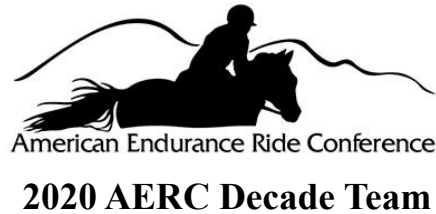


## JayaMae Gregory & Foxfire's Little Britches (Asali)



2014 Cougar Rock photo © Diana Hiiesalu of Gore/Baylor Photography

**Rider's name:** JayaMae Gregory

**Horse's name:** Foxfire's Little Britches (Asali)

**Year of First Endurance Ride (first year in the decade):** 2011

**Region:** West

**Current rider lifetime mileage?**

**Endurance:** 1975

**Limited Distance:** 665

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?**

Asali was originally a horse I was exercising for the daughter of one of my Chico State professors when I was a college student. Because I was a starving student at the time and couldn't afford tack, I rode Asali in a rope halter and a bareback pad. Her owner introduced me to a lot of Parelli groundwork and I had fun learning something new with Asali as I was originally a traditionally trained hunt seat equitation rider. I am not quite sure what happened, but after a casual conversation with Asali's owner (who had previously told me Asali wasn't for sale), we worked out a deal. I ended up with a registered Missouri Fox Trotter for \$500 (and I made payments on that \$500 too)! She was worth a lot more than that, but her owner saw how much I loved her and she believed every horse deserved to have the love of a girl (or in my case, a woman).

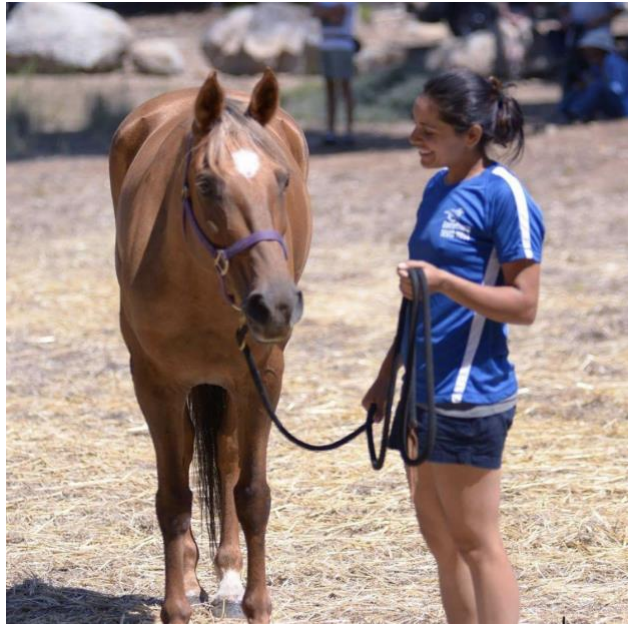
**What is your horse's breeding?** Missouri Fox Trotter

**Sex:** Mare

**DOB:** March 10, 2000

**Horse height:** 14.3 hands - **Approximate weight:** 850 lbs

**Color:** Palomino



2014 Tevis Start photo © Dominique Cogne (Kumba Photo)

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse?** I had always wanted a horse of my own... and Asali would run up to the gate every time she saw me coming. We fell in love with each other.

**Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?** Nope! Asali and I were both brand new to endurance when a friend challenged us to ride in the Tevis Cup. It took us 2 and a half years to get enough miles to enter Tevis since neither of us had ever been to an endurance ride before!

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?** To date, I have ridden 12 different horses in endurance. Of those 12, five horses I started in the sport myself.

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?** I love doing liberty work with horses and I teach horsemanship lessons and clinics to riders of all ages. I no longer compete hunter jumpers, but I still enjoy cross-training in hunt seat equitation.

**How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general?** I have been involved with endurance for only one decade, so I still feel I am new to the sport and have a lot to learn. But I have a huge passion for the sport and am the ride manager of the Kristina Chesterman Memorial Ride, a West Region charity ride I started in 2014, and I currently serve on the Tevis Board of Governors too. I first began riding when I was 5 years old.

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?** What first got me interested in endurance riding was the challenge and prestige of the Tevis Cup 100-mile ride. What made me fall in love with the sport was the connection and bond you build with your mount when you spend that much time in the backcountry together --- and being in nature has always been a healing experience for me. Sharing those experiences with a beloved horse --- I can think of few things which match those experiences.

**How old was your horse when first started in endurance?** 11

**How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons?** Asali and I completed 20 rides over our first three seasons together.

**What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.)** We started with limited distance rides, but moved up to 50s quickly.



Photo © 2011 by Jo Danehy, Danehy Photography

**How long until you top tenned or raced (if you did)?** We never really raced --- I just rode Asali to her best ability that day. I do remember one “real” Top Ten though, when we came in 6<sup>th</sup> place at the Quicksilver Fall Classic in 2013.

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons?** I usually always give 3 solid months off in the winter, but we are always riding in between ride seasons, even if it’s just light riding.

**If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one?** I give 6 weeks off after a 100 mile ride.

**If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one?** Same as for 100s – I give 6 weeks off.

**Do you use any special type of tack or shoeing with your horse?** My horses are all barefoot and I swear by EasyBoot Gloves for training and competition.

**What kind of problems have you overcome with your horse?** In the beginning, when I first started riding Asali, she had a ton of go. And if you tried to hold her back, she would head toss and get light in the front end. Turns out she just needed to be ridden more. Now, if I give her too many days off, especially if the weather has been fresh, I just expect we’ll need to get a good gallop in on the trail.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse.** Tevis 2014, hands down. It was our first Tevis completion and the day was just perfect. Nothing went wrong, we just enjoyed the ride we had together. And when we crossed the finish line, I had no idea we were making history --- as very few Missouri Fox Trotters have ever finished Tevis. To date, Asali is the only one of her breed to have three Tevis Cup finishes, a Tevis Cup finish with a junior, and she’s also the only MFT to have six 100-mile completions.

**What was your most humbling experience?** Being overtime on a limited distance ride after having successfully completed more than one 50 mile ride... it was a series of unfortunate events, which included not being tacked up on time, my junior leaving his vet card in ride camp, and throwing boots on the trail. A good learning experience for sure!

**What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?** The biggest lesson I have learned is that you really can do anything you put your mind to -- you just have to believe in yourself, commit to the training, and not give up. Sure, you need a good horse too, but you don’t need an expensive, highly trained Arab... you just need a sound, healthy horse you connect with who loves the trail.

**What advice would you give to new riders?** Trust your horse, especially when riding at night! They know where their hooves are better than you. And train your own body! If you expect your horse to be a

top athlete, you need to get in shape too! Hit the gym, pick up trail running or weight lifting or swimming or whatever sounds appealing to you.

**Looking back, what do you feel you did right?** I listened to my horse. I slowed down on the trail if she didn't feel as strong as usual, I let her run when she felt good, I switched saddles when I realized the one we had wasn't working. I also learned to be present --- Asali helped me with this one.

**What would you do differently?** Hmm... I think Asali should answer this one... and if she did, she might request more treats on the trail. I am not always good about sticking apple slices and carrots in my saddle bags. The one thing I can say is I might have looked for a mentor instead of going into my first ride totally blind (yes, I was that rider who polo-wrapped her horse to go down the trail and didn't bring enough food, thinking everything was going to be provided for me at the ride).

**What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it?** I had two goals when I started riding Asali – to finish the Tevis Cup and become a Decade Team. We achieved both. Now I would like to get one more 100 under Asali's belt before retirement, so she'll have a Silver buckle award with AERC for seven 100-mile completions.

**Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?** Asali is a confident mare. She is also trustworthy and easy to work with. She often mirrors me though --- so if I am having a bad day or projecting negative emotions, she calls me out immediately. This is why she has taught me so much about myself.

**What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most (50s, 100s, multiday, etc.)?** I love 100s and hope to do more in the future! I also love 50s and want to start going to more new rides, especially out of state rides!

**In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life?** I have gained an immense community --- some of my closest friends I have met through endurance. After the Camp Fire in 2018, when my family and I lost everything (including one of our beloved endurance horses), it was our endurance community who came together to raise money for us, helped to house us and feed us, and gifted us with new riding gear, among so many other things. Endurance riding has also taught my children so much --- not just given them so many special memories, but it has also taught them responsibility, accountability, leadership, and about giving back to others.

**Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?** I free-feed my horses grass hay so they have access to hay 24 hours a day, much like they would in the wild.

**Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem?** No, but I only feed alfalfa during competition or intense training. And I stopped feeding beardless wheat a long time ago after a vet told me it wasn't the best type of hay to feed horses.

**What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?** I use California Trace supplement in my mashes.

**Do you give any kind of joint products?** Nope.

**Describe your electrolyte protocol.** My favorite electrolytes are the EnduraMax electrolytes from Kentucky Performance Products. I purchase them from Riding Warehouse. I always electrolyte more on hot days and only if the horse is drinking. I do not rinse my horse's mouth after giving the electrolytes, as a vet once told me it will encourage the horse to drink more if you don't rinse.

**How do you choose which rides to attend?** Usually, I pick the ones which are close to me so I don't have to haul too far since I am often driving by myself or with a junior. However, in the coming years, I'd like to attend more rides out of state.

**Do you go to rides outside of your region?** I have been to a few outside of my region --- in the summer of 2019, when my family and I did a cross country trip in an RV gifted to us after the Camp Fire, I had the pleasure of catch riding at three different rides: one in Illinois, one in Kansas, and one in Oregon.

**Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why.** This is easy. The first two who come to mind are Barbara White and Kathie Perry. I think everyone would agree with me that they are legends in our sport. But I have also had the pleasure of getting to know them off the trail and am attracted to their spirits – they both are a wealth of knowledge, but are so incredibly humble, gracious, and kind. They are also strong women with some incredible life experiences and have a zest for living which is contagious. I feel lucky to call them both friends. The third person would be Nicole Wertz, who not only has some amazing accomplishments in endurance, but also in dressage. She is a beautiful rider and among only a few who have mastered more than one riding discipline.

**Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them.** My first trail partner, besides my horse, is my oldest son, who began riding with me when he was six. Jakob has kept me honest in so many ways, especially when it comes to horse training. He has a natural ability with horses and I have learned so much from him, besides just enjoying his company on the trail.

**In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?** A good mind, nice conformation, a curious personality, and that “spark” that you just know when you see it. Oh, and I am partial to mares.