

Marin Horse Council

2014 FALL EQUINOX NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 120

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A swell time at the MHC Fall Ride and BBQ, with many lovely tributes to Sandy Greenblat!

From the Saddle

By the time you read this we will have, hopefully, shared a meal together in remembrance of Sandy Greenblat. I knew Sandy from his work with the MHC as he compiled a long list of Marin's trails with other important information that makes up the Marin County Equestrian Trail Guide. This comprehensive guide is a wealth of solid information containing trail maps, horse camping and public land facilities for the trail rider. There is a word about wildlife and wildflowers, trail etiquette and ride preparation, which public land you are riding on and nearby stables and lodging. The effort Sandy put into this project was tremendous. The financial benefit from his efforts has been funneled into the "Save our Trails" fund which continues to support the acquisition of public land that will be saved in part for the benefit of equestrians. The MHC continues to raise money to support the preservation of our public trail system. Consider making a donation to our "Save the Trail" fund in Sandy's memory so the work to preserve our trails will continue to benefit the equestrian use of public trails.

I wish to thank Duffy Hurwin for her tenacious effort to push for a bench dedicated to Sandy's memory within Point Reyes National Seashore. Her efforts, combined with funding from the MHC and the need of a new bench/table at Divide Meadow in the Bear Valley area of the Seashore will soon yield results. While the Park Service doesn't allow a dedication plaque on any structure in the Seashore, we will all know that the bench is placed in honor of Sandy, his love of Point Reyes and the contributions he made to the equestrian community. Look for a photo of Sandy's Bench in an upcoming newsletter.

Perhaps now more than ever before it is time to take a stand for our trails as trail riders. But really, how many trail riders are out on a regular basis riding our public lands; especially on shared use trails? I'm going to sound like an old geezer for a minute and maybe I am now, but when I was a kid growing up in Mill Valley we rode at all over. Horseback riders and hikers made up the majority of trail users. There were community arenas like the Southern Marin Horseman's Assoc. arena in Mill Valley where we would ride to from Mt. Tam if we wanted to use an arena, meet for a vaccine clinic or compete in a horse show. Now most barns in Marin have at least one arena where you will find most riders. What's happened? Land in Marin became too valuable to keep horses in the back yard, it was more fashionable to ride at a barn with a trainer, and perhaps it's become too scary for parents to allow their kids to venture out on the back of a horse to explore. Ranches and stables became landlocked, limiting public land access. You can't tell me horses became too expensive when I see what some pay for organized sports or mountain bikes or therapy.

I do think that even if we were riding the trails in the numbers we were in my day that today the trails are not as safe. Today, many of our trails are, or are {continued on page 2}

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OUT ON THE TRAIL



Thanks to Laura Wais for the great photos!

MHC Fall Ride

DEDICATED TO SANDY GREENBLAT

Our yearly Fall Ride was held at Novato Horsemens Sunday October 5th. 50 riders and "lunchers" enjoyed a great relaxing day. Those who rode enjoyed a two hour ride to Rush Creek and back.

During lunch many stood up and shared stories of rides, work projects and adventures with Sandy Greenblat, the ultimate naturalist.

Lynn Cominsky, a long time friend of Sandy's created a picture of him at Divide Meadow at Pt Reyes. His wife Marilyn was among us listening to the stories.

Lunch was served by Pat Duffy's 4H, H Lane Vaqueros. The group greeted everyone with a smile and cleaned up {continued on page 3}

becoming shared use trails. That along with an increase of trail users gives rise to encountering conflicts. Large group hikes on narrow trails, dogs, some off leash, trail runners plugged into head phones, mountain bikes, some riding too fast, can all lead to conflict or an unsafe encounter. Couple that with the fact that many of today's horseback riders don't have the skills that were evident when horses were more commonly used on public land. Yikes!

My point being, prepare yourself and your horse. The public land we have in our back yard is for all to enjoy. Don't hobble yourself with fear of an encounter, arm yourself with solid riding skills. Help your horse understand how to negotiate unforeseen encounters. Carry your phone with the proper land management numbers in case you need to phone in an infraction or need help. Let's be proactive not reactive. Don't give up riding some of the most scenic trails in the world. By doing so we give up our voice on how they are managed.

- Monte Kruger | President, MHC

My Trailriding Accident

It was one of those beautiful midsummer days in Point Reyes which makes you feel grateful to be alive and in the company of a trusted horse companion. We were at the beginning of our ride on the Stewart Trail, near the nexus with the road leading to the campground. Ambling at the side of the trail, both my pony and I were relaxed and unfocused. I had not fully settled myself in the saddle at the trailhead and I attempted to reposition myself...my left leg out of the stirrup and the reins on the buckle.

Suddenly, without any warning I foresaw, my pony began to rear and then spun to gallop down the trail. When she reared, which she had never done before, I lost my seat.

When she swerved, I was catapulted onto the hard ground. The ranger and the ambulance crew which arrived in seeming minutes were wonderful in bringing comfort and care; and I had the first ambulance ride of my life to Marin General Hospital. In the ER, I learned I had ten rib fractures, a fractured clavicle and scapula, and a small lung puncture. I was in the hospital a week, in rehab a week; and now, over two months later, I have finally begun to turn the corner in recovery.

During the past two months, there has been a lot of unoccupied time to review the accident. How could this have happened to me...a conservative, careful rider with a spotless history of accidents? How could this have happened to me...riding a horse I knew well and trusted, with over ten years of riding the trails together? The answer, I think, is that I, an experienced rider, had neglected to follow some of the basic rules of horsemanship and trail riding:

1. Always remain focused on your surroundings and your horse. There can be many distractions while riding on the trail...even just the beauty surrounding you; but it is important to always be alert. Linda Tellington-Jones' concept of "soft eyes" can be useful here. I was more focused on fixing my stirrups than I was on my horse or where I was riding.
2. Late Summer and early Fall bring hornets and their nests throughout the Seashore trails. Often these nests are located in the soft soil on the sides of trails. Consequently, it is important to be alert to signs of hornets and to ride on the harder ground in the middle of trails. I believe that my pony stepped on a nest and was stung repeatedly on her sensitive belly. This is, I believe, why she reacted as she did.

OUT ON THE TRAIL

3. Always keep your feet in the stirrups. It is tempting, particularly at the end of a relaxing ride or to adjust stirrups, to take your feet out of the stirrups. As in any sport, it is easy to become over-confident; and my experience shows that riding without stirrups is inadvisable; and if necessary, it requires increased vigilance. If I had had my stirrups, I probably would not have lost my seat.

4. Always have control of the reins. Again, it is easy when relaxed on a trusted horse, to either ride on the buckle or with loose reins. If I had had control of the reins, I may have been able to modulate her reaction to being stung.

I hope my experience can be useful as a cautionary tale. Unfortunately, I have learned the hard way that the basic rules of trail riding are ignored only at one's peril. I wish everyone safe and happy trails.
- Dorrie Kamp

One Dollar Champions

"One Dollar Champions Riding Team" is the name that we gave our group in reference to the price we paid for all of our horses! I am the only adult in the group; there is my son Vasco, and his two classmates Ruby and Ethan. They are all 8th graders at Greenwood School. We ride together on a regular basis a couple of times a week. We like long trail rides and we also participate in limited distance endurance rides. Many times we have arrived in the first 10 with a couple of first places. We have also ventured out on long trips such as riding half of the John Muir Trail, and just a few weeks ago we rode from the Presidio Stable in the Marin Headlands to Stewart Camp in Point Reyes.

We are lucky to have good, sound horses that we trust, and that allows us to fully enjoy our rides because we can count on their physical and mental stability. But it was not like that from the start! By choice, we adopted all our horses. It has been some sort of a mission/challenge/life lesson for the entire group to rescue a horse that has some problems, physical or behavioral, and trying to make it better and to bring out his/her champion spirit. We have some criteria on how to select the right candidates to adopt. Age and breed are important factors since we ride endurance, and the assumption is that whatever the problem(s) with the horse, we feel that "yes, we can fix it"...if we are lucky!

Every one of our champions has his /her individual story, coming from different backgrounds, and offering unique challenges and personalities, so we have a general protocol that we follow for all cases and individual care is based on the particular need. I strongly believe that in order to build a healthy and respectful relationship with a horse, both parties have to be happy and feel safe. It is especially important for the horses to have all their basic needs met, meaning freedom of movement, social life, and food security.

The general protocol that we apply to all is to offer them a lifestyle that is as close as possible to their natural habitat. Our horses are so lucky to live on 65 beautiful acres in a herd, with free choice of food and water 24/7. It is my experience that the best condition for the animals to relax, learn, or re-learn how to be a horse and start building a relationship is based on trust. We do not own a whip, a bit, a spur or a horse shoe. I visit my horses in their pasture daily, one by one I hug them, massage them, touch them all over, trim their hooves, all without using a halter....but it was not like that from the start! I had to work to gain their trust and respect and establish myself in the herd.

I have been charged multiple times by Soxy, the leading gelding that had a terrible anger management problem when he first arrived; he was aggressive and had no respect for humans. I thought he would kill me!
{continued on page 4}

afterwards. It was so great to see our eager, future equestrians have so much fun and enthusiasm!

A few hours later full of BBQ burgers, salads and portabello mushrooms the group packed up and took their horses home

- Ride Honcho, Michael Willin



Pablo Point Trail

After years of being impassable due to fallen trees, nettle and overgrown poison oak, the trail crew has revived Pablo Point. This mile long mainly flat trail is quite beautiful. Many years ago, one could go to the end and have a view of San Francisco. The trees have grown tall and the trail has a quiet and untouched quality.

Pablo Point is three quarters the way up Texierra Trail. If you leave from Five Brooks parking lot you take Olema trail south toward Dog Town. The Trail crew has done a great job clearing the Olema trail. It will take between an hour and an hour and a half to reach Texierra Trail, depending on how fast you ride. You turn right on Texierra Trail. It is about ten minutes shy of the end of Olema that meets with Highway One.

After you explore Pablo Point, you go back to Texierra trail and turn left up to the Ridge Trail. Turn Right on Ridge and go two miles till you reach the intersection. Left is the Lake Ranch trail that goes to the coast. Turn right on Bolema and when you reach Olema, turn left. It is fifteen minutes to the parking lot. It is about a four-hour loop.

It is also possible to park your trailer on Highway One at Randall and catch the Olema trail.

Dennis Portnoy is co-author of *Riding the Pt. Reyes Equestrian Trails*: written by horse and rider. - Dennis Portnoy, www.myselfcare.org



The Marin Horse Council is on Facebook. Check out all of the events and activities we are involved in.



Buy A Horse A Drink?

For those of you who have not heard, the Alto Bowl Horse Owners Association (ABHA) has started raising funds to Buy A Horse A Drink. Due to global warming and current drought conditions, the natural springs that have always kept the Horse Hill water trough filled, have literally dried up to a mere trickle. They no longer provide the horses with anything close to the 140 gallons of water a day that they need to drink. At this time, we are having to run a very long hose from the neighbor's yard to our trough in order to keep it filled. Obviously, this is just a stop gap measure. The ABHA needs to connect Horse Hill to the municipal water supply of the City of Mill Valley so that the horses have a dependable and permanent supply of drinking water. However, this connection will come at an estimated cost of \$22,000.00 – a tremendous amount of money for our small non-profit organization.

So, we have decided to ask the public for their financial assistance with this project and have created our Buy A Horse A Drink fund raising campaign. For the very modest donation of \$20.00 – or more – you will help us get water to the horses and receive, in appreciation, our beautiful 2015 desk calendar which stars all of the wonderful horses who live on Horse Hill.

Your donation will not only help the ABHA provide the horses with water to drink but will help to preserve their present way of life. Horse Hill and its resident horses are an integral and beloved part of Mill Valley. The horses have a big fan base in the community, especially with the many children who stop by to say Hi on their way home from school. They know each and every horse by name and personality. *{continued on page 5}*



He received individual care that was based on the principal that he had to respect me, and learn that I was not afraid of him. With Soxy I had to be bold and very assertive. If he would try to kick me, I would chase him and kick him back; if he tried to bite me, I would bite him back. I would stand my ground and puff up my chest and growl every time that he was starting to charge me. We also did a lot of bonding work together and, in order to get to know each other better, we went for many long solo trail rides.

I remember the first time that we took Soxy out on a trail ride, we had just been walking for 15 minutes and he was already foaming, from emotional insecurity. He was very fidgety trotting in place and not able to relax. My son Vasco looked at me and said "Daddy, you have got a real hand full." Soxy continued to improve and learned how to respect humans, and now he actually enjoys people, he is very inquisitive, and always the first one to meet you in the pasture. He turned out to be an extremely confident trail horse, though he is still protective of his mare friends.

Rhythm, another \$1 Champion, is an 8-year-old race breed Arabian that spent 2 years in a race barn in Texas. He got so terrified by that kind of lifestyle that just putting a halter on him would make him so tense, shaking, with all his muscles hard as concrete, legs spread out and not able to move, and not knowing where all that energy will go when and if. It presented a big challenge to work with him.

The previous owners adopted him from a 3rd party after he was rejected from the race circuit, in the 2 years they owned him they were never able to do much with this horse, he was terrorized by the saddle and worst by the cinch, and they were justifiably afraid of him and his reactions. I started to work with Rhythm the day after he arrived at our ranch, I took him out on long trail walks on a lead line, first with a companion horse and soon after just him and me. After a few outings I put a saddle on him, he froze and became stiff as a rock. At the beginning it would take him up to 20 minutes to start letting go and breathing normally. I kept doing this routine as often as possible, and slowly he would show some improvements.

Because Rhythm never really developed any horse social skills, the herd did not accept him and treated him as an outcast and always kept him at a far distance. The only good thing at his advantage is that he is the fastest of the bunch so he could always get away, but he was always lonely, except for the time that he would spend with me. Soon I realized that he is an incredibly gentle horse that just needed reassurance and learn how to trust others and himself.

After a month of working together I started to ride him on the trail. We would just walk at the beginning, then we moved to a little trot, then we would do more and more and by the end of March we had covered more than 200 miles on trail rides so I decided to bring him to Mt. Shasta to do his first endurance LD. I then realized that he is a very good athlete. We continued to condition regularly and

NEWS & UPDATES

entered another endurance ride. At the beginning of that competition during a control start with 90 plus horses, Rhythm had a panic attack. I came off, sustaining some serious injuries. I had a major setback and had to reconsider many times if I should change my passion.

The wounds healed, and as I started to feel better I got on my trusted mare Tempest, another \$1 Champion, and started to ride again, and decided not to abandon my work with Rhythm but instead learn from the mistake. I learned that although we had made a lot of progress, the time necessary for anybody, including horses, to heal from emotional wounds is more than just a few months. I focused on how we could make it better, I asked other people's advice, and I worked with Rhythm almost every day. So far we have been out in Point Reyes half a dozen times on long solo walks. I pay attention to the small changes in his behavior and I can see that he is feeling better and better. The biggest recent improvement is that after almost 8 months he is finally accepted by the herd, and that tells me that he is finally finding his horse spirit, feeling like a horse and being accepted as one.

- Roberto Varriale

Remembering Sandy Greenblat

Marin's horse community has sadly lost one of its greatest supporters, Sandy Greenblat. Sandy was born July 28, 1933 and passed away on July 14, just shy of his 81st birthday. Sandy was a tireless advocate for causes he believed in, and horses were his favorite cause for more than 20 years.

In 2003, Sandy was presented an award for Citizen of the Year by the City of San Rafael for all the outstanding charitable work he had done for betterment of the city that he called home. This is what Sandy was all about; he was more concerned with what he could do for others than himself. Sandy would always go out of his way to help, whether it was advice or even helping repair a broken piece of your horse trailer.

Sandy was raised in San Francisco and took riding lessons as a child. He loved horses from an early age. Riding was put on hold while he pursued his careers in retail and later as a commercial realtor and father. In addition to raising his own biological children Jerris and Martin, he adopted a young Vietnamese refugee, Tam, and paid for her education.

Sandy served in the military during the Korean War and broke his back so seriously that the hospital wasn't sure he would live. He said they declared last rights on him only for him to surprise them and stay alive. He did suffer from numerous orthopedic problems as a result of this but it didn't stop him. He had many hobbies through his life: racing motorcycles, flying planes, restoring vintage cars, trail running, fishing, camping and others. His initial love of horses resurfaced in his life later on and became his true passion. In 1993, at 60 years of age, he picked up again with horses where he left off as a child, taking riding lessons at Sunset Corral, now Willow Tree Stables in Novato. Most people wouldn't have the guts to do that as they are approaching senior citizenship, but Sandy always had an attitude far more youthful than his chronological age. In fact, no one could ever believe he was the age that he was.

Sandy dove wholeheartedly back into riding and bought a hunky hot four-year-old chestnut Dutch warm blood and quarter horse cross that he named Cody. At the tender age of 4 years, Sandy had his hands filled with Cody's youthful energy; he would buck each time Sandy asked him to canter, for many years! Well, you know what they say about a "green rider + green horse = black and {continued on page 6}

Horse Hill is a part of Marin County Open Space. MCOS allows 14 horses at a time to live on Horse Hill. This makes it a truly unique and special environment for the horses and for the community. Horse Hill is the only pastureland in overly developed Southern Marin County where horses live, roam and graze freely on 55 pastoral acres. And, because Horse Hill is a part of Marin County Open Space, its pastures are open for the recreation and enjoyment of the general public. Anyone is welcome to visit Horse Hill for a hike, a run with their dog, look at the wild flowers or walk to the top to take in its beautiful views.

Horse Hill really is a special place and our main goal is to preserve this way of life for all of the wonderful horses who reside upon its slopes. We can only accomplish this goal if we can provide the horses with a dependable and permanent supply of water to drink. Horses do need water. So, please consider Buying A Horse A Drink?!

And – just in case anyone is interested, we have 2 spots opening up at Horse Hill. So, if you are an active trail rider and own a horse that is appropriate for life on a very steep hill, please contact us. Horse Hill offers direct access to all of Mt. Tam's spectacular trails. But, do keep in mind that Horse Hill is not for sissies. We perform all of the chores ourselves – feeding, mucking, fencing AND (until we get water) filling the darn water trough!

- Amory Willis

Send an e-mail for calendar request to:
buyahorseadrink@gmail.com

If you are interested in making a donation, please make a check payable to:
ABHA – Buy A Horse A Drink
P.O. Box 1954 | Mill Valley, CA 94942



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2014 Grants from Barns & Trails

1st Round of 2014 BABT Grants Awarded: Bay Area Barns and Trails is pleased to announce that after review and research, the board of directors selected 5 projects from 3 counties. The funded projects were the first grants made by BABT since 2011 and were made possible by a bequest to BABT from founding president Barbara Weitz.

- Alta Bowl Horse Owners Association: \$2500 for Horse Hill water project
- San Ramon Valley Horsemen's Association: \$625 to build manure bunker at a trail head
- Ocean Riders of Marin: \$5000 for environmental protection projects (pending)
- Marin Stables & Trails: \$5000 arena project
- Tilden Wildcat Horsemen's Association: \$5000 in support of education/outreach at the East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride.

With these awards the BABT board is pleased to forward our mission of preserving and protecting public access to stables and trails in the Bay Area.

- www.bayareabarnsandtrails.com

Ocean Riders

In response to an offer submitted by Ocean Riders of Marin to continue operating the horse stable at the Golden Gate Dairy, the National Park Service has presented to Ocean Riders a draft of a ten-year lease. Negotiations over the exact terms of the lease are on-going, but Ocean Riders feels confident that we will continue to be an equestrian presence in Southern Marin for years to come. The support of the equestrian community and of our local Muir Beach community members has helped us meet the requirements of the NPS for such an important opportunity. It is exciting to look forward to developing more extensive community opportunities for education about horses, the Redwood Creek Watershed and the many environmental concerns that are being addressed here. We thank everyone who has helped us get to this point. We will keep everyone apprised of our progress.

- Maureen Pinto



*Hoofprints in the fog
Miles of timbered trails
Blackberries and forget-me-nots
Climbing up to the sky
Glints of sun off azure ocean
Stepping down through old pines
Spanish moss weeping
To rest in the meadow
Divided yet still together
And in our hearts
Forever*

blue." Despite a succession of injuries and some surgeries, they were quite the unstoppable team. No one would believe the kind of close-to-endurance riding that Sandy and Cody did with fervor. They not only covered every single trail in Marin but embraced horse camping in many locations including Euer Valley, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Carmel Valley, East Bay and many others.

In 2005 Sandy decided to create the Marin County Equestrian Trail Guide. He had created huge files of information on trails and facilities over so many years, he wanted to share it with everyone he could. He also got very involved in the MHC, and started raising money for horse-related improvements at Pt. Reyes and at Samuel P. Taylor Park. In 2006, he published the first issue of the Marin Equestrian Guide – a truly landmark accomplishment - with maps of every horse trail in Marin, parking information, favorite trail loop descriptions, locations of all the watering spots for horses, and more. It was a great hit, and in typical Sandy fashion, he donated the profits to the MHC. He also raised funds to buy tables and hitching rails for some favorite picnic lunch spots: Five Brooks, Palomarin, Coast Camp, Taylor Park and additional new hitching rails at Divide Meadow, Bass Lake, and Coast Camp. It took Sandy 3 years of lobbying the Pt. Reyes management to get approval to do this work.

This was typical of his persistence when there was a goal that he really wanted to accomplish. Sandy was not put off by hard physical labor in the efforts to reach those goals either. He was digging post holes for some of the new hitch rails under the watch of a younger park ranger who wasn't supposed to participate in the labor. Perhaps he was embarrassed watching a 70-something man digging those holes because when Sandy returned to finish digging another day, the work had been done!

Sandy was tireless in his efforts to "leave things better than he found them" – one of his oft-stated goals for his life. Sandy was very protective of and judicious with the donations he received for the tables and rails. He went to pick up an unassembled table and was asked how much it would cost to buy the table already assembled – and it was only \$10 more. His passenger Ron gave him the extra \$10 and made him turn around and exchange the table for one already built. Sandy

AT THE BARN

planned to spend hours assembling the table on his own time so as not to, in his view, squander the MHC donation money!

Throughout all these years, Sandy was the Trails Representative for the MHC, and he continued to work in so many ways to benefit the equestrian community. He updated and reprinted the Guide in 2008, this time with a photo of his own horse Cody on the cover. The first issue had a photo of Ron's horse and Cody's best friend and next-stall neighbor Cazinova. We are trying to find a way to do a digital version so that Sandy's hard work can continue to benefit many more equestrians.

Besides being a longtime member and board member of MHC, Sandy was also a member of San Francisco Horsemen and Los Viajeros Riding Club (LV), which specializes in overnight catered rides. He was elected LV club treasurer for 2 years and commuted all the way from San Rafael to Woodside every month for meetings. He also straightened out their books and made sure every ride made a profit.

Sandy rode Cody for 18 years until they simultaneously retired from riding; Sandy at 79 from knee and ankle problems and Cody at 22 from Cushing's disease. Cody sadly predeceased Sandy 2 years earlier. When he could no longer ride, Sandy switched his energies to helping out the art community, and together with his wife, Marilyn, established a permanent artists' colony/gallery in San Rafael, called the Downtown Art Works. Sandy volunteered as director, overseeing the renovations of the building and then hiring his replacement. It is yet another example of Sandy's generosity and community spirit, and dedication to "leaving things better."

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know and ride with Sandy for many years feel a great loss of a wonderful friend. Although he is greatly missed by his riding buddies and his family, all his contributions to the horse community will live on for many years to come.

The Fall Marin Horse Council ride on October 5 honored Sandy Greenblat and the tremendous contributions he made to the Marin horse community.

- By Duffy Hurwin and Lynn Cominsky

My Barn – Willow Tree Stables

"At the barn", or ATB is my most frequently used text message. My non-horse friends and family have come to understand the meaning as "Peggy won't respond for a while"! Just two years ago, after a 13-year hiatus I reentered the horse world via Willow Tree Stables. A baseball/basketball mom of a growing boy left little time for a horse in my life. I was looking for a horse to sponsor to get my saddle legs back under me for a Sierra pack trip I was taking. Monte Kruger showed me around the ranch and introduced me to potential horses. While strolling through the row of pipe corrals we call "The 20's", I met Tater, a beautiful sorrel gelding with a blaze and a snip. He nickered and came right to the gate. I was a goner. Tater has the big quarter horse cheeks, and a wavy mane and tail. Hook, line and sinker, he had me at 'hello'. It's a perfect match. Through the incredible generosity of his owner Kim Kouri, 6 months later, I became a horse owner once again.

This is my first experience at a large barn. About 90 horses live at the ranch. We have two large outdoor arenas, a covered arena providing plenty of space to spread out for working your horse, and two round pens providing an opportunity for ground work. The covered arena and one of the outdoor arenas have lights for evening riding and extending the winter days. Trail access is fantastic at Willow Tree Stables. Marin County Open Space Indian Tree Preserve {continued on page 8}

PIGEON FEVER

This highly contagious disease is spreading all over the United States. Please see an informative article by Grant Miller, DVM, at www.horse-journal.com. Search site under: BLOGS > Pigeon Fever- Making its Rounds. [Click here.](#)

Thrush

Thrush, that black foul smelling discharge in a lot of our horses hooves, is hard not to recognize, yet easy to take lightly. A couple of days of hoof picking and Thrush Buster should take care of it.... Right? No. Thrush is an infection. It needs to be taken seriously and treated properly. With proper hoof care and good husbandry, it's a minor set-back to the health of a horse's hooves.

Thrush is an anaerobic bacteria (dark, oxygen free environment is the only place thrush can thrive). It can be a cause of lameness in many horses and is often overlooked by owner, vet, and even farrier. It is more common during the wet season, though it can still cause problems in the dry season. This is especially the case in horses with high heel or contracted heels, making it very difficult to thoroughly clean the hooves. In extreme cases thrush can infect the corium, causing pain.

The best defense is keeping the hooves clean and regularly trimmed. Trimming clears away overgrown frog and broken down bars, making it easier to clean. Also, proper balance of the bones allows for maximum blood flow, which keeps the foot healthy. A healthy foot to start with is a strong natural defense against a number of foot problems including thrush. Cleaning is key, and I find that most of the time hooves are picked very quickly and surface only. It's a good practice to go a bit deeper and really get the mud, manure, footing, etc. out of the sulci. I like to take a light wire brush (like a large tooth brush) to the bottom of the foot to really clean it out. Remember, thrush can only grow in places that are dark and lack oxygen, so a clean foot can't have thrush.

There are many treatment options out there, and I think most are fine as long as the foot is clean. I've used Thrush Buster and Coppertox a lot, because they are easy. I've also used triple antibiotic cream, like Neosporin, on really bad cases that infect the corium and end up a bloody mess after removing the infected frog. There {continued on page 8}

AT THE BARN

are foot soaks that can be done with a dish soap like Dawn or Borax. White lightning is a gas that can get to places the hoof pick can't. I've used it only for fungus (white line disease), but have heard of people using it for thrush too. I truly believe that removing infected tissue and keeping the feet clean is what works best, but can help to use some of these over the counter products as well.

Thrush can invade any foot any time of the year, so always keep up with the cleaning of the feet and living area. The thrush bacteria is easy to kill with oxygen and any treatment that seems to call to you. Keep up with trimming and shoeing to keep your horses feet healthy and sound. Remember, no foot no horse.

- Dustin Smart, Farrier dustinsmart@live.com



Extreme Equestrian Challenge

For more than 21 years, Equi-Ed Therapeutic Equestrian Program (based in Santa Rosa) has offered year round therapeutic riding and vaulting lessons to students with physical, emotional and cognitive disabilities in Sonoma County, as well as those residing in the surrounding counties of Marin, Lake and San Francisco. Equi-Ed also serves disabled veterans through its W.A.V.E. (Wounded American Veteran's Equestrian) Program and offers competition opportunities to its riders. Equi-Ed maintains an affiliation with Santa Rosa Junior College's Equine Science and Adapted P.E. departments as well. Equi-Ed's rock solid herd consists of two Quarter horses (Rojo and Cisco), two Mustangs (Tooyo and Satin), an Appaloosa (Little Bit), a Haflinger (Mike) and a Belgian/Quarter Horse cross named Belle. Thanks to these special horses, amazing strides can be made with each rider. All volunteers at Equi-Ed must go through at least 18 hours of training so that effective and individualized instruction can be given in the safest setting possible. Internationally certified therapeutic riding instructors, Max Freitas and Sade Cain work hard to provide each student with the highest quality of instruction along with the highest level of independence possible.

In August, Equi-Ed held the Extreme Equestrian Challenge for students, volunteers, staff and community supporters. This annual ride-a-thon (similar to a walk-a-thon) involves participants taking pledges for the program and is Equi-Ed's largest fundraiser.

{continued on page 9}



Enjoying the good times and the spectacular views from Willow Tree Stables!

and Stafford Lake border the stables. Saddle up and ride single file or on fire road trails for a trail ride loop ranging a half hour meadow ride or 2.5 hours to Ship's Mast trail for beautiful views of the west Novato hills, the Bay at Bel Marin Keys and to Mt. Diablo to the southeast as you exit groves of redwood trees that look like pin cushions. There are fern forests, redwood groves, and California oak woodlands. The Marin Water District trails have scenic views of Stafford Lake and Indian Valley Golf Course. For the adventurous trail riders we venture off to Morning Star Farm and Mt. Burdell for a 2-hour or 4- hour ride. You can also ride to Rush Creek and then trailer the horses back home.

Willow Tree Stables is a great facility for me. I enjoy the shaded trails with views, and the workers take excellent care of my horse, but what makes Willow Tree special to me is the community of people. Monte and Curt share their home with a "mi casa tu casa" attitude and even tutor kids in their spare time. The work staff take pride in their care of the grounds and especially the horses. They even get out of bed at 10:00 PM to sweep the acreage and check that all horses are tucked in and happy. There is always someone to lend a hand, answer a question or give advice. Borders and sponsors stay connected by a monthly newsletter and a message board with updates on clinics, vet calls and trail hazards. Tricia Yates, the resident trainer with the Liverpool accent (Liverpool English) is almost always in the main arena with students of all ages and skill level.

Friday Night pot luck BBQs and holiday parties provide a great fun way to bring everyone together. Monte cooks her famous country style ribs and Curt lights the cowboy sized firepit. Everyone shows up with a side dish and a beverage, we turn up the music, and call it a party! It's laid back and you could stare at the hills and stars for hours. Meanwhile, kids ride in the lighted arena creating games on horseback and entertaining the adults like "try" to catch Tricia bareback, capture the flag or bareback tag. On full moon nights a ride through the hills is spectacular. We even take group night rides to the Lake in the dark.

The magic of Willow Tree is family. There are folks of all ages and there is something for everyone, including now my fifteen-year-old son. To my surprise, Nick loves horses too. With the help of Monte and Trisha he's learned to ride and now sponsors a sassy Quarter horse mare named Lucy. He is a member of Novato Junior Horsemen and Marin Horse Council and volunteers at events. Together we have participated in trail restoration projects, work parties, trail rides, cattle events and Tails and Tires clinics. My sporty boy is now a cowboy.

- Peggy Murrin

Training Your Trail Horse

My name is Becky Larcher and I am the trainer at Marin Stables in Fairfax, California. I have been teaching riding and training horses for 25 years, out on the Marin Municipal Water Shed.

People ask me, "What do you need to teach a trail horse to ride the trails? Shouldn't they know how to do that?" Sounds silly, I know. Have you ever been on a runaway horse? Ever had a horse that doesn't want to leave the barn, or leave the group, not go over a bridge, kick another horse while being ridden? Ever had a "seasoned" trail horse do something "he's never done before?" I could go on and on about what trail horses do that is inappropriate on a ride.

Horses, in nature, don't follow a trail. They walk the easiest path from point A to point B. They travel in a herd with a defined leader and the rest are followers. They run when the leader does and they rest when the leader does.

That leader, now they have a job to do. They are constantly on the lookout for any and all possible threats, seen, heard or felt. At the slightest hint of threat, they run. Because they run, so does the herd. Did you know a horse can run a 1/4 mile before taking a full breath or having a cognizant thought? This is done for their protection; they just might outrun that mountain lion chasing them!

All of us, who trail ride, have a constant job of teaching our horses to go against their true nature. We want them not to spook, not to run, stay on the trail, follow others politely, and take instruction from the predator on their back. Most horses are not prepared to allow a human/predator to dictate what to do in a crisis, and most humans are not prepared to do the dictating either.

Riding horses in an arena, where the environment is controlled and consistent is easy. It is also poor preparation for trail riding. What it does prepare you and your horse for is for your horse to listen to you and for you to learn when he/she is or isn't listening to you. This may not seem like a big deal but imagine this... You and a friend are out riding down the trail, chatting about life, and two dogs run up behind you. They are charging and bouncing down the trail towards you, no people in sight. What do dogs LOVE to do? CHASE! Dogs are predators. Horses are prey. See the picture? Now add the human into the mix. What are humans? Predators. Where is this human/predator? On the horse's back, where the mountain lion would be, if he caught the horse.

Now, if this horse and rider have a clear understanding of who is leader and who is follower, this won't be a big deal. The leader's body language says "it's ok, nothing to be afraid of, hold your ground, turn and face the danger." All of this CLEARLY goes against every instinct in this horse, but because the rider is the leader and the horse is following, it's not such a big deal.

Now, if the horse and rider don't have this clear leader/follower relationship worked out, the result can be drastically different. You have a predator chasing the horse, another predator clinging to his back, a rider whose heart rate has spiked off the charts while adrenaline is coursing through the blood stream, their body clamped on, while trying desperately to stay on this runaway freight train. Anyone ridden this ride before?

If people could understand how their actions and emotions, intentional or not, direct their horses actions, we would have much safer horses and riders on our trails. I went to a Buck {continued on page 10}

It has manifested in various forms throughout the years and this year's theme was a Trail Trials inspired one. Equi-Ed volunteers and staff worked hard building a bridge, logs to walk across, a labyrinth maze and many more obstacles to challenge our riders. We had an amazing number of students, volunteers, staff members and community supporters who stepped up and took pledges.

Program participants then saddled up their favorite horse and rode through, over and around some tough obstacles. They developed greater team work with their horses and left the arena beaming from ear to ear with pride from completing the course.

The incredible level of financial support that was shown to the program during the Challenge will ensure that Equi-Ed can continue enhancing lives through the therapeutic power of the horse. Not only did we reach our goal of raising \$15,000, we exceeded it and brought in \$17,148! This will allow us to continue to provide quality care to the program's horses and offer scholarships to riders in financial need. We are so grateful to everyone who has volunteered their time, made a donation or provided support in any other way to make this event such a success. For more information about Equi-Ed, visit: www.equi-ed.org, find us on Facebook or email Sheila at: infoequied@aol.com to schedule a visit.

- Sheila McCarthy



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Brannaman clinic a while back and he kept repeating something that made so much sense. He was talking to all the people in the clinic who were unable to do the exercise because of one excuse or another. I heard 'the arena is too dark, it's too big, there's too many people, people were talking in the stands'...the list goes on and on. What he said was "People, you have GOT to get control of your emotions!!" So true.

I ride, practice, learn, teach and train Horsemanship. This is the study of how horse and human relate. It transcends discipline, breed, age, size and ability. Everyone benefits from Horsemanship. Anyone who wants to develop a better understanding of these claustrophobic, full throttle-a-holics, and cowards by nature, that we love to ride and spend time with, I highly suggest learning more about Horsemanship.

As a predator, humans are poorly prepared to understand prey animals (horses). From the moment you enter your horse's space, he is gauging whether you are a

leader or follower. Your horse believes that his life depends upon whether you lead or follow. Please remember, leadership is earned through trust. This leadership is held through trust, not dominance. There is no love in a horse's natural life; he leads or he is led. Each horse and rider are their own individual herd. Make no mistake, one of you will be the leader and the other will follow. Which one are you? - *Becky Larcher*



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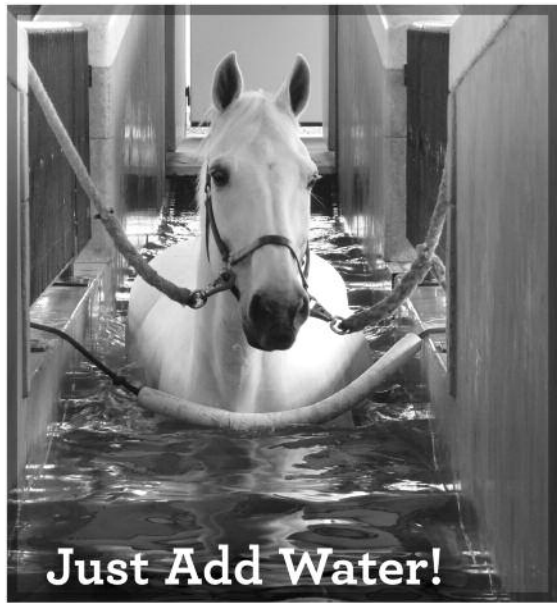
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