

Marin Horse Council

2015 WINTER EQUINOX NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 121

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Sparkling Marin Headlands views, and exemplary trail manners!

From the Saddle

Happy New Year from the Saddle! My last ride before year's end was in the Marin Headlands above Rodeo Valley Stables. The day was one of those rare ones without a cloud in the sky. From Wolfback Ridge the Farallons looked like you could reach out and touch them floating in a glassy sea. Looking south, the entire San Francisco peninsula was spread before us; southeast the bay shimmered in the sun while in the distant east Mt. Diablo stood, clear as a bell. Beneath us, every detail of southern Marin was standing out; Sausalito, Mill Valley, Richardson Bay, Angel Island up to Pt. San Pedro. To the north Mt. Saint Helena and of course slightly west Mt Tam in all her glory. 360 degrees of stunning vistas. We live in the most beautiful place and are so fortunate to be able to freely ride where we can capture these moments. However, even with these moments comes a feeling of unrest. It happens because we have too many times encountered a trail user who selfishly disregards other trail users when seeking their own fulfillment. It is unfortunate that often our moment is compromised and our safety jeopardized because someone is acting irresponsibly.

All too often of late I've had a conversation with a fellow rider who has relayed a tragic or near tragic experience when they've encountered an errant mountain bike rider who was riding in an unsafe manner or who was using a trail illegally, a trail that should have provided the legal user with an experience similar to the one I have described above. In the defense of most mountain bikers (not all) I have encountered on the trail, I found them to be respectful, courteous and they've been a pleasure to share the trail with. However there is a percentage of users who defy any and all trail etiquette. What is being done about it?

Currently the MHC is collaborating with MCBC and MCL in the formation of *Trail Partners* as a platform to encourage trail users to act responsibly. The target audience is the trail user who wants to do the right thing on the trail but may not know what the right thing is. The message from *Trail Partners* is a gentle reminder that we are all responsible for each other's safety while enjoying a trail and reminding users that we are all on the trail exercising our right to a safe and enjoyable experience. Educational opportunities and informational material are forthcoming. What *Trail Partners* will not be addressing is the percentage of trail users who use our trails in an irresponsible or 'illegal' manner. This includes outlaw or rogue mountain bikers. The larger problem caused by this small percent of trail users who, regardless of what the rules say, poach trails off limits to them or ride at unsafe speeds, is the welfare of hikers, who are clearly the majority of trail users! It is this small percent of outlaws who create an unsafe feeling for all other users most of the time and that causes displacement or worse. It's fairly evident {continued on page 2}

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OUT ON THE TRAIL



Coast Trail looking over Wildcat Beach.
Photo: Bob Cooper

Point Reyes Trails

Where to start? Point Reyes is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. It is a privilege to travel on the Park's network of gorgeous trails, whether on foot or horse. Every trail is unique in its flora, fauna, weather, elevations, and wildlife. Whether you are on the same trail every day or change it up regularly, each hike or ride is different from the one before.

Goldie is my horse and she has brought me such joy in the few years I have owned her. We have had our challenges, but worked through them and now we enjoy an awesome connection. We see eye-to-eye on most things, but every now and then her idea of fun does not necessarily match mine. The deer, elk, hikers, cut trees - all of which she knows and has traveled past so many times, become the monster in the shadows. I suspect she is making sure I am still awake when she jumps to the side or puts on the brakes. After she gets my attention, I reassure her that everything is okay and we rumble on. She loves the trails as much as I do and together we have traveled most of them in the park.

Our biggest decision is where to go. There are so many options to choose from. Do we feel like riding on the flats across open pasture passing cattle and beautiful ponds? If so, then it is out to the Rift Zone. Do we want to see the sparkling ocean from atop a mountain? If so, Sky Trail here we come. How about cantering the most perfect cantering slope in the park? If so, out to Muddy Hollow we go. If we want a workout, it is straight up Whittenberg - not one of Goldie's favorites; too much work. The trees, wildlife, views, smells, water, and so much more, relaxes our minds and calms our bodies. Wherever we chose, there is one thing for certain, we had the best ride ever. What is my idea of a perfect trail ride?--the very next one. - Bonnie Perry

that these entitled, self-serving individuals need to be handled by stricter means such as enforcement. But wait!

There exists a very vocal group of mountain bike advocates and trail users who are applying pressure to our County Supervisors and other land managers to open up the trails in our preserves and in our parks for expanded recreational use. They are pushing for shared use of narrow trails, expanded use of our parks and the creation of connector trails that would string together existing trails. We have County Supervisors who are listening to this small group. They are listening because this group is a non-profit political organization whose mission is "...taking a direct role in trail access decisions by public land managers, electing officials who are willing to be fair about bike access, mobilizing mountain bikers to become a political force on their own behalf, and building an informed community of advocates for fair access."

Could our supervisors be persuaded to give in to this group by granting them access to our narrow trails? How do we as a minority user combat this kind of political pressure? What should be done?

As one who frequently rides a wide variety of trails, it is my hope that our community of users can also apply political pressure of our own by making it clear to county officials and land managers that they need to appeal to the mountain biking community at large and demand that they figure out a way to police their own. The land managers simply don't seem to have enough resources to strictly enforce the laws, nor has enforcement by itself shown to work. Providing lip service alone or the published suggested behavior guidelines are not enough to rein in these outlaws. The mountain bike community should be publicly condemning the outlaw behavior by policing their own and making irresponsible riding uncool! Strava riding is a prime example! If the outlaw riders cannot be controlled by their own peers then we need to demand better enforcement along with a convenient public reporting system while asking land managers to turn a deaf ear to expanding our trail system for bikers. The ultimate responsibility for our safety is our own, but the supervisors and land managers should be held accountable if they grant any more access to mountain bike riders until these same riders can control their own outlaw population. If expanded access is granted before these safety issues are addressed, we should mount a campaign of our own that puts pressure on the Board Of Supervisors and land managers to stand up against this small but very vocal group and turn them away at the trail head.

- Monte Kruger | *President, MHC*

My Favorite Trail

One of my favorite trail rides is the Coastal Trail/ Laguna trail in Point Reyes Park. Because of the predominantly sandy soil and the great maintenance of the trails, they are usable even with our wet winters. I was just there after our recently very rainy weather and the Coast Trail was pristine; Laguna had a bunch of large but not deep puddles with good footing. The Coast Trail is reachable from the Youth Hostel Parking Lot opposite the Muddy Hollow parking lot. Usually there are only one or two other trailers there so the parking is easy -- just beware that the grassy area is boggy so be careful in the wet weather.

As you'd expect the Coast Trail parallels the coast -- IF you want to go down to the beach there is access at Coast Camp, where also there is an area to tie up horses near the trail. If you're in for a beach ride, you can turn right at the beach, towards Limantour and hook up with the Muddy Hollow trail. I prefer to stay on

OUT ON THE TRAIL



Great ride! Wildcat beach overlook, and over the estero with Susan, Lisa, Kristen, and Dan.

the Coast Trail and if it's been wet, take Laguna back to the youth hostel. There are other intersecting trail options farther along Coast, but they are steep and/or rocky so not ideal in the wet weather.

Bikes are not permitted on Laguna but are on Coast -- the cyclists we've encountered there have been mellow and polite. There are plenty of opportunities for long trots and canters on the Coast trail but sometimes there are a fair number of hikers/bikers limiting this. IF you take advantage the trot opportunities the loop is about an hour, and hour and a half at a walk. A couple of times we've circled back, repeating the loop in the opposite direction for a brisk two hour ride .

Other perks are seeing the Tule Elk on the Laguna trail, and bathroom facilities at Coast camp. It IS a bit of a drive but worth it, and there are no parking fees!

- Lisa Capaldini

Favorite Times in Marin County

I have ridden in Marin since the mid 1970's and it is a favorite place to ride. I was asked to write about my favorite trail in Marin. I decided, instead, to write about five of my favorite times riding in Marin. I live in Livermore with my wife, Charlotte, and daughter, Molly. We have four horses. Charlotte and I ride trail. Molly jumps and does dressage. I often use a packhorse to camp at one of the campgrounds in Point Reyes.

Once, I was camping at Wildcat Beach and the weather for the last morning was bad. First, there was just heavy fog; then the fog started to drip; then the drip turned into a sprinkle. By the time I packed up everything, the sprinkle was a shower. Fortunately, I was dry in my rain gear. I rode out the Bear Valley Trail. All the leaves, especially the ferns, were wet and shiny. Short white flowers lined both sides of the trail, glistening in the rain. Of course, all the moss was full and bright green. Different wildflowers were out at other places. It was a perfect ride in the rain.

A different time at Wildcat, I timed my dinner just right. I prepared pasta with some fried sausages spiced with pesto. When it was ready, *{continued on page 4}*

Biker/Horse Accident

The day before Thanksgiving was a beautiful, warm day, perfect for a ride on Bear Valley Trail in Pt Reyes National Seashore.

Many families riding their bikes slowed down and spoke as they passed to alert us.

My horse is used to bikes as we have been riding this trail for 10 years.

Riding back to the trail head, about a quarter mile to go, my day changed. A fast biker racing his brother passed very close, very fast and said nothing. I asked him to slow down. My horse then bolted to the left in a canter. and I lost my balance and fell on the hard road base. The biker then flew by my husband who also asked him to slow down but he did not. Finally his brother in back watching the horror yelled for him to stop and the man finally did. My husband chased my horse, tied the horses to the trailer and reported the accident at Park Headquarters.

We provided our contact information to the two bicyclists, but they refused to provide their information. However the Ranger did talk with them and took a report. We spent a couple of hours at Marin General ER. They took x-rays, and gave me a breathing monitor machine. Most of my ribs are bruised and sprained. We returned home, not looking forward to changed Thanksgiving plans with our family. What upsets me the most is if rogue bikers can ride in this manner with all families and well mannered bikers, equestrians, and hikers, what will happen to Bear Valley Trail? Will it go the way of China Camp and Open Space trails? None of my friends will ride or hike there. I am sure the mountain bikers will whine about losing trails. Are any of them planning to reimburse me for my ER bills, new helmet, new medications? I am sure I am able to walk because I wear a padded riding vest and helmet. How much more armor do I need?

When I see people on the trail, I always stop trotting and walk and announce myself. My horse is trained to stop. Why cannot the bikers?

- Marina Eisenzimmer

OUT ON THE TRAIL

Reporting Information for Public Lands

CA State Parks: Mount Tamalpais, China Camp, Olompali: Roberto (Rob) Walton, Supervising Ranger (415) 388-2952 (415) 388- 3653 General Ranger Line
E: rob.walton@parks.ca.gov

Samuel P. Taylor State Park and Tomales Bay State Park: Rosemary Blackburn, Supervising Ranger (415) 488-0291
E: Rosemary.Blackburn@parks.ca.gov

If there is an ongoing Emergency, the State Parks Dispatch Number is: 911 or (916) 358-1300. That is the quickest way to report an emergency or crime in progress.

Marin County Open Space District:
Ranger Field Office: Checked frequently (415) 473-2816 (field office)

File an incident report: www.marincounty-parks.org/depts/pk/divisions/open-space, and go to Contact Us.

Situations requiring immediate attention which are not emergencies: Marin County Sheriff's Office Communications Division at 415-473-2311 and they will contact the appropriate Parks, Open Space, or Landscape Department

Marin Municipal Water District:
Bill Hogan, Chief Ranger
Non-emergency (415) 945-1187

Active visitor misconduct (Non-emergency) (415) 945-1500
E: bhogan@marinwater.org

Pt. Reyes National Seashore:
(415)-464-5137 Follow the prompts.

Pt Reyes Dispatch, non-emergency, is (415) 464-5170 (this is a recording); Sheriff's dispatch line (noted below) may route you to a live ranger, if appropriate. The Sheriff's Department has a substation in Pt. Reyes Station.

Golden Gate Recreation Area:

Park Police
Non emergency: (415) 561-5656
Emergency: (415) 561-5656

ANY EMERGENCY SITUATION CALL: 911
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Left: Bob and Taxi enjoying the surf. Right: Gorgeous views heading into Muir Beach.
Bottom: Horse camping at Wildcat Beach.

I decided to eat dinner on the cliffs overlooking the beach – great decision. I was blown away by the sunset. Alternately, I ate and took pictures for half an hour. Later in the dusk, I was mesmerized looking down at the complicated pattern of waves, coming in, bouncing off the beach, bending, and intersecting other waves.

Recently, I rode up to Crystal Lake from the Coast trail. When I last visited the lake 25 years ago, the trail was a tunnel and high bushes hemmed you in everywhere. You could not see the lake. Now, the trees provide so much shade that the bushes have melted away and the understory is open. Nature goes in cycles and Crystal Lake is looking good again. I look forward to stopping here next time for lunch and maybe a swim.

For my local horse club I lead a ride from Tennessee Valley to the Pelican Inn for Sunday brunch. On the best days there is no better ride. The views of the ocean, Green Gulch Zen Center and Muir Beach are exhilarating. The brunch is fantastic. The Ocean Riders are accommodating, letting us use their paddocks. Redwood Creek and Miwok Trail are a change of scenery – enclosed, isolated and serene. At the end of the ride, I am happy to have shared part of Marin with another group of riders, some riding in Marin for the first time.

One day last September, I trailered out to Limantour Beach. The last part of the ride was on the beach from Coast Camp. It was late afternoon and I was alone riding my mare who walked calmly while the waves washed past her feet. The light was soft and it felt like the fog wanted to form. The ride for the next hour reminded me why I need to ride: good for peace of mind.

I don't have a favorite trail. I just like to ride. - Bob Cooper

Sky Ranch Update

Horse Supporters gathered at the Fairfax Town Council meeting on Dec. 3rd to show their support for horses remaining at Sky Ranch. The horse facility has been operating at Sky Ranch since 1955 but the property is now being purchased by Marin County Open Space. As part of the acquisition contract, the property is to be delivered tenantless. The horse facility lessees were served eviction notices and will need to remove the horses and all personal property by Feb 1, 2015. The only hope put forward was if the newly formed Sky Ranch Horse Association, with the help of the Marin Horse Council, could get approval of a proposal that the ranch facility stay by Dec 1st. The proposal needed to demonstrate adequate financial means and plans to bring the property up to the county's codes.

On Dec 1st, the Marin County Open Space District decided that they could not approve the proposal as is, and that they would not recommend that the evictions be waived. Carl Somers, Chief of Planning and Acquisition for MCOSD said that "Due to the inflexible nature of the acquisition schedule and the liabilities involved, eviction of the horses is the best reply we can make." But he added that although MCOSD is not ready to fully approve the proposal put forth by SRHA, he looked forward to continuing discussions with the Sky Ranch Horse Association and hoped that MCOSD and the horse association might reach an agreement in the future that will retain an equestrian boarding facility at the ranch.

Meanwhile the horses will need to be relocated. Relocating the horses, many of whom have been at the ranch for most or all of their lives, will be a hardship. Two of the horses are in their late 20s and two others presently have pigeon fever. But with the help of Curt and Monte Kruger and Robert Eichstaedt of the Marin Horse Council, most members of the 12 member SRHA are willing to move forward and try to work with the county to bring the horses back to Sky Ranch and reestablish the horse facility at the ranch.

The Sky Ranch Horse Association will begin fundraising for the horse facility as soon as possible. The campaign slogan will be 'Save Sky Ranch Horses' to distinguish it from the fundraising campaign of the Marin Open Space Trust. The donations given to MOST's 'Save Sky Ranch' fundraising campaign went toward purchase of the property as open space and did not include any accommodation for the horse facility. - *Claudia Mullaly*

Halleck Creek Ranch: Flying Changes

Halleck Creek Ranch is proud to announce an exciting new pilot program: *Flying Changes* is designed for women who are in transition or facing a life obstacle. A horsemanship and riding group, *Flying Changes* will be held weekly at our historic Nicasio Valley ranch.

This powerful form of equine-assisted therapy is for those who want to gain confidence, persevere through personal obstacles and be empowered. The partnership of horse and rider provides benefits that are as diverse as the participants themselves. Therapeutic riding offers unique advantages in many areas. Riding and practicing horsemanship skills will lead to improved balance, muscle control, flexibility, and strength. Bonding with the horses and learning about their nature will lead to increased self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness.

Beginning in January 2015, the group meets weekly on Mondays, 9:30-11:30am, for six consecutive weeks. Participants will work with the horses both on the ground and from their backs, as well as do some self-work in the process. No horse experience is required. If interested, please contact Program Director, Molly Scannell, msscannell@halleckcreekranch.org for more information.

In General: The best number if life or property is in immediate danger is always 415-472-0911 which connects you to a Sheriff's dispatch operator. Any non-life threatened situations, call 415-473-2311; if you are in another agency's jurisdiction, the call will be routed appropriately.

Note: 911 from a cell phone goes directly to CHP before being routed to another appropriate dispatch center. Use 472-0911 unless you are reporting highway incident or condition.

Be prepared to say your name, phone number, accurate location, the situation, the resource request, plus any details that are pertinent. In real emergencies, stay on the line until you are told to hang up.

More info: In July, 2012, the County changed its email addresses to reflect the shorter name @marincounty.org, and consolidated multiple telephone prefixes to a single 473- prefix for all county telephone numbers. Simply replace 507- or 499- with the new 473- in all County phone numbers. To find any contact in the County office, the public can dial the automated attendant at 473-7000 Emergency: 911; from cell phone: (415) 472-0911

The Marin Horse Council recommends that you carry these numbers with you when you ride in public lands. Also, be aware of unsafe conditions and unsafe behavior in other public land visitors, and be a good public land partner by reporting these to the proper contact person. Thank you. - *Linda J. Novy*



REMINDER!

All Marin Horse Council memberships now renew on JANUARY 1st. You can renew online or use the renewal form included in our quarterly newsletters. Email us at contact@marinhorsecouncil.org to ask about the status of your membership. To smooth the transition from our old system to this new "everyone renews on the same date" system we are extending 2015 membership to those people who renewed in November or December of 2014.

Thank you for your continuing support!

A Short Read With a Lot of Truth.

Some folks will never understand..... Why do we have a horse? Why does a person.....

Spend many hard-earned dollars on blankets and bits and lessons and trucks and trailers?

Get up at 4am to drive to the next horse event or new trailhead every other week-end?

Not be self-conscious about "helmet-head hair" as we enter the supermarket to get a ready-made dinner because we spent all day at the barn or on the trail and not in the kitchen?

Get really good at developing creative ways to justify a recent tack purchase?

Have more pairs of riding boots than street shoes?

Find all of our street clothes in the back corner of the closet?

Get a chiropractor or massage therapist for our horse, but not for ourselves?

I stopped in a coffee store for coffee and someone called my well-worn chaps "cute." Oy vey!.....

Non-horse lovers will never comprehend why. If we horse lovers attempt to explain why, the non-horse lovers will still walk away shaking their heads in confusion. So, just don't even try. We love to read how our choices are illogical. But, we DO know why. It is just difficult to explain. We are not bothered by the characteristics we now shamelessly display.

We listen to the poignant words from Mary Ann Kennedy's song and thoroughly comprehend what she is talking about:

*"I want to ride my pony,
Forget the things you said to me
Like the wind
Til' I'm free again
Til' I'm me again...."*

Be kind and patient with that horse of yours – his/her heart is twice as big as yours.

- Susan Tomasini



Horse Hill: We Did It!

Well, actually ... You did it! Marin Horse Council members, the equestrian community at-large, horse lovers county-wide and out-of-towners, too. Hundreds of people sent generous contributions to Horse Hill's "Buy A Horse A Drink?" campaign. On November 1st, the Alto Bowl Horseowners Association declared our fund-raising goal had been met. We had received sufficient funds to immediately build the reliable drinking water supply system for the Horse Hill herd. The water system is now fully operational.

On behalf of the horses and the ABHA, a big Thank You! to all of the folks who helped make the new water system a reality. We'll follow up with a detailed report to everyone who donated. If you want to receive further info and aren't on our contact list, feel free to email your name to: HorseHillSpot@gmail.com
- Robert Eichstaedt, ABHA

Large Animal Rescue in Marin

On November 8th & 9th, three Marin Search and Rescue team members, ten Marin County Sheriff's Posse riders and three Marin Humane Society field officers attended a Large Animal Rescue training in Lucas Valley. Several other attendees represented diverse agencies and organizations. This 16-hour intensive LAR training was co-sponsored by the Marin Horse Council and the Marin Humane Society, with facilities generously provided by the Marin County Parks Department. Trainers were Deb and John Fox of Large Animal Rescue Company, Hollister CA.

Participation in this training by a large contingent of the Sheriff's Posse means that Marin County now has a horse-savvy core group of LAR responders. Several Posse members had previously taken this training in 2005. Since a search for a missing equestrian by the Marin SAR team may evolve into a rescue operation for both rider and horse, a LAR capability could very well come into play at any time.

The LAR course, much of it being hands-on "incident" scenarios, provided key information and practical training to facilitate rescue of large animals in incidents on the trail, in pasture, in trailering accidents and other situations where the tools and skills required are very specialized. Throughout the weekend, knowledge of equine behavior and safe rescue operations were emphasized. Cows were mentioned in passing, and elephants never.

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AT THE BARN

During the first training day, Open Space ranger, Craig Solin, was called out of class in response to reports of a missing horse on Mt. Burdell Open Space Preserve. The Burdell search continued into Sunday morning; everyone in the class was wondering if the training, gear and personnel at hand might be suddenly be called into the field for a real LAR. Then the horse showed up.

Large animals are dynamic and unpredictable. In stressful situations they act and react differently. Rescuers need to be prepared for these unpredictable reactions. The techniques taught in this course are based on the equipment carried on most type 1 (standard fire fighting) engines. Even if firefighters responding to a large animal rescue incident are not LAR trained, an experienced horseman on-scene who does have appropriate training can inform rescuers regarding safe and unsafe approaches.

LAR incidents may involve a multi-agency response. This class taught how each agency interacts and emphasizes the importance of cooperation and teamwork. All those who successfully completed the course gained California Fire Marshal (FSTEP) certification in Large Animal Rescue.

The MC Sheriff's Department underwrote the \$250./person course fee for its Posse members; MSAR did the same for its team members. The Marin Horse Council was very generous in providing lunches, plus great coffee and tasty snacks. Thanks to everyone who made this training happen.

Discussions are underway to establish a central cache of large animal rescue gear, staged to mobilize quickly when needed. There will be another LAR training in Marin in 2015, date TBD. We are also hoping to provide a condensed LAR seminar for horseowners who may find themselves involved in a horse rescue. For more information, contact me any time at 415 259 9787 or re@well.com
- Robert Eichstaedt.

What is Dressage?

Dressage comes from the French word meaning "to train". The history of Dressage dates back to ancient Greece and was developed to train horses for battle. The Classical training of "Haute Ecole", i.e. Aires Above the Ground, can still be seen in modern day exhibitions and is still practiced and taught at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna and Cadre Noir in France. Today Dressage is an international and Olympic sport.

Dressage is a partnership between horse and rider, the goal is to achieve lightness, balance, and unity through systematic communication of the aids. The aids are defined as how the rider uses their body to influence the horse's movements. All breeds of horses and disciplines of riding will benefit from this classical form of training, because the goal is to improve the horse and rider's level of training and communication.

In Dressage competition, there are levels of test patterns designed to help horse and rider develop connection, balance, strength and flexibility, as well as to check on the progress of development. The tests increase in difficulty and length as each horse and rider team moves up the levels. At the lower levels the tests are simple and straight forward with large circles and simple transitions within the gaits. In the upper levels the movement become more challenging and incorporate lateral movement as well as collection and extension within the gaits, smaller circles and canter lead changes as well as Piaffe and Passage, a highly-collected trot. In the upper levels it truly becomes a dance in which horse and rider are partners. This is most apparent when seen in the Musical Freestyle completion where the rider choreographs the movements to music, much like in figure skating.

Why Dressage ?

First and foremost I am a student of Dressage. I'm also a professional Dressage trainer with over 30 years of experience teaching students, training clients' horses and bringing my own horses up the levels. What intrigues me about this discipline is that I never stop learning from each horse I work with and every student I teach. They each present new challenges, so I continue educate myself by riding in clinics and reading and watching videos of the top competitors. For me Dressage is a life long journey.

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"Lucky" the LAR horse endures a series of unfortunate events.

The amount of training that it takes to move up the levels in Dressage completion depends on the individual horse and rider team and their athletic ability and work ethic. At the lower levels most horses with good true gaits (walk, trot, canter), and a willingness to work, can be trained to do the movements. The upper levels require a lot of hard work and dedication from the rider, a special relationship with the horse, a special horse with the right mindset, and athletic ability and great instructors.

Where to start ?

Online you can find local Dressage clubs and trainer listings. Check out the United States Dressage Federation at www.usdf.org. You will also find listings for local competitions and trainer clinics - go check them out. I also suggest you visit boarding and training facilities in your area. Visit and talk to both students and instructors. Set up an appointment to talk to the trainers about your goals, background and the type of horse you own. Ask them about their training philosophies and experience. Ask permission to audit a lesson. Find out if the trainer has a lesson horse i.e. a "School Master" available. Having a well trained lesson horse to learn on is invaluable as this allows you to experience what the movements feel like when you ask with the correct aids. Online you can also find local Dressage clubs and trainer listing

To sum it up, Dressage should be a positive, pleasurable and challenging learning experience for both horse and rider.

- Lisa Everett

The Historic Murphy Ranch

About ten years ago I went looking for a ranch to board my quarter horse, "Bey Jewel". I needed a full-service facility, pasture boarding and direct trail access. The second that I saw the magnificent Murphy Ranch and met with its competent and friendly manager, Anne Murphy, I was sold. "Bey Jewel" and I have been happily ensconced at Murphy Ranch ever since.

Originally called "Drakes Bay Hereford Ranch", Murphy Ranch has a long and fascinating history. The ranch is located on the rugged Pacific coastline just past Inverness on Drakes Estero. This ranch is now a part of the Point Reyes National Seashore and one of the most historically significant ranches in the park. In 1857, it started life as the Shafter family's "Home Ranch". They were in the dairy business. Using this ranch as their base of operations, the Shafter family built a sizeable dairy empire. By 1872 they had developed 31 dairy ranches and their land holdings grew to encompass most of the property now owned by the Point Reyes National Seashore. These holdings stretched from Bolinas in the north out to Pierce Point Ranch and the Lighthouse in the west.

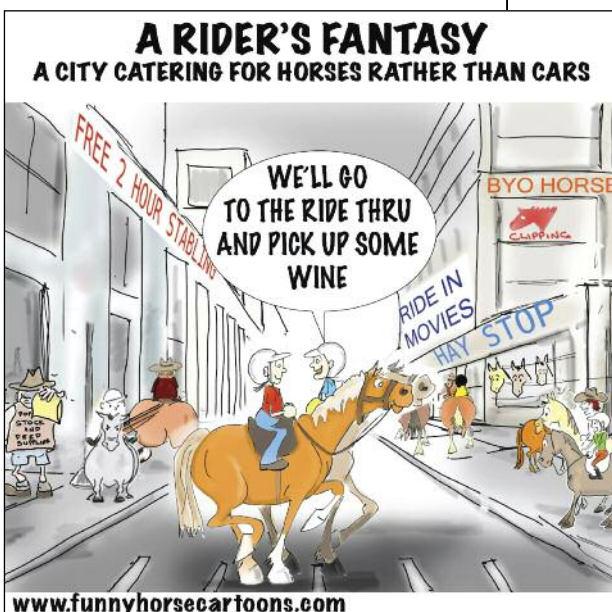
In 1929, the Murphy family acquired the Shafter dairy ranch and, since then, the ranch has been home to five generations of Murphys. During their tenure, the Murphys made the transition from dairy to beef cattle ranching. And back in the day, 150 horses lived at Murphy Ranch - all necessary "equipment" for the daily operations of a cattle ranch. In 1964, the Murphy family sold all 11,000 acres to the Point Reyes National Seashore.

As a part of the national park system, this 11,000 acres of land will now remain preserved in its natural state in perpetuity - and its many wonderful and scenic trails will always remain available for the recreation and enjoyment of the general public!!!

After the sale, The Murphy family continued to lease back 3,000 acres of the ranch. And although Anne is the only Murphy in residence, the entire clan constantly comes to visit. How could they stay away? Since 2005, the McDonald-Luchessi-Cattle Co. has held the cattle grazing permits for Murphy Ranch and, nowadays, the ranchers mount ATVs to monitor and round up the cattle. Anne is the lone hold-out to a bygone era. Until recently she participated in all of the ranch round-ups - riding circles around the ATVs on her talented quarter horse, "Hijo".

Anne Murphy still holds the lease for 20 acres of the ranch which are dedicated to the grazing and boarding of horses. The acreage is located smack dab in the middle of the Point Reyes National Seashore - and offers direct access to their entire trail system via the Estero trail and Muddy Hollow Road. You can ride as far as your horse is willing to pack you.

The horses live in the 5 pastures surrounding Anne's house, all nestled in a small valley which gives them good protection from the winds and storms. The pastures are all a couple of acres in size and come with shelter. "Bey Jewel" lives in a lovely pasture with her good friends "Fox" and "Brandy". They have nice views of the rolling hills and of the Estero. In order to best protect the land and the environment, Anne generally limits the horse population to 3 horses per pasture. She promises no mud - even in the rainy months - and (believe it or not) there really never is any mud! You might have to pull on your wading boots to visit your horse but there is nothing but green grass under the water. And, for some unknown reason, the grass stays green all year long. Bey Jewel thinks that this a wonderful thing.



AT THE BARN



Left to right: Bey Jewel, Amory and Anne. Cattle drive at Murphy Ranch! Amory with birthday pony Pebbles. Drakes Bay Hereford Ranch sign.

Although the riding out of the ranch is great, I think that "Bey Jewel" and I enjoy our ranch rides the best. Murphy Ranch has its own bachelor herd of Tule elk! We love riding among these enormous and beautiful animals. Sometimes they even walk along with us. At first, this was a little nerve wracking but we have adjusted. Other days we enjoy heading up to the ridge and out towards Drake's Point. We enjoy the incomparable views of the Pacific Coast and when looking down to our left and are treated to the rather amazing spectacle of "Duck Lake". This lake is home to almost every imaginable breed of water bird and provides a lovely setting for their non-stop avian activity. The lake is also a bi-annual migratory stopover for many flocks of ducks – hence the name of "Duck Lake". If we make it as far as Drake's Point, we are frequently rewarded by the sight of young, white haired seals sprawled out all over the beach below us – bathing in the sun. And - if we are really lucky, we occasionally catch a glimpse of a pod of whales spouting and breaching in the distance.

However, the very best thing about Murphy Ranch is Anne Murphy. She is an extremely knowledgeable and competent horse woman. She spends the day fluttering about the horses like a mother hen – attending to their personal needs and running her fingers all over their bodies checking for wounds, scratches, bumps and lumps. I feel completely comfortable leaving my horse in her care.

And Anne picks and chooses her boarders with care. As a result she has assembled a nice group of like-minded people who all love their horses and have a lot of fun together. Especially fun is Anne's annual birthday party for all of the horses. All of us decorate our horses from head to toe with flowers, ribbons and glitter glue and then hold a horse beauty pageant. Last year my elderly pony "Pebbles" served as judge. It probably goes without saying that she awarded the first prize ribbon to our very favorite horse, "Bey Jewel". After the pageant we always sit down to a lavish barbeque prepared by Anne and her friend, Frank. After gorging ourselves, we all stand up to sing Happy Birthday to all of the horses and cut their birthday carrot cake up into little bite size pieces.

Good times, good rides, Great Barn!!!
- Amory Willis



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Our Newsletter is Going Green

The Marin Horse Council is going "Green"! We will be sending out our quarterly Newsletters via e-mail. In doing this we are conscience of our responsibility to the environment and financially we will be saving money that can be put towards supporting our equestrian presence in Marin County. However, if you must have a hard copy of the MHC Newsletter mailed (USPS) to you, please contact me at 415 488 0950 or email: pr@marinhorsecouncil.org

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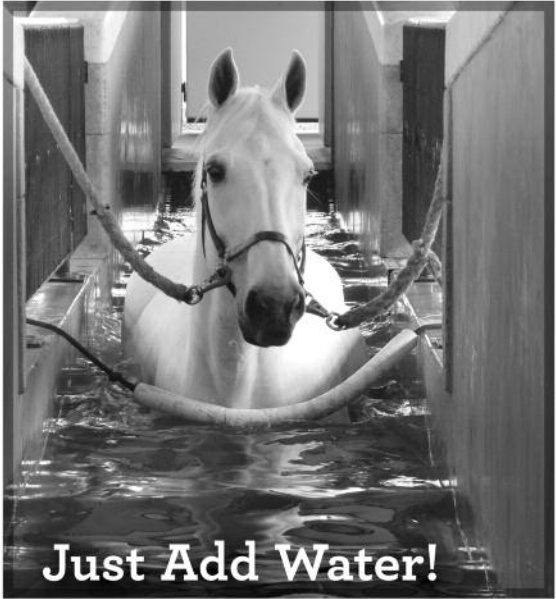
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