



SERA NEWSLETTER

SOUTHEAST ENDURANCE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

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SERA CONVENTION ISSUE



All convention photos by Miles Cary

President's Message

Board of Directors-

President- Sudi Lenhart

Vice President- Jane Moss

Secretary- Laurie Underwood

Treasurer- Tamra Williams

Past President- Ike Nelson
DVM

State Representatives-

Alabama- Troy "Ike" Nelson

Florida - Kim Williams

Georgia- Jane Moss

Kentucky- Amy Whelan

Mississippi- Jack Price

North Carolina- Lara Worden

South Carolina- Patsy Gowen

Tennessee- Sudi Lenhart

Virginia- Lynne Johnson, DVM

AERC Representatives-

Sanctioning Director-

Susan Kasemeyer

Director- Duane Barnett, DVM

Newsletter editor-

Nancy Sluys

I hope everyone has gotten off to a great start in 2017, whether you've been to a race yet or just been conditioning. There are some new rides in our region that I hope we can show our support to. Take No Prisoners is March 4, and Hodges Hootenany is April 21 and 22. Let's help these ride managers be glad they took a chance in putting on an endurance ride and help them be successful!



I want to take this opportunity to welcome two new board members to the SERA board....Lara Worden has been elected to represent North Carolina and Jane Moss has been elected to represent Georgia. Welcome you two and thank you very much for being willing to donate your time.

If you haven't yet sent in your membership renewal, please take a moment to get that done.....online at seraonline.org is easy and quick!

As the new ride season gets underway, many of us think about what our goals are for the year. Some of us are ridiculously superstitious about saying any of those goals out loud, in fear that the endurance curse will fall on our heads and all will be lost. Some of us feel empowered by saying goals out loud and not being afraid. Some of us have huge goals (completing a tough 100, doing a multiday ride, managing more than one horse). Some of us have small goals that can still feel huge (getting an injured horse back in the game, doing that first ride, starting a new horse, getting a friend into the sport, helping a junior get started). Wherever you find yourself in your own goals, there are some things that are certain in endurance--things are never boring, things constantly need re-evaluating, and if you ever find yourself thinking you've figured everything out, you will shortly be thrown a massive endurance curve ball.

As we go forward in 2017, let's make this commitment to ourselves and our southeast endurance community:

We will continue to embody the highest standards of care for our horses and offer each other respect and support as we travel down the trails together.

Happy riding!
Sudi Lenhart
SERA President

EDITORS LETTER -

Hi Folks, well I hope you have all been having a fun and productive winter. A few years back I discovered a cure for my mid winter depression, we head to Florida for a few weeks in January with a horse (or horses) and motorcycle (for the non horse riding husband!) in the trailer and kayaks on top of the truck! This year we took in an endurance ride, met friends for kayaking, camped in several equestrian camps, visited with family and generally had a great time for two weeks of exceptionally good weather. Now that I'm back I expected a little break as winter wound down but spring seems to be approaching more quickly than usual and I haven't missed a trail day yet! Good thing too because I am now trying to ride four horses and a mule!



photo by Becky Pearman

After my lackluster year in 2016 with several unexpected lamenesses that took out my two main horses I have everyone back going again and hope to be able to do a ride with each of them before the year is out. I have high hopes for lots of fun times on the trail. I have no specific goals with any horse, just to enjoy myself on the endurance trail and keep it low key.

I hope to see you all and hope you have a great year on the SERA trails!! Please, if you do have any great experiences or learn something new consider taking a little time to write it down and share it with your SERA buddies. I always have to beat the bushes for material so if you could contribute a little story or tip I'd so appreciate it and so would our readers!!

Happy trails!!

Nancy & Zanie, Able, Snap, Summer and Danny!!!

SERA Needs You!

Please take a moment to renew or become a member!

You can renew online at

Seraonline.org

Individual membership is \$25 Family is \$30

Thank you!

2017 SERA Convention, Amicalola Falls GA by Jane Moss

Friday afternoon found everybody hugging and admiring each other in the lobby of the hotel, like long lost friends, as we only ever see each other in riding clothes covered in mud, dirt & dung potentially. Seeing everyone in their fancy civvies with their hair washed is always a treat. Then all the delegates were in a mad rush to unload trucks and check-in just in time to hear Dr. Ike Nelson present on equine Chiropractic followed by Kathy Tow on equine massage, a very informative afternoon.

Next were lovely appetizers & a happy hour where we all mingled and caught up, horse chats were to be heard all over the patio and the roaring fire and beautiful view were very conducive to a happy 2 hours. Then we all went for food and we had a great time catching up. Dan Hallman, Elise & Maddie Rogers regaled us with behind-the-scenes hilarity of the Tevis road trip & Dan's phenomenal completion with the Rogers family expert crewing services.

Saturday morning the convention continued with the GERA, SERA & AERC meetings which were very well attended and there was lots of informed discussion. A break for lunch and Dr. Melissa Hamilton told us all about the latest in injury treatments and cutting edge technology being employed for our injured equine athletes. It was eye-opening to see the latest gizmos vets use to treat these days. Then Lara Worden our resident equine nutrition expert did an excellent job in her presentation on feeding strategies for endurance horses and an in-depth insight into forage analysis. The last presentation was by Dan Hallman and Elise who told us all about their Tevis adventure which was interesting and highly entertaining, as we had a taste of it the night before.

The banquet was a smorgasbord of delicious food choices and everyone enjoyed it. The awards for GERA & SERA followed the meal, saddle racks, embroidered jackets, coolers and blankets, plaques and halters were strewn around the room in good order.

Horse riders make pretty good dancers and what we lack in style, we more than make up for with endurance so the band, despite the great music, left us wanting more. Yours truly had a close encounter with a speaker towards the end of the evening. The darn thing just jumped out at me in the middle of one of my routines but apart from that a great night was had by all.

Jana Smith and all the SERA folks did a wonderful job organizing the convention this year. Thanks to all involved for a fun and informative weekend - what more could you ask for? I enjoyed seeing all my friends there and if you didn't make it, be sure to mark your calendar for next year's convention, it's a guaranteed good time.

SERA AWARD RECIPIENTS- 2016 RIDE SEASON

100 MILE CLUB- *3 or more SERA 100s in one year*

Margaret Clare Summers on Mardi Gras Tuesday

BRONZE LEVEL 100 MILE ACHIEVEMENT WINNERS - *3 SERA 100s lifetime*

Margaret Clare Summers on Mardi Gras Tuesday

Cheryl Van Deusen on Precious Beaunita

Cheryl Van Deusen on Snake Eyes Leroy

Cheryl Van Deusen on Hoover the Mover

GOLD LEVEL 100 MILE ACHIEVEMENT - *10 SERA 100s lifetime*

Vic Stine on Fine Tune

FIRST 100 MILE RIDE - *Sponsored by Mike and Ruth Anne Everett*

Jane Moss on Streak Afire TTF

Tina Cochran on Spirit

BEST CONDITION - OPEN DIVISION-

Spirit - owned and ridden by Tina Cochran

CONSISTANT CONDITION - *High average vet score- Sponsored by Running Bear Farm/ Teddy Lancaster*

Spirit - owned and ridden by Tina Cochran

LIMITED DISTANCE BEST CONDITION - *Sponsored by Barefoot Rides/Aubree Becker*

Psyches Fire- Owned and ridden by Robin Owens

65 PLUS - *Sponsored by Larry Mitchell*

Jane Larrimore

OPEN MILEAGE CHAMPION -

Margaret Clare Summers on Mardi Gras Tuesday

RESERVE OPEN MILEAGE CHAMPION -

Dan Hallman on Rusty



photo by Miles Cary

LIMITED DISTANCE MILEAGE CHAMPION - Sponsored by Jana Smith in memory of Steffanie Waddington

Terry Price on Southern Motion

TOP TEN OPEN DIVISION -

1. Tina Cochran
2. Margaret Clare Summers
3. Sudi Lenhart
4. Claire Godwin
5. Meg Sleeper
6. Annie Whelan
7. Jane Moss
8. Cheryl Van Deusen
9. Kathy Broaddus
10. Dan Hallman

Photos by Becky Pearman



Clare Summers & Mardi Gras Tuesday

TOP FIVE LIMITED DISTANCE -

1. Terry Price
2. Robin Owens
3. Lindsay Campbell
4. Judith Clark
5. Jane Lee



Vic Stine & Fine Tune

FRESHMAN HORSE OF THE YEAR - Sponsored by Dan Hallman

Heart Throb Hotel - owned and ridden by Jody Buttram

FRESHMAN RIDER OF THE YEAR - Sponsored by Foster Olson & Lela Nielsen

Rachel Land

JUNIOR GRAND CHAMPION - Sponsored by Lori Nelson

McKinsey Ware

JUNIOR LIMITED DISTANCE CHAMPION -

Aubrey Williams



Dan Hallman & Rusty

TEN CONSECUTIVE FINISHES -

- Streak Afire TTF- Jane Moss
- WF Felina - Jenny Fox
- MA Jaxxon - Jane Larrimore
- Stormy - Judy Clark
- Fine Tune - Vic Stine
- Chico - Jane Lee
- Fougueux - Kathy Broaddus
- LB Brimstone - Lani Newcomb
- WMA Salvation- Hannah Burton
- Cherwona - Nelia Rueter
- Astaciana de Alrena - Ed Casillas
- Mystique Temptation - Kim Williams
- Southern Motion - Terry Price
- PW September Hero - Patsy Gowen
- Psyches Fire - Robin Owen
- Wieago- Sudi Lenhart
- Skyfall Micah - Scott Carroll
- RA Cash the Check - Joni Burden
- Dream Chance - Margaret Clare Summers
- TLA Monkey Bzness - Tykey Truett

350 MILES IN A SEASON -

- Fine Tune - Vic Stine
- Summers Bishop - Margaret Clare Summers
- Coup - Gayle King
- Streak Afire TTF - Jane Moss
- MA Jaxxon - Jane Larrimore
- Spirit - Tina Cochran
- Cowboy Bob - Kathy Broaddus
- Heart Throb Hotel- Jody Buttram
- Call Me Dakari - Kim Williams
- Gryphon - Mary Howell

LAWTON JOHNSTON AWARD -

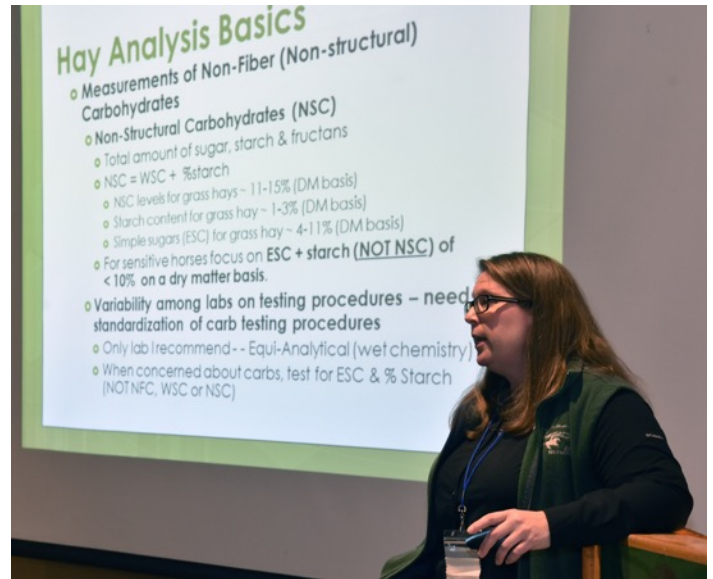
Ike Nelson DVM



photo by Miles Cary

Scenes from the SERA Convention!

Photos by Miles Cary



Southeast Endurance Riders Association, Inc.
Members' Meeting Minutes
Amicalola Falls State Park, Dawsonville, Georgia
January 14, 2017

Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President, Sudi Lenhart, at 8:59 a.m.

State of the Organization – Sudi Lenhart

- We are a volunteer organization.
- What is our identity?
 - SERA has a reputation for amazing volunteers, riders and ride managers.
 - Sudi would also like for SERA to be a mentor organization to new people at rides
 - We had 33 SERA sanctioned rides in 2016
 - The breakdown of rides per state:
 - Florida = 10
 - South Carolina = 6
 - North Carolina = 4
 - Tennessee = 2
 - Virginia = 4
 - Georgia = 3
 - Mississippi = 2
 - Alabama = 2
 - Kentucky = 0

Old Business

- Mike and Ruth Anne Everett attended the NETC in Raleigh, North Carolina on July 8-10, 2016. Nancy Sluys attended as well. The Conference theme was "Maintain, Manage and Ride". Ruth Anne has PowerPoint presentations from the speakers which she will share upon request. SERA provided funds for their attendance.
- Bandana Program
 - Sudi Lenhart requests member feedback on this program
 - Jane Moss - her experience at the GERA ride was that people were excited about the program and found it helpful.
 - Jenny Fox - likes to be able to easily identify new riders.

- Patty Gale - the bandana program allows riders to be more proactive.
- Nelia Rueter - the bandanas provide visibility, although some new riders she rode with dumped them on the ground.
- Sudi Lenhart - is there value in the orange bandana or are folks intimidated?
 - Stagg Newman - believes the orange bandana provides value.
 - Eric Rueter - there are alot of "unqualified" people who ask for an orange bandana who shouldn't have one..
- Sudi Lenhart - we are out of both colors and need to order more.
- Sudi - would like the State representatives to handle distributing the bandanas at 2017 rides
- A motion was made by Nelia Rueter to continue the bandana program which was seconded by Nina Barnett. The motion passed by unanimous vote of the members present.
- SERA Promotion Speech - SERA sanctioned rides
 - Sudi Lenhart - it appears that SERA is missing the opportunity to promote itself at rides, even with the bullet point "cheat sheet" prepared by Patty Gale. A State representative should be promoting SERA at each ride.
 - Jenny Fox - if you are a State representative and cannot attend a ride occurring in your state, you should ask someone to promote SERA in your place.
 - Cheryl Newman - likes the idea of SERA's president promoting SERA at rides.
 - Ike Nelson - the President can direct the State representatives, so no motion is needed on this issue.
- Sudi Lenhart reminds attendees that a meeting for ride managers is scheduled to occur after the Tevis presentation to be given by Dan Hallman and Elise Rogers.

New Business

- Financial Report - given by Tamra Williams
 - Tamra has returned to a cash basis accounting.
 - Financial reports were distributed to the members.
 - Ike Nelson - SERA needs to do take action to correct the status of the general fund
 - Tamra suggests that for 1 year, ALL sanction fees be put into the general fund. Currently the trails fund gets \$1.00 and the general fund gets \$1.00 of sanction fees received, or transfer funds from the trails fund to the general fund.
 - Eric Rueter - believes the rules of account prohibit us from making such a transfer.
 - Cheryl Newman - suggests that we revise the split between trails fund and general fund to 1/3 - 2/3 on a permanent basis.
 - Jenny Fox - suggests that SERA hold a fund raiser.
 - Eric Rueter - offers the Big South Fork ride as an SERA fundraiser for 2017.
 - A motion was made by Ike Nelson to suspend sanctioning fees from being allocated to the trails fund and have all sanctioning fees be allocated to the general fund for one year. Laurie Underwood seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous vote of the members present.

- Camp Osborn Boy Scout Pow Wow Ride - Tamra Williams
 - The ride has been cancelled due to tornado damage in base camp and to the trails.
 - Ride manager Kim Williams believes that insurance will cover the existing structures but not the trails.
 - Tamra - if insurance proceeds are insufficient to help repair the trails, would SERA authorize a grant to help repair the trails.
 - Ike Nelson - there is a process in place, in this instance the ride manager should apply to receive funds.
 - Sudi Lenhart - what should our level of commitment be?
 - Nancy Gooch - how can an amount be determined without first knowing what the needs are?
 - Joe Schoech - alot of our members would like to go and help with the trails; AERC also has trails funds
 - Tamra Williams - will be the SERA contact with Kim Williams regarding the Pow Wow trails.
 - Suzie Anderson - is sending her ride entry to Kim as a donation and suggests others do the same.
 - A motion was made by Sudi Lenhart asking the members if the repair of the Pow Wow trails is a viable use of SERA's funds. The motion was seconded by several members, and passed by unanimous vote of the members present.
- Sudi Lenhart - AERC Convention
 - SERA typically helps the SE Directors with a donation in the amount of \$750 per Director to help with their costs in attending the AERC Convention which the Directors personally pay for.
 - Susan Kasemeyer - the amount covers a large part of their travel and lodging expenses.
 - Laurie Underwood made a motion that SERA give \$750 each to Susan Kasemeyer and Duane Barnett to help with their costs of attending the AERC Convention.
 - Ike Nelson seconded the motion.
 - A vote of the members was taken and the motion passed.
- Sudi Lenhart - SERA's Junior Awards
 - The junior awards as currently structured require that juniors have at least 250 miles before they are eligible for an award.
 - Nina Barnett and Trish Harrop - suggested that we eliminate the threshold..
 - Nina Barnett - explains the junior awards and how they are calculated, up to 6 places. This year we only had two juniors qualify for awards.
 - Eric Rueter - suggests that the award be based on the number of rides each junior does vs. how many miles a junior does and not count placings because juniors are at the mercy of their sponsors.
 - Patsy Gowen - has reservations about eliminating a mileage threshold.
 - Jenny Fox and Sharon Wilson - believes the change will encourage juniors.
 - Sudi Lenhart - suggests that SERA eliminate the mileage threshold for the junior award for 1 year.
 - A motion was made by Trish Harrop to eliminate the 250 miles threshold for junior awards. The motion was seconded but the Secretary did not recognize the voice of the person making the second. The motion was passed by a vote of the members present.

- Stagg Newman - asks what SERA's 2016 membership numbers are
 - Ike Nelson - we are down a bit
 - Nina Barnett - the 2015 number was 182, but she does not have the 2016 numbers available
 - Joe Schoech - AERC revenue is down 12% in membership fees
- State Elections
 - The following members were elected as State representatives:
 - Georgia - Jane Moss
 - North Carolina - Lara Worden
 - South Carolina - Patsy Gowen
 - Virginia - Lynne Johnson
 - Mississippi - Jack Price
 - Kentucky - Amy Whelan
 - Florida - Kim Williams
 - Tennessee - Sudi Lenhart
 - Alabama - Ike Nelson
- Sudi Lenhart - thanks Ike Nelson and Laurie Underwood for organizing and putting on the SERA convention for the past several years.
- Eric Rueter - matters involving the SERA website
 - If anyone wants to have something published on the website, send it to Eric via email.
 - Eric asks the members present if they use the website. A show of hands confirms its use.
 - Ride calendar vs. ride schedule
 - Eric will discontinue the calendar - which displays SERA sanctioned rides in calendar format - be discarded and keep the ride schedule - which displays SERA sanctioned rides in text format by ride date - be kept as the members find the schedule to be more useful than the calendar.
 - Online sanctioning and membership renewal features were restored in 2016.
 - Eric asks the members present if use the online renewal function. A show of hands confirms yes.
- Katherine Capps
 - GERA as an organization was dissolved at the BOD meeting held on Friday, January 13, 2017.
 - There is a possibility that the GERA ride held at Dawson Forest will continue. Options to continue the ride are being explored.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 a.m. by President Sudi Lenhart.

Submitted by Laurie Underwood, Secretary

Bigfoot, Desoto National Forest, MS 10/22/2016 by Shannon Conrad

“Debbie..., I’m lost again!!”.... So the weekend began. I called long time endurance rider and regular riding buddy, Debbie Ivey. “Where are you?” She asks. “Heck, I don’t know. GPS says somewhere near Auburn, AL.” Only 330 miles into the 650 mile trip.... Turns out I was not lost, just not there yet....

After several detours (I’m known for getting lost), I turned into the Desoto National Forest. Whew, 11 hours never felt like so long. I knew it would be a tight trip, so I planned to ride Tina Cochran’s mare, Fancy, who I’d ridden before, instead of bringing my own. I always loved riding Fancy because her big trot and flowing canter. As hoped for, I pulled into camp at 6 pm, Tina had her vetted in, set up and all I had to do was ride.

Last week on a training ride my regular cinch started fraying and I had sent it in to be repaired. I figured my back up cinch would work just fine, as it has done many times before, so I just blew off this nagging feeling that I really should just buy a fresh replacement before the ride.... (My regular cinch has pads around the buckles whereas my backup cinch doesn’t). I put my outfit on her. I noticed her being touchy in the girth area, but still continued on without really listening to her....

“5 minutes!” the call is heard....I threw my leg over, the saddle slipped sideways. I got off, tightened the girth and this time as I threw my leg over, she reared. Again and again with me on top trying to figure out what was poking her in the girth! The third or fourth time, she sat back and began falling over backwards. I pulled my feet out, bailed, landed on my hip and shoulder and did a full body roll to get out of the way-- just before she hit the road right where I fell. Whew....That was a close call.

My saddle off billet was broken, stirrup bent. Darn it!!!! I pulled out a recently purchased back-up saddle and threw it on her. Found a new soft cinch and left it loose. Tried to set the stirrups and jumped on, but time was counting down... By this time, Bud, Tina and I were about 10 minutes late for the start. We headed out of camp in a hurry in hopes of catching up. It became clear within a couple of miles my saddle was too loose and every bit of my 5 foot tall person could not reach the stirrups even though they were on the highest notch!

After some argument, I sent Tina and Bud on their way and I told them I would make it on my own. On my tippy toes, I tried to stay balanced and off Fancy’s back. The canter was no better than the trot so we settled in for a very long loop. Trot trot trot....walk walk walk....trot trot trot....walk walk walk. We didn’t see a soul. It was a very tough 18 miles and the thought went through my mind a few times to just turn back and call it a day. My inner dialogue began....

“You think you really want to do a 100 and you can’t even get 5 miles out of camp????” “I can do this!” “Naw. Just go back....” “No, work through it....” “Ok, so what now????” Remembering a conversation with long time rider, Terry Wyatt, about a ride earlier in the season where I had to RO due to severe shin splints... “The saddle doesn’t matter as much, it’s just the fenders and stirrups....” Ok! I had a new plan. Just make it in, change the stirrup leathers from the broken saddle, put my sheepskin on and try again. Ok! Things were looking up or at least, I thought I had a plan

40 minute hold. Fancy did great. Eating, drinking. Thank God for a good mare! Got the saddle fixed, had some water and off again for the next 22 mile loop. We headed out with others passing in the wrong direction and poor Fancy was looking for her herd mates! Little did she know, but they were at least 45 minutes to an hour ahead of us at this point. We were the last out of camp and I urged her forward, that we were indeed going the right direction.

But, the damage was done. My ankles were burning and on fire and in excruciating pain from those first 18 miles; I could barely feel below my knees. We both wanted to race, but neither one of us wanted to go. We hit 30 miles and both were just disheartened. We plodded along at a steady 7.5 miles per hour. Trot. Trot. Trot. “You just have to click the miles away” I thought.

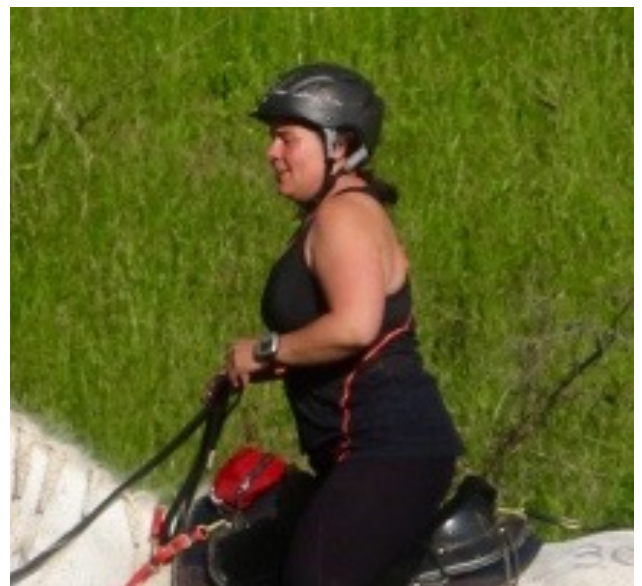
The inner dialogue continues....“Why are you even doing this?” “I don’t know.” “Well, what else would you be doing on a Saturday afternoon?” “Cleaning the house? Weed eating? Picking up horse poop?” “Ok then, really this isn’t too bad, now is it????” “No, really it isn’t!” “And you know, it could be raining...” “No, it could be snowing...” “No, it could be sleeting...!!!!” I realized it really wasn’t that bad after all as I remembered the words of Angie McGhee.... “it could always be worse....” We clicked more miles along as I sang some songs and tried to enjoy the beautiful day.

At the pass, we found Tina and Bud. Fancy screamed! Her herd buddies were indeed here! They ran off on the pink loop and us beside them on blue! Fancy found a new lease on life and we ran 3 miles into camp chasing the smell of them, until we crashed again, just this time into the woods... It was a tight turn and we came head to head in the turn with some outbound riders, also going fast. One of the riders tumbled over her horse, hit the sand and was pretty bloodied, but found her wits and continued on. We veered into the brush as to not run the down rider over.... Cautiously, we came out of the brush and slowly trotted in the rest of the way.

I was barely able to walk, especially after the urgent stop, but Fancy, as a true warrior, went to the vet check and passed with all A’s and a 52 heart rate. Darn it! I had to go back out again. My ankles weaker than ever before and still on fire. An aspirin, a beer and some liniment had to fix it! A few minutes later and I found several camp mates hoisting me back up onto Fancy’s back. “Ok, only 7 mile to go.... I can crawl 7 miles if I have to” I told myself...

We headed back out alone again. One hoof in front of the other. Shoulder and hip aching, where I’d hit the gravel road only hours before. My other hip, also aching, fresh with a dog bite from earlier in the week when I was volunteering at our local animal shelter. My shins yelling and ankles and feet numb. But still.... “You still want to try that 100?” I asked myself. “Ok, girl. Winners Never Quit, and Quitters Never Win” I told myself. Every mile is part of who I am and who I bring to that next 100 mile attempt.

We trotted along. We hit the one mile to finish mark and I told Fancy we had to do our best finish. It was OUR finish.... We found our might, cantered along the road alone until we passed the finish line and found the out timer. “11th place”—I was crushed....but...we did it! One final vet check, again with all A’s, and there it was.... An official completion! For starting so late and with so many challenges, we still finished!!! Right then, I reminded myself, “To Finish is to Win and To Win is to Finish!”



The Continuing Adventures of Danny the Mule! by Nancy Sluys

In my last installment Danny (aka Jets Danny Herlong) was progressing well at the trainers. He had been there for 2 months but I decided that since I was going to be in Florida for 2 weeks in January that he might as well stay there for another month working instead of coming home to the pasture while I was away. At this point I had been visiting him every week and watching his progress.

When I returned from Florida and called Trent to make a date to come see Danny, he told me to go ahead and bring my saddle, much to my delight! As I drove up to the farm things were a little unusual. Danny had his head out of the stall and his eyes were bugging out and Trent and his assistant, Phillip, were at the back of the barn looking out at something. Turned out that a pot bellied pig had wandered up out of nowhere and all the horses (and the mule) were freaking out about it. We managed to lure the pig into the chicken coop with a bucket of grain and things settled down a bit. I brought Danny out to meet the pig and after a few well deserved snorts he touched noses with it and all was well. That was the end of it.

I saddled Danny up and sent him around on the longe line to check out his attitude and the change in him was miraculous. When I brought him there he felt like a ten ton weight on the end of the rope but now he felt light as a feather as he moved around me and yielded to my body language. The smile was starting to spread across my face. After a few minutes I went ahead and mounted and he stood stock still. I rode him around the ring and did all kinds of figures and even executed a sidepass when I went out the gate to take a little trail ride with Phillip, Trent's assistant.



We rode out and I let Danny follow so I could get a feel of him and not knowing how he would act out in the open. He quickly became tired of the quarter horse's pace and we went on around at a strong and steady walk. Through a cut over area and down a steep rocky trail to a creek and across. A few times he tried to veer off but came right back when I asked. He wasn't perfect yet but he was well on his way! My smile got bigger! He handled all the terrain and the creek very well.

The next week I went back to ride him again and he was even better. When we got back to the barn I told Trent I was going back to get my trailer that I thought I could take it from here. A couple of hours later my mule was home in my pasture!

Two days later I loaded him up and took him to our place on the mountain in Virginia for a weekend of real riding to see how far he had come. I rode him 3 out of 4 days and each day he got better and better as we got to understanding each other's language. He was fearless, bold and smart on the trail and of course, being a mule, was very surefooted on the mountain trails. He was also very happy that he wasn't going around and around in circles at the trainers and



could just go down the trail. We trotted and cantered some and he was solid and steady at all gaits. He didn't mind being left by other horses or moving out ahead. He really enjoyed himself and loved seeing what was around the next bend. I rode with a variety of groups over a variety of terrains and really put him to the test. I couldn't have been more happy. Each day the bond was growing stronger. His strength is impressive and nothing I did all weekend phased him physically, he barely sweated!

We did have a few little incidents of sticky feet (mule moments I call them) when we had a difference of opinion about which trail to take but I tried not to make a big deal out of it. When I could feel him stiffen to stop I would quickly ask the rider behind me to go around before it became an issue and he went right on. I make sure I am the leader and am the one making the decisions and he is getting that idea. I think we have a real good partnership going already. After this past weekend I can say that we are officially conditioning for our future endurance adventures! Don't know when that will be but it may be sooner than I thought it would by how good he is doing!

Happy mule trails!!

Nancy & Danny



Please be a contributor!!

If you don't see a story about your favorite ride it's because you didn't write one!

Please send me yours!!

email- minglewood@surry.net

Deadline for the next issue

April 1st, 2017

Thank You, Nancy Sluys

