



# AERC Extra

Photo ©  
Karl Creations

Welcome to the Summer 2012 edition of AERC Extra, the online newsletter from AERC. Bonus: Clicking on an advertisement—or website address—or email address—or anything in **red**—will link you to that place on the web. We encourage you to contribute to the Extra by sending in your stories to the AERC office.

*The AERC National Office Staff*

**Some Highlights of this Issue: Coming Home to Endurance Riding (3) • Conquering the American River Classic (3) Gypsy Bella, Heart-Stealing Horse (6) • A Great Start for Jennifer and Jake (8) • Year 1: Exciting, Stressful, Educational (9) From Airplane Pilot to Horse Pilot (11) • From Founder to Finish for Rainey (14) • 50th Birthday Goal: Ride the Tevis (16) Big South Fork Pioneer Experience (20) • Meet AERC's Only Gypsy Vanner (24) • The Slowest Way is the Fastest Way (24)**

## New AERC Members Share Their Stories

Thanks to all the new (and new-ish) AERC members who wrote in with their stories, mentor thanks, opinions and remembrances. New members deserve a great deal of respect as endurance riding is not an easy sport to take on. Just joining AERC takes a leap of faith—in yourself **and** your equine.

We welcome all new 2012 members and hope that your first year of AERC membership is a positive one. It may be difficult, but sometimes you may learn more from a pull than you would a completion. Just remember the AERC motto, "To finish is to win," and celebrate every completion.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome at the AERC office. The economy in general and gas prices, specifically, have slowed AERC's growth, but with the grass-roots efforts of members introducing others to the sport we can get back to expanding our membership and building towards a stronger future.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and will **contribute to the next issue**, focusing on the best endurance ride you've ever experienced!



**Flex Tree Saddlery**  
*Designed Comfort  
for Horse and Rider*



[www.flextreesaddlery.com](http://www.flextreesaddlery.com)  
618-539-3903

## Endurance Riding: It's All About Friendship

by Joshua Cook

In my short experience in the sport of endurance riding I feel like I've learned a lot about myself, my horses, and the range of emotions this sport can induce. I first entered the sport about three months after first throwing my leg over a horse.

With some prodding and poking from my main mentor and lovely wife I entered the 2010 Old Dominion LD ride. During that ride



© Peter DeMott, [www.photosbydemott.com](http://www.photosbydemott.com)

continued >

**American Endurance Ride Conference**  
[www.aerc.org](http://www.aerc.org) • [aerc@foothill.net](mailto:aerc@foothill.net)

P.O. Box 6027 • Auburn, CA 95604 • 866-271-2372

### ITCH BEGONE!

Zephyr's Garden 100% Natural Itch Team  
**STOP THE ITCH SALVE**  
&  
**STOP THE ITCH SPRAY**

Don't let sweet itch, bug bites and itchy dermatitis ruin your horse's summer.



Use coupon code **ENDUR2** for a 15% discount.

805-969-7059

## It's All About Friendship . . .

I foolishly sat on my horse unconcerned at the start line and didn't even think about other 35 horses that would soon be galloping by. I lost two shoes in one loop and put my first EasyBoot on and realized I didn't actually own a second, went through my first away vet check, and finished in 90° weather four minutes before maximum time. When Art King and Nick Kohut finally shook my hand and said, "Congratulations, you have completed," I nearly cried. I'd never felt more elated, exhausted, or proud than I did at that very moment.

After much Ibuprofen and a few days to re-learn to walk I quickly started thinking about the next ride. As I progressed through a few more rides I tried to learn as much as I could from as many different sources as I could. I feel very lucky to ride here in the Northeast and have so many great riders to learn from.

I soon met what seemed like a whole family of fellow endurance riders I saw every other weekend. I learned about the proper saddle choice for men and a product called "Body Glide" from Skip Kemerer, which I still thank him for to this day. I quickly became enamored with every aspect of the sport and went through what I'd like to call the "purchasing phase"; I bought some Taylored Tack in matching colors, something I swore I would never do when I first entered the sport since I have a Y chromosome. I then moved on to heart rate monitors which I thought I had terribly bad luck with but it turns out almost everyone has bad luck with them at some point. (I wish I would have learned that lesson before I bought three of them.)



**"I've never been involved with any sport—or anything for that matter—where people are all so willing to help others; it's refreshing for the soul."**

Kathy Broaddus and Lani Newcomb are people I consider some of my best friends and whom I've learned the most about the sport from. They told me one day, "Yeah, we have a hard time keeping our heart rate monitors working, too. So we really try to listen to what the horses are telling us about what's going on too." Wait . . . you can do this sport without all the electrical doodads? Again, something I wish I had learned pre-purchasing phase, but listening to the horse I've learned is an art that can always be improved upon.

Moving on, after a little convincing from my wife, we entered the Biltmore 50 and both finished. As miserable as I was at the finish, Ken Marcella told me my horse looked good, shook my hand and said, "Congratulations," and that made it all worthwhile.

Thinking about that first 50 also brings back a sage piece of advice I'd like to pass along to anyone thinking about stepping up ride distances. Sam Lewis calmly told me, upon learning of some concern I had at riding 50 miles, "Hey, it's just twice as far as you've ever been, what's the big deal?"

I'd also like to take a moment to share a piece of advice of my own. If you love your spouse they probably shouldn't be involved with your first 50. Even more Ibuprofen and a few weeks to re-learn to walk later, I quickly decided I would stick to LDs for a while.

I moved on and rode several more LD rides, and actually won the LD Mileage Award here in the Northeast for the 2011 ride season. There were highs, top tens and a vet's choice award. There were cold mornings and hot afternoons. There were lows, lamenesses and other pulls. There were lots and lots of sponges which I always seemed to lose from my sponge leash. There were a few rainy days, including one especially horrible storm during the Big South Fork 100 that I was crewing for Kathy Broaddus and Lani Newcomb. Standing there holding a metal E-Z Up in the middle of an open field during torrential downpours, extreme winds, lightning and thunder made me fully question my sanity.

There were frustrations; once I threw my heart rate monitor down in the vet check halfway through a ride because it hadn't been working and decided to try to listen to what the horse and trail were telling me. I then lazily sauntered back to camp, enjoying that loop more than almost any I have ever ridden, and completed the ride. Turns out Lani and Kathy were right, sometimes it's nice to step back from the technology and get more in tune with the horse and trail.

Throughout it all, the single thing I remember most about my short time in endurance are the many friends and kind people. Even at my first ride—when I didn't know anyone—a rider stopped and helped me put my EasyBoot on, a group of people at the end helped me complete as I was without crew. I've since tried to help riders, been helped even more, and witnessed people working together with a common interest in mind. I've never been involved with any sport—or anything for that matter—where people are all so willing to help others; it's refreshing for the soul.

So even though I've only been around for a short time, I feel like I'm part of a big group of friends, my endurance family. Who knows where this sport is heading in the future with advances in technology and research, but I sure hope one thing stays the same . . . the people. 🌟

# Coming Home to Endurance Riding

by Stacey Campbell

Is it possible to be born an endurance rider? Is there something in our DNA that others are lacking? For years I wanted to try endurance and when I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease I pretty much gave up riding so endurance was out of the question.



Horses are in my blood and I was determined to ride again. It took me almost four years from my return to riding until I attended my first endurance ride. It was like coming home. I can't count the number of times I have been criticized for letting my horses eat on the trail but here among some of the best riders I've ever seen eating on the trail was a good thing. I was no longer the only one with hay in front of my horse 24/7. My soaked mash buckets were no big deal, I didn't get the look I usually get when I pull out my feed. And the best part, I could ride at my pace and not get yelled at for going too fast. I had given up riding in groups with my gaited mare because the other riders only wanted to walk slowly down the trail. I'm not a speed demon but I have a gaited horse and want to gait. Among the endurance crowd I am just another rider and horses are actually passing me—how cool is that?!

I spent a long time looking for something fun but challenging for me and my mare. Since joining AERC I have learned so

much about training, nutrition and tack, plus everyone has been so friendly and encouraging. I can't help but brag about the bond I have developed with my horse after the hours and miles I have spent preparing for our first ride. I think endurance riders have what most riders only dream about.

Completing my first LD ride was the hardest thing I have ever done physically and mentally. I almost gave up after my first loop but somehow got back on and had the best ride of my life on the second loop. I am tougher than I thought I was and it was so worth the pain and the tears it took to complete that first ride. I can't say enough good things about this sport and the people that have what it takes to love it. I suspect we all have something inside us that brings us together with the horses we love and that to finish really is to win. 🌟



# Conquering the American River Classic

by Jaya Gregory

I joined AERC just last year. Weeks before I had become an AERC member, I had no idea endurance was even an actual sport. I had been researching the Tevis Cup ride on the internet when I learned about the American Endurance Ride Conference. The more research I did, the more I realized I needed to become an AERC member if I was going to take on my friend's dare of attempting the Tevis Cup.

Fast-forward a few months and I was at my first limited distance ride. I showed up without a mentor and ill-prepared for the weather, with little more than a few snacks. Luckily, a few seasoned endurance riders came to my rescue—Kathryn MacPhail and her daughter, Madison, as well as two sisters, Linda and Teresa Straub.

Fast-forward one year and I've gained a wealth of knowledge and experience, although I continue to learn at every ride.

This year, the American River Classic marked my first ride of the season. I entered the 50-miler in the Pioneer Division with my Missouri Fox Trotter mare I call Asali. The American River Classic turned out to be my favorite ride thus far. Here is my account of the 50 miles Asali and I traveled together:



continued >

## Conquering the American River Classic . . .

It was the morning of the American River Classic. My alarm went off at 4:15 a.m. I woke up, got dressed (in my funky new purple riding tights), gave Asali a mash, put on her new Renegade hoof boots, got her saddled, took down her electric fence pad-dock, locked up the truck and trailer, forced down a banana and a breakfast bar, and somehow mounted, all by 5:30 a.m.

I did not start with the front runners. I hung back and started out at about 5:40. This was part of my new strategy, to keep Asali from bolting at the start. It worked. Although I could feel my own anticipation channeling energy to her, Asali did not take off running. We kept up a good warm-up pace, following the glow sticks in the dark of the early morning.

At mile 2 or 3, we threw both back hoof boots. I dismounted and decided to strap them to my saddle rather than put them back on. The trail had relatively good footing and since we train barefoot, I knew Asali would be fine. We continued on our way, encountering many difficult hills, with boulders we had to pick our way through. There were also narrow passes, with sides so high, I had to be careful not to scrape my legs or catch a stirrup on something. Asali would just bulldoze through each obstacle as if it was nothing, which increased my anxiety. When the trail mellowed out a bit, I breathed a sigh of relief, enjoyed the early morning sun, and made Asali stop while I snapped a few photos of the water.

At some point during the ride, I ran into Peggy, a woman I had ridden the first part of a ride with at Wild West. Although at first we didn't remember each other's names, we certainly remembered our short time together on the trail last year, and we were thrilled to reunite. Our horses remembered each other too. Peggy was riding with a friend. Michelle and I had never met, but Michelle knew who I was right away, for she has been following my blog.

For the rest of the ride, Peggy, Michelle, and I played leapfrog. I would ride with them for awhile, then I would take off alone with Asali. Then they would pass me during one of a few stretches where I decided to hike or jog next to my horse. At one point, I joined up with an ear, nose, and throat surgeon, a gentleman named Jim. We talked about our careers—his as a doctor, mine as a nurse—before he went on ahead and I decided to hang back with Peggy and Michelle. I was enjoying riding the ride, slowly. My goal was not just to finish, but to finish with a lot of horse left.

There was something magical about riding this trail too—from Granite Bay to Auburn to Cool, back to Auburn. We traveled on the Pioneer Trail, riding as pioneers, and then we met up with the historic Western States Trail. The American River Classic is the oldest sanctioned 50-mile endurance ride in the world, and I was thrilled to be experiencing its history, and hearing the stories that traveled through the roar of the American River below.

The highlight of the ride, for me, was racing across No Hands Bridge with no hands. I gave Asali permission to choose the pace. I sat on her back, with my arms stretched out in the wind, merely a passenger. We were carried across by the same energy those Tevis Cup riders felt every year as they crossed this same bridge in the dark. And although we were the very last horse and rider team to enter the final vet check, I was cheered on by a young volunteer, a girl in elementary school. Before we left the vet check, she said, "It doesn't matter if you win or lose. It matters if you finish." I responded with a thumbs up, an enthusiastic "Amen, sista!" and continued on my way, knowing exactly why I love the sport of endurance.

Peggy, Michelle, and I met with some challenges just four miles from the finish, but we, together, worked as a team. We suddenly were not competing against each other, but with each other. We crossed the finish line at 5:06 p.m., as the very last riders, all of us logging the same end time, knowing that the victory was shared amongst us.

And I, along with Asali, could have kept on going... 🌟

Follow Jaya by reading her blog: <http://www.enduranceriding.me/>.

**A note of thanks.** I want to say thank you to all those who have helped me embark on my endurance journey! Without their help, I'm not sure I would have been able to this—and I'm so glad I've gotten involved in such a thrilling sport.

A special thank you to Shelly, Beth, Dr. Washington, and Julia for all their time and effort as well as the wonderful members of SWIT&DR.

Finally, a BIG thank you to my endurance partner, Snickers! He's been a trooper and a fantastic mount for our conditioning and we had a fantastic first ride, despite the rain, rain, and more rain! One ride down, and many more to come!

Thank you, Jillane Baros



# Jaya's Son Takes a Turn: Cache Creek

by Jakob Gregory, Age 10

I liked the Cache Creek Ridge Ride [near Williams, California; West Region] because it was beautiful and they organized the ride well. My favorite part of the ride is the meadow with the grassy field where you could run. My least favorite part is the finish because I wanted to keep riding and when Beauty got worked up.

I want to go to the ride next year because of the beauty. Thank you Alyssa and Jennifer, also volunteers. You never waste a moment in the saddle. Beauty and Asali, you worked hard!!!!!!!!!!!!

**More from Jaya:** I have to agree with Jakob that the Cache Creek Ridge Ride is well managed—that is the main reason why I will probably make this an annual ride for us. It was hot and sunny and not very shady on the trail and we also encountered many steep, difficult climbs, but we had so much fun riding. This was a challenging trail, especially for a junior rider on his first ride. I could not have been more proud of Jakob or his horse, Beauty, who we adopted from a horse rescue almost two years ago.

I have two favorite memories from the weekend. The first was on Friday night, when Jakob and I were getting ready for bed. We were both cozy in our sleeping bags in the back of the horse trailer. We left the door to the trailer open so we could see the stars above us. Jakob spent some time reading aloud to me, using his head lamp for light. Jakob was reading from his book, "Diary of a Wimpy Kid." I enjoyed hearing his voice and I eventually fell asleep to the silly story.

My second favorite memory occurred on Saturday, when we were towards the end of the competition. We were on a wide dirt trail, side by side. The horses were feeling good and we began trotting, and then cantering. Jakob and I held hands and continued down the trail, side by side. We were all alone, in open country, being carried through the sun on the backs of our horses. I heard Jakob laughing and I remember wanting to freeze that moment in time.

When the ride was all over—after we had presented our horses for P & R and received our completion time—Jakob and I were walking the horses back to our camp when something went awry with the hose on the water truck. Both horses spooked and galloped off. In the process, my arm got tangled up in Beauty's reins, Asali knocked me over, lunging me forward and to the ground, right in Beauty's path. I was dragged a couple feet and then trampled by Beauty. I came out of this potentially dangerous accident relatively unharmed.

While I have several bumps and bruises, a swollen knee, a mild black eye, and overall soreness, I could have ended up with a massive head injury. I heard Beauty's hooves hit my helmet several times and I know the only reason I was talking and walking after the incident was because of my helmet—it saved my life! I am sharing this story to stress to my readers how important wearing a helmet is.

Accidents happen, even with those horses who rarely spook, who have lots of training, and who are older in age. It does not matter how experienced of a horsewoman or horseman you are, an accident can happen anytime, anywhere and it can happen so fast, you aren't able to get out of the way or stop yourself from falling off.

On that note, I can say I am glad I got "trampled" and "dragged" checked off my list all at once. My chances of those things happening again are pretty slim so I can deem myself "been there, done that." After the eye injury I suffered following my first 25 and now this accident following Jakob's first 25, I am really hoping our subsequent rides are uneventful. Otherwise, people are going to start wondering why we continue in this crazy sport they call endurance. 🌟





Call for your free catalog

**Easyboot Gloves**  
For the barefoot horse  
**\$59.50 each**  
Now in Wides  
Fit kit available  
We test it .....  
So you don't have to



314 Dutch Ravine Ln  
Newcastle - CA 95658  
(916) 663-9278 orders & inquiries  
[www.theaustralianconnection.us](http://www.theaustralianconnection.us)  
aussiconn@yahoo.com  
AERC member since 1981 #2225

Share the story of your favorite ride ever for the next issue of AERC Extra! Send by September 1, 2012, to: [endurancenews@foothill.net](mailto:endurancenews@foothill.net)

# Gypsy Bella, Heart-Stealing Horse

by Diane Schmidt



Probably like a lot of others, I have wanted to do endurance riding for years, but have always had to put that dream on the back burner for all of the usual reasons. Then, about a year and a half ago, while looking on Craigslist at the horse ads (not that I needed another horse or was even shopping for one . . .) I clicked on an ad for a free horse. There was a very small picture of a horse looking up from eating a pile of hay. And, as if never before seeing a picture of a horse doing what a horse does best, my first thought was, "Now, that's my kind of horse!" I could slightly make out her conformation and the fact that she was part-Arab was definitely part of the appeal, but there was something else about her that made me think "she's supposed to be mine." I called the number and left a message; no return call. I called a few more times, nothing. I went back to the ad to email the owner, but the ad had been removed. I figured

she went fast—she was free, after all, although the ad made it sound like she had issues, as among other things it stated she would make a good brood mare.

Off and on for the next week I continued to think about her, that little picture. I thought, what the heck, tried the number again and this time there was an answer. The girl on the other end of the line told me she had already given her away. In my disappointment I asked her if she thought there was any chance that she might come back to her (convinced this horse was meant to go to me!). She said, "Well, she's not actually gone yet. The person is supposed to come get her within the next two weeks," to which I said, "If you still have her, I'll come get her today!" and with almost no more information about this horse, I drove the hour and half on snowy roads to go get her. I did find out she was a registered half-Arabian and that her other half was Mustang, which made me give a little yelp of delight at the thought of owning a horse with dual tough ancestry, and that her name was Ginger, which I quickly changed to Gypsy Bella—more fitting, exotic, if not a little over the top.

I started riding her almost immediately and, yes, she did have issues, but I didn't care, they would pass with time. The day she ran off with me in a foot of snow, going uphill and away from home, I knew she had completely stolen my heart! I love this horse!!!

But after some months of riding, she became like a lot of horses, really not that interested in going anywhere. She would just as soon stay home and veg. She was nice and plump and she was content. I, on the other hand, was not. I started to wonder what happened to that challenging ride of mine?

By the next fall, I had met a couple who had started endurance riding the year before and I started riding Bella out with them. This gave her a bit more impetus to exert herself, but still, I could feel the hesitancy to really move out and I began referring to her as my "reluctant endurance horse." On our solo rides during the week she would try to duck out on me, mid-gallop, at any wide spot in the road, which to her was surely a good place to turn around, go home and veg. I began sending her mental messages that we were going to be in a competition, a big competition, soon, and that she needed to be in shape for it. Next, I began running, wanting also to be in shape for the ride and while jogging past her pasture along the road I would send her a new mental message: "See Bella, I'm running!" But on our rides she made it clear that my enthusiasm was not about to rub off on her!

Finally the big weekend came and I had done all I could do, riding in all kinds of weather, ice and snow, diligently training both Bella and myself, gleaning all I might need to know from my patient friends, asking again and again how the vet checks worked, how to know what pace to go, and everything else I could think of.

We arrived the night before the ride at the Washtucna, Washington, Home on the Range. I watched Bella with concerned interest as she was totally unconcerned about her new surroundings after being hauled three hours (when she rarely left home via truck and trailer, ever) and being in the midst of 75 or so other horses. No whinnying, no pacing, no dragging me around like a real racehorse would, totally aloof to all others of her same species, totally the "Queen Bee" that she always insisted she was. She vetted in that night with her standing pulse at 40, which my friends told me was really good. I opted not to ride her that night for a look around, as it appeared to me she had no "edge" which needed to be taken off.

The next morning, we rode out at a gallop and I could feel a nervous energy in Bella that I'd never felt before. Within the first

continued >



**Check out the  
Arabian Horse  
Association  
Awards for  
Distance Riders**

Distance Horse Awards  
Competitive Distance Program  
Frequent Rider Program  
Competitive Trail High Point Program Awards  
Endurance High Point Program Awards  
Distance Horse of the Year Award  
Horse Achievement Awards

*You could earn blankets, coolers,  
plaques and more. Find out how!*

Contact AHA for information:  
**303-696-4500**

## Gypsy Bella . . .

mile or so, we came to the first creek crossing, swollen from 10 days of rain, and I thought that's it for us, the ride is over, she'll never cross that, as I had yet to get her to cross water of any kind. I felt a shudder go through her as she plunged across, never even slowing down. This seemed to give her an adrenaline surge, because over the next miles I couldn't get her to slow down and go into that extended trot that I was so used to riding.

I was looking over at my friends as if to ask, when do we slow down?! I decided to just hang on and let her do whatever she was going to do, galloping next to the trail, as she picked her route around the rocks and sagebrush.

I was getting tired. Her gallop isn't the smoothest and I'm thinking surely she's going to slow down, she's not in that good of shape, and at times feeling as if in a dream and "what horse am I on anyway?" Then with another burst of energy, she decided to leave behind our friends and catch up to the lead group. On our way there, I'm thinking, she just wants to be up with the lead horses, I'll get her to slow down then. But after a few minutes of galloping along with them, she pulls ahead, obviously not concerned with being with other horses and we're out on our own, still refusing to slow down.

Through watery eyes, I see it, another creek. My hopes are up—she crossed the first one. But with a closer look, I knew this one was different. There was a slight slope going down to it, with black mud along the bank. She stopped and I could feel the old stubbornness re-enter her body. "No!" I thought. "We had such a good lead!" Soon enough, all the horses and riders we had passed were splashing merrily through the water, up the bank to the other side and leaving us behind. My friend came back for me, tried to get Bella to cross with his horse. No go. He came back again, gave her a couple of smacks on her rear with his crop; I knew that wouldn't do it, she doesn't respond to aggression. I jumped off of her as Greg turned back one more time to help me cross. As I looked at her, I saw her sides were heaving, she was soaking wet with sweat and I swear I saw stars dancing above her head. I knew she was just too tired to even negotiate the crossing. So with Greg and his horse pushing her from the rear, I plunged in, dragging her across behind me.

Mounted and moving once more, all the lead horses were out of sight and we rode the last few miles of the 15-mile loop at a slower, sane pace.

The 45-minute hold at the camp flew by and I rode out alone, a few minutes late. I was pretty much exhausted and figured Bella would dog the last loop, and I wouldn't blame her. But she seemed to be refreshed enough and surprised me by taking off again. But when we got to the hills where the footing was deep from the rain, I slowed her down. I figured as tired as she was, she could easily strain a tendon in the muddy footing. Two riders caught up to us and after riding a mile or so with them, they took off at a gallop, cresting the hill with ease and we were once more alone. It was during this long walk that I mentally told her how proud I was of her, even though I was pretty sure we were now in last place, I couldn't be prouder!

And I thought to myself: how could she have possibly known it was a competition, being her first time out, if not for her understanding all the times I told her we were going to be in one? For her to continue to run, refusing to slow down, even when we were on our own and not necessarily going in the direction of camp/home or even knowing where that was, what else could explain it? Next thing I knew, we were once again on firmer ground and I easily urged her into another gallop where the finish line came too quick.

We finished the 25 miles in fifth place out of 40 riders in just over three hours and she took sixth in best condition. And once again my Gypsy Bella had completely stolen my heart! 🌟

# GO BITLESS

## The Genuine Dr. Cook BITLESS BRIDLE™



SAFE  
GENTLE  
EFFECTIVE

See for yourself  
with our 30-day  
satisfaction  
gaurantee

[www.bitlessbridle.com](http://www.bitlessbridle.com)  
or call toll-free (866)-235-0938

Rubicon™ Endurance-Trail



The Arabian Saddle Company  
32505 N. 43rd Street  
Cave Creek, Arizona 85331  
Phone: 480-473-7722  
saddler@arabiansaddle.com  
www.arabiansaddle.com



Beverly Gray  
The Arabian Saddle Company  
Box 393  
Kamas, UT 84036  
Phone: 435-783-3435  
bev@arabiansaddles.com  
www.arabiansaddles.com

***Nominate that special someone!***  
**Hall of Fame Person • Hall of Fame Equine  
Pard'ners Award • Volunteer Service Award**

Send your nomination to Jan Stevens by July 28, 2012:  
[circlebarranch@rangeweb.net](mailto:circlebarranch@rangeweb.net) or 5 Fort Road, Ashland, MT 59003

# Planning a Future in Endurance

by Kristy Wilson

I have competed in CTRs through ECTRA since 2007, and I think they provided me with a great base to try endurance. Even though I've been a member of AERC for a few years because I believed that I should support an organization that I would eventually compete in, I didn't have a horse that could do more than 35 miles. My mare would either score very well at CTRs or be off at the end, and so far we've spent a whole lot of money without finding any answers. Our homebred gelding is 7 this year, and he's a lovely, spirited, huge Egyptian Arabian who is just now going down the trail calmly (OK, not always) but at least without a daily battle.

When I was seven months pregnant in June of 2010, my husband and I made a six-hour drive to buy Brigadier D+/ from Deb Shaffer. This was the horse, I figured, anyone could ride, and eventually he would be our child's horse. He had quite a few endurance miles, Deb promised me "Briggy" was a "boring" horse (I haven't had a boring horse since I was 12) and he would be great for an occasional guest to ride.

However, once Katie was born, my mare's lameness issue only grew worse and more frustrating. So, I started riding Briggy. I loved riding him and decided to do my first ride, Moonlight in Vermont, in 2011. I had the good fortune of camping next to Michelle Rice, and she assured me I would have a great time. She was right; I loved it. All the people I met at Vermont were warm, welcoming, and patient and generous with my questions. AERC is a great community of riders.

Having a 1-year-old doesn't give one much time to condition, but I have a supportive husband, thankfully, and I know one day soon it'll be all three of us going down the trail together. Until then, Briggy will do a ride or so each year, and Deb, if you come across any more boring horses, please give me first dibs! 🍷



Katie with Brigadier D+/, her horse.

## A Great Start for Jennifer and Jake

My name is Jennifer Hall and I rode my first AERC ride December 2011 on my wonderful Paso Fino, Jake. If you were at the Goethe ride in Florida you will remember us because it was our first ride and Jake looked like a woolly bear! It was a last-minute decision because I was in the area for a good friend's anniversary and wanted to camp at Black Prong. When they told me they were having an endurance ride, I thought, I have always wanted to try that with Jake, and so we signed up. We ride a lot in the state forest behind us and after purchasing a GPS/heart rate monitor, I saw that we had been preparing for long distance without trying! I was very proud of him that day. He passed all the vet checks and didn't place last, even after getting lost on the second route.

Jake and I have been partners for six years now. He was a runaway and so scared of everything that I couldn't even catch him. The previous owner said to run him into a stall and toss a rope around him and that will do it. Well, five years and many Parelli clinics later, Jake and I have a wonderful relationship. He will go anywhere for me and do anything. We officially passed Level 3 with Parelli. We unofficially passed our first part of Level 4 but his back right leg does not fall correctly when doing the flying lead change. It was at an endurance ride vet check that the vet pointed out an old injury on his right hind leg and he said that was probably why. Here I thought just because he was gaited he couldn't do it. He can move sideways faster than any non-gaited horse I know, spin, canter, he flips me up on his back with his head, wins or places in all the competitive trail rides/courses we have entered, and is very loving.

But the best thing I love about Jake is that he loves for my youngest daughter, who is 9, to play with him. She won't ride anyone else. He is so much calmer and just follows her around everywhere. He lets the kids in my 4-H group play with him (he has too much "brio" for them to ride) but with all the Parelli ground games, the kids just have fun with that all day! They always pick him because he is fast and will do anything they ask.

Jake and I have been through a lot to get us to this point. I can't tell you how many millions of circles, sideways, backing and disengaging we've done to get him to not run away! He just couldn't "think" through anything. I had to throw away the bit for over two years and use the halter and sticks. He was and is much more willing to give to the stick riding than something in the mouth. He now "thinks" instead of "escapes." When this happened, he finally could lower his head, relax and round out which

continued >





## A Great Start . . .

will help him for long distance riding. He prefers to trot when he is really relaxed but is gaiting more and more while rounding. Very cool stuff!

What we love about endurance riding is that I can let him “move out.” Most of my friends have non-gaited horses or just don’t want to do much more than a walk so I was always holding him back on rides. This is one reason we mostly ride alone. Besides that it is just peaceful and relaxing. On our first endurance ride, my goal was to enjoy the ride, let him move out when he wanted to but he just couldn’t go faster than a Largo. He asked to walk finally in the second half of the ride. I had to ask him before that. I have never felt him move out so fast in a Largo before, and that is when we got off our trail! I was enjoying the ride so much I forgot to look for markers. Luckily endurance riders are so helpful! It wasn’t long before we were back on track.

We only got to enter two rides over the winter—one endurance ride and one competitive trail ride—but plan on entering one this summer and then again come fall. Good news: two of my daughters, Hailey (18) and Sydney (9), are both doing their first ride in June. I hope to make this a family event.

I’d like to say thank you to all the wonderful riders who helped me through my first two rides. I was given so much advice and encouragement. And several people let me borrow stuff, like the heart rate monitor before check-in. Oh, I can’t forget the wonderful hot soup I was given after my first ride! I felt very welcomed and this is just the kind of atmosphere I want my family to be around! See you all soon! ❁

MONITOR YOUR HORSES HEART RATE

**V-MAX**

THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL GARMIN® FORERUNNER 310XT WITH V-MAX ADAPTER KIT. SPECIAL PRICING.....\$414.99 FREE SHIPPING!

HEARTCHECK BASIC SYSTEM FOR ONLY.....\$85.00

REWARDS POINTS WITH EVERY PURCHASE. THEY NEVER EXPIRE!

THE DISTANCE DEPOT

THEDISTANCEDEPOT.COM

# Year 1: Exciting, Stressful, Educational

by Linda Delo, D.O.

Wow, what an exciting, successful and educational first year this has been! I used to ride bareback in the woods and did a little English equitation riding as a teenager over 35 years ago. Then I was off to college, medical school, marriage, raising a family and running a family practice. My lab tech, Colleen, has the “horse fever” and told me stories of these crazy endurance rides which included camping and riding fast through the woods for 25 to 50 miles. That sounded like lots of fun to me, so finally, I asked if we could go riding sometime. I used to know what I was doing, a long time ago. It took two requests before she realized I was serious. So Saturday arrived, and I was off to Colleen’s to go riding and expecting to be incredibly sore the next day.

Well, that’s all it took for me to get hooked all over again like when I was a teenager. Lucky for me, Terrill, her husband, had some temporary medical issues, so he wasn’t using his horse. He was more than happy to see the sheer joy I experienced riding Dusty. So, we started training just two months prior to the first ride.

I knew this was going to be a tough sport. I wondered if I would be able to handle the 25-mile ride, but was willing to give it a try. Colleen assured me that she would be right there beside me, and if we could keep up the pace we had during training, we would most likely not only finish, but “top ten.”

The first ride day finally arrived at Goethe Forest–Gator Run. It was freezing cold, and I mean freezing! I am a native Floridian, so ice in the water buckets at 6:00 a.m. was NOT my idea of fun. It only warmed up to 37° by the time we started. The horses were extra frisky in this cold weather and we were off!

We started out at a fast lope/gallop to get the lead, which we did successfully, despite the few detours Dusty tried to take on her own. Unfortunately, a few miles out, I lost my stirrup on a corner and off I went only to be stepped on! Ouch! Thank goodness I was wearing proper gear. I had knee-high boots plus half-chaps which protected my leg from anything more than a really nasty bruise. My pride was another matter. Uh-oh, now I had to get back on my horse, but that darn English saddle was a long way up for a wobbly fallen soldier. The three horses behind us caught up about that time and, of course, they stopped to ask if we needed help. (No, I was OK).

Colleen had to get off her horse to boost me back on, and off we went again at a fast trot. She said we would catch those that passed us later; we had plenty of time for that. She was right, we did pass them and finished the first loop in first and second

continued >



## Year 1: Exciting, Stressful, Educational . . .

place. Unfortunately, her horse did not pass the vet check. So I had to quit, or go it all alone for the second half of my first ride. She said I could wait and go with another rider, but I know endurance riding is not for wimps, so off I went, all alone.

My parents were driving up just as I was leaving for the second loop. They got to see me wave in apprehension and take off alone on an unhappy horse. Dusty did not want to leave her pasture mate! We made a serpentine pattern down the road and into the woods. Wow, this is kinda neat and definitely scary: just me, the horse, and the woods. I was worried I would miss a turn, or worse, fall off again, with no one to help boost me back up. I was determined to stay on when Dusty would spook again.

Well, the three horses caught up to me. I was actually relieved to let them pass, so I could follow, and Dusty would be less likely to spook. I informed them this was my first AERC ride, in case I unknowingly breached some etiquette of the trail. At the water trough, we took a shorter break than the other horses and took off in the lead again. I managed to stay on through a few more spooks, but then there was a bad spook as the three horses were closing in on me from behind. It was a big scary log that looked like an anaconda to Dusty, who made a quick bolt to the right.

As I said, I was determined not to fall off again, so I managed to stay on for the worst of it, but I gripped tight with my legs, which meant go to Dusty! With my foot out of the stirrup and her running instead of stopping, off I went, hitting the ground in a bewildered thud. I could picture the other riders continuing and my horse keeping pace with them, while I was left on the ground, with a long walk back.

The riders behind me stopped and asked if I needed help while I stood in a daze, looking at Dusty up the road. She was looking back at me thinking, "What the heck are you doing down there?"

Those three riders were great folks, my saviors, complete strangers, who stopped and asked my horse's name, which I could only barely remember in my stunned stupor. They caught her for me and helped me get back up, asking if I was OK. (I thought I was.) I thanked them profusely, and they reminded me the ride was not about winning, but finishing. They stayed with me the rest of the ride. Fortunately, there was only a few miles to go. I don't know who they were, but THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

I finished! As I slid to the ground in exhaustion, Terrill was there to take Dusty for the vet check and my parents were there to help me limp back to the camp with a badly sprained ankle, a badly bruised calf, and huge smile on my face. Oddly, I was not embarrassed about falling off a horse. Terrill did have fun teasing me about it, but he got dumped in another ride, and justice was served. Oh, and I have to mention the first bathroom break after the first ride: I squealed in pain from the burning while my friends outside laughed and knew exactly what that was all about. Endurance riding is not for wimps!

I was back in the saddle after a few months, when my ankle was healed enough to ride. I finally agreed with the advice of my mentors and ditched the English saddle for an Australian. The next ride, I got a blister on my hand from holding on. I was absolutely not going to continue the precedent of falling off. Fortunately, I had no more falls the rest of the season.

The Far Out Forest ride was the most difficult, the most challenging, and exactly what I had expected from an endurance ride. Colleen and I took first and second, and Dusty got best condition. Check out the photo of my dirty shirt (previous page). I was filthy just from dodging trees and limbs. I sure was proud of my first season. Not only did I finish all the rides, I took first place twice and even won a best condition.

I have to mention my last ride at Charlotte's Web, another race I had to do completely alone, missing my mentor, Colleen. (It was my final exam.) It was scary, yet so beautiful to be in the woods with deer running alongside me and across my path, the sun reflecting the morning dew on the new green grass, and the spider webs glistening in the morning sun. I finished first and managed to have the strength and ability to take care of my own horse (although Terrill and Colleen still did most of the work). On all the other rides, the sheer exhaustion I felt made me pretty useless and very thankful for their help. I never would have had the strength to do it without them. They taught me so many things and helped me to build up MY endurance.

Terrill has his horse back, and I have one of my own. Next year's adventures will be much more difficult, as I build the stamina to actually manage my own horse. (Terrill and Colleen will be taking care of their own horses and WE will be helping their daughter break into the sport.) I can't wait to compete again, this time with a pack of four! 🌟

# Rowley Welcomed as 'Part of the Gang'

by Diane Rowley

I joined AERC this past January, connected with some wonderful members of Daniel Boone Distance Riders, and have been having a blast ever since!

I originally got interested in endurance riding through a conversation I had with Denny Emerson a number of years ago when my daughter, a three-day eventer, was a working student at his farm in Vermont. As he described the sport to me I remember thinking, "Now, that's what I'd like to do!" I owned horses and had been riding for a number of years but wasn't really interested in participating in the types of competitions with which I was familiar or in spending endless hours in arena work. On the other hand, I loved hiking and trail riding but quickly grew bored of the rather relaxed pace of most trail rides. Endurance seemed like a sport made for me and it was always in the back of my mind as something I wanted to explore during the following years when my life was filled with too many other distractions for me to get involved.

continued >

## Part of the Gang . . .

I also hesitated because, even though I knew a lot of horse people, I didn't know any endurance riders and I didn't have a horse that was suitable for endurance. I figured that both these factors would prove pretty substantial obstacles to my actually getting involved in endurance. In this I could not have been more wrong!!

Within a day of my finding the AERC and SERA websites and emailing Amy Whelan, I was in touch with Patricia Bullock of DBDR who offered to introduce me to endurance and to allow me to ride her horses as I got familiar with the sport. I haven't looked back since!

I've competed in two 25 mile-rides and had a great time at both. The rides themselves were fun and the people involved were so friendly and welcoming, it immediately made me feel like part of the gang!

I'm now searching for my own horse to compete on and am looking forward to many happy years of endurance riding. 🌟



Patricia Bullock, Dandi and Diane Rowley.

# From Airplane Pilot to Horse Pilot

by Sarah "Marriah" Gray

Hello, endurance compadres! My name is Sarah Gray, but I am called Marriah (my middle name). I call my horse Zephyr, and his name on paper is Danceforthegold. We come from the hills of Los Gatos/Boulder Creek (California) where there are zillions of trails to ride. We live here with Matt (who just goes by Matt) and his mustang Roanin ("Roe"). I have a beautiful daughter, four great dogs, and a bunch of crazy chickens. My two sons have grown and gone from home, one a firefighter and the other a Marine (yes, I am so proud!). I am a retired airline pilot, and am currently flight instructing and publishing a book on horse trails of Santa Cruz and surrounding counties.

I have done a few limited distance rides so far, but really we are just beginning to get the hang of this thing called endurance. Zephyr and I completed two days of the New Cuyama ride. The best part of this ride was loping to the finish with Iylla, on her horse Sunny, astonished that our boys were full of energy and life after 55 miles. We all had big smiles. Being my first completion, I was ecstatic! There was a real feeling of caring people there. I was so scared at the start, I am sure that I asked 30 or so people to please not trot past me (I would stop and let them walk past). I know that this was annoying to some. Let me just say a huge "Thanks!" to you all. Though I started late, I am certain that half the riders did as well. The worst part of the ride was getting up in the dark and pouring rain on the last day and tacking up. That was hard work! It turned out to be a good thing in the end, because only half the riders rode, so we had a very mellow start. All in all it was a wonderful experience. I met many good folks out there and had a lot of help along the way!

My real "endurance mentor" has to be Iylla Reissman. She got me on a training schedule that prepared us for the ride. She helped me figure out tack issues, fine-tuning food and weight issues for my horse, and really walked me through the first ride. I also have a wonderful friend, Cyd Bocks, who I ride with quite often. We did our first two limited distance rides together. She keeps me grounded, safe, and on the trail. Thanks to these ladies I am slowly getting my off the track and ready-to-run horse, Zephyr, to slow down and go the distance! I have also learned lots from Jeff Luternauer, who is endlessly patient and has almost 20K miles worth of endurance knowledge. My man Matt has also helped me along the way, not letting me give up, and literally helping me up, after the few incidents of pushing the eject button by mistake and finding myself in the dirt. Zephyr is usually standing there wondering why the heck I didn't stay on through his rambunctious handstand. Zephyr and I are becoming a wonderful team (despite the occasional hand-stand). He is a strong, sound, and intelligent horse. You will see Matt out there on the trail as well. He has been working slow and steady with his Mustang for the last year, and just rode his first 50. He completed the Lost Padres!

We are planning to do a ride a month, and if all goes well, do the Western States Trail Ride (Tevis) eventually. This year our ride goal is Virginia City, and our overall goal is no injuries, and to enjoy our rides! Thank you all for the warm welcome and patience while Zephyr and I learn the ropes! 🌟



Marriah and Zephyr, © Iylla Reissman.

# Lotto 649 no match for endurance

by Valerie Green

Most people feel on top of the world when they win Lotto 649 [the lottery run by the province of Ontario]. I feel that way when I am out riding on trail with my horse, training and racing.



My love for horses and riding reignited in the summer of 2011 when I began riding again after five years. The weather was beautiful, the trails were magnificent and I loved the connection I was making to my sister's horse, Kali. Then, in October, at an event with the Ganaraska Forest Horse Club, I met Bob Coleman and Michelle Bignell, owners of Cayuse Creek Ranch in Millbrook, Ontario. That meeting changed my life. They invited me to their ranch where they shared their joy in raising and racing Egyptian Arabians in endurance rides throughout Ontario and the United States. Their star horses, Alleena and Kashif, had many accomplishments, and their pride was heartwarming.

In November, Bob purchased two new French Arabians and offered me the opportunity to train and compete on one of them, TT Contender (barn name: Pretzel). With Pretzel, I would enter their world of endurance horse racing—I was ecstatic, nervous and exhilarated. A flat track racer and top pole bender, Pretzel was a

beautiful chestnut with a sweet face, compact body and energy to spare. He was going to become an amazing endurance horse.

Throughout the winter, Bob and Michelle mentored me, coaching me on horse care and event strategy and generously loaning me tack and other equipment. They linked me up with AERC so I could compete internationally and gave me AERC magazines which had valuable articles on endurance riding and horse care. But all that winter preparation didn't prepare me for my experience once the snow melted and the training began. The joy I felt with each ride in the forest and my developing partnership with Pretzel, along with my new friendships, made me feel like a Lotto 649 winner!

Our first competition was a two-day event at Aprilfest, in Mansfield, Ontario. Both days were spectacular. I rode 12 miles on Saturday and 25 miles on Sunday. I met new people, built friendships and learned a great deal about endurance racing. Everyone was so helpful. I loved tending to Pretzel. Coming into the resting holds,



sponging him down to cool him, checking his heart rate, ensuring he had food and water, learning about taking electrolytes and going to the vet check to get the OK to continue were all highlights of the event. Out on trail, I was grateful for how hard he worked for me. When we received our completion awards, I was already thinking about our next race: OCTRA Spring Ride in the Ganaraska Forest, our stomping grounds. I was lovin' it.

On May 19, 2012, we entered the two-day event, 25 miles each day. Pretzel and I were both much calmer. We knew what to expect, where to go and how to pace ourselves. Pretzel was amazing, always willing. He knew to drink on trail, enjoy his beet pulp, and stand still for the vets. And this time, on trail, I could enjoy it more. Pretzel and I placed third in our category for Set Speed 25 miles. Next: Summer Solstice 50 miles!

From the moment I mounted Pretzel on that first ride to my dismount on wobbly legs after my third 25-miler, I felt like a winner. From weekend trail rider to weekend trail competitor, I knew I had found a new challenge that combined two of my greatest passions, riding Pretzel and being outdoors. I am grateful to the people I have met, especially Bob and Michelle, the forests I have ridden in, and for the special bond I now have with Pretzel. Endurance racing really is my Lotto 649. Each day I ride Pretzel, I feel like I have won the jackpot! 🌟

**Equiwinner™ Keeps Horses Hydrated!**  
It's not about feeding more electrolytes.  
It's about making them work properly.  
Click here [www.signal-health.com](http://www.signal-health.com)  
or call 877-378-4946

# Ten Years of Thinking Before Joining

by Janette Sasena

I would like to share my inspiration: My mare Caducius Oriana (“Bailey”) and I took our hearts in hand to our first endurance ride last fall. I had considered this wonderful sport about 10 years ago but was hesitant, not feeling confident in my knowledge base since I have boarded my girl since she came into my life just under 18 years ago.

I had been checking online, gathering information on long distance riding all summer, listening to my friend Rick Lee who talked about the Tevis ride he plans to enter next year. My Morgan mare had been given strict orders from the vet—she had to lose weight, almost 500 lbs. Wow, what to do? We started training rides, by hook or by crook. We were working together for her to lose weight and become healthier.

One Friday afternoon the decision was reached: Bailey needed a challenge; so did I. I spoke to ride manager Sarah Maass, who encouraged me to load Bailey and come to the ride that day and volunteer some time to better understand the ride. The folks in the camp were generous with their time, shared their advice, helped me. I was in awe. Where had we been all these years? These people cared for their horses, were a team with their horses.

Bailey and I rode our first 25 mile ride with Rich and Joan Elbert who took me under their wing—Bailey absolutely loved the challenge and quickly got the hang of what she had to do. I had to remember to breathe and stay in the saddle. We were hooked, no question. We should have started this much sooner. My thanks go out to all the riders I have met. Their knowledge, caring and enthusiasm is contagious. I hope to share the spirit of sharing and caring with new riders with an interest in this sport. 🌟



Janette and Bailey at the Run for the Border Ride. Photo © Bob Zimmerman, blzbob@usfamily.net.

# Fate Takes the Twisty Trail for Rider

by Jill Surkin

This is my third year as an AERC member, and they’ve been eventful ones. Sasha, my 17-year-old rescue Arab, is my inspiration, and he’s definitely taught me the meaning of the word “endurance.”

In September 2006, I had little money but was looking for a new horse anyway after I had to retire my old guy. As an eventer-turned-trail-rider with vague thoughts of getting back into eventing, I was keeping my eye on some rescue websites for a young project horse. I was certainly NOT looking for an Arabian (my previous experience with the breed consisting of a 50% blind, 100% crazy one at a lesson barn in the 80s), and definitely not an 11-year-old one with no brakes who was headed to auction before the rescue took him. I’m still not sure what made me go look at him, but I guess some things are just meant to be! I rode that 11-year-old Arabian for 15 minutes in an oversized round pen, and then I came back the next weekend with a trailer and took him home.

I soon realized that, in fact, I had found myself a project horse . . . just not an eventing project horse. Sasha knew some dressage, but he hated it with a passion, and he was a truly terrible jumper. But true to his breed, he could go for hours on the trail, and he was never ready to go back home. However, I soon realized that aimless trail riding wasn’t going to be enough for him—he needed a JOB. Ride the same trail twice in a row, and he knew exactly where he was going and what he was going to spook at along the way. I had heard of endurance, but I knew nothing about it, so I began reading everything I could get my hands on. It sounded like just the thing he needed to keep his brain busy.

In the spring of 2008, I laid out a training schedule, with a goal of doing an LD in the late summer or early fall. Sasha took to it like a duck to water, always asking to do more, more, more. Everything was going well until June, when he came in from the field with a swollen hock, which turned out to be OCD lesions that had probably been there since he was young. After surgery in July and three months of stall rest, he was ready to get back to work, but the vet wasn’t sure if he’d be able to stay sound in endurance. I spent six months bringing him back slowly, and he didn’t take a single bad step. He was ready to go! We did two LDs in 2009, and I signed us up with AERC for the 2010 season. We did two LDs and two CTRs that year, topping it off with a completion at our first 50 in November.



Jill Surkin and Sasha, © Hoof Print Images, www.hoofprintimages.com.

continued >



**Instant Wireless Monitoring System**

- For Trailering
- For Foaling
- For Barn Cam
- Easy setup
- No tools required
- Range up to 1200 ft.
- Can be used everywhere



[www.TrailerEyes.com](http://www.TrailerEyes.com)

## Fate Takes the Twisty Trail . . .

So, 2011 was going to be our year—I had plans for at least 10 rides, five of them 50s. But I guess fate had other ideas . . .

The year started off fabulously: An LD in March was followed by a 50 in April, a CTR in May, and a top ten finish at the Old Dominion 25 in June. But in early July (what is it about July?!?), he strained a suspensory out in the pasture, which took him out of competition for the rest of the year. And then, a month later, a freak fall from a friend's horse landed me in the ICU for two days with a hoof print on my chest and four broken ribs. So I joined Sasha on the road to recovery, and we helped each other with our rehab. Two weeks after my accident, I was hand-walking him up and down the driveway, and wouldn't you know it, this horse—who's been known to pull like a freight train for 25 miles straight and spook at invisible nothings on a regular basis—was an absolute saint. He KNEW I couldn't hold him if he started acting up; even though it was his first time out of his stall in six weeks, he walked next to me as quietly as could be, and he stood like a statue every time I needed to catch my breath.

Fast-forward through six months of rehab (again), and we're back in the game once more, old Iron Horse and I, starting off the year with a successful LD in March and a 50 in April. So, maybe 2012 will be our year? I sure hope so, but if it's not, we'll keep "enduring" anyway. This year marks his third year with a completion in

a 50, so look for us in the Decade Team awards when he's 25 . . . 🌟

# From Founder to Finish for Rainey

by Lorna Dobrovolny



Lorna and Rainey at the 2012 Nevada Derby. Photo © Rene Baylor, Gore/Baylor Photography.

"I think I'm all right," I yell, as I lay on the desert floor moving slowly, first one body part, then another, following a violent departure from my horse's back. "Your girth was loose and the saddle rode up on her withers," my friend Andrew Gerhard explains as we are assessing what happened. This horse foundered back in May 2010, but is definitely "up" for her first 50 mile ride attempt at the Nevada Derby ride. We were doing an easy Friday pre-ride when the mare soundly bucked me off. I'm down for the count, having bruised up my backside badly. I am limping around in pain. Saturday's ride is definitely out. I had been so determined to take Rainey to her first 50 to see if she could finish sound. At this point, it's obvious I'm NOT sound, given that just walking is painful. It had been a very rough road to the start line in the last two years and this was one more obstacle to overcome. Would it be possible to ride on Day 2? At this point, all I am certain of is that I need some time to recover.

The next day I focused on getting better while my friends rode through weather conditions that tested their personal endurance: sandstorms, 50 MPH winds and sleet. By the early hours of Sunday morning, riders awoke to a blanket of snow and frigid wind. They were dropping out quickly. My friends, who had planned to ride again, decided a second day of rough weather riding wasn't for them. I was on my own and still weak from my fall. Should I head out alone into the early morning darkness on this amped-up horse? Memories of the recent past laboring to get this horse to a 50-mile start line flashed swiftly through my dizzied mind.

Rainey was a pasture ornament for most of her 12 years, first as too much horse for her former owner's husband and second as a buddy to my main endurance mount. When my gelding needed throat surgery, she was his stall buddy for a couple of months. I was so focused on the gelding's recovery, I didn't pay attention to warning signs of founder in Rainey (and I know better): a fat horse with a cresty neck, bounding pedal pulses and warm feet. Though she wasn't fed supplements other than vitamins, she is a very easy keeper with a ravenous appetite. When putting them both

## PROTECT THOSE SOLES!



continued >

## From Founder to Finish . . .

back out to pasture, I thought it was slow enough to avoid problems. But the x-rays confirmed I had not been cautious enough. Rainey had a mild rotation and very sore front feet. Not knowing much about founder treatments at the time, I wondered if euthanasia was a kind option. I only knew these cases can be very grave and certainly career-ending for an aspiring endurance horse.

This mare had been barefoot for most of her life. When she came up lame, my vet's treatment recommendation was pretty standard; corrective shoes, stall rest in deep shavings, pain relief and a supplement for equine metabolic syndrome. My long-time shoer came out and we had a long conversation about what to do. He concluded that she was too sore to shoe right then. But it would be his last visit as he was retiring earlier than first planned. He gave me a couple of phone numbers of farriers he recommended to come out when she wasn't quite as sore. This was not the time to try a new shoer and I was very reluctant to call. Rainey always had great feet before this. I decided to leave her barefoot and learn everything I could about hoof



Rainey's hoof x-ray, courtesy of Loomis Basin Equine Medical Center in Loomis, California.

mare. Nancy explained that Fina was a good babysitter for her young horses and was willing to help out. They got us through those first tough miles where I found out Rainey has a competitive nature. Like a spoiled child, she would still buck when I wouldn't allow her to chase every horse in front of her. This time I was ready and could take appropriate action.

The skies cleared after the first 20 frigid miles and the second half of the ride was wonderful. Her post-ride vet card listed all As and she dove into her hay.

At home, she's trotting around with her pasture-mates sound and happy. Watching her, I well up with pride knowing how far she has come from that sad day of founder diagnosis to the glory of her first 50-mile finish. Rainey, you've come a long way baby.

I share this story to encourage others who may experience a diagnosis of founder in their horse. There are different paths to recovery and, in many cases, recovery is possible. Rainey literally owes her life to the people who helped along the way—family, friends and my veterinarian Langdon Fielding, DVM. Even people I've never met are my heroes, namely Kirt Lander, Linda of The Happy Hoof YouTube channel and Karen Chaton, whose stories of Granite Chief's recovery from laminitis gave me hope when I needed it most.

Now that my horse is sound, I've got to work on my own soundness. Recovery from my injury will be far less complicated, though. A little rest and a lot of ibuprofen should be all I need. We are back on the trail and it feels grand! No more hand walking this season. There's nothing to stop us now. 🌟

care and function to help her recover.

An e-mail to Kirt Lander, owner of Renegade Hoof Boots, put him on the phone

with me the next day. He spent almost an hour explaining to me about how Rainey could recover using barefoot techniques. I found myself dumping sand in her paddock, padding hoof boots to take her out to alternatively hand walk in a sand arena and soak her feet in the creek out back. The most important thing I did was take the information gained from her x-ray and slowly file down her heels to get her coffin bone ground-parallel. This is a tricky balancing act between the deep digital flexor tendon and the coffin bone. Her hay was restricted and included a supplement that balanced her carbohydrate metabolism. She sported a grazing muzzle for the rest of the summer. Gradually, over the course of a year, the laminar attachment strengthened and her soundness returned. It was a tough roller coaster ride to recovery that got us to the start line that day.

So did I get in the saddle and ride? I was reluctant and nervous. But I did mount up and headed out slowly to the start. Right off, I met a new friend, Nancy Oglo Upham and her horse Fina, a wonderfully mannered, seasoned

**TRAILWISE TACK**  
*Your Source for Specialized Saddles & Innovative Trail Tack*

- \* SPECIALIZED SADDLES
- \* SPRING TIES & TRAILER TIES
- \* BETA HALTER-BRIDLES & TACK
- \* SUPRACOR PADS \* SHEEPSKINS
- \* SUPPLEMENTS \* ELECTROLYTES

*and lots, lots more!*

**970-231-3299** Online 24/7  
AERC Members get 10% off - Code AERC10!  
[www.TRAILWISETACK.com](http://www.TRAILWISETACK.com)

*Barefoot In  
New Mexico  
Pioneer Ride*

*October 19, 20, 21, 2012*

*Alamogordo, New Mexico  
50/55 mile & L.D's each day*

See our ad on page 24 of the July EN!  
**575-491-6297**  
[www.enchantedarabians.net](http://www.enchantedarabians.net)

# New Gaited Horse Endurance Award

by Julia Tarnawski

When AERC member Dodie Sable, of Pennsylvania, contacted **Friends of Sound Horses** (FOSH) about starting a Gaited Distance Program, I was thrilled! What an opportunity to honor these hearty horses and riders. Having competed on my Fox Trotter for several years in local AERC rides, I understood the challenges in preparation and the glorious satisfaction of completion.



Linda Nichols, Marianne Stuart, Elizabeth Funderburk, Jackie Fenaroli (her husband Don took the photo), Leslie Harper, Laney Humphrey, Pete Harper, Bruce Weary DC, Sandy and Keith Kibler, Becky Lange and Julie Tarnawski.

Diane Little, FOSH vice president of shows and events, became equally excited about the prospect of a GDP. Diane, a Canadian, had also competed in distance riding so together with Dodie, a plan was developed and presented to the FOSH board with a projected program date of 2013. In the meantime, I headed to the AERC Reno Convention in March. Through California competitors, Becky Lange and Jackie Fenaroli, I discovered that many of the gaited horse folks were meeting for breakfast on Saturday morning. What a great group! I was truly honored to be with them that morning and sharing their table at the banquet that evening.

My joining AERC was an easy decision after attending the lectures and meetings of this fine, all-encompassing organization. I was welcomed and informed on so many different levels. Thanks so much especially to the many DVMs who provided such thought-provoking material albeit for the endurance enthusiasts but certainly for the average horse owner as well.

FOSH is presently helping in obtaining video of the various gaited horse breeds for distance competition DVM inspections. The interaction

of our two organizations FOR THE HORSE can only be a plus as we move toward the unveiling of our FOSH GDP in 2013. 🌟

Any and all input is appreciated for Julie at [julie\\_t@earthlink.net](mailto:julie_t@earthlink.net) and for Dianne at [ddlittle@telusplanet.net](mailto:ddlittle@telusplanet.net).

## 50th Birthday Goal: Ride the Tevis

by Kerry Greear

*"Far better it is to dare mighty things,  
To win glorious triumphs,  
Even though checkered by failure,*

*Than to rank with those poor spirits  
Who neither suffer much  
Nor enjoy much*

*Because they live in the grey twilight  
That knows neither victory or defeat."  
—Theodore Roosevelt*

December 11, 2004: December is the start of AERC's ride year so this is the year I will try to do the Tevis Cup 100 mile endurance ride in California. Just one year ago I saw the "Tevis Cup" book while visiting Steamboat Springs. The cover inspired me. The stories touched me. I was looking for a new personal challenge that involved horses and the book set me on my way. The history of the trail and stories of the men and women who felt compelled to do that ride and organize it so others could do it made me want to join them. I knew nothing about endurance riding but started reading when I got home.

That challenge was started one year ago and I have learned so much. I found AERC's and the Tevis Cup websites. I ordered some books. They gave me a lot of information but also made me question whether I had any business even contemplating this endeavor. I read about Robie Park, riding in the dark, metabolic pulls, tying-up, electrolytes, heart rate recovery. I knew nothing about any of this but the thought of being on top of the world at Watson's Monument and looking back at Lake Tahoe from the back of my horse, then pointing his nose for 90 more miles of enchanting trail with names such as Elephant Trunk, Cougar Rock and Robie Point was compelling me to move forward. The "Pandora's Box" of all the reading and learning how to be an endurance rider was overwhelming at times. Did I really need to know all this? I just want to do this one ride, not be part of this group of people who travel all over the country with their horses year after year after year. Or do I? Can I hope to complete Tevis without doing other endurance rides? Is there any way my horse and I could get ready to do this? Will my family be supportive? How much will this cost in time and money? Is there a possibility Hawk could be injured?

Today, I continue to have many questions and reservations about Tevis 2005. But I have come a long way. My first endurance ride was June, 2004, at Ft. Howes, Montana. I found out about the ride and emailed Jan Stevens. She was very kind and helpful in her responses but I found everyone assumes everyone else knows the terminology and protocol for rides. I knew pretty much nothing about nothing. I had been riding Hawk since I started him under saddle in April of 2002 in a western saddle that weighed about 38 pounds. I ordered a synthetic Western saddle because I wanted a lighter saddle but there was no way I could ride without a horn. I tried it on Hawk but never rode in it until I arrived at Ft. Howes. I drove to the ride on Friday and there seemed to be about a hundred trailers and a circus tent in a big field. I was by myself and overwhelmed. I parked out on the edge and put Hawk out

continued >



## 50th Birthday Goal . . .

on his stake to eat then walked around and looked at horses and watched people. After asking, I found the office and filled out paperwork. Jan made me join AERC and told me to just have fun and ask, ask, ask, and take care of my horse. Everything else would come together. I decided to believe her.

I met two riders, Julie M. and Heidi C., who were very kind and helpful. They both advised me to just ride at my own pace, ask questions and take care of my horse. That was good, to hear the same advice from both which mirrored Jan's advice. Julie and I rode around camp a little and I got used to the new saddle. I then took Hawk over to the vet check area. I walked up to the vet and his scribe and told them this was my first ride. The vet told me I should probably do the limited distance ride, not the 50. I started to question myself again. Two riders from my area, trail riders like me, were entered in the limited distance. Thoughts were dancing around in my head but my mother has always said, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," and I decided that I wanted to try the 50. The vet said it was my choice and said Hawk looked very good.

I really didn't sleep at all that night and was up wandering around when the riders were warming up and leaving camp on the 100. I watched the pace most used to leave camp. I got Hawk ready much earlier than we needed and we wandered around camp; he grazed and I observed. I watched the 50-milers head out on the trail and waited until they were gone before I set out by myself. Hawk started his nice trot and I did the cadence in my head that I had observed in the 100-milers. I started passing people. I noted some people had stopped to adjust tack and some horses were not very well behaved. This behavior was like most trail rides I had attended and it gave me confidence that I could be "one of them."

We went several miles then came up behind an older lady who was having difficulty with her horse going up a hill. I offered to lead and her horse followed Hawk. We ended up riding together the rest of that loop and that chance meeting was one of the best things that have ever happened to me. That lady was Dorothy Sue Phillips and to this day she helps me in all my endurance endeavors.



Kerry Greear and Hawk at Cougar Rock. Photo © Melinda Hughes, [www.hughes-photography.com](http://www.hughes-photography.com).

She gave me several tidbits of advice on that loop when I would ask her questions. Unfortunately, her horse was pulled at that vet check but she had told me what to do to get Hawk through the check. I left on the second loop by myself again and rode alone. When I came in for the second check, Dorothy Sue was waiting for me and helped me. I had not figured out the logistics of the vet checks and had all Hawk's food and my drinks back at my trailer. Between that and having to check in 10 minutes before going back out on the trail, I forgot to eat.

The third loop I caught Becky R., who was also riding a Morab. She was fun and we finished the ride together. I did not tell her that I was seeing black spots and feeling faint and nauseated. I knew I had low blood sugar and was dehydrated but thought I could make it through. At the finish, I found Hawk and I were eighth place. I threw my saddle in some grass and took Hawk to the vet check. I made it through, then made it back to the trailer where I passed out. Hawk was eating close to me when I woke up and I put him on his stake and got in the shower and drank Gatorade and ran cold water until I felt better. I slept awhile then went outside. Imagine my surprise when many people came over to check on me and congratulate me. They jumped in and helped me with my chores and pushed all their remedies on me. I found I had missed the award meeting and that was why they came to check on me. I had not even thought about attending. The next day as I drove home I thought about what I learned and about the work I had ahead of me. Luck and a good horse had gotten me through my first 50. I wanted to count less on the luck and more on my knowledge for the next one.

I decided to go to Wheatland, Wyoming, for the Shamrock ride for my next endeavor. This was a multi-day ride and I decided to ride on Saturday. I emailed Susie Schomburg, the ride manager, and she was very welcoming and remembered me from Ft. Howes. My thoughts on the way to the ride was that I needed to take better care of myself, do the same things I had done with Hawk previously and try to have fun. That attitude is the same one I have every ride; that is all that is important. It rained all the way to Wheatland. The directions talked about a dirt road into camp. I stopped at the Shamrock Saloon to ask about the road and followed his advice. I ended up staying and visiting with him and drinking too much beer until the rain stopped and he determined the road would be dry. The road gave me palpitations at times but I kept going. I parked by a really nice lady from Illinois who was doing a limited distance ride. Her man friend offered to be my "chore boy" and I totally enjoyed their company and his Aussie dog.

continued >

An advertisement for Long Riders Gear. At the top, the website "LONGRIDERSGEAR.COM" is written in red. Below it, a blue banner reads "WIDE SELECTION OF PRODUCTS MADE IN THE U.S.A.!" in white and red. To the right of the banner is a brown leather saddle. Below the banner, it says "-NEW- Tucker Saddles &amp; Renegade Hoof Boots!" in red and white. To the right of this text is a red hoof boot. Below the hoof boot, it says "Facebook Only" Deals... with icons for Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. At the bottom, the phone number "888.420.GEAR (4327)" and email "thegals@longridersgear.com" are listed. The background of the ad features a silhouette of a rider on a horse in a mountainous landscape.

## 50th Birthday Goal . . .

There were faces I recognized at this ride. I was thrilled to see Dorothy Sue again. I knew it was going to be hot, and hydrated myself all evening and regretted the beer I had consumed at the saloon. Hawk was doing great. One of the people riding with Dorothy Sue said my horse made hers nervous so I opted to ride alone. The first loop I ended up riding with three other women for awhile. We took turns with gates and I felt good after that loop. I started the second loop by myself but caught three other women. One of them made a lot of nasty remarks to me and was very paternalistic. Since

I had met so many other nice riders thus far, I was able to shrug her off. I ended up riding with another nurse on that loop and we had a great time. We also did the third loop together, which was a little scary with rain, lightning and wind. Hawk and I both felt very good at the end of this ride and we had finished in 12th place and took about an hour less to do this ride than Ft. Howes.

On the drive home, I realized that I now had one year to prepare for Tevis 2005 and I believed Hawk and I could do it. I knew Mike would help me and my mom believed in us. I made a list of all the things I wanted to work on for the rest of the summer and fall. Those included working harder on pacing and losing weight and getting acclimated to heat. I realized my instincts were good for distance riding on Hawk and I need to just trust in us as a team. I had learned so much but had more to learn. I reminded myself that stopping for me to gaze and Hawk to graze on the trail are as big a priority as finishing well. I felt good about endurance riding and most of the people I met thus far. That night I dreamed about Tevis and decided to write a letter to Julie Suhr. She wrote a letter in return and told me she thought Hawk and I could finish Tevis and encouraged me to enjoy the journey.

I made arrangements to take Hawk to California and ride him on some of the Tevis trails and crew for a couple from Colorado who were going to ride Tevis. I would have the opportunity to see the vet checks and work with a veterinarian/rider as crew. It was the 50th anniversary for Tevis and the ride was full. Betty Wolgram's horse was lame so her husband, Ken, offered his horse to her. I decided to let Ken ride Hawk at Tevis instead of me riding the trails. Many people have told me that I was crazy to let Ken ride Hawk but I trusted him and I knew that he would run as much as he could to help Hawk complete. When he would want to change or try something he kept looking at me so I finally did something very hard for me. I put Hawk's halter on and handed the lead rope to Ken and told him that I was giving Hawk to him for three days and I wanted him to quit looking to me and just concentrate on him being a partner with Hawk. After the ride was over, Ken had a hard time giving Hawk back to me.

I loved the magic of Tevis 2004. We worked hard, overheated, laughed, dozed rarely but worked together. It was bittersweet when Betty did not finish on time because she was nauseated. Ken and Hawk went ahead and finished right before cutoff. I came home from California knowing my horse could do Tevis but after what I had seen wondering if I had the stamina for it.

Hawk and I enjoyed the trails at home for the next couple of months then I found I lacked 50 miles of even being able to enter Tevis 2005. Being on a waiting list or worrying about it would bother me enough that I wanted to meet qualifications soon. Looking on the internet, I found a ride in Oklahoma in December called the Seminole Stomp. I arrived at Sportsman's Lake yesterday, signed in and tried to do a few miles of the trail. They had 11" of rain the previous week and the trails were eroded and full of muddy water. It was slick, there were scrub oaks on both sides of the trail and the ribbons were so faded I had trouble figuring out where to go. Hawk did not like the trails and jumped up on the sides where my legs were knocking trees. I was discouraged. When I got back to camp, I met Patti Crawford and her husband, Sam. They adopted me and Hawk and it ended up being a wonderful ride. I met Susan Keil at this ride and we finished it together, holding hands as we whooped across the finish line in fifth place. Hawk looked great all through the ride and I learned a lot from both Patti and Susan. This was a ride where I saw more ride etiquette violations. I thought about my first three rides and the great people I had met but also the ones who would let another horse and rider do all the work as leaders then they would run ahead of them at the finish line. I thought about the positive role models I had found and decided that I would probably want to keep doing endurance riding even after Tevis. Driving home to South Dakota my heart was full. It was seven months to Tevis and I now qualified and could send my registration into the office. 🌟



TRUMBULL MOUNTAIN  
**EQUINOX**  
www.trumbullmtn.com  
(800) 442-9672  
saddles@trumbullmtn.com



**Promote the sport with Endurance News:** Whenever I go to the doctor, dentist or anyone who has a waiting room, I donate a few EN magazines for them to add to their magazine collection. Here we have a captive audience craving something other than health and beauty tips to pass away the waiting room time.

**Ronnie Eden, MT Region**

(That's Ronnie at left, "checking the oil"!)

# Here Comes Trouble, er, Krista K.

by Krista Kester

I'm one of those newbies about which you seasoned riders just scratch your heads. You know, the ones who don't dress or act right at a ride. Their tack is decidedly "un-endurance like" and they can't use a stethoscope to save themselves. Yep—that's me.

But honestly, think back to when you were brand-new to this sport. For some it has been decades since you were in my shoes. For others, not so long.

Although it took me a long time to get here, 2011 was finally the year that I found AERC. The journey here was marked by several unsuccessful attempts to find an outlet for my competitive nature. But this is my story.

Like many, I gave up horses in high school and did not bring them back into my life until after the kids were grown and gone. That was December 2006. At that time, I bought several quarter horses and for the next several years just enjoyed riding the country roads around our home. On a whim, I entered an ACTHA ride in Iowa. I had no idea what I was doing, but my big red Quarter Horse KC behaved like a champ (except for refusing to side pass). I did several more ACTHA rides over the winter but began to tire of the slow pace.

I had been to a competitive trail clinic the previous year so did some surfing for "competitive trail." From that, I landed at the NATRC site. It looked interesting and 35 miles (over two days) on a 1200 pound quarter horse seemed like a pretty good undertaking. So, last March, KC and I headed to Oklahoma for a NATRC ride. Keeping up with plethora of rules was a task and not really my style, but we did okay, and I liked the challenge and the hours in the saddle.

I was ready to do it again but wasn't sure that KC was the right mount for the task. So I started looking for a horse that was ready for more distance.

At that time, I did not appreciate the distinction between "competitive trail" and "endurance." As a result, my search for a new horse naively used the terms interchangeably. In retrospect, I was very fortunate that I landed where I did.

In July, I happened across an internet ad for a gray 1/2 Arab "endurance horse" named Bella in Florida. I live in southeast Nebraska—it's a long way from here to there. But I have a granddaughter named Bella so the horse really caught my eye. Bella (the horse) had already done two LDs and two 50s. I had no real idea what those accomplishments meant, but I wanted a horse that was ready for the distance rather than one with "potential."

My family thought I was nuts, but using free miles, I flew to Florida on a Saturday morning, rode the horse on Saturday evening, made the purchase, and flew home on Sunday. Two weeks later Bella arrived in Nebraska.

She was so dainty compared to the Quarter Horses! My saddle was too big so I dug out an old trail saddle that didn't fit the QHs—it fit her perfectly. The headstalls I had were gigantic—the bit just hung down in the middle of her mouth. She surely thought I was mad.

When we finally got underway, she was great. She was well trained and conditioned. Responsive. Only snorted at a few things. We were ready so I started looking for another competitive event.

I still did not appreciate the differences between CTR and endurance. Hence, my next big mistake.

We entered a NATRC ride because of the date and proximity to home. I was by then at least aware of AERC and Bella's record, but I didn't think there was much difference between the formats. That delusion was about to be corrected.

The ride was a disaster. The weather was beastly hot so they shortened the distance and lengthened the time. The pace would likely have been too slow under any circumstances, but the change guaranteed it was. We had to walk a great deal just to meet the minimum time. Actually, Bella pranced sideways and behaved like a knucklehead most of the time. I was horribly discouraged. Is this supposed to be fun? Long story short, I realized I had to try real endurance rides or just give it up.

I found the Indian Territory Elevator ride in October and took the plunge. My husband Kerry came along to crew for me and he was a true champ. The real star of the day though was the ride manager, Susan Young. She was fabulous. There were oodles of helpers and every one of them seemed dedicated to making sure that the first-timers knew exactly what to do, where to do it, and when to do it. They were unbelievably friendly and helpful. (For you other newbies or "wannabes" out there—it helps when you don't hide the fact that you have no idea what you are doing.)

Morning came and we were off. For those of you who have forgotten your first ride, think back. The start of an endurance ride is unique, and I was not prepared for my own or for Bella's response. Fifty or more horses pressing together, many fully intending to go out at a gallop. Most of the rest going out at a very brisk trot. Not exactly the match race from "The Black Stallion," but it is a rush. Well, I was not going out at a gallop (notwithstanding Bella's thoughts to the contrary) and even the hard trot she would have liked to maintain was daunting. The ensuing conflict between the little gray horse and her rider took some time to resolve, but we eventually came to a common mind.



**BEAUTY  
DISPOSITION  
ATHLETIC ABILITY**

4101 N. Bear Canyon Rd.  
Tucson, AZ 85749-8640  
Tel: 520.749.1162  
Fax: 520.749.2572  
[al-marah@att.net](mailto:al-marah@att.net)  
[www.al-marah.com](http://www.al-marah.com)

continued >

## Here Comes Trouble . . .

Actually, I finally began to give her a little credit for her experience and good things started to happen. We motored along on the last several miles of the first loop and came into the vet check in about 10th place. She was down almost immediately and we went out on time (my one-man crew was awesome). The second loop was incredible. Bella didn't miss a beat and we finished sixth in the LD. For a former marathon runner, this sport fits the bill.

Four weeks later we rode our second LD. I managed the ride much better and Bella clearly appreciated my improvements. We finished third with best condition.

I can't finish this story without paying tribute to Darlene Krell, who trained Bella and was willing to sell her to me even though I had absolutely no experience in the sport. Darlene has been doing this for many years and I am confident she had more than one second thought about letting Bella go to a newbie. Darlene is a champ and a darn fine trainer. Thank you.

In the end, I am hooked. Although I'm not well-seasoned yet, I am learning the ropes. I probably still won't dress right and will probably ask some of those stupid questions that make your eyes roll. Please be patient. Hopefully we'll see you on the trail. 🌟

# The Big South Fork Pioneer Experience

by Toni Pederson



Toni Pederson and Gypsy Dream.

September 2011. It was raining, a misty cold rain that penetrated everything; the ground, clothing, hair, even skin. It had been raining the entire week and I was warned that where we would park had a history of becoming muddy . . . very muddy. As I pulled up to the campground, the first thing I saw was a tack shop trailer being towed out of the mud. This was not a good sign. I turned into a field designated for trucks with smaller trailers, picked up speed, topped a small hill, did a quick turn so the front of my truck was facing downward, and cut the engine. This was where I camped. Even the top of this knoll was covered with soggy wet ground. I did a quick prayer that when the end of this weekend came, I would be able to drive down the rise and out to the gravel road without getting stuck.

My mare, Gypsy, impatiently pawed in the trailer. At least she kept a steady tempo: 1,2,3,4. I had borrowed three metal stock panels, 12' long each, that I planned to attach them to the side of my trailer to create Gyp's pen. Those panels turned out to be more difficult to handle by myself than I had realized. Hoping no one was watching, I dragged the panels by maneuvering them one end at a time into position. With the pen completed and Gypsy quietly munching from her hay bag, calm and happy in the mist, it was now time to make camp.

I planned to sleep in the back of my Ford Expedition. I had bought an inexpensive alarm clock that ran on batteries, and had a grocery bag full of non-refrigerated food items such as chocolate cookies, granola bars, Pop-Tarts, dried fruits and nuts, juice boxes, and my favorite, locally-made beef jerky. A trail ride is never complete without it! In the tack compartment of my trailer, I had an entire cooler full of bottled water and a six-pack of Coke. In the now-empty back of the horse trailer, I created a makeshift bathroom/dressing area. I stood back and marveled at how prepared and organized I was. After giving myself a little pat on the back, I grabbed my horse to go through the vet check and get signed in for the ride.

Here I was, at the Big South Fork National Park in Tennessee. It is the heart of gaited horse country and I expected to see other gaited horses at this race. The veterinarian gave Gypsy the once-over, pointing out to me that her winter hair seemed to have started growing early; I must have come from up north. "Lexington, Kentucky, only four hours to the north," was my reply. "Okay, trot her out," he told me. I made sure to let him know that she was a gaited horse. He raised one eyebrow and kind of gave me a little smirky smile. "Oh well, odd man out again," I thought to myself. We passed through the vet check with all As.

With Gyp happy to be back in her pen, I sat in my car and ate a meager little dinner. No cell service; I had warned my husband that may be the case, but I knew he would be at home worrying anyway. I sent him a text message with the hope that as I rode the course the next day, I would go through an area with some cell coverage and the message would get sent out. At the new member talk, Joe explained what to expect during a "typical ride" and gave us pointers for first-time endurance competitors. It was good advice, and I was glad that I had hung around for it. It was well past dark when we finished. I made my way back to the truck and quickly fell asleep.

It was still dark. I heard voices. People and horses were moving about. What time was it? Darn, the back light on the inexpensive alarm clock was not working. Oh well, surely it was not time to get up yet. The first light of dawn seeped through my eyelids. I heard voices talking about the start time for the 50 milers. I was doing the 30 mile ride. It was cool outside and I was comfy and warm, so I easily decided that I had more time to sleep. There was now full morning light. I rolled over to see the clock . . . oh no! Only 20 minutes until the start. Panic set in. The alarm on the cheap piece of junk I had bought didn't work. Now I was hurriedly

continued >

## Big South Fork Experience . . .

getting dressed and ready. I threw the saddle on Gypsy and was at the starting line with a minute and a half to spare.

It was still raining. I decided to start in the middle of the pack. Quickly the front runners were off. As Gyp and I rode down the trail, I kept reminding myself to ride my own ride: "Don't race, you want to have enough horse left to complete all three days." But Gypsy was wanting to race and my adrenaline was running high, so we moved rapidly down the trail. Within the second hour, Gyp had found her rhythm and we settled into the ride. We passed a few riders and were passed by others. Basically, we were riding happily by ourselves. The rain picked up, so I grabbed my raincoat from behind my saddle. I put one arm in the sleeve and swung the raincoat over my head. Before I realized what was happening, Gyp was bucking and tearing off down the trail. What was going on? There wasn't time to think, I just had to hang on and go with her down the trail. The coat was dragging the ground, hanging off of the one arm I had gotten into the sleeve. Rain was hitting my face so hard that I had a difficult time seeing where we were going. Finally, after a lot of "Whooooas," Gypsy came to a stop.

What in the world just happened? We were all alone and nothing had jumped out at us. I was just putting my coat on. I'd ridden her before in my raincoat. Then it dawned on me—I had always stopped and gotten off of her to put the coat on. Never had I put it on while riding her! I was laughing to myself as I thought, "Lesson learned. Practice everything, even the littlest of things, before doing them on an endurance ride!"

Eventually, we came upon two ladies; one riding a beautiful Morgan and the other riding a small light Arabian. We passed them, and they passed us. We passed them again, and they passed us. I was beginning to feel that I was in their way, but their speed was matching Gyp's and we couldn't seem to get beyond them. Finally, I asked if we could ride with them. Gyp seemed to be happy with this arrangement and I introduced myself to Gale and Shef. Gale's Morgan was named Baran and Gypsy took an instant liking to him. We paced off of him to complete the first 16.5 miles of the ride.

Gypsy pulsed down rapidly and we waited in the hold for our required 40 minutes. I grabbed a quick lunch while Gyp happily munched on her hay. We tacked back up and were out on the trail within seconds of being released from our hold. Gale and Shef were hanging back at the hold a little while longer, so once again we were riding by ourselves.

The second loop went down the side of a mountain. It wound in and out of boulders, which had broken off of the sides. It seemed as if we were forever descending, but we finally leveled out and came to a stretch of path that went along the river. It was an old train bed, and I should have been taking advantage of it by cantering to make up time, but Gyp and I were enjoying the peace of being alone on the trail, so we took our time.

What goes down must eventually go back up, and thus did the trail. Up, up, up it went. We climbed the slick sandstone mountain side; it was so steep that I could tell poor Gyp was feeling every step of the climb. At one point, Gypsy stopped and looked over the drop off of a cliff. I swear I could sense her considering whether or not she should just jump off and end her suffering. Eventually, we made it to the top and rode back into camp. We had ridden the entire second loop without seeing a soul.

The time keeper gave me my score sheet and I was shocked to learn that I had finished ninth! There were still five riders behind me. This meant that I got the chance to stand for best condition. One of the best pieces of advice that Joe gave the new competitors was to take the opportunity to stand for BC whenever we can; we should use it as a learning experience, plus get a free vet check. I was shocked to see how much weight I had forced my poor horse to carry. I made it a point to lighten my load for the next day's ride.

That night, cold, tired and wet, the ride management served us a hot dinner. Never before in my life had spaghetti tasted so good! The ride therapist gave a talk about muscular/skeletal biomechanics. He gave advice on how to keep from having sore necks, backs, hips, and knees during long hours of riding. He talked about his finding that when we experience these types of pain, we transfer the problem to our horses and they experience the same types of pain. This was information that served me well during the next two days of riding.

During the evening, I learned that Shef and her horse had taken a nasty fall on the slippery sandstone climb. Her gelding had scraped up his knees and they both were bruised and stiff; they would not be competing the next day. Wow! Gyp and I had climbed that same slippery mountain without incident. This was the first time that the dangers of endurance riding had actually seemed real to me. However, at the same time, I was impressed with my own mare's ability. When the day was done, my back ached and I had a headache, but I was looking forward to doing it all over again the next morning.

Dawn of the second day came and I was up, feeling invigorated and ready to go. It was amazing how comfortable the back of the truck could be and what a good night's sleep you could have when you are physically exhausted. Gypsy herself seemed happy and ready to tackle the new day's course. This course wound up and down mountain sides, in and out of the beautiful Laurel Creek, past old homesteads, along the tops of mountain ridges, and into the vet check after 20 miles.

The motto of AERC is "To Finish is To Win." I came to this pioneer ride with my only objective being to finish all three days with a sound horse, so I approached the second day's ride as a fun day. I met a fellow Kentuckian, Brenda, and we started the ride together. We were surprised to find out that we only live a few miles away from each other, and that we might be able to do some training rides together. Brenda was delightful, and we talked and rode at the back of the pack. After an hour, Brenda left Gyp and I behind to ride our own ride. We stopped and took pictures, we played in the creek, we even stopped to talk with other trail riders that we passed. At one point, Gypsy and I caught up with Ann, who wasn't sure if she had remained on the correct course or not. We rode and talked together for a while. Eventually, I held Gypsy back so we could continue to take it easy; we were having such a pleasant day.

continued >

## Big South Fork Experience . . .

Gyp and I finally made it to the vet check. Of course we were the last ones in, but that was my plan anyway. I was surprised to see Joe there. It seemed as if he had stayed there to make sure all the new endurance riders were doing okay. This vet check was away from camp, and the ride management had arranged to bring supplies for all of the riders without pit crews. This was such a nice thing to do and I really appreciated it. After our 40-minute hold, which included lunch, we were back on the trail. Only 10 miles left of this day's ride and it seemed to go by fast. As I approached the end, there, standing with the time keeper, was Joe again. I realized then what a friendly, helpful group of people were in the Southeast Region of AERC.

Another hot meal was served that night, and at the award's presentation, I was given the "Turtle" award for last place. The prize for last place was 50 pounds of feed. Perhaps I should consider coming in last all the time! The next day's course was discussed and, due to the large amount of rain the area had received, the Big South Fork River was too high to be safely crossed. Eric, the ride manager, made the decision to repeat the second day's course. I had really wanted to cross that river and see new scenery.

The next day dawned early. Gyp and I were up and ready to go. I marveled at her; she was becoming fresher and fresher each morning. Brenda got up to see me off on the next day's ride and we agreed to keep in touch. Shef and her horse were still unable to compete the third day, so Gale and I decided to ride the course together; Gypsy and Baran seemed to like each other and it was a good match. Up the rocky mountain side and along the cliffs is where the "Mountain Horse" really showed up in my mare. She had an abundance of stamina and when we hit level ground, she went right into a smooth gait.

Gale and I met up with another lady who rode with us for a while. Gypsy may have gotten a little jealous over sharing Baran's attention. She stopped dead in the middle of the path, stood for a few seconds and then turned around and started gaiting back the way we had come! I dismounted, turned her around and walked her for a few minutes. Then I mounted back up and we took off down the trail with renewed vigor and a refreshed mindset. Gale and Baran had let the other lady go on and hung back to let us catch up with them. We gaited happily into the vet check together.

During our hold time, people offered hay and treats to Gypsy. While I ate, several people offered to crew for me. This was turning out to be much more of a friendly endurance event than I had imagined it would be. All too soon, our hold time was up and Gale and I were off on the trail again. A comparatively easy second loop and we were walking toward the finish line. We thought we were all alone, when out of nowhere two riders were suddenly upon us. We bolted across the finish line, which wasn't the best thing for our pulse rates; but what can we say, it was instinct.

We pulsed down and were immediately in the vet check after coming off the trail. After a thorough exam, the same vet who had made me feel like an outsider at the initial check, smiled and patted Gyp on the shoulder. He turned to me and said, "This is a good, solid horse." I smiled the rest of the day. Again, Gypsy had passed her check with all As and I had shown at least one person what a Mountain Horse is capable of doing.

That night, another wonderful hot meal was served as we gathered around for the awards. I heard stories of more spills, lameness, and riders pulling horses for various reasons, metabolic troubles, and lost equipment. I had made it through all three days without incident. And when I was already feeling pretty good about myself, Eric announced the people who completed the Pioneer portion of the endurance ride. I was surprised to find that I was one of only three people who completed all three days on the same horse! When I went forward to accept my award, Eric announced to everyone that my mare was capable of going a couple more days. Wow!! I went to the Big South Fork feeling like somewhat of an outsider, but I made friends; I was invited to join a local long distance riding club, and I completed the goal that I had set for myself and Gypsy. But the thing that I remember best about the ride is that I gained respect from fellow riders for my little gaited mare. 🍷

# From Rescue to Endurance Horse

by Cherry Grubb

"Once you hear this horse's story, you won't be able to leave her here!" were the resonating words of Dominika Nawrot, former trainer at the [Standardbred Retirement Foundation](#) (SRF), that will always bring a smile to my face when I reflect on my equestrian journey with a retired Standardbred broodmare named Boston Kate.

The SRF adoption fee was a Christmas gift to me from my sister Amy in 2010, a full \$300 to put toward a Standardbred that I knew I would adopt, but clueless from among the 30 or so head which horse it would be. The week after Christmas and two days after a lofty snowstorm that hammered central New Jersey and left most of the spacious farm where the horses are housed for the program ensconced in over a foot of snow, we packed our horse-crazy daughters in the truck and struck out on a quest for my new horse: an endurance candidate.

I had decided months before that I wanted to delve into the endurance world, a spark that had ignited in my belly upon returning to horsemanship after a 20-year hiatus where life and the "real world" (college, career, bringing up baby) had been inserted into my former life as a pleasure rider and foxhunter. I found inspiration in my mentor and fellow boarder, Mike Keretzman, whom upon returning from the Fort Valley ride in October of 2010 made a passing remark to me that I might enjoy endurance riding. Be it kismet or coincidence, Dominika at SRF had already piqued my curiosity about the sport after regaling me with her story of a

continued >

## **From Rescue to Endurance Horse . . .**

late-night arrival for a ride in Maine where she unloaded her Standardbred to the whispers of "What is that?" amongst the sea of Arabian athletes. She proceeded to hold her own on Oz the Great and finished fifth in a well-worn English saddle with a sponge and wearing nothing more elaborate than a tank top, regretting only the lack of bug spray.

A sponge? What the heck for?

And so I launched myself into the next chapter of life as a newbie endurance rider on a mare that had become a rescue success story on a local harness racing forum after her caretaker, Rose, put everything on the line and outbid an Amish man for her at auction. Her former owner had weaned Kate's most recent foal, number eight for the 14-year old mare, and threw her up on the block without a second thought. Rose had no means to feed or keep the horse, but saw something special in her. Enter the folks in white at SRF who realized the horse was a registered Standardbred and pulled Kate into their program immediately.

### **The 2011 ride season was not without its trials and tribulations, although Kate and I have forged our way along and never looked back.**

I was concerned that I would not find an ideal candidate that fateful day at SRF, although my criteria were clear: I was looking for an athletic gelding, not too large, between 6 and 10 years old, with some trail experience, a calm temperament, and a zero spook factor. We had even brought balloons and umbrellas to make sure! And most importantly, the horse had to want me, too. The ones that turned or walked away from me in the pasture would likely not make the cut. As I walked through the gate to the last pen of candidates, I was almost immediately joined by a curious, gentle mare, who had chosen to quietly follow me as I toured the pasture. My sister informed me that I had just been adopted. A final call to Mike, whom I was leaning heavily on for advice and support, would be the deal maker or breaker. "Are we completely opposed to mares?" I remember asking, fingers crossed. Her age was another possible stumbling block at 14 years old, as well as the pin firing scars on her right hind leg, but after passing her pre-purchase vet exam with flying colors, Kate left SRF with a new job ahead.

And so it was that I launched myself into the world of endurance with so much to learn and a burning desire to find out exactly what it would mean to live up to the AERC motto of "to finish is to win." Conditioning commenced immediately during the snowy winter months as Kate and I began to understand the rigors involved in an endurance training program. Obstacles like stream crossings now became a challenge to my balking mare as she would have to process them as critical breaks for water and learn to enter without hesitation. Regulating the rangy mare's trot was a major concern, given her ability to trot at upwards of 18 mph. Helping her find a comfortable place for her footfalls and slowing to an 8-10 mph trot came with the help of equitation trainer Shawna Simmons, who showed us how to stay engaged and steady. Kate's canter left much to be desired until quite by accident one day I stumbled across a verbal cue that must have remained from her days on the track. And thus with a kiss I learned just exactly what my mare could do!

The 2011 ride season was not without its trials and tribulations, although Kate and I have forged our way along and never looked back. At Rabbit Run we rider optioned after 15 miles, no thanks to a tack malfunction that had rubbed my leg raw and an apparent colic episode on Kate's part that actually revealed itself to be marish behavior during her early spring transition. We entered each ride with no expectations, strictly a "finish to win" attitude and by June at the Old Dominion LD, finished ninth place, strong and ready for more. The true test would be at Ride Between the Rivers for our first 50, and while she was tired at the finish and had difficulty pulsing down, she placed 18th in her first ever endurance trial and earned every single accolade that would come her way. (As a side, we owe many heartfelt thanks to Natalie Muzzio, who without hesitation offered extra ice and much time and energy to help Kate pulse within limits.) And it is that attitude that embodies the riders, crews, veterinarians, and volunteers that I have encountered during my first season with the fabulous organization that is AERC.

The crowning moment this season for my mighty mare and me was at Fort Valley in October. Mike's horse had been pulled for a sore back, leaving Kate and me to continue alone on the third loop. With the change of seasons, the pending darkness seemed a vivid reality and with Kate's unfortunate aversion to the incline at Indian Graves (where she chose to balk and stand solid for what seemed an eternity), the time gap between ourselves and the dozen or more horses that passed us on the ridge after we finally reached the summit had closed. It was Kate's first foray alone on the trail without an equine buddy and the true test of trust in our own partnership. At the time we trotted out, we were most certainly contenders for the turtle award, but on that final loop, not only did Kate willingly move along as I endlessly coaxed and praised her, she actually made up time, crossing the finish line at what would average at an 11 mph trot. I could not have been more proud of my mare; we finished with daylight to spare.

Season One has ended and Kate and I have completed the first chapter of our endurance story with a mild sprain sustained at the Mustang Memorial ride in November. Kate is a very good patient, however, and will no doubt recover quickly and gladly begin the much needed rehabilitation that lies ahead. There is no doubt in my mind that Kate loves her new career. We have just renewed our annual membership with AERC, although this year's form has been submitted as a family membership for Mike and I, as we currently park both of our horse trailers in the same driveway and leave two pairs of muddy boots by the front door when we return from the barn. My daughter Katy has also caught the distance bug, placing second on her first-ever 30-mile CTR at Chesapeake Fall in September, and champing at the bit to continue in 2012 as a junior competing in limited distance AERC rides on her new Arabian, "Harley." The sport of endurance riding promises something different and exciting for each one of us as we add new chapters to our equestrian journey and we offer many thanks to AERC for making it all possible. 🌟

# Meet AERC's only Gypsy Vanner

by Julie Anthony



I started Spencer in LDs with the intention to cross-train for CDE's, getting him in better shape for the marathon section of the competition. My husband and I have always done trail riding and still do all year round, but was finding I was sitting in a carriage driving more than riding so thought the distant events would be fun, since I like to ride so much. I knew it could be a challenge with a Gypsy, but found Spencer to be very easy to ride. His conditioning of LDs improved his dressage scores and he has won every marathon since he started doing the rides. His weakness is that he doesn't pulse down like the Arabians, so I adjust my rides accordingly. We back up to the Goethe Forest in Florida, which is very active with endurance riders which makes it easy to train. I try to fit in as many rides as I can and my husband has even started doing them with his Quarter Horse. We have met many great people at the endurance rides and I do get all sorts of comments about Spencer.

## Member Opinion

# The Slowest Way Is the Fastest Way

by Carol Grosvenor

I'm new to endurance riding, from the Central Region in Texas, and was asked to write this article by Susan Keil, DVM, past chair of the AERC Education Committee. I have ridden for over 20 years in other equine sports, and am currently training a young Appaloosa for endurance and all-around riding. AERC has done an amazing job gathering, teaching and presenting information on how to feed and train for endurance, but I think there could be some improvements made in the training and preparation of riders and horses, especially for people like me who are new to the sport. This article is aimed at novice endurance riders and anyone riding a green horse, especially if new to training horses. Most of the ideas in this article relate to specific incidents, often learned in the school of hard knocks. My hope is to save some of those for you!

**Too many accidents.** In our region, there have been some serious accidents. When I compare that to other equestrian sports I've been involved with, it seems disproportionate. There's nothing worse than for someone who loves to ride being hurt or killed in an accident that might have been prevented. I think almost all accidents are preventable or can be mitigated with proper instruction and training on the part of both horses and riders. We were taught that riders should take full responsibility for their own actions and those of their horses. Riders will try to do things we shouldn't be doing. We will sometimes push too hard, not push hard enough, get scared or angry, or simply not know how to handle a situation. We are not born knowing these things, but horse safety and skills can be learned. Our horses depend on us to make the right decisions on their behalf, and other people do, too.

Endurance riders are some of the most enthusiastic, fun-loving, adventurous, brave and genuine people I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. My thought isn't to curb anyone's enthusiasm, but to enhance the sport by making it less stressful for the horses, which will make it less stressful and safer for riders, too.

## **Riding and Training Safety**

**The starts.** At my first 25, I rode out with two other newbies, and we decided to do a delayed start, but even with the delay, we ran into problems, and a lot of those weren't of our own making. Our horses got very excited, so we needed the late start. We got lost a couple times before we even got out of camp, we kept running into a few people who were having problems with their horses—spinning, rearing, bucking and general hysteria, and a couple people who were on the ground trying to work out the problems before attempting to get back on. In the next rides, I saw similar things, including horses that got loose and ran through camp. It made me think the experience could be safer.

**Mandatory helmet use.** Helmets are inexpensive, accessible, and some even rather attractive. You can get one that will save your life for only \$30 at the nearest tractor supply store. There's absolutely no reason one should ever get on a horse without one. Most endurance riders wear them, but I believe they should be mandatory in every equine sport for people of all ages. Think about what your brain injury would put your family through if you were too shortsighted to wear one. United States Dressage Olympic silver medalist Courtney King Dye was riding a young horse that stumbled and fell with her. She's now brain-damaged for life, because she was in a hurry and didn't put on a helmet. Upper level dressage trainers have generally thought them unnecessary,

continued >



## The Slowest Way . . .

but this accident rocked their world. After Courtney's accident the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) changed the rules in eventing and dressage, making them mandatory for eventing, and nearly mandatory in dressage, exempting only adult riders at the highest training levels. Courtney King Dye now supports Riders 4Helmets.com, a nonprofit group, and the video she made for their convention is heartbreaking. If you think you don't need to wear one, watch her video.

The New York Times reported the following in a September 28, 2010, article on Courtney King Dye's accident. "A 2007 study by the Centers for Disease Control found that horseback riding resulted in 11.7% of all traumatic brain injuries in recreational sports from 2001 to 2005, the highest of any athletic activity. Last year, there were 14,466 emergency room visits for brain injuries among riders, according to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons."

The rest of this article relates to the training issues, which make horses and riders safer, specifically for endurance.

### Training Concepts, Tricks and Tidbits

I have always felt that training is far more important to your safety than your insurance policy. It actually is your insurance policy. By "training" I don't mean just miles and miles of legging your horse up. Of course, we have to do that to prep for endurance riding, but regular obedience training cannot be left out in the training of a sane and manageable endurance horse—flatwork, obstacles, loading, standing still, standing tied, etc. If you do it well, you may never make a trip to the emergency room. There are many basic skills that every rider and rider combination should be able to do well before attempting to ride endurance.

### Basic Skills Needed Before Attempting to Compete

**Overview.** One should be able to ride at walk, trot and canter uphill and downhill over uneven terrain with a group of four or five other horses, and also alone. If you're a novice rider, take riding lessons from a reputable trainer who will train you in and out of the arena. If you can find an endurance or eventing trainer, preferably who has been through a rider/training certification program, that person should be a good choice. Dressage training is also very good experience, but it doesn't use a half-seat (also known as two-point, jumping seat or huntseat), so it isn't enough. I believe the half-seat is the most effective, efficient, and least-tiring seat for endurance riding. To ride in a half-seat for any length of time, you will have to practice. It gets easier the longer you do it, though. Learning to jump isn't really necessary, but it is helpful. Hire a trainer with a gentle, yet confident disposition, whose horses are well behaved and move properly (preferably with some degree of collection or self-carriage).

**Learning the half-seat.** You need to know how to post a trot and ride a forward (two-point seat) properly. This is important because it takes weight off your horse's back and lightens his load. It provides for much less concussion on your spine and your horse's back. If you're doing a lot of long rides and you do not post or ride in a half-seat, you will end up with pain in your lower back. If you always ride in two-point or a halfseat, you can ride pain free for years. "Two-point" refers to two points of contact with the horse. The two points are your feet. Your buttocks (the third point) do not touch the seat of your saddle, but shouldn't be very far out of the saddle. Think of the fabric touching the saddle, but not your weight. Your heels are slightly lower than your toes, and your ear should align vertically with your heel. The angle of your back and hips changes depending on the speed and terrain. Your head, shoulders, face and eyes are all forward. Don't look down, slump, or roll your shoulders forward.

**Negotiating obstacles.** You should be able to negotiate obstacles (hills, water, narrow trails, logs, mud, etc.) as you may find in the area you will be riding. If possible, go early or make a trip to the ride location at least once in advance of the ride so you and your horse are familiar with the terrain, type of obstacles and footing. If there is anything particularly challenging or scary for your horse, such as a wooden bridge, cattle or other types of livestock, spend ample time practicing before you do the competitive ride. One day of training should be sufficient if you've been doing everything else correctly in your training program.

**Lungeing in open land.** Be able to lunge your horse obediently in open land at walk, trot and canter and have the horse able to willingly stop on the lunge line. Many people start horses in a round pen, but for trail riding and endurance, you need to be able to lunge in open land so that you can calm a horse down before a ride, check for lameness, check his mood, train voice commands, and enhance straightness and obedience. If you can't do this, he's not ready for an endurance ride, so stay home and practice.

**Stopping your horse.** It vitally important to be able to stop your horse and have lateral control over him at all gaits. Stopping sounds awfully basic, but it can be very difficult when the horse is highly excited. If you can't stop him on the lunge before you get on, don't get on. Either start out on foot and get on when he calms down, keep lunging until he is stopping, or go home and keep training. Horses should be ridden in the most forgiving tack as possible, but it is common for the horse who goes perfectly at home in a D-ring snaffle to need a Pelham (or other stronger leveraged bit) and a martingale (known in western riding as a tie-down) on a hunt, cross country course, or an endurance ride. You can get into a lot of trouble on an endurance ride if the horse won't stop, so when you train do some of your training at speed with other people so you know you can stop him, and bit him accordingly. Running into someone else to stop your horse doesn't count! As crazy as that sounds, I've seen people do it as their

continued >



Mountain Lodges of Peru  
adventure at its finest

TRAVELER  
Tours  
of a Lifetime  
2011

Experience PERU on HORSEBACK!  
www.mountainlodgesofperu.com  
equestriantrekking@gmail.com  
916.769.7701

## The Slowest Way . . .

main stopping technique. However, finding riding buddies usually becomes a problem.

**Use of secondary aids (bits, spurs and whips).** I would have left this section out, except my horse was balking rather violently on a trail two weeks ago, and I had to put on some spurs, which immediately solved the problem. These aids are often essential for smaller riders.

We have started horses in a roundpen in a halter with a side walker on the ground. In those early sessions, we didn't wear spurs or carry a whip, but it is a good practice to train the horse to these secondary aids. Some horses are initially afraid of whips and spurs, so you will have to acclimate the horse first. Once the horse is no longer afraid of the whip, it serves as an extension of the arm, and is extremely useful. The dressage whip works best, as it lies across the rider's thigh, and is used by a tap to the hindquarters. I only use spurs on horses that are sluggish or obstinate, but there are times when they are necessary. Inexperienced riders are advised against spurs, though, because the rider must be able to keep his/her legs quiet and not inadvertently spur the horse.

We have used snaffle bits or Pelham on all our horses, although I've also ridden in hackamores and side pulls, which I find offer the rider much less control over the horse. The Pelham is essentially two bits in one and is controlled by two sets of reins. It's a nice choice for a hotter horse. People often think using one is too complicated, but it really isn't. A Pelham allows one to ride the horse without leverage using the jointed snaffle or Mullen mouthpiece (straight bar), which promotes collection and helps the horse carry himself correctly. If the horse needs to be stopped or slowed down, the rider engages the second rein on the end of the shank with curb chain. Almost all the other bits only engage the shank, which is much stronger, but it doesn't promote the nice carriage like the snaffle bit. A horse that is carrying himself correctly is much more comfortable to ride and it's easier to control his speed. It also helps him build a strong back and neck, which is thought to lengthen his years under saddle.

For small children on forward ponies, the Pelham is often used with a converter, allowing for one set of reins. This essentially changes it into a Kimberwicke, which uses the snaffle or solid bar mouthpiece, the curb, and sometimes also a shank. Obviously, by combining the two rein actions, it no longer functions quite the same way, but these bits are safe for cross-country riding, and are often used in foxhunting and eventing.

**Mounting a young horse safely.** You must be able to safely mount and dismount. This requires training of both horse and rider, and may appear to be a no-brainer, but it's not. The rider is at the most risk while trying to get on the horse, because only one foot is in the stirrup and the rider's balance is precarious and in motion. A lot can happen in those few seconds before the rider is safely in the saddle.

I had the misfortune recently to be on a ride with an old friend. We were taking her 4-year old on his second trail ride. She hadn't trained a green horse in years and made a few mistakes. I asked if she wanted me to hold him while she mounted, but she declined. The girth wasn't tight enough, and it caused the saddle to slip as she mounted from the ground. She thought she'd get on and tighten it once she was up there, but as she mounted, her foot touched his flank because the saddle was slipping. He came unglued and began to buck violently. She was bucked off and broke her arm. The mistakes made were: not checking and tightening the girth just before mounting, not using a breastplate as young horses don't often tolerate saddle movement, and not having me hold him. I'm sure if I'd been holding him, I could have secured the stirrup for her if the saddle had slipped, and I would have checked the girth. If you're riding a green or excited horse, please have someone assist you while you mount. There is no shame in taking this simple precaution. Once you're in the saddle, you're much safer, but during the ascent, you aren't.

When you do sit down, sit down lightly, and don't allow your horse to walk off immediately. Make him learn to stand before you mount and after you're in the saddle.

**Dismounting.** On the dismount, always be sure to take your left leg out of your stirrup before you jump off. Swing your right leg over the saddle, hold your body against the saddle, then remove your left foot from the stirrup, and jump away from the horse's body. Do not ever put your right leg on the ground, leaving the left foot in the stirrup, and then take the left foot out. If the horse spooks while you're dismounting, you can be drug while only standing on your right leg. I had a friend who did that, and he broke his leg when the horse spooked at a car driving by.

## Training Before a Ride

Don't worry about your ego! Worry first about your safety and the safety of your friends and the horses. All horses and riders start out green. For everything, there is a season. It takes a horse about two years to become reasonably safe, and about four years to become extremely reliable in almost every situation. The whole first year a horse is under saddle is an adventure. You can't let your guard down, or skip a step, or forget how green the horse is. As soon as you do, something will happen to remind you.

Then one day, 18 – 24 months later, you realize he's behaving pretty well, and the "goober" moments are nearly gone. At this point, it's time to pay forward and help your friend with his or her green horse. Be the one to mount last to make sure your friend is safely in the saddle, take the lead, ride first through the spooky spots, set the pace, etc. But, you can't rush it. Horses have to have things introduced one thing at a time until they work through their fears and anxieties. It really does take a lot of wet saddle blankets. When someone tells you a horse had 30 or 90 days with a trainer, it doesn't mean very much, even if he does very well for the trainer in a tightly controlled situation. It only means he's ready for you to start riding him. There will be a lot more work to do from that point, as you continually up the ante of what he will do as a finished horse.

**Learning to ride well before training a green horse.** It generally takes people about five years of experience riding (and I mean riding a lot and taking lessons) before they are ready to start training their first green horse. When you do that, hire a

## The Slowest Way . . .

trainer to work with you, so you don't make little mistakes that escalate into big mistakes that can make a horse unmanageable. It's very hard, sometimes impossible, to retrain bad training experiences, so it is far safer and efficient to never make big mistakes, or correct any small mistakes immediately. For example, if your horse never learns he can buck you off, he won't keep trying it, and you will have a non-bucker for the rest of his life. On the other hand, if he learns he can buck people off, he'll just get better and better at it with practice. Horses usually warn us what they are thinking, but it takes training on our part to figure out what they are saying and what to do about it. When you work at home without a trainer, have a knowledgeable person with you.

**The training learning curve.** My daughter and I, who didn't have the luxury of buying well-trained horses, have ridden together over 20 years. We learned a lot, especially from the worst behaved ones, bless their little bucking, rearing, bolting, spooking, biting little hearts! She's now 26 and just started training a 3-year-old Warmblood/thoroughbred cross for showjumping and dressage. I'm on my second year with my second appaloosa (fifth personal horse). My young mare is now about 75% solid and doing mainly endurance, but is also learning to jump and do basic flatwork. It's still not easy watching your child train a horse when he's misbehaving, but we've both gotten better over the years. They still throw a lot at us, but we're better at anticipating their behaviors. We ride often and stay fit. We're both seeing much faster progression with our current horses than we did with previous ones.

**Riding enough.** Green horses need at least three training sessions per week. You can break them up different ways, but at least one session should be all groundwork. The others should include a few minutes of groundwork and the rest under saddle. I've seen endurance riders train mainly riding very long, hard, fast rides, but I think that causes the greener horses to end up being less obedient and stiff, and can cause lameness issues if not done correctly. You need to mix up some of your trail training with standard arena training—lateral work, turns, disengaging, cavaletti, jumping low fences, obstacles, backing up, pulling logs, working cattle, etc. It makes for a better behaved, less spooky and flexible horse. If you are pressed for time like I am, even 15 minutes on the lung line will help reinforce your training and verbal commands.

**Cell phones.** When riding or working with horses, always carry a cell phone on your person. A cell phone that is in a bag on your horse is not going to help you if you're incapacitated and can't reach it. Also, make sure you have the battery charged!

**Feeding for optimum training.** Sometimes if a horse is agitated, dangerous and/or difficult, bad behavior can be eliminated by changes to the horse's feed. Every horse is different, so there is no absolute correct way to feed. Endurance riding is trickier, since it is a balancing act due to the high calorie intake needed to complete long rides. Those same feeds can make a horse hard to handle. The H/A/A United States Pony Club Manual (easily available online for about \$20) has some excellent information on feed for different levels of work, as does the AERC web site. If using that manual, the eventing guidelines will be closest to endurance.

Your vet or equine nutritionist may be able to help you with this. From my experience, as a rule of thumb, the younger adult horses in the best health, are most likely to behave badly if given too much feed or a diet that is too rich. Both of my appaloosas, until late teens, could not be safely given alfalfa, beet pulp, or sweet feed. Some horses can stay very healthy on only good, quality grass and hay. As they age, though, I have found the amount of food required to maintain their weight and health increases. My 25 year-old, retired, 14.2 hand appaloosa now eats about 4x the amount the eight year-old 15.2 hand appaloosa eats, and she's not overweight.

**Ruling out pain.** Many times when a horse is misbehaving or is not up to par, it is a pain issue, not a training issue. So, if you feel like you're doing everything right, check for physical reasons. For example, a saddle that is too tight over the withers may cause a horse to buck. A tie-down or bit that is uncomfortable may cause a horse to throw his head. A mild bowed tendon may cause him to refuse to cross a creek. Sometimes these things are easy to figure out, but often they'll require a veterinarian and a lameness check. Tendon and ligament injuries may come on gradually and take many months to heal. Just because the horse appears sound, doesn't mean he is ready to go back into endurance training. Talk to your vet about a proper comeback schedule, so you don't reinjure him.

**Learn to say no.** I don't know how many times I've been in situations where someone is having trouble with their horse, and the rider has asked another rider to ride it, in hopes of fixing the problem. Folks, remember you're never obligated to get on someone else's problem horse, even if you are a professional trainer.

Inversely, if you're having trouble with a horse, and a friend volunteers to get on and "fix" everything for you, you are not obligated to let him/her do so. It is your call as the rider to assess the volunteer's ability and the anticipated behavior of the horse. I've had this happen to me, and denied the opportunity to another rider, which probably seemed like an insult. However, it's wasn't. It's simply making a decision not to needlessly endanger someone else for your own benefit. If you choose to ride a green horse, you must be willing to handle whatever that horse throws your way, but your friends are under no such obligation.

When trainers work with problem horses, it is most often done in an environment where the trainer/rider has some control over the outcome. People don't expect a trainer to start a young horse in a rocky field covered in cactus, so why is it suddenly OK to ask your buddy to train your horse for you on a steep, rocky trail in the middle of nowhere? The person asking isn't concerned about your welfare, and may not have any idea how dangerous and ridiculous the request is. Even if you're a trainer, you do not have to ride any horse that you feel is too dangerous. I've seen incredibly talented trainers turn down such requests without any hesitation. Your health is always more important than your ego, and if your friend can't handle her horse, it's not your problem or responsibility.

**Short reins and snaffle bits.** Traditionally, horses of all disciplines are started in snaffle bits (non-leveraged), which are the

continued >

## The Slowest Way . . .

mildest bits made. Of those, wide mouthpieces are the gentlest, and narrow ones the most severe, but medium-wide bits often fit the horse the best. When starting your horse in a snaffle, check it carefully to make sure it won't pinch the horse's mouth or cheek if poorly constructed. Make sure it fits and that the horse has had his wolf teeth pulled, if he has any. Get the heaviest bit you can find because it will stay in the right place in mouth more easily. If possible, use heavy reins or weight them near the front (Indians sewed rocks on the reins) so they do not float lightly. Heavier reins improve hand signals to the mouth. If you're riding an endurance ride in a snaffle, keep the reins short, and keep your hands over the withers unless riding on a loose rein to rest your horse. Your hands may follow the reins coming forward with canter strides. The rein line from the mouth through the bit through your elbow should be nearly straight.

When riding a green, fresh, hot, scared, disobedient or excited horse, keeping that reins short (although the grip shouldn't be tight) is an excellent safety tool because it decreases your reaction time to anything the horse might do, such as spook or bolt. All you have to do is clamp down, straighten him or disengage the horse's hindquarters if a full correction is needed. Long reins are fine if the horse is relaxed and chances of a problem are minimal, but not a good idea if you think you might need to make a very quick correction. If you're riding in a hackamore and leveraged bits (bits with long shanks), this will not work as well, however. Riders have the most control over their horse's movements in a snaffle or curb bit, not a hackamore or rope halter. The rider can use his body position to control speed in a hackamore, but not the reins, so it is best not to ride a green horse in a hackamore on an endurance ride until the horse's speed can easily be rated at all gaits.

**High reins on a potential buck.** If you think your horse is going to buck, and often you can feel when a horse is very tense and starting to move its body upward, then ride defensively. Raise your hands several inches above the withers. This isn't good equitation, but it will help you if he bucks, since it isn't as easy for a horse to buck with the reins higher. This works in any bit. It gives you a little more control if he can't get his head down, which he must do to buck. Sometimes horses are just too strong to stop, but it will surely make it more difficult. Do not lower your hands if the horse is starting to buck. The most important things you can do are try to keep your weight back, stay on by being centered, do not lower your hands, and attempt to disengage his hindquarters.

**Disengaging the hindquarters.** If a horse begins to buck, bolt, spook, or rear, disengaging the hindquarters can save you from a disaster. If you don't know how to do this maneuver, have someone explain it to you, and practice it until you can do it with your horse's head level. This isn't just one standard maneuver; it is modified depending on the situation. For example, if you disengaged the horse too quickly when he's moving fast, you can cause him to fall with you.

This is the single most important training maneuver on a green horse. Everyone should know how to execute it. I have seen riding instructors teach this to students before teaching anything else, because it is that important. To explain it in detail is another topic for another date, but it is best taught and learned in person. It isn't difficult and can easily be learned in one session with a good trainer. It is commonly used by "natural horsemanship" trainers. Once the horse has learned the maneuver, you will use it to improve your horse's flexibility in your ground training, so it isn't just used to reprimand bad behavior.

## Teaching Thoughtfully and Dealing with Fear

Most horses aren't mean, although there are a few that are. If you end up with a mean, grumpy or untalented one, it's best to let him go. The best horses can be quite easy to train, but some can be a real challenge. Initially, they will try your patience by being excessively headstrong, reactionary, or afraid of everything.

Most horses misbehave because they are scared, they don't understand you, or they are in pain. Your job is to figure out how to communicate cross-species, and horses are much better at body language than humans. If the first thing you try doesn't work, keep thinking about how to explain it better so he'll understand you. Show him what you want. Horses learn visually. It often works well to walk over the scary thing, jump the jump yourself or cross the creek and let him watch you. If he sees it didn't kill you, he will eventually decide he can do it, too. However, be careful not to let him jump on you, in a case of crossing a creek or something tricky. If there is no place to move out of the way, this is not a good choice, but I've taught horses to jump in the arena by walking over many fences this way.

Horses can smell fear and can tell from your voice if you're scared, serious, mad, patient and/or kind. They size up your leadership abilities almost as soon as they meet you, and they'll behave accordingly. The horse that makes your life miserable may turn out to be the best horse you'll ever have, so don't give up too fast. Many people quit too soon, and it's a shame. Being a good trainer for your horse takes feel (as the Dorrance brothers said), patience, a calm demeanor and skillful teaching ability, but these things can be learned. No one is born knowing how to be a good teacher.

**An example: trailer loading.** An example is teaching a young horse to trailer load. If you're not keenly observant, it may appear that two people are using nearly identical techniques. One is successful while the other is not. However, on closer inspection, the techniques are not the same. The successful trainer is correctly timing his cues, rewards and punishments, maintaining or not maintaining eye contact properly, is standing in exactly the right place and has done the proper groundwork so that he has perfect control over the movement of the horse before he ever goes near the trailer. The other person's timing is off, he's rewarding when he should be punishing, he's standing in the wrong place, he's done no prep work, and he's thoroughly confused the horse, who has decided to quit trying and go have a tantrum. The poor trainer isn't giving the horse clear signals. Horses need to know

continued >

## The Slowest Way . . .

you're serious—your cues must be crystal clear, adequate prep for every new skill you teach has been done, you're confident, and you will discipline him, if necessary.

It works best if he likes you, but he must respect you. He needs to know you aren't mean or angry and you will never lose your patience or your temper, unless he does something terrible, such as bite you. A punishment must always be in keeping with the crime—never too light for a serious offence, but not too severe for a small mistake, and a horse who doesn't understand should be shown the way and helped, not punished. If this is all done correctly, the horse will come to enjoy his trainer/rider and look forward to his time with you, doing anything you ask him to do. Trailer training is the type thing that is best learned by watching people do it right and wrong, so when it is time to teach your horse to load, go to some clinics, watch some training DVDs, and/or hire someone who excels at teaching horses to load, and don't be in a hurry. This is one of the most dangerous things you will teach your horse. If you've never done it before, hire a professional.

**Controlling the situation.** With all horses, and especially green ones, you may have achieved perfection as long as you're riding in a controlled environment—usually an arena with fences, but the horse isn't safe yet. Every time you make the environment less controlled and add any additional stimuli, that training will be tested. As stimuli are added and he's learned to behave in face of these changes, he becomes a safer, more reliable mount. Think about the simple addition of another horse in the arena, a dog, a loud noise, a bird that suddenly flies from a tree, a car passing by, etc. A horse isn't ready for a trail ride until you've trained your basics in a controlled environment and then slowly added additional stimuli. You will have also done some "spook in place" training, taught him to disengage his hindquarters, "sacked him out," and he's learned basic voice commands—stop, slow down, walk, trot and canter. When that has all been done, and he's proficient in the controlled environment, it's time to take him out to the trails with one or two other riders on seasoned horses.

The initial trail rides have to be done slowly and carefully. There are things that will happen that can't be controlled, such as the rustle of an animal in the bushes. There will be some spooks, some attempts at bolting, rearing or bucking, most likely. If you're training the horse, control the situation so that you don't find yourself on a ride with six experienced endurance riders going 15 MPH when you need to be at a walk. That time will come, but it's not now. Be careful whom you choose to ride with, when you ride, and where. Pay attention to the temperature and changes in the barometric pressure, as that can make a young horse difficult.

Try to make sure that if you have to get in a training argument with the horse, that you are in a good position to win, and that you are as safe as possible. Most of the time, you won't be able to give up until you've won something. If you're scared, aren't strong enough, feel you are too old, or are not experienced enough to do what has to be done, hire a trainer to do it. That's what trainers are for. The good ones will fix the problem and explain to you how to ride through the issue correctly later. However, as random as we like to think situations are, if you think about it all logically, you'll realize it's not really random behavior. As a rider/trainer of a young horse, one has to always be thinking about what might escalate the horse's excitement level and how to deal with that issue.

**Rougher terrain may make your first trail rides easier.** In my experience, if a horse is very green, don't take him on the easiest, flattest trail you can find first. Take him on a moderately hilly, rocky trail that winds through the trees, instead. This may not make sense, but read on. Follow a lead horse and he'll behave better because he has to put all his focus on negotiating the trail. The wide, flat trail might invite a runaway situation or he may be spookier because he's got less to think about. So, whenever possible, save the wide-open flat trails for later. As for first trail-ride speed, I suggest walk and trot only. Some horses will spook and shy more often at a walk because they have more time to look at things and scare themselves. Others will take a trot as an opportunity to run away with you, so ride accordingly, but remember he may actually be better behaved going a little faster.

Often green horses will buck going into the canter. This can be alleviated with hill work and building hind end muscle. It takes a horse time to get strong and balanced enough to canter with a rider, so do initial rides in walk and trot. When he's strong enough, the cantering will come easily when he's ready. Expect the green horse to be unsure how to negotiate trails. He will be clumsy and may trip or fall to his knees or get discombobulated. If he's sound, this will improve fairly rapidly, and it is not cause for alarm. Just don't try doing anything technical at speed until he's more sure-footed.

## In Conclusion

Happy trails, everyone. I hope some of these ideas will be helpful to some of you, and that I haven't discouraged people, but hopefully given them some ideas and insights to use with their own young horses. It is a lot of work to train a young horse, but one day, you realize you did it. You got there. You made it. Those first two years of hard work will pay off in all the rides that will follow in the coming years. Horses never forget the lessons of their youth. 🌟

*About Carol: Carol Grosvenor is a webmaster at The University of Texas at Austin. She lives on a small horse farm in Dripping Springs, Texas, with her husband David, a graphics manager at UT. They have two daughters, Rachel Wilson, DVM, and Courtney Grosvenor.*

**Share the story of your favorite ride ever for the  
next issue of AERC Extra! Send by September 1, 2012,  
to: [endurancenews@foothill.net](mailto:endurancenews@foothill.net)**

# Endurance Riding BOOK REVIEW PAGE

by Aarene Storms

## 4th Gear: Power Up Your Endurance Horse by Dennis Summers

In the interest of full disclosure, I've gotta say that I'm writing a book called "Endurance 101." This book is designed to be the book that every beginning endurance rider should read, because it answers questions and describes situations for new competitors. (If you want to read some of my book, early versions of chapters are posted on my [Haiku Farm](#) blog.)

When I heard that Dennis Summers was writing a book, too, my heart went into my socks. He knows so much more than I know about endurance riding. He probably knows more than I will ever know about endurance riding.



Everybody would love his book, I feared, and nobody would ever look at mine.

But, good news for everyone: Dennis didn't write a book for beginners. Dennis has written the book that every experienced endurance rider needs to read.

His book assumes that the reader has a horse (or more than one horse) and has competed in the sport for a few years. For example: Dennis doesn't spend time describing what electrolytes are; rather, he leaps straight

to the good stuff: how he uses them (in combination with a lot of other stuff) to enhance the performance of his horses.

His writing style is casual, conversational and fun, reminding me of the narrative style of classic quotable cowboys like Will Rogers and horse-tradin' writers like Ben K. Green. Dennis uses terms you recognize but don't often see in print, like "woo-woo," "stink-eye," and my personal favorite, "putting the blade down." He uses phrases you will want to work into your daily conversations, like, "Give me a horse that knows she has 100 miles to cover and only one bucket of energy to do it with."

And, he illustrates his books, not with photos showing his own fit horses chugging down a desert trail or up a steep mountain slope, but with his own charming and uniquely-styled drawings.

The training techniques he recommends are, in his word, extreme. This is not an entry-level book for beginning endurance riders; it is the book for riders who want to push themselves and their horse(s) to perform at a much higher level.

The advice is practical, down-to-earth, and personally tried out by Dennis and his wife Sue Summers. These two have been riding (and racing) in endurance for a long time. Their horses do fast miles over many years . . . but if you read the book, you will understand the training and work that goes into preparing a horse to do that kind of work year after year.

Dennis and Sue have learned a lot about riding, training, and maintaining good solid endurance horses, and we're lucky that they are willing to share the knowledge.

Maybe following their advice will make a huge difference in your ride, and maybe it will make a small improvement.

Even for confirmed "riding-not-racing" endurance junkies like me, this book is definitely worth reading and re-reading.

## . . . But It Wasn't the Horse's Fault: a Rambling Catchall by Julie Suhr

If you've never spent time swapping campfire stories with some of the earliest members of AERC, this book is a nice substitute.

Julie Suhr, who started riding endurance in the 1960s (when this author was still learning to read!), likes to tell stories. In her first book, "Ten Feet Tall, Still" she related the events of a life spent mostly on horseback. Julie's new book is more casual, telling stories about rides and riding, about horses and people, and about the not-necessarily-wise choices that only horse people will understand.

She talks about courage, she talks about junior riders, she talks about people who have made a huge impact on the sport as well as people who made a huge impact on a just few other people.

And, of course, Julie talks about horses: big, bold horses, kind, care-taking horses, and horses who got themselves lost in the wilderness.

Amply illustrated with photos of "the way we were" in the early days of endurance riding contrasted with modern photos of "the way we are," it's possible for readers to really understand the enormous changes that endurance has undergone . . . and also to see that the heart of our beloved sport is mostly-unchanged: a horse, a rider, a long trail.

A must-read for endurance riders, the book also makes a nice gift for your non-endurance friends. Perhaps after reading it, they will join us on the long trails we love.

The book is illustrated by another long-time endurance rider, Judith Ogus.

All profits from the sale of this book go to the [Center for Equine Health](#) at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.