citizenship and having his own business. He is proud of his kids and family and the people around him.

And those who know him best are proud to call him their friend.



A large group of Moctezuma Stables supporters cheered on their riders at Louisville, 2014.