



AERC Extra

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Welcome to the Winter 2013 edition of AERC Extra, the online newsletter from AERC. Bonus: Clicking on an advertisement—or website address—or e-mail 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

Stories in this issue by **Mary Howell, Jakob Gregory, Donna Werner, Angie McGhee, Sue Kjellsen, Mary Palumbo, Jill Askew, DVM, Kim Black, Bob Walsh, Carol Grosvenor, Jill Surkin, Jody Rogers-Buttram, Lori Dinkelman, Deb Juettner, Jessica Cloeter, Dorothy Sue Phillips, Jo Pavlis, Madi Boekes, Stephanie Schoolmeester, Nicole Beck, Chad of Double R Ranch, Audra Homicz, Jamie Worthington, Janice Taylor, Jessi Zirbel and Sharma Lynn Gaponoff**

Rescues in Endurance Riding

Little did we know when we put out the call for stories about rescued horses who went on to compete in endurance riding that we would receive so many touching stories of caring and love. That these horses could even come back to good health is a wonder. But the fact that they thrived with their new owners and are now succeeding in 25-, 50- and even 100-mile competitions is a miracle.

Sometimes the greatest gift that these horses can bring is the change they bring about in their owners. As Deb Juettner wrote in her story about her rescue horse, Rena: "Sometimes I wonder just who rescued whom."

We hope you find these stories inspiring.

Gryphon: From Rescue Horse to 50 Miler

by Mary Howell

One of the most unexpectedly rewarding experiences of my life has been adopting a little rescue horse. We quickly developed a strong bond that has helped us successfully complete two endurance rides together just three months after I brought him home.

This story begins in mid-July, when Sandra Fretelliere posted on Facebook that her endurance horse's dam might end up at a slaughterhouse. Barb Horstmeier in Fort Valley, Virginia, agreed to adopt the mare from the Pennsylvania rescue where she was being held. Checking videos of other horses at the rescue, Barb noticed a small, Arabian gelding with a big trot and suggested I take him on as a training project, offering to haul him along with the mare to her place in early August. We were given no information about this horse, not even a name, so I came up with Gryphon, from the mythological beast that is a cross between a lion and an eagle.

I picked up Gryphon on August 5, on my way back from competing my young mare Siena at a ride in West Virginia and after dropping off my 5,000-mile horse Shiloh at his new retirement home. (My husband holds me to a strict two-horse limit at our place outside Richmond, Virginia!)

Barb commented that even with a full pan of feed available, Gryphon first gobbled up a big handful of loose mineral salt. She started giving him limit-

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Gryphon . . .

ed access to grass so I'd be able to turn him out in my pasture by the time I brought him home. Despite several weeks of regular meals, 14-1 Gryphon was still under 700 pounds when I first saw him, with a raised area on his windpipe and recent scars on his haunches—perhaps from being squashed against a manure-covered wall in the transport trailer? At least his hooves were in good shape, although flared out from lack of care.

Gryphon loaded readily, but even with Siena for company started kicking in fear so I left right away on the three-hour drive home. After turning him out for a few days, I started by haltering and leading Gryphon around to get him used to his new home. He was soon being fed four pounds of high-fat concentrate twice a day, plus loose mineral salts and hoof supplement, with a couple flakes of clover and alfalfa hay tossed out each morning.

I focused on grooming and handling his feet for a few days, putting on and taking off hoof boots and getting him used to being rubbed everywhere. He especially loved having his ears rubbed and tugged on! I soon added a saddle and bridle and began short lunging sessions. I could tell Gryphon had been trained by the matter-of-fact way he accepted the equipment, but it took some time and effort to get him to relax and settle on the lunge—he would zoom around as if being chased!

Heeding the advice of friends who warned me not to wait too long, I first sat on Gryphon's back after he'd just been at my place 10 days. We took a few steps around the paddock, then I dismounted and remounted one more time before quitting for the day. For those first short rides, he was still so narrow that I used two thick saddle pads and my smallest girth, gradually increasing the amount of trotting. Although he didn't like crossing water, I could tell Gryphon really enjoyed being out on trail. There were some challenges, however. As he gained fitness and energy, he would weave nervously while being tacked up. On two occasions, he jerked back on the lead rope and struggled to pull free. The halter and lead held fast, so after he settled down I was able to continue. Using a soft, reassuring voice and feeding a piece of carrot at each step of the process helped his acceptance.

Gryphon needed to be re-schooled on trailer loading as well, so I began feeding him in the trailer stall to reinforce his thinking as a "home away from home." By early September, we began traveling to nearby trails as he continued adding weight and building muscle. One trip involved taking my rig on the ferry across the James River. Gryphon kept his head out with curiosity the whole way across!

By early October, Gryphon was up to about 25 miles of riding a week. When he floated Gryphon's teeth, my vet confirmed he was about 7 years old and reassured me that the windpipe scar should not affect his ability to handle the rigors of endurance. The hoof boots I had been using didn't stay on as well once we started doing longer and faster training rides, so he got his first pair of shoes in mid-October and I noticed an immediate improvement in his stride.

Eager to see how my little rescue horse would handle an actual endurance ride, I hauled my two horses to South Carolina for the Sand Hills 35-mile LD ride on October 20. My friend Teresa McCarty rode Siena as a companion horse and was a big help before the ride and the vet checks. In base camp, Gryphon never stopped eating his hay and pan of beet pulp mixed with grain. On ride day, he boldly led the way out on trail while Siena followed close behind. The first loop was nearly 25 miles, so we packed electrolytes, grain and carrots and took a rest stop beside a big puddle about halfway through, which helped ensure good vet scores at the first hold.

On the second loop, Siena led most of the way to help us keep a consistent pace. Several frontrunners missed a turn, so we ended up in third and fourth place with a ride time of 4:36. After watching his completion trot-out, timer Laurie Underwood commented that Gryphon looked as if he'd been doing endurance all his life!

Three weeks later, Gryphon tackled his first 50 at Broxton Bridge, also in South Carolina. This was a longer trip and we didn't arrive until nightfall, but he ate well overnight. On ride day, he was excited while being tacked up since he knew what to expect—but once I was on board, trotted calmly out of camp and kept pace with the big gelding Amy Atkins was riding (Siena was in the LD ride). Without his buddy horse at the first hold, he wouldn't settle and eat until I stayed with him and hand-fed. When I was trying to electrolyte and finish retacking, Don Meuten, DVM, happened to pass by and was a big help, teaching me how to do a nose twitch when all else fails!

At the second hold, Gryphon ate much better. He stopped for a long drink of water about halfway through the last loop, and when I asked him to pick back up the trot noticed he was favoring his right front leg a bit. Concerned he might be going lame, I dismounted and hand-walked him for about a mile after checking his hooves and the saddle. He perked up as we started ap-



Above: Gryphon in late summer 2012. This photo: Gryphon and Mary Howell at the November 10, 2012, Broxton Bridge ride. Photo © Becky Pearman Photography.

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Gryphon . . .

proaching camp (like most horses, he has a great sense of direction), so I remounted and when another rider caught up to us, asked her to watch his trot. He was moving better and we trotted slowly in the last few miles.

The ride vets saw a few bad steps on Gryphon's completion trot-out, so Dr. Ken Marcella offered to examine him later that afternoon. Using flexion tests and his thermography machine, Ken pinpointed Gryphon's right front fetlock joint as the source of the issue. The next morning, that joint was slightly swollen compared to the left front so I iced it several times that day and the next. By the time I got home from work on Monday, both ankles were the same size and Gryphon was sound and happily running around the pasture. His hoof walls have grown out so much that in another few farrier visits, his feet will be back to their normal shape, which should help him stay sound, plus he'll be getting a joint supplement before next ride season.

I was extremely fortunate to take on a rescue horse that happened to have been well-trained at some point, and also credit Barb's eye for picking a horse well suited for endurance. Gryphon does have some skeletons in his closet, and a few times I had to pep-talk myself before going out to work with him. What kept me going was the grateful look in his eyes when things were going well and knowing how much fun we'd have once out on trail. My plan is to continue competing him in 2013 and one day tackle a 100. Gryphon has become a friend that I'd want to spend that many miles and hours with!



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Some Tips for Rehabbing a Rescue Horse

1. Do something with your rescue horse every day to help develop trust more quickly.
2. Be careful about how much you feed at one time . . . the rescue facility and my friend Barb got Gryphon to the point where he could handle both grass and larger amounts of concentrate, but I still upped his grain ration gradually and waited a few weeks before worming to ensure his system could handle this.
3. Take your time finding out how much training the horse has had and what his issues are (there will likely be some!). Focus on one thing at a time, letting other issues wait for another day.
4. Practice key skills like loading and standing tied many times at home so that out in public there are fewer surprises.
5. Use your voice to reassure and reward as well as reprimand. I'll never forget how Gryphon's ears pricked up when I praised him for crossing the creek behind my house without acting up beforehand! When I use my stern voice, however, he knows I mean business.
6. Once the basics are set, switch your routine so the horse never knows what to expect! Don't ride every time you fetch him from the field; lunge on days when you don't have time to ride.
7. Ride alone if you are comfortable doing this. Real bonding comes from gaining confidence in how your horse handles situations by himself. This also prepares you if a buddy horse is not able to continue at an endurance ride. Always wear a helmet and tell someone where you are going!
8. With help from your veterinarian and farrier, constantly evaluate your feeding and hoof care regimens and make adjustments as needed. Using the scales at the Sand Hills ride, I found out Gryphon weighed 756 pounds; my goal is to add another 100 pounds and do more training on hills before his next ride in 2013.
9. Expect some setbacks and be creative in resolving them. I'm giving Gryphon syringes of applesauce to practice for the next time he needs to be electrolyted.
10. Have faith that things will work out. I rationalized taking on this unknown risk by telling myself, "Well, I can always find someone to give him to if he doesn't work out." I'm thrilled that he enjoys endurance, because it might have been a challenge to find him another good home!

-MH

AERC Convention: March 8 & 9, 2013 – Click [HERE](#) for Information!



Photo © Bill Gore

My Horse, Beauty

By Jakob Gregory, AERC junior member

Beauty is a very dark looking horse. She is a mare. Her breed is an Appendix. Beauty is 10 years old. She loves Nicker-Makers [horse treats]! Her trot is fast and very bouncy. I got Beauty from Safe Haven Horse Rescue [in Cottonwood, CA]. She was originally adopted by a woman who rescued her from a PMU farm [the place where they collect the hormone from pregnant mares' urine to make the prescription drug Premarin]. If Beauty had stayed at the farm, she would have died. I adopted her later, after her owner was not able to take care of her anymore.

When I first got Beauty, she had no formal training, but I still rode her on the trail. She liked to just follow my mom's horse. So we sent her to Tina [Cornish] and Dan [Gunter] for 10 weeks of training. Now she is an even better horse! Next year, I plan to do my first 50 on her. (Info: www.safehavenhorserescue.org)

Jazzmyn: 'I'm Grateful for Every Second'



Jazzmyn at intake.

by Donna Werner

I first learned of endurance riding through an acquaintance nine years ago. The sport sounded interesting and fun, and I was looking for a new goal. However, it soon became apparent that it wasn't the right time to explore endurance riding as life took some twists and turns. Little did I know that the biggest detour would lead me right back to where I wanted to go.

I volunteered for the local region of a statewide horse rescue. Through this work, I realized there was a need for a special needs foster home. I, along with several volunteers, created

our own non-profit 501c3 equine rescue to answer this need. The first horse to grace me with her presence would change my life forever. I received a call from a friend that a horse rescued by another organization was due to be put down because she was extremely aggressive and dangerous. My friend agreed to trailer the horse from her foster home to the veterinarian's office to be euthanized. However, one look into that mare's eyes quickly changed my friend's mind. That mare needed a special place, needed more time to heal her mind, body, and spirit. I was asked to take her to our home and help her heal.

This mare, Jazzmyn, is a grey Andalusian-Arab cross. She was 7 years old at the time. She was emaciated. She had a worm load so high that deworming was dangerous. She almost died three times during the initial phases of refeeding. We had received reports that she had been beaten and had items thrown at her. She was very aggressive, especially during feeding times. She would charge with her teeth bared, ears back. If that didn't work, she would kick. During her first six months with me, she broke my foot, bit me, and sent me flying across the pen, landing on a stump and almost breaking my knee. I knew her future would be in jeopardy if someone didn't commit to helping her. So my family adopted her and gave her a forever home. That was five years ago.

Her training and rehabilitation were painfully slow and appeared almost stagnant at times. She had a healthy body within a few months, but her mind and spirit were taking much longer to heal. She still had behavioral issues, and I still had deep fears for my safety. She and I kept working together, never giving up. I was very fortunate to have access to the right trainers at the right time. If I hit a roadblock, I always had someone I could talk to and get the information and encouragement I needed to push through. I tried to leave the frustration and fear behind, knowing that everything has a season and that horse time starts when it starts and ends when it ends.



Donna Werner and Jazzmyn at Ride the Storm in October 2012 Photo © John Nowell, www.remuda.stugroup.com

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Jazzmyn . . .

There were some basic issues we had to address. She still liked to charge at me for her food; farriers wanted to sedate her before trims; she took three hours to load in a trailer because she sat back on everything and would rather rear up than get put in a trailer; it took two skilled people 20 minutes and several trips around the arena to get a bit in her mouth. Each one of these things caused me to think that maybe I was going to get terribly hurt. I wondered if she would ever trust me. That was the element that was missing. And, when she was under saddle, would I trust her? I had seen the force behind her aggression. One major breakthrough that helped solve the charging at food and even standing still for farriers came about from a game I played with her. I would put her in the round pen and have her food in the center of the pen. We played This Is My Food. It is a modification of a technique in Carolyn Resnick's Watering Hole Rituals. I earned a small level of respect from her when she realized that I could move her feet away from her food, and that I could just as well invite her back to her food. I remember the first time she let me brush out her tail without pinning her ears or offering to kick me. I remember the first time she let me pick up all four hooves and clean them. Those were big milestones. The trailer issue and the bit issue still remained.

We continued to work lightly under saddle. Eventually, we were ready to hit the trail and build a new level of trust between us. This is when my desire to do endurance riding came back into focus. People thought I was crazy for continuing to have patience with the trailer loading and bit issues. This mare did not respond to aggression. If you offered aggression, as was so often suggested, you would receive aggression that was frightening. If you were too soft, she would play games with you to the point of frustration. It boiled down to the fact that I still had not earned her entire trust. This was approximately a year ago. Four years had passed since Jazzmyn came to our home.

A major turning point came about November 1, 2011. Jazzmyn was in our stock trailer in the forward stall. The middle gate was latched. I had gone to the outside to unlatch the gate. On my way inside the trailer to lead her out, she pushed past the gate. The gate swung back on her and embedded in her face on her upper jaw. She was wedged between the side of the trailer and this metal gate lodged in her face. She was bleeding everywhere. My husband and I worked as quickly as we could to shove her face backward and pull the gate. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, we were able to get her free. The bleeding wouldn't stop. She had a very sizeable hole in the side of her face. Finally we were able to get the bleeding to stop. A visit to the vet confirmed that she had broken a bone close to her eye. It was dark by then, so I put her in the round pen and went to check on her every two hours. She looked pitiful. I sat there and sang to her and cried for her several times. She was on stall rest for eight weeks.

She suffered nerve damage and couldn't pick up her feed. I had to hand-feed her twice a day. She was able to eat her hay, but grain was difficult for her. We had gone from a horse that used to try to kill me to a horse that was literally eating out of my hand. I had to clean and medicate her wound twice a day. She had to learn to trust me that I would not do what others had done. I sang to her while I cleaned her wound and put fresh medicine on it. Slowly, she was learning to trust me. When the swelling went down and she could eat on her own, I was able to halter her. I still couldn't put any pressure on her face. I taught her to ground tie with verbal cues and corrections. I tried to do whatever I could to still do some level of training, some level of building trust and respect. I sat with her many hours just reading books, singing to her, talking to her, or just doing nothing. Eventually the nerve damage was healed and her eight weeks of stall rest had passed. I took her to a good trainer and friend who helped with the trailer and bit issue. Jazzmyn's eye had softened. She now left her pasture mates and hay to follow me around the pasture. She let me know that she trusted me now. I began to realize she wasn't the same horse, and I could trust her.

Our work with rescue was nearing to a close, and I wanted to pursue my original goal of endurance. It was time to begin thinking about conditioning, correct saddles, tack, and equipment. As always, I was provided the guidance I needed. Everyone I have met in the endurance community has been very helpful and encouraging. This truly is an amazing community. It is a diversified group as not everyone's goals are the same; however, you don't have to look too far to find someone who can help you reach your next goal. I found Naomi Preston while purchasing tack. She has become a true friend and long-distance mentor. I don't know why she has taken me under her wing, but I am truly grateful. Jazzmyn and I benefit greatly from her shared knowledge and experience. Naomi has guided me with suggested conditioning schedules as well as countless other issues, through preparing for our introduction ride in March 2012, to riding limited distance at the current time, and helping me move into the next phase of riding 50s.

Jazzmyn and I ride about three days a week now. We incorporate one long ride a week of about 15 miles, one interval training day, and one day devoted to helping our younger horses get ready for endurance riding by walking lots of trail miles. My husband is working with a young rescued mustang, and my 9-year-old daughter is working with a young rescued paso fino. Eventually, they too will be riding endurance.

Jazzmyn and I are currently doing limited distance rides. When I know that we can finish those safely and within a certain time, we will begin entering 50s. Jazzmyn and I are developing an even deeper bond. I believe she is my horse, and I am her two-legged. She has an amazing spirit. She is no longer aggressive; she is eager to go out on the trail and discover new things; she enjoys the pace of endurance conditioning. I am constantly in awe of her strength and intelligence. She is a wonderful teacher and friend. She is part of my family. I have learned to walk through my fears for the sake of another. I have become a better horsewoman because of her. The path to her rehabilitation has been slow and continues in different respects, but I am grateful for every second I have spent with her.

Make sure every mile counts – JOIN or RENEW!

Seven: Great Luck from an Unlucky Start

by Angie McGhee

In 2007 my friend Suzanne Solis told me she was looking to buy a Samtyr-bred horse and I told her I'd heard there were some stallions owned by a race breeder in Chattanooga that were starving over by the Tennessee River. The owner was dying of emphysema and his son wasn't doing anything for the dozen or so horses he had on "pasture." Since she was interested we got someone with the data source to print out all the horses registered to this man and there were two Samtyr stallions ages 5 and 6. With the sheets describing the different horses I drove to downtown Chattanooga and found a hidden wooded field between the sewage treatment plant and a huge power substation. The four stallions were on 20 acres of woods and their only water source was backwater from the Tennessee River just below the sewage treatment plant. This is also near where Chattanooga's barges unload and the water often has a film of diesel top.

I called Suzanne to describe the 5-, 6- and 7-year-old stallions. I said, "Five looks like a fat pony, Six is nice but his feet are incredibly grown out and broken and look like daisies! I'm kind of liking 7; he's following me around." I wasn't looking for a horse, but hated the idea of this sweet 7-year-old still being a stallion and only halter broke. I knew it meant his chances for a decent life were very limited if things didn't happen for him very soon.

He wasn't Samtyr bred, he was MHF Eclipse and NF Proof, but being fairly pedigree-illiterate I'd never heard of either. He had a big thick muscle on the bottom of his neck from eating out of trees, a muscle that later made him capable of avoiding all syringing. He wasn't starved since it was summer, but he did have a pronounced backbone and was ribby. His belly looked bloated, as if he'd been eating lots of low-quality fare. I found out later a local had been buying straw and throwing it to them thinking it was hay.

Though the owner was unconcerned with selling the horses and very comfortable with the idea of others feeding and even having the vet out for animals he owned, he was finally forced to let them go when the power company he had leased the land from noticed he was over 25 years behind on his rent.

Suzanne bought the 6-year-old "Tinian" and I bought the 7-year-old "JA Hallys Eclipse." I never put a halter on him, never even chased him to get him to trot. I know that's insane to people who pay for pre-purchase exams, but it seemed like God was sending this horse to me whether I thought he was a good one or not, so I did as I was told. Since he was the 7-year-old I had been calling him "Seven" in the field, then we noticed the date we agreed to buy him was 7/7/07, and he turned out to be my seventh endurance horse. Thus, his barn name became Seven.

By the way, we didn't bring them home that day. It was six days later, on Friday 13.

Seven wasn't horribly skinny so putting weight on wasn't the problem. Actually, he never stopped eating and after three months on free-choice Coastal Bermuda I suddenly quit focusing on covering his backbone and realized he looked as if he had swallowed a round bale! His belly was monumental and nobody who saw him at that time would have dreamed he could have made an endurance horse!

On his first trail ride his hind foot slipped and he just slowly sank down and lay on the trail. He had to stop every 10 feet climbing a hill just to rest. Even now as a competition horse he has his idiosyncrasies. He will *not* take electrolytes during competition, is difficult to shoe, may trot at an angle like a coon dog and usually has large amounts of greenery hanging out of his mouth as he goes down the trail. On the plus side, he has awesome feet and is very smart and independent. He handles competition and hauling extremely well.

For two years I just completed rides on him and was surprised he just kept finishing. He was so laid back I thought maybe he'd been sent to me to get him rideable for my friend Bekki who needed a gentle endurance horse, but he was so rough riding and had so many difficult to deal with traits on the ground that it just never worked out. I was still watching for the place I was meant to send him when he surprised me by tying for the win and taking best condition in his first ride of 2010. Seven went on to win another BC and finish eighth LW in the SE. He also won SERA's "Consistent Condition Award" for highest average vet score.

I still didn't think he could be a 100-mile horse because of his refusal to take electrolytes, but in 2011 I finally gave him a chance and he went three for three in 100-milers, was high mileage SERA horse and second LW in the Southeast Region. As of right now he has 1830 miles, four one-day 100s, three BCs and many high vet score awards.

I've decided he was meant for me all along. He's not bad at all for a pot-bellied horse raised on sewer water! Oh yeah, the horse with the daisy feet, Jamag Tinian, has done 455 endurance miles with Theresa Bagwell and he competes barefoot!



Seven before and after (photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, www.geniess.com).



Fadjur's Talisman: a Jolly Canter for this Horse

by Angie McGhee

January of 2009 Kara Disbrow of Dandridge, Tennessee, e-mailed me some photos of a horse and said, "I went to look at this horse on Craigslist but he's smaller than I want. He looks like you. You should get him." I looked at the photos and thought he looked good but wasn't really shopping. Later at a ride both Kara and her husband Gary urged me to call about him. A week or two later Suzanne Solis, who lives nearer Atlanta, sent me photos of the same horse that she had seen on Craigslist and just thought he looked like something I would ride. Weird.

When Gary kept mentioning him at rides I finally tried to contact the woman again but she'd disappeared from the face of the earth. The following June out of the blue I got an e-mail from Karen Pruitt of Georgia with pictures of the *same horse*, saying she'd seen him on Craigslist and thought of me. It was just too weird. Not like anyone had sent me any photos of any other horses during this last six months! I might mention here that I have tried searching out some very well-built, properly bred, well-raised horses in the past and had no luck at all. Kaboot, my best horse, had found me. I decided that works. I just tell God I'll ride what he sends my way, so I tend to be looking for a sign. This looked like somebody jumping up and down waving a sign.

I called about him and found that this woman had bought him from the January ad, but was now pregnant and didn't want him. I arranged to come look at him thinking he was still north of Atlanta but when I called back for directions I found out he was now in Macon, over five hours away! Oh well, I just had to meet this horse.

When I got there what I saw was really sad. I never would have recognized him if I hadn't spent so much time looking at his photos. He was skinny and covered in rain rot. His chest was so skinny it looked like both legs came out the same hole and his toes pointed east and west. I didn't give him a chance at becoming an endurance horse, but didn't want to leave him there so he came home with me. I figured I'd fatten him up and break him to ride and he could at least have a shot at life.

A day or two after he came home he developed the most horrendous deep choking cough you've ever heard and it spread to all my horses. He was not looking like a good decision!

By calling the Arabian Horse Registry I found out his papers had been sent in but no blood test. When I asked who would own him if the blood was sent in they told me a woman named Sheila in Georgia. I googled her and found her on facebook. She about had a stroke when I said I had "rescued" a horse named Fadjur's Talisman. She said her close friend had died of cancer and left her something like 20 horses to disperse. She had done her best and had given him to a vet tech with the agreement that if she couldn't keep him he was to come back to her. She also assured me he's had the *best* of care until he was 5 years old (last year). She drove four hours to my house, was heartbroken to see him but liked me and signed over his paperwork.

Tally turned out to be a joy to ride. He did his first ride, a tough 55 in September of 2010. The first time the vet saw him trotting towards him with his knees popping out to the side like Charlie Chaplin he just shook his head and said, "Whatever you do, don't ever let this horse look in the mirror!" As if the crooked front legs weren't enough, the next spring he developed stringhalt in his right rear and any time he takes a step backwards his leg shoots up in the air (scattering people, who think he's kicking). It worried me at first, but then again, this was obviously a horse I was "meant to have" so I figured it would work out. No problems in forward gear; he's just a flamboyant backer.

He is now 14 completions for 14 starts with 705 career miles. After passing his two years of completion marks this fall I let him speed up a bit and he took high vet score at the Big South Fork 50 and then best condition and high vet score at the Talladega 50. He has the most wonderful little rocking chair canter and just a jolly way of going down the trail. I think there's just something festive about his feet flying out in all directions. It works for him!



Photo © Jessica Willis, www.unbridledimagery.com

Hope for Horses: Saving and Rehabilitating

by Sue Kjellsen, updated by Rachel Newcomb



In Leicester, North Carolina, there is a 75-acre farm tucked neatly into a rolling green mountainside. Horses graze in its peaceful fields. Two shaggy dogs run to greet each new visitor who rolls up the long drive. A cat, tail switching, keeps watch over it all from a wide, barn window. It is a scene so idyllic; it seems as if nothing bad—in this world or even the next—could ever touch this place. But it does, on an almost daily basis.

Hope for Horses, as the farm is called, is dedicated to saving and rehabilitating horses that have been abandoned, injured, or are just unwanted because they committed the crime of growing old. It is difficult for most of us horse lovers to think that someone could abandon any horse, but in these hard days, with scarce money, few jobs and farms being lost to foreclosure, providing a horse with the basics—food, shelter and veterinary care—is a luxury many find they cannot afford. While there are no concrete statistics that confirm how many horses are abandoned annually, reports from Humane Societies around the country confirm that the numbers of abandoned or neglected horses have exploded. In an even more gruesome statistic, a recent New York Times article stated that close to 100,000 horses are shipped from the U.S. each year to Canada and Mexico for slaughter.

AERC member Whitney Wright founded Hope for Horses in 1998 with the support of Dr. Ann Stuart of Appalachian Animal Hospital. The first horse arrived literally starving to death and suffering from a nasty abscess in her neck, possibly from a gunshot wound. With a great deal of care and even more patience, Wright saved the horse, aptly named Glory, and, in her first happy ending, placed her with a loving family in Leicester.

Throughout the years, hundreds of horses have followed Glory to Hope for Horses, each with its own sad story. Many have been abandoned following a divorce, a job loss or a move. Some ill-treated or neglected horses are confiscated by officials from the surrounding counties and brought to the farm. Others are abused at the hands of their owners for reasons too murky to understand. One horse was brought to Hope with a halter so deeply imbedded in its head that it had to be surgically removed. The stories are endless, sometimes bizarre and often heartbreaking.

With room for only 25 horses on the farm at one time, Wright and Dr. Stuart and her associate, Dr. Erin Purvis have had to make some very hard decisions. It's a sad truth that not every horse can be helped. Some come to her in such bad shape that there is no alternative but euthanasia. "That's the toughest part of the job, making that decision," Wright states.

Happily, most of the horses Wright rescues end up being adopted into responsible, permanent homes. Although some horses end up being returned for various reasons, the horses that are fortunate to become a "Hope" horse are safe throughout their life. With an annual budget of only \$85,000, Hope for Horses, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, runs with the help of dedicated volunteers and contributions from people who care as deeply about horses as Wright does.

In September 2013, they are pleased to announce that they will be hosting Run for the Horses, a 30-mile and 50-mile endurance ride at prestigious Biltmore Estate in the heart of Asheville, North Carolina. Please check the AERC ride calendar for more information.



You can find out more about Hope for Horses at www.hopeforhorses.org or send an email to Whitney Wright at hopeforhorses@aol.com

Serra 'Loves Every Minute' of Endurance

by Mary Palumbo

I've been riding since I was 7 but didn't get to try endurance until a few years ago on a heavy paint horse who taught me a lot about conditioning and tried his heart out. As much as he wanted to do it he just wasn't built for it. I am always watching the Camelot horses and donated some money to the Arabian Rescue Mission in Colesville, New Jersey, toward a sweet gray Arab mare who tugged at my heart.

I forgot about the little mare, knowing she was in good hands. Within the month I convinced my husband to let me foster a horse for ARM with no intention of keeping it. We had fostered many dogs along the way so he agreed, especially since we could use it as a tax write-off. The application process to foster went smoothly and I was quickly ready for my first foster. As long as the horse wasn't aggressive with people or dogs and wasn't a stallion I told ARM I would take who ever they wanted. One of the volunteers remembered I had sent money for the little gray mare (she had been named Serra after a beloved horse she had lost recently) and Serra was to come to Connecticut.

My husband and I picked her up on our anniversary (good thing he loves horses too) in New Jersey at the QT Farm. She loaded fairly well but seemed so terrified and had a faraway look in her eye. Arriving home Serra still seemed very upset and worried but with each passing day as she learned there was a routine she could follow and understand she slowly settled down. Riding her initially she seemed very up and nervous but with each ride she became better and better. A prospective adopter came to see her several times and in the meantime my neighbor and my vet were both telling me to keep her and thankfully I was easily persuaded.

Serra took to the trails with obvious experience. We conditioned from mid-March until June when I entered her in the Pine Tree 30. We rode with Bill and Stephanie Rice who were patient and encouraging. At mile 23 I felt like she had hit a brick wall and got off and walked up a hill with her and then she felt great again. We vetted in with a heart rate in the low 40s even with her calling to her newfound horse friends. After my heavy Paint who I worked hard to get a HR to 60 this was a piece of cake.

We then entered the Western Maine 50 and Serra felt great for 18 miles but she was suddenly off the last two miles in from the first loop. She remained off on the left front for several days and we could not compete any more that week. September we went back to a 30 in RI and got attacked by ground bees. This horse was fabulous as any other horse would have dumped me but she just jumped around and then took off galloping when I asked her to get out of there. We managed to finish the 30 in good shape.

This past year we did four more LDs and Serra seems to love every minute. We don't know her age; Camelot said 12, my vet said 14 or 15 and the chiro/acupuncture vet said closer to 20 Since we don't know any history or her real age I won't push her to do 50s. This mare has given me so much enjoyment—she is bold, brave, smooth, will lead or follow, almost never spooks, and feels about as safe as any horse can be and the list goes on. I will always wonder if someone is wondering what happened to her and I pray someone sent her to Camelot knowing they usually get homes and don't ship to slaughter.

For more information about the Arabian Rescue Mission, visit <http://arabianrescuemission.org>.



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A Knock on the Door Brings Rikasha to Jill Askew

by Jill Askew, DVM

My rescue story begins with a neighbor knocking on my door. He knew someone at his church who was looking for a good home for her 14-year-old purebred Arabian gelding. I had a half-Arabian and had done a couple of LDs which gave me the endurance bug but my mare was little and small-boned, and sometimes crazy so not the best horse. I really didn't need another horse (already had three) but thought I might as well go see him. Well, after seeing him, I knew he had potential: great legs, good bone, perfect size (15 hands), and seemed quiet even though he was in this tiny pen with sheep around him. Then I found out that his owner had him from birth and never did anything with him except keep him in a pen, so he was basically unbroke. I couldn't leave him there so I took a chance.

He turned out to be easy to start under saddle. After one year of training and conditioning we did our first LD and was even in the top ten. After 545 miles of LDs we finally did our first 50 just after his 18th birthday. "Rikasha" is an awesome ride and partner and I feel fortunate to have him. Our goal this year is to do more 50s. I can only imagine what kind of endurance career he could of had, but hopefully his joints are good having only been ridden for four years. I never thought my best horse would be the free horse!



Smooth: Nine Years and 3,915 Miles After His Rescue

by Kim Black



Smooth and Kim Black at the Pink Flamingo ride.
Photo © stevesphoto.smugmug.com.

Searching for a new endurance prospect in my price range was a slow process and initially I passed on a pair of "Russian Arab" rescues because they had no papers. Finally accepting the fact that the registered Arabians I had bred or looked at weren't meeting my expectations, I decided to take a closer look at the untrained, un-papered, skin-and-bones rescue. I measured his bone structure, getting a thumbs up in most areas. He calmly passed my flapping paper spook test indicating he might be "steady." Two tons of hay and \$200 brought my new horse home. My husband just shook his head saying, "That looks to be a project."

I had been hoping for the three "S"—Short, Smooth, and Steady—for my next endurance mount. At 15.2 he wasn't "short" so I named him "Smooth" expecting him to live up to his name. The "4-year-old" turned out to be 6 with scarring where a halter had grown into his nose. He had nose-to-tail ticks so we bonded intimately through two weeks of intensive tick removal. Smooth still stomps a foot to alert me when a tick crawls up his leg.

It took a full year to get enough weight on him to think about being able to compete. I have never experienced a horse as easy to train, whether due to trust in me or malnutrition, but in 2004 we began endurance

competition. I learned Smooth detests mullein stalks and will try to go around them whenever allowed. Due to his having survived on nothing but weeds for several years, I generally trust him to know what is OK to eat on the trail. At times he will want to eat nothing but yarrow or willow and other times he prefers lupine (without the poisonous root bulbs).

We have now competed for nine years, with 74 starts, 71 finishes and 3,915 miles together. This year's goals? The first completion in 2013 we will reach our Decade Team award; the second will get us 4,000 miles. Anything after that will be icing on the cake. My "project" has emerged as an incredible equine athlete. Smooth is my once-in-a-lifetime horse and I will be forever thankful to have had him as a partner in my life.

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Houdini: Magical Change to High Achiever

by Bob Walsh

Houdini came to us in the fall of 1990 as a 3-year-old. He was scheduled to go to slaughter the day after we picked him up. I actually talked the owner into giving him to me. He was a full Arabian and we still have his papers. He was skin and bones with a bad case of rain rot, but he had a look in his eyes. I did nothing with him for almost a year in which time he grew and gained much-needed weight. We began riding him on short outings and liked the way he moved. I decided to start him on a training program pointing toward a competitive trail ride of 25 miles. He came through with flying colors and we knew we had an endurance horse. Over the years he got better and better. He liked the work and would seem to push when he knew there was another horse in front. He even made the April 2000 *Endurance News* cover.

He had 34 completions with 21 in the top ten. He completed three 100-mile rides, his first the grueling Old Dominion 100 and in doing so earned me my first Old Dominion buckle. In 2003 he became a decade horse competing for 10 consecutive years.

We retired him in 2004 and last year we lost him to a bad bout of colic. We miss him at the farm but will always remember his achievements as a member of the endurance community.

Ladybug: A perfect Appaloosa for Limited Distance Rides

by Carol Grosvenor

My horse is a beginner endurance horse—12 rides now (a few were intros), but 100% completion to date. She was a rescue at the age of six months. The man I bought her from rescued her and then never sold her. She sat in his pasture for the next six years. Another endurance rider heard about her as he knew the owner. She had a month of training as a 3-year-old, but then was not ridden for the next three years.

I did ground work with her for a couple of months as it was winter, dark and raining, when I got her, then took her for a month of training which turned out to only be five rides, as it kept on raining. By then it was early summer and we started her on trails, initially ponied off a friend's endurance horse. She did her first intro two and half months later and came in first, although she was really only greenbroke at that point.

I acquired her at age 6 and she is now 9. She had several very serious injuries that will preclude her from ever doing more than 25s, but she's done very well, especially considering how serious the injuries were.

She's my first and only endurance horse, and she's a rather large Appaloosa (large by endurance standards). She enjoys it, although she's not very fast, and she hasn't done it without some problems along the way. We usually have to canter almost the entire ride as she can't trot as fast as most of the arabs, but her P&Rs are competitive with most Arabians, and usually better than the quarter horses.

As she does more rides and gets further along in her training, she's getting more confident and more workmanlike. I do other types of trail riding with her, but she prefers the endurance rides and her training rides with her endurance buddies. I ride her in a pelham, which is a two-reined bit that is part mullen-mouth snaffle and a short shank, often used in foxhunting and eventing. She doesn't need a martingale or tie-down, as she's learned to carry herself properly without additional aids.

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Sasha: From “Unsellable” to Unbeatable

by Jill Surkin

Six years ago, I was looking for a new horse. I had only owned two horses in my life, and I knew within seconds of meeting them that they were the right ones for me. So the bar was set pretty high for the next one . . .

Enter Flynn, an 11-year-old Arabian gelding with no papers, who I found on a local rescue’s website. They knew nothing about his history, other than that he had been deemed “unsellable” by a dealer and was about to be sent to auction (red flag #1). The rescue’s manager knew the dealer and offered to take Flynn off his hands and try to find him a home. He had been at the rescue for over a year by the time I went to visit him (red flag #2).

He stood quietly in the barn to be groomed and tacked up, but when we went outside to put him through his paces, the rescue said that they would only let me ride in the round pen “for liability reasons” (red flag #3). So that’s what I got, a 15-minute ride in a round pen on a bundle of nervous energy. I didn’t know if he would jump, or hack out, or get along with other horses, or even load on a trailer. But there was that feeling again, the little voice that said, “Don’t you dare leave this one behind.” So the next weekend, I went back with my trailer, he walked right on, and off we went.

Remember those red flags? Well, those questions were soon answered, when I discovered I had a serious bolter on my hands. Bad teeth, a small mouth, and a low palate combined to produce a horse who responded to any touch on the reins by threatening to break my nose with his poll, and then taking off hell-bent for the barn. I think I fell off more times in that first year than in the previous 15 years combined. A dentist and a new bit solved the pain issue, but breaking that bolting habit took several years, including almost a year where the only thing he was allowed to do outside the arena was *walk*.

During those years, I realized that what I had was a highly sensitive, highly intelligent horse who needed a *job*. Flynn—now named Sasha—was a terrible jumper; the arena gave him serious angst; and the one-hour trail loop bored him so much that he would do the Arabian jump-and-plant spook just for the entertainment value. But he loved being out on trail and always tried to make new paths heading away from home, across properties where we weren’t allowed to ride. I had heard of endurance and thought it might be just the thing for him, but I didn’t really know anything about it, so I started reading.

At about that time, I moved Sasha to a new barn with access to miles of trails, and he took to endurance training like a duck to water. Our progress was derailed for a year due to hock surgery, but luckily he made a full recovery. Our first LD was quite an eye-opener! I knew enough from my reading to keep him well back at the start, but even so, being out on trail with 80 other horses just about made his head explode. We got our completion, though, and we were both hooked. We made slow and steady progress over the next few years, and when he turned 18 last month, Sasha and I had 300 endurance and 165 LD miles to our credit, with a 100% completion rate.

We still have a lot to work on together. Sasha hasn’t bolted with me in over two years now (knock on wood!), but he can still lose his marbles in a group, especially if he’s at the tail end of it. I’m learning to recognize those situations at a ride and avoid them before he gets dangerous, while continuing to work on them at home. And the more 50s we do, the calmer he gets at the start, and the better he takes care of himself throughout the day. Once he settles down on trail, he’s got a medium trot to die for, ears forward the whole time, and I get to sit back and enjoy the ride. And that makes it all worth it.



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Rescue Stories . . . We Have Three

by Jody Rogers-Buttram

Cash Bonus+/10. It started in 2005. A man pulled into the driveway with a horse on a trailer and said, "You have Arabs, right?" Of course the answer was yes, and then he proceeded to tell me he had what I needed. It was a skinny, coming 7-year-old stallion that was only 14 hands, half-Arab and half-TWH but *with* papers. He has been contracted to "catch" him because he was on an acre lot with three others—one had already died, and this one had escaped to eat grass. He was missing hair on his back and rump, and wasn't broke to ride. He asked me \$600 for him. After two hours of "I don't need him, put him back on the trailer," I finally asked if he would trot out in hand. Answer: "I don't know, but we can find out." He did, and what a trot it was—at that point, I said to my husband, "Get me this horse, I can do something with him." We paid \$150 cash for him.



Since that time, Cash Bonus+/10 has accomplished a lot. He was the 2006 and 2008 AERC National 100 mile Junior Champion, the 2008 AHA National 100 mile half-Arabian Champion, the Region 12 AHA Champion at the 100-mile distance twice, over 2000 miles, 10 one-day 100s including two OD 100-mile completions, and multiple AERC regional placings. Not bad for a horse that was hungry and just showed up at the door one Sunday afternoon.

The Boogie Man. There was a herd of Arabians that had been floating around two counties for five years. They were part of a divorce issue from a show barn in Tennessee. They originally were 26 horses, but over the course of the five years, half of them had died of starvation. I became involved in the rescue of these horse several years ago, having to report them to the local TV media to get anything done. One of the herd stallions and a mare were dumped in a local hunting ground during deer season. A hunter found the stallion, but the mare was never recovered. We adopted "The Boogie Man" at that point. He was a skinny little black horse that knew how to stand for halter class, but nothing more. The Boogie Man3, aka Booger, has since become a 100-mile endurance horse. Booger has over 1,000 miles, two overall wins and three one-day 100-mile rides. He was featured on the local news when rescued, and then again by the same station one year later, when he went to Blackwater Boogie to do his first endurance ride. Booger finished the 50 there, and it is a benefit for a horse rescue group. Booger's adoption price was \$150.

Miss Fancy Pants. Also from this same herd of Arabians, was a mare that we paid \$60 for. She and her 3-year-old daughter were starving, still in the care of the owners that had starved off half the herd earlier. I had started watching for them when someone told me that there were more of the starving, I proceeded with the law again. When nothing happened, I tried a different approach. I offered to buy the two horses. I paid a total of \$100 for the pair; later, after rehabilitation, the filly was placed in a forever home as a pasture pet—for the price of \$100.

Miss Fancy Pants was trained to the hilt. This mare knows everything, she moves off leg pressure, knows word commands, and carries herself like a dressage horse. She also came with some "brain" issues. But we are working through those as well. She just finished her sixth 50 mile ride, in third place, again at Blackwater Boogie. In fact, all three of our rescues have gone to and completed the rescue benefit ride.

Hoof health video series launched

Keeping horse's hooves in optimal condition is a hot topic among horse owners and enthusiasts. Theories and misinformation abound and are regular complications when contemplating hoof care. Vettec is offering an informational video series called "2 Minutes with Tab" featuring certified journeyman farrier Tab Pigg. Tab discusses basic anatomy and hoof function along with common misconceptions on hoof care. Tab provides the audience with simple solutions and how-to instructions on common hoof problems including; laminitis, founder, thrush, thin soles, under run heels and WLD. Vettec is offering this video series free on their site at www.vettec.com/2MT.

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Koedoe: Impound Auction Find

by Lori Dinkelman

My husband rescued our beloved FEI competitor DCL Mooi Koedoe (pronounced "Kudu") from the Georgia Department of Agriculture's impound auction. A number of nice purebred Arabians were auctioned that day; but as a starving, rain-rotted, snotty-nosed 2-year-old colt, Koedoe was overlooked by everyone.

My husband Christo was able to view his pedigree and appreciated the quality of his breeding. He was the lucky bidder that day at \$300.

Christo rehabilitated this rescue and named him Koedoe after the soaring jumps and bucks he displayed during his saddle training, which reminded Christo of the Greater Koedoe, a South African ungulate that can easily scale eight-foot game fences.

Koedoe has developed into a stout, 15-hand, loving endurance horse. He can be tough to rate and has a mean competitive streak on the trail. Still, he took our 16-year-old daughter Sydney Sumrall to the North American Young Riders Four-Star Championship last year.

He will be back in FEI competition in 2013. Koedoe is straight Egyptian (Curundu Saladin x HMT Morousa).



Photo © Katherine Capps

Rescuing Rena – 425 Miles and Counting

by Deb Juettner

The call came in July of 2005. Renters were being evicted from a farm. If homes were not found for their seven horses, the horses would be put down by midnight that night. I was told that if I got there quickly, I could have my choice of the horses for next to no money. Who can pass up something like this?



Photo © Bob Zimmerman

Even though I got to the farm as quickly as I could, only one horse remained—the one who was running the fence line, screaming, sweat pouring down her face and her eyes rolling in terror. I was told she was half Russian Arabian and half Tennessee Walker. Maybe, but she looked like every Arab owner's nightmare. The irony of her name did not escape me. Serena. The name may have meant calm and serene, but anyone could see this mare was anything but. My head was saying, "Uh, no way. Leave. This horse is a nutcase." However, my heart was telling me to save this poor horse. My heart was much louder and I listened.

Six hours later, after doing everything anyone could think of to get her to load, three burly farmers literally lifted the still-crazed, but now exhausted, mare into the trailer. Rena was on her way to her new home at a boarding stable close to my home.

Over the next year, I had Rena evaluated by two different trainers. Their assessment wasn't positive. They said that she was dangerous, that her mistrust of humans and explosive nature would result in me getting seriously hurt. She was fearful and unpredictable and fought every one and every thing. Every experienced horse owner knows about horses that are truly crazed. Beyond help. I knew in my heart that wasn't Rena.

If Rena had ever been handled with any gentleness, she had long forgotten it. Since riding was out of the question at this point, I spent hours just sitting in the pasture watching her watching me. It took months but, finally, her curiosity drew her to the now-familiar pasture ornament that was me. Slowly, I put my hand up. After a few sniffs, she let me touch her. I had never in my life felt so grateful for a simple touch.

Soon after, we moved Rena to her permanent home in a new pasture on our property. Even after a year, Rena was still very mistrustful. My husband and brother-in-law spent countless hours just standing at the pasture fence talking to her. They encouraged Rena with apples and ever so slowly, she began to respond.

The first real turning point came when my 20-year-old Quarter Horse came home to retire after being a Minneapolis Police Department mount for the previous nine years. Baby's personality was the polar opposite of Rena's. Baby was calm, confident and



continued on next page

Rena ...

trusting. Rena was thrilled with having a pasture buddy and Baby's easygoing nature seemed to help Rena be a little less nervous. It was time to move Rena along in the journey to being a trustworthy riding buddy.

After many hours of hand-walking and exposing her to obstacles, I eventually eased into the saddle. Rena didn't explode. She was tense, but not intent on getting me off her back. I felt immense relief and made the mistake of being over-confident. On the third ride, Rena bunched her muscles to power into the uphill canter I had asked for. In a second, I had been dumped right on my head with a strong enough impact to crack my helmet. I knew I needed to get right back in the saddle, but the sound of the cracking helmet was still in my ears. That could have been my neck. Suddenly a deep fear clawed its way inside me and proceeded to cripple me. Now the problem wasn't Rena, it was me.

Even though I recognized the fear, I still held out hope that everything would be all right in the end. Other people rode Rena without mishap. In fact, they all loved her and praised her for a wonderful horse. I fought hard to overcome the sound of the cracking helmet that haunted me and forced myself to ride Rena. I rode with others, just in case. She was hyper-alert, picking up on my nervousness but, little by little, hour by hour things started to fall in place. When Rena was on a state park trail, she seemed to blossom. She was focused, happy and moved out faster than I thought possible for a 14-3 horse. She glided, and I glided with her. Every minute spent with her strengthened our bond. We were becoming a real team.

I had tried endurance riding in my 30s and I wanted to try it again. A friend who lived close by who had also ridden endurance was convinced Rena was a "one in a million" horse with the heart and focus to really enjoy the sport. We set up a conditioning program in spring 2011 and I entered my first 25-mile MNDRA competitive trail ride in May. By the end of the ride, it was clear that Rena was made for the sport and I was ecstatic.

We spent 2011 doing comps, then started LDs in 2012. Rena lives for ride day. She sees the trail and the other riders and she is focused on her job. When she gets into her "power trot," jaws drop. Personally, I feel like I'm flying and it is the most wonderful feeling on Earth. She has so much heart, such willingness to give everything she has ride after ride.

Rena has more than 425 miles so far. It may not be the highest mileage in the world, but every mile has been a giant step. Every mile has been a kind of miracle, for both of us. When we are riding, I sometimes remember that screaming, wild-eyed, terrified horse from seven years ago. I think of the time it took for her to come around and for me to regain my confidence after my fall. As we glide along the trail, we are one. We've both had our journeys, but we've taken those journeys together and we are a team doing a sport we both love.

Sometimes I wonder just who rescued whom.

Goody: the Beginning of a New Chapter

By Jessica Cloeter

Growing up on a small ranch in Wyoming I spent every extra minute I could find in the pasture. However, beyond high school life took me on a different path, one that only allowed for the enjoyment of horses a couple times a year when I returned home. In 2011, I realized how much I truly missed spending time with and was finally ready to return to the equine world after a 10-year hiatus spent getting my degree and hammering away in the corporate world to build my career. Entering the show ring was the last thing I wanted to do, however, with my competitive spirit I knew I needed something to train for and goals to achieve. A close family friend and endurance rider out east encouraged me to explore the sport. By early December, I had done considerable research and I was ready to start my journey to becoming an endurance rider.

First step, the horse. I was ready to take the leap into horse ownership again, but after such a long separation I wasn't ready to spend a lot of money on a horse for a sport I wasn't even sure I would enjoy. With that in mind I first turned to horse rescues, but without a more in-depth understanding of what to look for I needed guidance. After a few online searches I found MileMakers, an endurance and trail riding training facility in Colorado where I also live.



continued on next page

Goody . . .

Upon contact, Joanne Pavlis encouraged me to come out and meet with her and learn about what to look for when purchasing or adopting an endurance horse. At our first meeting she generously spent two hours showing me a variety of different horses, some for sale and some for adoption through a local rescue foundation and her own FAWOR. She thoroughly explained what to look for when choosing an endurance horse from bone structure to hoof size, from heart girth to gait. (See full story on FAWOR later in this issue.) It was at that meeting that I first met Oh My Goodness (or Goody), a 7-year-old, fleabitten grey Arabian gelding that was part of Joanne's rehabilitation foundation FAWOR. At 16 hands, the retired racer from Texas wouldn't have been my first or even second choice if I'd had to pick a horse at that first meeting. However, through Joanne's "ride before you buy" program I was given the opportunity to try several horses over the next month, one of which happened to be Goody.

There was something about the first ride with him that hooked me and kept me coming back to him. After several years on the track Goody wasn't without issues. When he first came off the track he was cinchy, had significant back soreness, osselets in his fetlocks, and long toes and run forward heels on his front hoofs. The five months in rehab with FAWOR had Goody moving in a positive direction and a foundation built to overcome these issues. In some ways he reminded me of an off-the-track thoroughbred I'd once owned. He was a bundle of controlled power, a quick thinker and learner with a willingness to move out. While many people would have shied away from adopting a horse with similar issues to begin a physically demanding sport such as endurance riding, I felt he deserved this opportunity. I believe in second chances and the qualities that drew me to him, plus Joanne's encouragement and ongoing support, made me believe Goody could excel at endurance. By the end of January I committed to him.

With the support and knowledge imparted by Joanne, the next five months found both Goody and I learning together. He learned giving to the bit, flexion, comfort with the cinch, rating and how to pace with other horses. I learned the benefits of going barefoot, how to condition an endurance horse, managing cold osselets, supplementing a horse with special needs, and the ins and outs of endurance riding. We both learned that arena work bored us senseless. It wasn't easy, but it was rewarding. The trail is where the most progress was made and where we both wanted to be. It was there that we found our groove.

By June we were ready for our first ride and entered the Mountain Mettle. While we didn't finish our first 50 due to some soreness Goody began to develop in his hind end as a result of the vast elevation changes during the ride, I was extremely proud of the 38 miles Goody and I completed together. At the same ride everything finally clicked with Goody and an endurance horse was born. And me, I developed a trust and comfort with Goody that reached a new level. Plus, I was hooked on the sport.

In July, we entered our second endurance ride and earned our first completion in the 55-mile ride the first day of the Sangre Scenic. Having been focused on maintaining a steady, manageable pace, I was blown away to find we came in fourth out of 13 riders. The best part? For me it's a tie between not scoring below a B on any criteria at vet checks and riding my once bit-bracing, ex-racer on a loose rein, including the five miles we paced with a pair of other horses.

Here we are almost exactly one year after I first clapped eyes on a grey Arab with soulful eyes and a ground-devouring stride. Not a day goes by where I'm not spending some time with Goody. He's not only my horse, he's exercise partner, a new motivation, my therapist, the catalyst that moved me back into the country, and the reason I planted four rows of carrots in the garden last summer. I may have given him a second chance and a devoted home, but he's given me just as much. He reminded me of the simple pleasure in small achievements and gave me a much needed work-life balance.

From the Cannery to Mountain Region Hall of Fame

by Dorothy Sue Phillips

In 1990 I was sitting in a small sale barn in southwest Missouri. A few horses, some cattle and goats were sold through this barn monthly. I had no intention of buying anything. I was just starting in endurance on a borrowed horse and did need one of my own. A small bay gelding went through the ring. I noticed he looked like an Arabian, so I asked someone who purchased him. Three men were buying canners. In those days, horses were still being canned. I spoke to the men and asked if they bought the little bay. Yes, he was going to the canners the next day. Impulsively, I asked if I could buy him. "Yes, lady, you pay the \$300 I bid and give me \$20 and he is yours." That's how I found Rebel Night Rider!

He was only 3, unbroke, but gentle and easy to start. I found the family who sold him and learned Rebel was just a pasture horse, with no plans for his future. He was registered but I could not get his papers. At age 4 he did his first LD ride near Lewiston, Montana. We got BC there and I told the previous owners I could get no credit for his win because I didn't have his papers. This little lie worked and in a couple of weeks I received his papers.

In 1991 I moved to Montana, I did several rides in the Mountain Region and Rebel was doing great. In 1991, beside the Lewiston ride he did the Hangmans Posse, Four Roses and Big Sky rides which he finished, but was never recorded. His total mileage is 4,175 on record, but about 200



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From the Cannery

miles are missing. In 1993 and 1994, we moved up to doing some three-day rides and in 1995 we did all five days of the Outlaw Trail (see photo), a ride I had only read about but desperately wanted to try. Rebel finished well. In 1997 and 1998 we finished the Rocky Mountain ride and I feel so fortunate to have done this multiday event along with the Outlaw Trail. So many wonderful miles, beautiful country and great memories.

When Rebel was 14 I sold him to Jan and Bill Stevens. I had other horses by this time. I needed to move on and Rebel needed a good home with an endurance family. The Stevens girls started their endurance career on Rebel. At age 26 he is now with a family near Wheatland, Wyoming, taking good care of another young family. I feel so fortunate to have started my endurance career on such a game and willing horse.

In 1995 Rebel was inducted into the Mountain Region Hall of Fame with 81 starts and 80 completions. He has eight BCs, 12 wins and 60 top tens! To finish a career like Rebel has done is truly to finish is to win!

Favor Foundation's Second-Chance Success Stories

by Jo Pavlis

Below are pictures and stories of happy horse owners who adopted their endurance horse through the [MileMakers](#) Training Program and the [Favor Foundation](#), a non-profit 501c3 foundation dedicated to providing horses with whatever they need to continue into a second career.

Since 1999, MileMakers has provided riding lessons and training for horses and riders. During that time, MileMakers has ridden, trained, and managed hundreds of horses. Many of these horses are now competing in endurance, nationally and internationally.

In the past five years, with the decline of the world economy, there has been an overabundance of wayward Arabian horses needing a second career and/or just a chance at finding a suitable new home. The Favor Foundation was founded to raise money to help offset the cost of the horses in the rehabilitation, retraining, and re-homing program. However, the Favor Foundation has a goal which is much larger than just rescue and adoption. The foundation strives to increase horse owner awareness and education. By providing this valuable knowledge, it is hoped that the horses will receive the beneficial care and management which will prevent them from becoming a "throw away" horse in the future. Many of the horses that have come through the adoption program are well-bred and had been well-managed. It is true that most of these horses needed some medical attention, however, some simply needed time to heal, be re-trained, or just needed the chance to learn how to be a horse again.

The numbers of horses coming through these programs have been numerous. Below you will meet just a few of them, and hear their stories. Congratulations to these endurance riders . . . and their remarkable horses!

Love and Butterfly. Hi! I am Madi Boekes. I am now 12 years old and got my first horse when I was 11. I know how lucky I am to own a horse at my age. Love was the name of my first horse. Love was a beautiful chestnut mare who came from the race track. She was retired from racing as a 4-year-old, after tearing both suspensory ligaments in her front legs. Love came to the Favor Foundation needing a whole year to heal her legs. I spent time with Love even before I could ride her. I hoped she would heal enough to be my endurance horse. After a year, she was recovered and I started my training with Love and adopted her for my very own. In the spring of 2012, Love and I were pretty ready to go on our first endurance ride. Sadly, Love suffered from a very bad colic. We took Love to the vet right away. We all hoped she could be helped. I learned that colic is the #1 killer of horses. Love is now in heaven. People thought my heart for horses would be over, but they were really, really, really wrong. A few weeks after Love had passed, I met Butterfly.



Butterfly is a beautiful bay mare. She was also retired from the race track, but suffered no injuries in her first career. Butterfly and I spent a lot of time training and getting to know each other, so I could still compete in endurance this summer. Our first endurance ride was a 50-miler! It was great to get my completion. I miss Love a lot, and she can never be replaced, but, I am glad to have found another race horse that needed a second chance.

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Second-Chance Success Stories . . .



Jewels. Hello, My name is Stephanie Schoolmeester. I will never forget the first time I saw Jewels when I was looking to buy another endurance horse. I had no idea she was a rescue horse. She was stunning and I immediately felt drawn to her. I was looking for an older horse with more experience. She had under 30 days of training and I wasn't sure I had the time to train a horse with my busy schedule. Plus, I was a little worried about adopting a rescue horse. It didn't take long for her to win me over completely. I could see how smart she was and willing to please. I adopted Jewels on January 4, 2011, and I feel great about giving Jewels another chance at life. She deserves it! Jewels is an amazing horse, and the best teacher I ever had. She makes me want to learn all I can so I can to help her. It has been an adventure and has challenged me, and made my horsemanship skills better, as well as sharpened my riding skills. It hasn't been an easy ride, however, every bump along the trail has made us a stronger team.

Jewels loves to go, and makes a natural endurance horse. Right now she is my running partner and she is getting me in shape for ski season. She is increasing my pace! She is happy running alongside of me or riding down the trail. She loves to compete and gets a laser beam focus at rides. She was like this from her very first ride when she maneuvered a very difficult course with complete ease. She ended up winning which wasn't my intention at all! She is very forward and is happiest going at a faster pace. However, my goal is to have a strong horse physically and mentally so we are going slow—to go fast. She has great conformation, and people always ask me about her bloodlines. They are shocked when I tell them that she is a rescue horse and she doesn't have papers. She is the most athletic horse I ever owned and the one I spent the least money on. She has completed nine rides, and has also won best condition. She always gets high scores from the vets. We are both very determined and I feel we make a good fit and have many more enjoyable miles ahead of us.

Colin, by Nicole Beck. Everyone dreams of finding that diamond in the rough. This incredible horse had somehow been overlooked by everyone. We love to think that maybe we finally got lucky. Everybody else didn't see what you saw, or maybe even God has finally seen you searching and has decided to throw you a bone because you've been burned so many times in the horse-buying culture.

I'm not sure how I ended up with my horse Colin. Maybe a combination of all of the above. I personally like to go with the idea that God has a plan and likes to reveal himself with these beautiful creatures we love and teach us something about ourselves in the process.

Colin came to Joanne Pavlis at the Fawor Foundation with a bone deformity on his face. It was most likely caused by an injury from his career at the race track. The Fawor Foundation had a veterinarian take a look at his lump and took radiographs to see about having his blemish removed. It turns out this was a big deal to most people when considering him for adoption. After two different veterinary consultations, one with the local farm vet and one with Colorado State University, they both agreed that all of this "knob" on the side of his jaw could be removed. However, it might just remodel again and maybe even come back larger!

Lucky that Colin was taken into the foundation and was competing as an endurance horse while in that program. I actually rode right next to him at a ride months before I adopted him, and didn't know he would soon be in my barn!

Colin has now received an award in his first season of endurance riding, for top 20 in limited distance. He has remained sound of mind and body, and stolen the hearts of so many people he meets.

In 2012 we completed the Big Horn 100 together. It was a first 100 for both of us. The truth is, I don't believe this is a "rare find." Given proper re-training and rehabilitation there are lots of Colins out there that need time and love and are more than willing and able to help us achieve our dreams.

Other Notable Rescued Horses Now competing in endurance who found homes through the Fawor Foundation:

Cleo, adopted By Samantha Brownwneller

Resolute Bey, adopted by Susie Matson

Oh My Goodness, adopted by Jessica Cloeter (see article by Jessica in this issue)

The **Fawor Foundation** and **Milemakers Training** are located in Larkspur, Colorado. Joanne Pavlis, the founder and president, has competed and trained endurance horses since 1997.



Overcoming Steep Odds at the Bucksnot Challenge

The following story was written by a young man named Chad, who lives and works at the Double R Ranch, a program sponsored by the Orange County Rescue Mission (for individuals wanting help from substance abuse). Chad had never ridden a horse before coming to the ranch. If you are interested in more information about the ranch you can visit their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/DoubleRRanchOCRM, or visit the www.DoubleRRanch.org website or www.rescuemission.org website.

Thirty miles? No sweat. I'd be lying if that was how I honestly felt. Ol' Chadly has done very few challenging feats in his short two years of adulthood, and as for my horse riding experiences, I'm fairly certain this ride ranks near the top! But the story, "Bucksnot Challenge Endurance Ride" is not about any one individual overcoming steep odds, one long (very long) horse trail, or a group of men from the "Double R," no, it is vastly grander. It is about people of all ages, races and backgrounds coming together to create memories. It is the woman riding, the man volunteering and the children rooting for all the riders. Don't forget the horses either. You'd be mistaken if for a second you believe horses aren't equally anxious and excited for the ride!

The story began, for me, the moment we arrived and made camp. Like the last event (when I volunteered) many of the same faces greeted me with waves and smiles, even a hearty hello or two. We dined with the rest of the folks under a big tent to a meal of tri-tip, beans and veggies and, boy was I happy to eat! Upon nightfall, a man with an Australian accent and a guitar seated by a bonfire played hymns fitting for this homey setting. After his private show which only a few people witnessed, the man allowed me to play his guitar. Boy, let me tell you, for that hour or two, I was the happiest I've been in years. I'm not very good, but oh, how I love the acoustic guitar. Time for sleep shortly followed—it would have been nice if I got any, but at least I kept warm.

The morning went insanely fast. By the time I drank my tea, horse saddled, and face smashed by a giant horse head during my less-than-graceful mount, I found myself situated by the starting line. A massive group peeled out from the get-go. Beau held us back before beginning the ride, and rightfully so. It was mine and Jeff's first ride. Needless to say, we lack experience and we wanted to stay together. A few minor inconveniences led me to early frustration, but I remained positive. When we first began ascending the monster of a mountain, the trail was narrow, winding, and full of bushes scratching skin and tearing feet from the stirrups. Maintaining a relatively slow pace eased my frustrations. I was able to see the sights of hills dotted by treetops and plant life thriving in various shades of green as we picked up speed as well as altitude. At one point, we were so far up that the massive hills of our own Double R Ranch (DRR) backyard were miniscule by comparison. Looking down made me dizzy and nauseous. I wasn't scared, honestly I wasn't. It felt like motion sickness, but I loved it all the same. I know that without Trail Boss Beau, fear would have been present in me during the first loop of the ride. In the words of Mr. Morrison, we broke on through to the other side and began descending. Beau fell off his horse in slow motion and I don't think I will ever lose that image!

Other than that, we made it to the halfway point and ultimately the entire ride without incident. (We being Jeff, Beau and myself, that is.) "We" does not include our other two riders of DRR that, without having to say it, fancy themselves as "superstars." Not everyone is as humble as "yours truly." Other than at the starting line, and a moment after the first loop, did I lay eyes on Peter and Randolph, the Grey-t. Although, even in arrogance, I mean skill, only one of two of them finished the ride. Peter landed a spotlight position of 10th place, while his counterpart, RanDiesel, finished at a comic place of "better luck next time."

Apparently, Randy was caught in the midst of Challenge Ranch kids, good riders. If only they had a sense of direction to go with their riding capabilities. They got lost. Instead of straight, they turned early on into the second loop and didn't wise up until they were far past the point of being contenders—and Randy was swiftly following them. His horse's number was 13: enough said?

But I must admit when I first saw Randy after the finish line, smiling and taking pictures, I safely assumed he placed, judging from the size of that grin and his enthusiasm to hear my experience of the ride.

"Well, how was it?" he eagerly asked. "A lot of work," I answered. Before I could finish the word "work", I was met with loving pat on the soreness I called an arm. "WORK!" he exclaimed with a great smile. "Yeah, work. It wasn't easy. I mean I had fun, but, man . . ." He laughed some more, as I recall.

Nearing the end of the Bucksnot Challenge story, after dismounting my horse, I mostly spent those minutes stationary. Each step was a fight to pick my ten-ton feet off the seemingly stone floor. I shuffled like the undead. I laughed as I got "the scoop" about Randolph's ride, about how he got misplaced and came in with the group of kids from Challenge Ranch who cheerfully sang a rendition of "We are the Titans" to soothe their misfortune. Randy proved that humility is one of his many traits, as jokes were continuously dished out throughout the night. Peter quietly reveled in his well-deserved glory. I modestly rubbed my "superior" placing (I came in 16th!) in Beau's and Jeff's faces. They were right behind me.

We all got awarded our prize at dinner: a blue sweatshirt with Bucksnot Challenge inscribed on it. It will be a cherished memento, while Peter also got a sweet hat! Food met everyone's standards. Laughter and chattering, smiles and humble, loving people were all I could hear and see. Jack, one of our volunteers from DRR, was the life of the scene, talking with many different people. If I didn't know better, I'd say Jack gives off a vibe that brings out the best in him and those around him. As for Peter, Jeff, Junior, Taylor and myself, we spent most of the dinner quoting Dave Chappelle and laughing hysterically.

All in all, you could say I had a good time, great even, but that isn't the moral of this story now, is it? It's about everyone and the memories they had in their warm hearts when they left for home. This is only a mere story, and is being told from my point of view.

God bless our privileges!

Chad C.

California State Horsemen's Association

by Audra Homicz

In 1971 **California State Horsemen's Association**, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), formed an endurance rides committee to promote horsemanship in long distance riding and to promote organized distance rides. I am honored to have been chosen by the former chairman, Richard Theodore, and CSHA President James Hendrickson to be the current chairwoman of this committee. Richard Theodore, long time ride manager of the Mariposa Ride (Run for the Gold), revived this program back in 2000 after many years of inactivity. He was chairman for 10 years. I am doing my best to do as wonderful of a job as he did and keep the program growing and going strong. I would like to share with the AERC membership some of what we are doing and what we are about.

The **CSHA State Endurance Program** works to promote and market endurance rides, the American Endurance Ride Conference and CSHA. We also are supporting trails and working on introducing and educating new people to endurance.



On June 24 CSHA State Endurance Program held a Education-20 mile fundraising fun ride on the Weaver Basin Trail in the small town of Weaverville, California. A demon-

stration of vetting your horse and mock vet checks for each horse were done by endurance rider Julie Neely and myself before and after the ride. Endurance riders Tara Fwelling and Willi Hoffman participated in the ride and were available for questions and advice. All participants received a educational handbook from the AERC and a donated custom magnet that included the CSHA website link.

There was also a CSHA state fundraiser four-mile poker ride on June 23 in the same location. Other trail users were invited to this ride. There were 19 paid participants. There was a untimely storm that came in that left snow on upper peaks in the Trinity Alps, but we were fortunate to have enough breaks between the deluges to have sunshine out on the trail. Everyone received a donated custom magnet that included the CSHA website link as a participation award. CSHA Region 18, local businesses and individuals donated some of the awards and there was \$50 cash high hand award won by Kat Wion, CSHA Region 18 president. Everyone won something and some won twice.

T-shirts were available to purchase for each event; some t-shirts were given out as prizes and BBQ hamburger lunch was served.

We also plan to be offering a AERC sanctioned 50- and 25-mile ride on this trail system starting 2014 and will continue with a educational ride and joint trail user poker ride as well.

In keeping with our our mission statement of promoting horsemanship in distance riding, custom engraved bronze Gist buckles were donated by the CSHA State Endurance Program to The Redwood Empire Endurance Riders for Redwood I and II 2012 for 2-day Best Horsemanship and to the Natalie Herman for the Trinity River Challenge 2012 for Best Horsemanship on Day 2. Both buckles recipients were chosen by Dr. Jennifer Powers as her choice of who took overall best care and presented the best horsemanship in not yanking or yelling at their horse, over-riding it, making good choices and showing concern at vet checks through the day and presenting a horse that was willing and ready to continue. As many riders at both these ride fit into that criteria it was likely a tough choice for Dr. Jen. The winner of the custom engraved Gist bronze buckle at Redwood I and II was Patricia Smyth riding Jazz and the winner of the same at Trinity River Challenge was April Moore riding AB Air Alamahn Both Trish and April were very overwhelmed and appreciative.

CSHA Memories

Julie Suhr provided the following story for the CSHA Endurance Program's website. Any endurance riders who have remembrances of their CSHA experiences are encouraged to write—see the main article for mailing information.

HCC Gazal: CSHA Lightweight Champion 1986, CSHA Best Condition Champion 1986

HCC Gazal and I are sort of ancient history at this point, but Audra has asked for my story so here it is. I first met this bay horse when he was 5 years old and I was more than 11 times that. I knew he was something special the first time I rode him. He had a joie de vivre attitude . . . the world was his to romp in with exuberant riders upon his back. He was just born happy and he shared it with all who came within his contact.

He completed over 8,000 miles of endurance which included 17 multi-day rides of 250 or more miles. He completed the Tevis Cup Ride seven consecutive years, was Top Ten four times and Haggin Cup winner three times. In all those mountains, in all those valleys, down every desert trail and every wooded trail, he went proudly and I can honestly say that Bob and I never winded that horse. Regardless of how hot the day, how fast the ride, how long the trail, a couple of deep breaths and his pulse and respiration were normal.

So actually Gazal put me on the map rather than the other way around. I never felt I rode him well. He was straight in the rear end and he threw me out of the saddle, especially at the canter, which he much preferred. I spent two years trying to teach him to trot, but he always won and we cantered many, many miles.

Bob and I shared Gazal. I knew he was AERC National Champion material, but I was very afraid of getting caught up in a horse race and harming him. So Bob and I traded on and off as his rider so neither of us would chalk up the points required.

We stopped riding him in 1991 after three unexplained falls. He was allowed to run free with us when we rode others. His total exuberance of racing by and flipping up his rear heels in total self-abandon brought the practice to a stop, however. He lived a good life in retirement until age 27 when the proud head was not held so high and the shifting of weight from one leg to the other told us it was time. He was buried with a stomach full of oats, apple and carrots dampened with the tears of those who loved him.

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CSHA . . .

Both buckles were provided by Gist at half of retail and were paid for by much appreciated donations from Duane and Karen Fredrickson and Trinity Animal Hospital in Weaverville.

In 1971 when the founders of the CSHA State Endurance Program started out, they provided year end high point awards to promote horsemanship in distance riding. I was told by the program's 1st chairman's wife that in the early 70s Endurance riders were not seen as good horsemen by other horsemen in California. Some Endurance riders in California were known to ride their horse literally to death in the days before AERC and the welfare of the horse protections that are now in place. CSHA wanted to change that perception by showing that Endurance riders could maintain their horses over the entire season in good form.

CSHA has awards for top 5 in Junior and all weight divisions in Endurance and participation awards for non placers. There is an overall High Point Endurance Rider award in honor of immediate past chairman Richard Theodore. CSHA also has awards for top three in LD and participation awards for those that don't place.

CSHA points are calculated from AERC ride results. ALL AERC rides count toward CSHA year end awards. There are 52 registered horses in the CSHA State Endurance Program for 2012.

Present or past members of CSHA that have participated in the State Endurance Program please contribute your story or share photos by e-mail so that we may post it on the web page with other participants stories and photos.

If interested in learning more about the how the program works and joining for 2013 go to: www.californiastatehorsemen.com or e-mail: dogwoodspringsfarm@yahoo.com.

Let Me Tell You a Story About Cindy Brown

by Jamie Worthington

Cindy is one of the most gracious and generous people with her time, equipment, horses, and helpful advice that I've ever met. I first met Cindy a few years ago when I responded to a rental ad as I was looking for a place to live. As I drove up to Cindy and Jim's ranch, I saw a pasture full of horses. In the course of showing me the house for rent that was above the pasture and pond, I asked about her horses. The conversation went something like this . . .

Me: I notice you have a few horses out there. Have you ever heard of endurance riding?

Cindy: Yes, I have.

Me: Really!? What do you know about it? I've just learned about the sport and I'm trying to learn more. No one I know really knows anything about it. Have you ever done it?

Cindy: Yes, I've done a little bit. [This modest statement belies the fact she's got thousands of miles and almost two decades of endurance experience under her belt.] If you really want to know more about it, talk to my husband. He's done a whole lot of it.

Me: No kidding? I'd love to talk to him. I'm in the process of looking for an Arab right now.

From that point forward, Cindy allowed me to pepper her with questions from time to time about what to look for in an endurance prospect, what equipment is necessary or not, and what the endurance rides were like. She introduced me to other endurance riders who are also very receptive to my questions. I joined AERC at her suggestion and began asking better questions as a result of that association. When she suggested I volunteer at the Lake Sonoma ride in our area, I jumped at the idea and met a whole group of riders and veterinarians who were also willing to share their knowledge and time with me as I climbed a steep learning curve.

Cindy took me out on her own training rides, sharing freely with me her horses, equipment, time, and knowledge. My mother commented, "How nice it is for everyone that she shares etiquette with you or people would be thinking you were a pig on the trail!" Things like waiting for others to water their horses before leaving the trough, waiting for others before going too far ahead after crossing a bridge or a muddy pit, or holding the gate open for those behind you and then waiting for the gate holder to mount prior to departing are all really nice gestures and make riding in the endurance crowd so very pleasant.

Soon thereafter, I ended up buying two 2-year-olds and began riding one of them about 18 months later. I was thinking about taking Scirocco on a ride when it dawned on me that I knew close to nothing about camping out with a horse alongside perhaps another hundred riders and horses, not to mention flags, vet checks, crew bags, P&Rs, holds, ride meetings, and other necessary details. So, I asked Cindy if I could do a ride with her on one of her horses, using her equipment, before taking my 4-year-old on his first ride. That conversation went something like this . . .

Cindy: Sure! That's a great idea. You'll learn so much by tagging along.

Me: Great. Thank you so much. I'm so excited! What do I need to bring?

Cindy: We'll have a potluck the first night so bring something that goes with tamale pie. Give me your AERC number and I'll fill out the paperwork for you. Since you're riding my horse, I'll pay half of your entry fee.

Me: Cindy! I'm borrowing your horse, his feed, your equipment, your transportation. I think I better pay my own entry fee.

Cindy: Oh, wow. That'd be really nice.

Me: What can I contribute for gas?

Cindy: Oh, nothing. It'd take the same amount of gas whether you came or not.

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Cindy Brown . . .

Me: Wow, that's really generous. Are you sure about that?

Cindy: Of course I'm sure.

Me: All right, then. Thank you so much!

Well, that LD ride at Cache Creek was a total blast and I've been hooked on endurance riding ever since. Last year, I rode Scirocco in three rides and this year he'll be in four or five, six if I'm lucky. Cindy is an incredible ambassador for the sport and supportive beyond any reasonable expectation to new prospects.

About six months later, I needed to move my second horse about 20 miles from my old to my new residence. Understand that both of these locations are 30 to 45 minutes away from Cindy's place. Eddie was trailer-shy. I explained to Cindy the different things I'd tried on different days and my lack of success in getting him in the trailer. Her response, "Hmph. We'll get him in the trailer," is typical of her can-do approach to everything. Well, sure enough, she had all kinds of strategies and ideas and once she'd met Eddie and saw the challenges, I think we ended up using everything she had! We left the pasture that day with Eddie in the trailer.

Because Eddie was so terribly frightened, Cindy suggested that she ride in the trailer with him to my new house—a 25-mile trip! The ride must have been harrowing for her back there but she remained cool as a cucumber. She called me in the cab of the truck only a couple of times to ask how much longer the ride was going to be. When I was going through Penngrove at 5 mph, she called and told me not to go any faster. Luckily, we were about a quarter-mile from our destination. When I finally opened up the back of the trailer, buckets of liquid ran out the back. I thought Eddie had peed profusely when in fact he had only sweat copious quantities. Apparently, soon after I began driving he'd begun to slip and slide in the tremendous amounts of sweat that was dripping off every part of his body, hence the phone calls and request to go 5 mph.

Truly, I don't know anyone who would volunteer to ride in the back of a trailer for 25 miles with someone else's young horse who was trailer-shy and petrified beyond belief. Cindy is a remarkable horsewoman and friend who has inspired me to have as much fun in endurance racing and training as she does! She is my HERO!

The AERC Office will be sending Cindy a HERO certificate in thank for all she has contributed to the sport. Thank you to Jamie Worthington for nominating Cindy for this honor.



Photo © Becky Pearman Photography

Kentucky Stampede I & II

by Janice Taylor, Daniel Boone Distance Riders, timer of the day...

This is only the second year that the Daniel Boone Distance Riders (DBDR) has hosted an endurance ride at this location. Our ride camp is at the Mine Made Paradise Adventure Park in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. With 43,000 acres of reclaimed coal land, there are plenty of trails to explore. And what a unique location it is!

Bill and Debbie Reed operate and have made improvements on this flattened reclaimed area with a stable, several water and electric sites, all with sweeping vistas of the surrounding mountains that were all ablaze with striking fall colors. Reintroduced elk made numerous appearances throughout the weekend—even blocking trail for the riders at times, and posing for Becky Pearman our ride photographer, and Peter DeMott, who was crewing for his wife. Could it have been more perfect? Yes it could; the weather was perfect!

Ride managers Amy Whelan and Connie Caudill, DBDR volunteers, our ride vets—Drs. Don Meuten, and Justin Murray, Bill and Debbie, and the Rough Terrain Rescue team all worked hard to make sure all riders had a fun and successful weekend with their four-footed partners. Then for true mountain ambiance, there was the puppy, the bloodhound Hank.

Teddy Lancaster of [Running Bear](#) was there to supply any last-minute supplies we might need over the weekend also. Because of unforeseen factors, the Rough Terrain Rescue team was out until the wee hours of the morning of the ride, making sure the trails were well marked and no sabotage had taken place . . . seems elk like ribbon too.

The first day's ride dawned cool and foggy which made for some beautiful photos, and fresh horses! Because ride camp is so high up and so flat, we who were left in camp could see the riders several

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times as they negotiated the trail. For me the most beautiful moment was watching the whole line of riders as they climbed up a steep hill about a half-mile away, their bright colors looking like a strange stream of ants crawling up the side of the mountain. How I wished I was among them . . .

From the smiles and exclamations from the riders as they timed in and out (my station for the day) everyone was having a grand time of it! Interestingly, all the riders finished the ride within two and a half hours of each other.

That evening we were treated to a delicious dinner prepared by the Rough Terrain Rescue team, and of course, Hank, making the awards even more enjoyable. Why is it that food tastes so much better out in the open after just ridden for 50 miles? Or sitting out in the sunshine all day watching riders come and go?

There were far fewer riders on the second day, nonetheless they took off in the clear morning air for their day on the trails. Again, I so wished I were among them. But, my granddaughter was on her horse this day, so it was almost as good. Again, we got to see them streaming up that hillside, and then as they traversed along a ridge across a wide valley. And again, the weather was perfect and yes, again, everyone was having a grand time of it! Love these two-day rides! Love it when nature blesses us with all her glory here in beautiful Kentucky!

If you weren't able to make the Kentucky Stampede in 2012, then mark it down for 2013, for a grand and unique weekend of endurance at its best!

The Season of the Silver Stallion

by Jessi Zirbel

Leaned over the fence, offered him a tuft of grass and remarked, "He'd make a heck of an endurance horse." Fast-forward to two years later, this novice 7 years "young" (as they keep telling me at UMECRA events) stallion ranked 15th out of 160+ horses in the 2011 LD division.

Without trying. Makes me wonder what could have been.

But an aversion to crossing running water, standing to a full book of mares and his rider balancing of funds-in funds-out (silly jobs) created a light season for the silver stallion. Oh, and by the way, no problems on water crossings *now*. We redeemed ourselves at our (ahem) Waterloo at Grand Island 2012, and garnered a first place LD finish. Cracks me up to hear him sip-sip-sip at rivulets a 4-year-old could walk across. And drink from rainwater puddles on trail.

We took it easy on the advice of our mentor, and as the season progressed and one completion turned into five, and he was doing back-to-back LDs and 25-mile CTRs. Well, I wanted more. He wanted more. And he is not to be denied. To top it off, Pamela Fullerton, his breeder and owner, made the casual remark (dare?) that she'd reimburse my entry fee if we were third or better. Say no more! We were ready to start adding a little more speed to our distance. We were not out of the ribbons after that. All told, we garnered two firsts, two seconds, some thirds, fourths, fifths and one sixth place finish in a competitive field. They don't call it Point Chaser for nothing!

Oh, did I mention we got a BC the first time we got a first place? Pretty cool for a stallion at the middle of the season, with a scant handful of rides up to that point. And a very, very green rider.

There were times of frustration for he and me both . . . being held at the midway vet check as he doesn't really immediately pulse down to criteria. Something about entering a check with all those endurance horses coming and going really cranks him up. I walk him, electrolyte and water him and in 10 minutes he finally relaxes. Figures—this is a horse that takes three miles just to warm up on rides. I like the hot weather rides best. Crew people descend on him with buckets of water and scrapers and he comes down in about three minutes.

At our second ride in 2011, Steve Smith (rider of the RMH Ru-Da-Di) looked at him right before his completion vet check, and remarked, "That horse has a 50 in him." Horrors! I have just done a couple 25 LDs and comps . . . don't say that.

Then I read on the online forums that is what I should be aspiring to do. Dang. I like 25 miles—done in three hours, can lounge around, volunteer, nap until awards. Sit around the fire. Watch all the pretty horses go by.

Oh well. If I must.

So Crescent gets a month off, and the lovely Midwest winter-that-wasn't of 2011-2012 conspires to create a perfect environment

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The Season of the Silver Stallion . . .

to bring Crescent up to distance.

The plan was for the 2012 season was to do three sets of back-to-back LD/25 comp combos, then bump up to 50s. Maybe do a 75 in there. But an unexpected human illness and once again, that money-in, money-out proved to be our unmaking. Lightly campaigned, several "first 50" opportunities came and went. I was relieved the first time it occurred, was slightly put out but still more relieved the second time, and got annoyed the third time. Dang it, I did not do all that work in order to not do the distance!

Then, our first came: Colorama. Trails I've mountain biked and ran on, with my late husband. I knew the soil, tasted the water, felt the air. It was time. We were both ready. Except my right ankle, which I hurt in a Labor Day horse accident. A mere trifle.

We led the pack out that summer dawn, led by a pace car driven by Bettina Koehn. All was fine and dandy until we left the dark streets of Greenbush, Wisconsin, and got on the trail. My nicely trotting mount turned into a bronco. For two miles he twisted and turned, ducked and bucked. It was all I could do to maintain my seat. Folks behind me marveled I stayed on at all. The potential drama of a loose stallion gave me superhuman strength, and in spite of that badly injured ankle, I stayed with my horse. Soon he leveled out and was cantering smoothly through the Northern Kettle Moraine, my newest friend Marianne Guilfoyle and her trusty steed Trekea apace. We drank deep and grazed long at water stops, cantered and trotted through rolling woodlands, and arrived at our midway out-vet check.

We had one more out-check before the completion check, he pulsed down to criteria, we ate our way until our out time, and proceeded back into camp. At a much more leisurely pace. As we retraced our way through the sunny streets of Greenbush, I was near to tears. We did it (with the exception of the final check). We did it! I was so proud of Crescent and grateful for the quality of mount I was trusted to ride.

Our second was the 55 at DRAW-A-Rama in Palmyra, Wisconsin. There, I learned about "the wall" and hand-walked Crescent for a couple miles, snatching handfuls of grass and clover, spending a half-hour at the water tank to give him every opportunity to revive him to his normal bouncy self. That was scary. I never had him stop on trail before. I would've hand-walked him in the entire way if need be. He completed that handily in spite of his rider. Gah . . . greenies. Newbies.

Our third (and final) event of the season was at Iron Oak in Arkdale, Wisconsin, at the nicely appointed Ukarydee Horse Campground. It started raining at 3:00 in the morning. We got 3.5" of rain in 36 hours. Boots Shepard gave it the moniker "Iron (S) oak" which we have all adopted. It rained steady for the first two legs, only sprinkled sporadically on the third leg, and merely drizzled the final leg. The saving graces that day were dry breech changes, warm dry wool socks, and our humor. Mildly hypothermic and highly caffeinated, we maintained our sense of well being and perseverance. It was interesting to share our experiences around the awards table that evening. Each one of us 50-milers had her own personal crisis that created a thought to stop at mile 25. I was almost crying (except that would've made me wetter!), saying I could not do that to Crescent. Another of my new friends could hardly care for her beast and herself, a third was musing, "Rider option . . . I could rider option."

I will admit I spent more time in the holds than my out time called for—if he was eating I did not disturb him. I've learned a lesson at DRAW-A-Rama and I was not going to foster a repeat performance.

All of us found some reserve in ourselves to care for our mounts, return to the trail, and complete what was begun. That event had 100% completion rate, and a brand-spanking new 50-miler! It even let up for us to have a bonfire that evening.

The best part of that last event was I caught up to my myriad Novice friends and got to ride that third loop with them. Serendipity indeed! For them to be doing that exact loop as I at that point pretty much salvaged the day for me. And at a nice conservative pace to boot!

I am hooked on 50s, and am even looking with less trepidation to a 75 or two. Who knows what the future may bring. Looking forward to 2013, and perhaps crewing for a Tevis duo!



Reflections of the Virginia City 100

by Sharma Lynn Gaponoff

This year marked the 45th Annual Virginia City 100 Mile One Day Ride, which is organized by the Nevada All-State Trail Riders club. I'd been encouraged to do this ride for the past couple years, but the timing hadn't been right. This year the timing worked and I was looking forward to the experience. Odette, who was part of my Tevis crew a month earlier, graciously agreed to crew again for Tahoe and me for this 100-mile ride.



Sharma and Tahoe passing by Washoe Lake on the Virginia City 100. Photo © Gore/Baylor Photography.

Virginia City is a quaint and historic town. It is one of the oldest communities in Nevada and is perched at an elevation of 6000 feet. Its history is centered on the discovery of extremely productive ore mines, most famously the Comstock Lode silver in 1859. With the tremendous amount of silver ore being extracted from the Comstock Lode, Virginia City quickly became a boomtown sporting stagecoach and railway lines connecting this important town with other towns in the Wild West and with towns to the east. Virginia City is also where writer Samuel Clemens first penned the name Mark Twain while he was a newspaper reporter in town. Despite the pull of Virginia City's charm, there was no time for this endurance rider to take in the sights of its historic buildings, museums, shops and restaurants. During this adventure, I would have to be content with seeing Virginia City and the surrounding high desert from the back of my wonderful horse, Tahoe.

We arrived at base camp in the early afternoon. The campground was small, but all riders, crews, horses, rigs and ride staff fit snugly. Base camp was adjacent to an historic building called the Ice House. The instant you walk inside the Ice House, you are immediately transported back in time to the Wild West days. The inside of this old wooden building is both comfortable and rustic at the same time. It looks very authentic, which of course it is—complete with a bar you can “belly up” to. The room contains tables and chairs where you can easily imagine rugged folks drinking their whisky and playing poker.

Linda, a newly found friend and fellow endurance rider, had done the Virginia City 100 twice before and recommended we do this ride together. I gladly took her up on the challenge. She, along with her husband Robert who was crewing for her, had arrived at base camp ahead of us and was able to save us a premium parking spot. Odette pulled into that spot and we soon had our campsite set up and Tahoe comfortably settled in. We then enjoyed lunch together with Linda and Robert at our campsites.

After lunch, Linda and I got our horses ready. We wanted to vet them in and then do about an hour ride to familiarize ourselves with the beginning of the trail during daylight since we would be riding it in the morning darkness. By 4:00 p.m., the ride veterinarians had not arrived, so Linda and I decided just to hand-walk our horses to the staging area and then down to the start. We figured the vets would definitely be there by the time we returned.

The staging area was in front of the Delta Saloon on the main street of town. From base camp to the Saloon and then to the start of the ride is all on asphalt because you are literally going right through town. The start (and the finish) was at the historic cemetery. I think the Nevada ride managers must have had a great sense of humor to set the ride up like this. It was a 30-minute walk on foot from base camp through town to the cemetery and then another 30-minute walk back. By the time we returned to base camp, the vets had indeed arrived and were vetting horses in.

Dr. Jamie Kerr was the head veterinarian. There were two other ride veterinarians, Susan McCartney and Karen Hassan, so vetting-in was quick and easy. Tahoe got “A's” on everything except jugular refill for which he received a “B+.” The pulse criterion was 60 beats per minute (bpm) and Tahoe pulsed in at a calm 42 bpm. Linda's horse, Jamal, vetted in equally well.

After finishing the vetting-in, Odette, Linda, Robert and I ate dinner, and then attended the ride meeting where Dr. Kerr told us a very morbid (but instructive) story about a horse that had dropped dead during an endurance ride with similar air temperatures and riding challenges as the Virginia City 100. Dr. Kerr explained that veterinarians at that ride did an immediate autopsy of the horse where among other procedures, they took the temperature of the horse's liver. It measured an astonishing 109° Fahrenheit. A horse's normal body temperature can vary from 99°F to 101°F. It is worrisome if its temperature gets to 102° F. However, if it rises above 102° F, your horse is in danger—it's a red alert. Jamie told us that based on the post-mortem 109° F temperature of that horse's

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liver, it meant the horse had literally cooked itself to death from the inside out. We all gasped in horror imagining that tragedy. Jamie gravely warned us not to cook our horses during this ride, as the weather forecast indicated hot and dry temperatures (in the 90s), and to be very careful about our horse's and our own hydration, etc. The ride meeting then ended, and with the image of that tragic story in mind, I bedded down for the evening.

Odette and I were up at 3:00 the next morning in order to get everything ready so Tahoe and I could leave base camp early enough for the walk to the Delta Saloon staging area in time to be there by 5:00 a.m. Linda and Robert were awake too, as was the rest of the base camp. We fed our horses and ourselves breakfast, dressed, tacked up and gave them their first dose of electrolyte paste for the day. Linda on Jamal and I on Tahoe headed out from base camp at 4:30 a.m. making the half-hour walk to the Delta Saloon. While we were riding to the Saloon, our crews were driving there. It was an unusual sight to see 43 horses and riders gathering in front of a saloon in the middle of town in order to begin an endurance ride. Only in Nevada can you have this experience. There was a squad car ready and waiting to escort us through the streets of Virginia City to the cemetery. The squad car would serve as our "controlled start."

At precisely 5:00, we all began to walk down the middle of Main Street behind the flashing red and blue lights of the squad car. Our horse's feet clip-clopping along the road were making marvelous percussive rhythms as the sounds of their hooves hitting the pavement ricocheted off the store fronts along Main Street. It was exhilarating and I commented to Linda, "Listen to the sound of all our horses walking through the middle of town—now that's not something you get to hear very often!" It sounded as though the cavalry had arrived.

Once we passed the cemetery we were off pavement and on a dirt road that went out into the desert and we were officially on our way, trotting down the trail in the pre-dawn darkness. Since I was unfamiliar with the trail, I tucked Tahoe and me behind two grey horses that were relatively easy to see in the dark. Linda and Jamal were right behind us. Then, after only about 10 minutes on the trail, both those grey horses suddenly and almost in unison began falling into a deep ditch off the side of the trail. Both riders were immediately catapulted into the air as their horses tried desperately not to somersault backwards into the ditch. Tahoe, being right behind that confusion, spun on a dime doing a 180° turn in order to avoid a similar fate. The centrifugal force of his acrobatics had me grabbing mane and hanging onto my saddle. Re-centering myself back in the saddle, I quickly turned Tahoe back around. I could just barely see those riders, who were on the ground, struggling to catch their breath, and then scrambling to stand up and grab their horses. It all had happened in an instant.

Horses were now rapidly bunching up behind Linda and me. It looked like a rush hour traffic jam on the freeway. Linda and I quickly began to yell, "Riders down! Horses down! Stop!" The two downed riders somehow managed to get themselves and their horses off to the side of the trail in order to let everyone pass. At that point, the trail was a swirling mix of dust and confusion. Once the downed riders and their horses were safely out of the line of fire, I continued down the trail calling out to them, "Are you OK?" They said they were and told everyone to just go on and they'd be fine. I heard later one of the horses had cut its knee open badly enough it could not continue the ride.

After the confusion of the accident, I was hoping Linda and Jamal were still behind Tahoe and me. Although dawn was rapidly approaching, it was still fairly dark, and as I glanced behind me, Linda was nowhere to be seen. I had caught up to a small group of riders who were among the top ten and going at a pretty fast clip. I stuck with those riders until it got light and I could see my equine heart rate monitor. Although Tahoe was easily keeping up, they were riding faster than I wanted him to go this early in the ride. Soon it was light enough for me to see my monitor, and based on Tahoe's pulse, which was just over 130 bpm, I decided I definitely needed to slow him down. I bid those fast riders adieu—all of who did indeed finish the ride in the Top 10. I slowed our pace to about an 8mph trot and Tahoe's pulse immediately dropped to 105 bpm. All the while I was still hoping Linda and Jamal would appear any moment. I knew they had a good chance of catching up since she and Jamal had just won Best Condition at the recent Wild West 50-mile Endurance Ride in the majestic Tahoe National Forest of Northern California.

As Tahoe trotted along the trail under the beautiful early morning desert sky, the air temperature was quite pleasant so I wasn't worrying about "cooking my horse." The only thing that was concerning me at this point was the plethora of rocks. I thought the Tevis Cup Ride, the only other 100-mile one-day ride I had ever done, had a lot of rocks on the trail. It certainly does, but I think the Virginia City 100 definitely has the corner on the market for rocks on trails. Rocks were everywhere—in the middle of the trail, on the sides of the trail, above us and below us: rocks, rocks, rocks and more rocks. It seemed to me that for most of the ride, there was barely a place your horse could step that wasn't on rocks. I couldn't imagine how a horse could do 100 miles of these rocky trails and roads and not sustain a stone bruise or worse. Then I thought about all the horses that had completed this ride in the past and hoped Tahoe would also be successful. The ride management was wise to advise riders to be sure all horses had additional hoof protection in the form of pads or easy boots for this ride. I was very glad Tahoe had pads on his front feet.

Tahoe and I ended up riding solo. Linda and Jamal were somewhere out there, too, but we didn't see them. We did pass a rider whose horse had pulled a shoe. She was walking on foot carrying that shoe that also had a pad attached to it, which meant it was likely a front shoe which is a bad one to lose since horses carry most of their weight on their front feet. Despite losing a shoe, her horse was contentedly walking behind her, carefully stepping around rocks with its bare foot. They had a long way to go to the first vet check, 24 miles away from the start. As Tahoe and I continued along these rocky high desert trails and jeep roads, the rest

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of the way to the first vet check was happily uneventful.

As we rode into the first vet check, Odette was ready and waiting, greeting Tahoe and me with a smile. Looking around, I saw many of the top ten riders already leaving as Tahoe and I were arriving. This vet check is a 45-minute hold, affording horses and riders a good amount of time to rest and eat. Tahoe and I couldn't have wished for a better crew. Odette, with her wonderful Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Daisy, were always waiting for us at each crew spot with kind and encouraging words. She was caring, efficient and effective with both Tahoe's and my crewing needs throughout the 24 hours of this ride. Her quiet competence was reassuring. A good crew is essential on a 100-mile ride.

Odette quickly took charge, leading Tahoe over to the P&R station and then to the vet in area. Tahoe passed with flying colors while everyone complimented me on my riding tights, as they are anything but traditional. The pair I was wearing is an outrageous multi-colored swirling pattern of sparkly faux snakeskin fabric made by Evelyn, "the Tights Lady." She always "has me covered" on these endurance rides.

At this vet check (as well as all the others) Odette was extremely efficient. I even had time to recline in her truck and take a 20-minute "power nap." Linda and Jamal arrived at the vet check about a half-hour after Tahoe and me, but rather than wait, I opted to head out alone on Tahoe. It was still early in the ride and it hadn't gotten that hot yet. I wanted to put as many miles behind us as possible before the day heated up. I still had the memory of Dr. Kerr's story at the pre-ride meeting about the endurance horse that got cooked from the inside out at a similar ride. I wanted to avoid that scenario at all costs.

The challenge on this next part of the trail was to find the turn off to Bailey Canyon. It was quite a distance along a jeep road until reaching the trail junction leading to Bailey Canyon. The air temperature was starting to climb and I became thirsty. I think that when I was gulping my Gatorade and trying to get the bottle safely back into my saddle pack while Tahoe was trotting, I missed seeing the trail junction that branched off the road into the desert scrub toward Bailey Canyon. Consequently, Tahoe and I continued along the jeep road. Looking at the ground, I began noticing there were no longer any visible hoof prints. Nor were there any footprints for that matter. Only tire tracks. Just as I was about to turn around, a man in one of the homes I was riding in front of told me I'd missed the turnoff and needed to go back the other direction. I thanked him for his help and after about 10 minutes retracing our steps, spotted the orange ribbons marking the Bailey Canyon turn off. I figure Tahoe and I lost a total of 20 minutes because of me missing that trail junction.

The trail through Bailey Canyon in my opinion is the prettiest one of the ride even though I think it had more rocks than any of the other trails. As such, I had to ride very slowly and carefully through Bailey Canyon. I heard later at the awards ceremony that the ride organizers and other volunteers had spent many hours clearing rocks off that trail in the canyon. I can't imagine what the trail looked like before they worked on it, so I'm glad for the trail maintenance they did. Since the route through Bailey Canyon was slow going, I had the luxury of enjoying riding next to desert pines, junipers and firs and hearing all the desert birds chirping and flitting around us. There were numerous typical high desert annuals along this trail. I saw a beautiful pale yellow Ranunculus that was actually still in its full and showy bloom even though it is mid-September.

Once out of Bailey Canyon we made up time as we headed down Jumbo Grade, a historical wagon road that transported silver ore and goods to and from Virginia City in the 1800s. To this day, riders may find thrown oxen shoes exposed from the erosion of the road. Most of this part of the ride is on hard-packed jeep gravel roads. We swung around through the Washoe Lake State Park enjoying the best footing of the ride, to the equestrian camp where there was a 15-minute hold and trot out. We crossed the road and were now riding in the direction back toward base camp. Before getting there however, we needed to negotiate what the ride managers had dubbed the S.O.B.s. I had heard this term before and thought it referred to the mounds and swales on multi-use trails caused by off-road motorcycles. That's what I was expecting. I couldn't have been more wrong with my assumption. The S.O.B.s were not 1- to 3-foot ruts and bumps in the trail made by motorcycles. They were in all probability a good two orders of magnitude larger. The first one I came to, I thought Tahoe and I were going to fall off the edge of the world. The road simply dropped off and disappeared before us. I have a rule when I ride—don't ride down anything I wouldn't ski down. And I'm a pretty bold skier. I like doing moguls and black diamond runs. These S.O.B.s were so steep and so loooooong, I would NEVER have attempted to ski them. How steep were they? I figured if they were covered with snow and I was skiing straight down, I would have reached speeds of 80 mph at the bottom of each. No kidding. Since there was no way around those S.O.B.s, off the edge of the world Tahoe and I went. The first one we went down was probably close to a 45-degree slope. I didn't think you were allowed to make roads that steep. Besides, they were full of the proverbial rocks. Tahoe is normally a very fast downhill horse, but here he took his time carefully negotiating each step down this extremely steep, rocky road.

The bottom of that S.O.B. leveled out briefly and Tahoe was able to take only about four trot strides before we were going up the other side that was nearly as steep and even longer than the road we had just ridden down. I lost count of how many S.O.B.s we went down, then up, then down again. Neither Tahoe nor I liked having to do them. I heard later, that in previous years, this S.O.B. portion of the trail started at mile 90 in the ride on the original loop trail, from which the canyons earned their name. I think that would have been very cruel to do to both horse and rider at the end of this ride and was very glad they were now in the first loop instead.

After getting through the S.O.B.s we came to a refreshing water trough that ride management kept filled to the brim for our

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horses. From there it was an easy five miles more of trotting to base camp for an hour hold and a vet check with tack off. Tahoe and I caught up to three other riders and after a short while, we found ourselves stuck behind a gigantic cement mixer truck going extremely slowly down the same jeep road we were on. Didn't he know we were on a 100-mile endurance ride and that we were on the clock? What was he doing on that road anyway? That cement mixer truck was so big, it literally took up the entire width of the road and we absolutely could not get past. We yelled, whistled and waved at the driver, but that truck's engine was really loud. The driver never heard us. Finally, he glanced in his rear-view mirror, saw us and stopped. In order to get around his truck, we had to ride up onto the embankment on the inside curve of the road. We scrambled past his truck and picked up the trot for the rest of the way back to base camp, leaving that lumbering truck in our dust. This first loop was a total of 51 miles.

As she had been at the first vet check, Odette was here to welcome Tahoe and me as we rode into base camp. She immediately began crewing in her most competent and delightful manner, taking Tahoe over to her horse trailer. I sat down in a chair to rest and watched Odette at work with Tahoe. I was beat. I felt as though I'd already ridden 100 miles. I was puzzled as to why I was so exhausted already. I'm not normally this tired after 51 miles. Perhaps it was the altitude. Perhaps it wasn't. Tahoe and I had completed the mighty Tevis Cup 100-Miles One-Day Trail Ride just five weeks earlier. Here we were doing another 100-mile one-day ride. Even though I'd had five weeks of rest, apparently my body hadn't had enough time to fully recover from the strenuous effort it takes to successfully complete the Tevis Cup Ride. I was extremely tired. I hate to think that my fatigue may be due to my age catching up with me. I don't know if other riders who are over 60 and had just completed the Tevis felt as tired. I was knackered. I really didn't think I had the energy to continue. Tahoe felt great, however—he looked and vetted-in as though he'd just taken a walk in the park.

Linda and Jamal came in a short 10 minutes after Tahoe and me. Linda and Jamal had also completed the Tevis five weeks earlier and she confessed she was just as tired as I was and not that keen about heading out again either. We knew we needed to do the last half of the ride together. "Misery loves company," as the saying goes.

Linda and Robert took off Jamal's tack, sponged him down and went to the vetting area for his exam. Unfortunately, the examining veterinarian observed that Jamal was a bit off on a hind leg so pulled him from the ride. The veterinarian indicated that although it was a minor sprain, since this is a tough 100-mile ride, he considered it prudent to allow Jamal to rest rather than take a chance on further injury if they were to continue. Linda agreed. She and Jamal were able to rest and Tahoe and I would be on our own. Ugh. I was so tired I didn't know how I could possibly make it through the last 49 miles of this ride and didn't relish the thought of tackling it without Linda and Jamal's company.

Odette heard my grumbling and gave me a much-needed pep talk. She had also found me two other riders to go out with on the second loop. I couldn't believe my luck. Odette hooked me up with Connie Creech, the ride manager and her friend who was riding another one of Connie's horses. Odette correctly suggested that if I rode with Connie, I would not get lost. Connie and her friend were wonderful company. They talked, sang songs and had a great time all the way through this second loop. Tahoe and I were thoroughly entertained.

It was during this second loop that the trail zigzagged several times across railroad tracks and the highway. Luckily, no trains came along and the traffic on the highway was sparse. After riding about 20 miles we caught up with two other riders, a mother and daughter. I couldn't believe how well the child was riding. She rode like she was absolutely weightless on her little horse. She made it look effortless. It wasn't until the awards ceremony that I embarrassingly realized that wasn't her daughter she was riding with. It was her young son. He rode so well, I thought he was a girl! I continued riding with all these folks until we completed this second loop, enjoying their company all the way back to base camp. I must say, the Nevada riders are very nice people to ride with. It was quite relaxing riding the trails with Connie and her friends and not having to worry about getting lost out there in the desert.

Returning to base camp at the end of this loop, we rode back through town again. Virginia City was in full swing. As we passed the saloons, we could hear Country and Western bands playing, singers singing, people dancing and could smell dinner cooking in the restaurants as we ambled along. When we arrived at base camp I actually felt better than when Tahoe and I had left camp 25 miles earlier. I'd gotten my second wind.

Odette met us at the entrance of base camp and escorted Tahoe and me to our campsite where she had made each of us a delicious dinner—Tahoe got mash and hay topped with carrots and I had my quinoa medley. This was another hour hold where the vet check would be with tack off. Once Tahoe vetted in, we settled down to eat our dinners and rest for the remainder of the hour. By now it was dark. Although I felt better after having just completed 76 miles of the ride than I did at the end of the first loop at 51 miles, I still was very tired and consequently uninspired to do the last loop of 24 miles in the dark. And dark it was. There was no moon, not even a sliver, only starlight for our horses to see by. I rested for longer than the hour minimum, stalling and not really wanting to continue. Odette gave me another pep talk. She said, "You need to get on that wonderful horse of yours and finish this ride. That's what you came here to do. Tahoe will take care of you. Now, muster up all your strength and get going!"

There I was, back on Tahoe, heading out alone again, this time in the darkness of a moonless night—in the desert—the BIG, wide, disorienting (to me) desert. There were no other riders leaving base camp yet. Since I had taken longer than an hour for this vet check, Connie and company had already left. Tahoe and I were on our own. I had about 7½ hours to do this last 24 miles, so I was not worried about finishing before the cut-off time even though we would be on the trail by ourselves. The nighttime portion

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of the ride is marked with glow sticks in the trees and bushes and large splats of dolomite powder on the ground, so I was fairly confident I could follow the trail and not get lost on one of the numerous intersecting trails and jeep roads.

The first part of this final loop was actually identical to the beginning of the ride. We would walk through Virginia City again and past the cemetery where the finish line would be. At this late hour, Virginia City was winding down for the evening. It was much quieter than when I'd passed through a couple hours earlier. As Tahoe and I walked on, we saw a herd of wild mustangs and wild burros down in the parking lot by the new hotel. They were walking the opposite direction through town toward some unknown destination. Tahoe neighed a greeting but they didn't answer. I don't think they understood his Arabian accent.

As Tahoe and I passed the cemetery we came upon the volunteers that were at the finish line. They had erected a set of big bright lights run by a very loud generator that illuminated the road for a few yards in each direction and you could easily see the dolomite finish line spanning the road. They cheerfully wished Tahoe and me a good ride on this last loop. I was looking forward to seeing them again in several hours and crossing the finish line.

Though there was only starlight to ride by and I could barely see anything at all, I knew Tahoe was having no trouble seeing the trail. Horses have excellent night vision. They have to. They are prey animals. If they could not see an approaching predator coming after them at night nor see a quick escape route, they would have become extinct millions of years ago. The secret to a horse's extraordinary night vision is a special layer in their retina called the tapetum lucidum. We humans do not have this special layer in our eyes, which is why the nighttime is so very dark to us. In the horse's eye, the tapetum lucidum acts like a layer of millions of microscopic prisms that greatly enhance the ambient light enabling horses to see exceptionally well in the dark.

Tahoe was heading down the trail with confidence at a good working trot. I tried to spot the dolomite blobs on the trail as well as the glow sticks in the trees to make sure we were following the correct trails. It was difficult for me to see the dolomite by starlight, so I relied more on the glow sticks, which were very easy for me to see. We were making great time. Then, after riding for an hour and 40 minutes, We Crossed The Finish Line! The volunteer cheered us and said "congratulations!" I was aghast and exclaimed in frustration, "This can't be! This isn't right! We haven't been out here long enough—there is no way we could have ridden 24 miles in the dark this fast. I must have taken a wrong turn. I missed the @#\$\$% trail!"

I was quite upset. I did not like being out in the desert darkness by myself on a trail I was unfamiliar with and clearly could not follow. I was frustrated from having ridden over an hour and a half on this loop, only to end up in the right place at the wrong time. I was tired and sore and my eyes were very scratchy from the wind and straining to see in the dark. I think it was close to midnight. Truth be told, I was so frustrated and disappointed, I felt like giving up. It took me a couple minutes of deep breathing and mental gymnastics, and somehow I calmed myself down. I asked the volunteer if there were any other riders close by. She told me there was a group of riders about 20 minutes ahead of me. I said I'd never be able to catch them in the dark. Then she said, "Wait a minute . . . I'm getting a text message. Hmmm. Ah! You're in luck. The last three riders are just now leaving base camp. They should be here in about 25 minutes." I told her I couldn't possibly have my horse standing here for 25 minutes waiting in the cold. That would not be good for him or me. We'd both stiffen up.

Now I was in a frustrating quandary. I was clearly behind schedule, and didn't know if I could finish this last loop fast enough to make the cut-off time of 5:00 a.m., let alone follow the correct trails the whole time. Poor Tahoe. Counting the 20 minutes we were lost in the morning, and now this hour and 40 minutes going in circles, we'd clocked an extra two hours and at least 15 extra miles. I did not like the idea one bit of venturing out by myself again, but there was no way Tahoe and I could wait for 25 minutes for the other riders. I needed to decide whether I would try to finish the ride or call it quits. I was angry and disappointed with myself for having flagrantly missed the trail, wasting so much time and precious energy. I really didn't want to continue, but I've never been a quitter and didn't want to start now.

I could feel that air temperature had dropped and it was now quite cool compared to the daytime temperatures. Tahoe loves it when it's cool like this and I could tell he was still feeling great. Because Tahoe was in such good shape, I thought there was a slight chance we could finish the ride on time. I gave myself another little pep talk, then got down to business and began to ride this last loop for the second time that night.

This 24-mile section of the ride was the shape of a lopsided collapsed lollypop. You ride away from base camp along the "stick" part where there could be two-way traffic from horses on their way back to the finish line. At the top of the "stick" the trail formed a lopsided and vertically compressed loop that terminated at the last vet check before the finish. Then you ride the "stick" part of the trail again eight miles back to the finish line at the edge of the cemetery.

Although Tahoe is good at seeing the trails in the darkness, he is not 100% at reading the dolomite markings nor the directional arrows or glow sticks. That is my responsibility. This time, I used my micro-flashlight. I was determined not to make the same mistakes again and miss the correct trails. Tahoe did not like it whenever I turned on my little flashlight. It made it very hard for him to see because it would blind his night vision. I tried to use my light sparingly, turning it on only when I thought I saw a junction of any type.

Soon we were being passed by a group of frontrunners that were heading the opposite direction from Tahoe and me on the "stick" part of this loop. None of them was using flashlights or headlamps and very few had glow bars on their horse's breast collars. One of them, who did not use any type of light, swiftly trotted past us in the darkness on a remarkable horse that had vision

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VC 100 . . .

in only one eye. These experienced endurance riders trusted their horse's night vision, and more importantly, even though they were all familiar with the trail, had not ventured out alone in the desert at night.

As Tahoe and I were nearing the top of the "stick," I heard a familiar voice heading in the opposite direction. I asked, "How long did it take you to ride the loop part of this trail?" The answer in the darkness came, "Two hours, but we walked." I recognized the voice. It was the mother with her young son. Since I had ridden with them earlier, I knew that their walk was as fast as a slow trot. It was around 3:00 a.m., and I thought if Tahoe and I could keep up a working trot, we might be able to do this part of the trail in 1½ hours instead of two. We just might make it across the finish line before 5:00 a.m.

Tahoe and I trotted on. Suddenly he snorted, simultaneously taking several side steps to the left. There were definitely things going "bump in the night." (They were probably the wild horses.) Even I could hear them—big steps crunching through the desert shrubs. I fumbled around for my little flashlight and directed its powerful beam to where the sounds were coming from. I thought it might be coyotes or even a mountain lion. There goes my imagination. Duets of glowing spots stared back at us reflecting the light of my flashlight. Tahoe and I hightailed it out of there. About 30 minutes later, Tahoe snorted again, and again sidestepped to the left. I didn't need to turn on my flashlight this time. I knew that unmistakable sound. A rattlesnake. It seems as though we aren't really alone out here after all . . .

We continued along the lopsided loop portion of the trail following the glow sticks and dolomite splats. I would have liked it better if those glow sticks were spaced much more frequently. Tahoe and I would pass one, and continue for what seemed to be a long time and I'd think, "Are we still on the right trail? I haven't seen a glow stick or dolomite for quite a while." Each time I thought this, and just as I was about to turn around and go back to the last glow stick I had seen in order to verify I was still on the right trail, there would be a new glow stick. Whew. In fact, when we hit the apex of this loop, the ride management had decorated a little pine tree with numerous different colored glow sticks so it looked like a Christmas tree out there in the middle of nowhere.

As we rounded the loop, both Tahoe and I could tell we were now heading back in the direction toward base camp. Finally. We picked up a little speed and then all of a sudden, for no reason apparent to me, Tahoe spooked. Big time. He zigged and I zagged. He took off and I fell off. Boom. I had the wind knocked out of me, although before landing, I managed to yell out a string of expletives! I heard Tahoe trotting away through the bushes and then didn't hear him any longer. I was hoping he had stopped. I finally caught my breath and realized that by some miracle, I hadn't landed on any rocks! Oh joy, however was that possible? Somehow, I'd landed on a soft mound of sand, which was now in my mouth (serves me right for yelling), down my blouse, in my gloves, my shoes and in my helmet. True grit.

Catching my breath and staggering to my feet I thought I could see a silhouette about five yards away that looked a lot like my horse. I took stock of myself and once I emptied out most of the sand, realized I was fine. That was a close call. I'd been very lucky not to get hurt. I spoke to the shadow, "Tahoe, is that you?" He nickered back. "Don't move," I said. "I'll come to you. Stay where you are." I caught hold of the reins and lead him back onto the trail. I spoke to Tahoe some more. "We definitely can't be stranded out here alone, me on foot and you running around all tacked up. This is the middle of the desert in the middle of the night. That would be really bad for both of us."

We walked along the trail for a while until I could find somewhere to remount. Tahoe is 16 hands tall. I'm less than five feet small. I need an escalator in order to get on him. Soon there was enough of an embankment I was able to scramble up onto the saddle. Although grateful that I was not hurt after my fall and still able to ride, I was miffed at Tahoe for dumping me. I kicked him into a faster trot. We had to make up time. At this point I began hearing intermittent voices in the wind. Other riders? I hope so.

The jeep road we were traveling on looked pretty smooth. It was not as hard packed or rocky as most of the other roads we'd been on during the ride. Rounding the next bend, Tahoe skidded to a complete stop. There was a shallow puddle spanning the width of the road and was too large for him to jump over. In the darkness, he could not tell if it was two inches deep or 20 feet deep and he was not going to step into that puddle. I tried everything I could to get him to go, but to no avail. From his point of view, it just wasn't safe to step in that water. Surveying the area with my little flashlight, I could see no other safe way to proceed except across that puddle. Worst of all, there was no escalator in sight either. The landscape was flat, flat, flat, disrupted only by desert bushes and small trees. Despite the lack of topography, I dismounted, resigning myself to the fact that it might be a long hike before finding something tall enough in order to remount Tahoe. By the light of my flashlight, I guessed the puddle was probably two inches deep at most. Sloshing through it on foot, I pulled a reluctant Tahoe behind me. After successfully navigating the puddle, Tahoe and I walked for a long time before there was an escalator that I could use to get back on him. I silently thanked the ride management for placing it there for me in the middle of the desert. Ah, you say—she must be hallucinating. On his back again, we only had to trot for a few minutes until we arrived at the last vet check, which was at mile 92.

Tahoe and I entered the vet check that was set up with bright lights around its perimeter and a huge campfire blazing in the center, I noticed everyone was sleeping. I felt bad having to wake up someone, but I really wanted to get through the vet check as quickly as possible. I had no time to spare. I guiltily yelled a loud, "Hello!" Instantly the sleeping volunteers sprang into action. There was someone taking Tahoe's pulse and at the same time the in-timer was giving me a time card and another volunteer was putting a blanket over Tahoe so his muscles wouldn't chill. Although the pulse criterion at this vet check was 64 bpm, because of the nice cool air temperature, Tahoe pulsed in at 52. There was a 15-minute hold here.

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Once we had our pulse time, the volunteers directed us over to the vet's truck and instructed me to yell to her so she would wake up. She and the vet secretary emerged bleary-eyed from the cab of the pick-up truck. However, by the time they waked over to Tahoe and me, they were in full swing. Tahoe easily passed his vet check. The volunteers then gave him water, hay and carrots, all of which he drank and ate with gusto. They offered me hot chocolate, soup and sandwiches. Yum.

The out-timer soon told me my 15 minutes was up and a gallant volunteer took the blanket off of Tahoe and gave me a leg-up. As I was leaving, the three riders that had been 25 minutes behind me arrived at the vet check. Rather than wait 15 more minutes for them, I decided to head out instead. I figured they would definitely catch up with me soon. I guess I had been hearing voices on the trail after all—theirs.

Tahoe and I were out in the middle of the desert in the dark again—alone. It had taken me all night, but I finally figured out how to use the planets and stars to help me stay on course. I could see Venus and Jupiter to the east. I also knew dawn was only a few hours away because below those two planets, Orion was oriented sideways. In late summer, Orion is always just above the eastern horizon just before dawn. As long as I kept Orion, Venus and Jupiter on my left, I knew I was heading in the direction toward the finish line. We trotted down the trail with newfound confidence.

That confidence didn't last long. We came upon a junction I couldn't decipher. I picked a direction and kept going. I looked up at the night sky—we were heading directly toward Orion and I knew I'd gone the wrong way. I switched on that little light of mine and shone it on the ground confirming I was on the wrong road because there were no hoof prints. As I turned around, the three riders that were behind me had arrived at that junction and were trying to puzzle it out. I signaled and called out to them that I'd taken a wrong turn, not to come this way. Tahoe and I quickly caught up with them, and joy of joys, they were familiar with the trail. This would be one of those gal's 15th time doing the Virginia City 100. I asked if I could join her escort service to the finish line and she heartily said "yes."

She was using a headlamp attached to her helmet, so Tahoe and I tucked in at the end of the line. Everyone slowed down to a walk. Our escort said there was a fairly long stretch of rocky trail ahead and she wanted us to walk. At this late stage of the ride, she advised, we need to take it easy on our horses. It was 4:30 a.m. I asked if she thought we'd make it to the finish line in time and she assured all of us that we would. We kept walking.

We finally came to the "water buffalo" (a large horizontal water tank that emptied into a 100-gallon trough), the last water stop before the finish line. All our horses drank thirstily from the trough and we drank too, from our water bottles. Refreshed, we crossed the paved road and found the trail on the other side. It was not far to the finish line from here. We picked up the trot and soon were able to see the bright lights of the finish line—we were indeed the last four riders to cross. Remarkably, we'd made it with 10 minutes to spare. I was amazed Tahoe and I actually finished in time to qualify. We could never have done it without the help of all the wonderful Nevada riders along the way and especially these gals at the end.

After a brief celebration with the volunteers at the finish line, the four of us continued past the cemetery and onto the pavement for the 25-minute walk back to base camp through the streets of town. At this early pre-dawn hour, Virginia City was quiet as a ghost town. We arrived at base camp and bless her heart, Odette was there with a smile to welcome Tahoe and me. She took care of Tahoe, and presented him for his final vet exam. Tahoe's completion exam scores were nearly as good as his pre-ride vet exam scores. With that, the ride logistics were over. Odette settled in Tahoe and sent me to get some sleep before all the morning activities began, such as judging for best condition, breakfast and the awards ceremony. I don't even remember hitting the pillow. I was out like a light.

I woke up in time to take a shower in the back of Odette's horse trailer and put on clean clothes for the post-ride events. The Nevada All-State Trail Riders club is extremely generous in giving awards to all the finishers and especially to the top ten riders and weight division winners. The winner of the ride, Kelly Williams on Diamond Ruler L, earned an engraving on the Virginia City Cup perpetual first place trophy, as well as a beautiful embroidered blanket. The winner of best condition, Fred Emigh on the stallion RTR Rimfire, won a custom-made hand sculpted bust of his horse, as well as their name engraved on the Mapes Cup perpetual trophy. The artist was there in person (NASTR member Michael Tristram with 14 VC100 completions) to take photographs of his horse so she could sculpt his wonderful prize. All of us who finished the ride were given a Virginia City 100 long-sleeved sweatshirt and a completion certificate qualifying us for an option of the beautiful Virginia City 100 sterling silver progressive belt buckle or sterling silver bracelet.

With breakfast and the ceremonies now over, Odette, her wonderful Corgi, Daisy, Tahoe and I headed home to California. Lesson learned from this ride—don't venture out into the desert alone on a moonless night when you are not familiar with these trails. In the end, you will not save any time and you could potentially put you and your horse in great danger. This ride is much safer when ridden with a buddy.

The Virginia City 100 is not a ride for the faint of heart. It is a beautiful desert ride, with a lot of challenges specific both to high desert riding and night riding. However, after successfully completing this ride, I definitely appreciate that it was well worth the effort. I am happy to report that none of the horses on this ride were pulled for metabolic reasons. We all listened to Dr. Jamie Kerr and none of us "cooked our horses."

Sharma Lynn Gaponoff is the author of "Tevis, From the Back of My Horse." It is available online through the Tevis Store, at SharmaGaponoff.com and on eBay.



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Single	()	\$45 (\$55 for on-site registration)	\$ _____
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