

Marin Horse Council

2017 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 129



Spring Ride at Lake Lagunitas and Bon Tempe Lake

FROM THE SADDLE

Where to begin? It's already July, however I guess I should begin at the beginning of the year as so much has already happened! But first, I must say that it's hard to believe we've had over 60" of rain (so far) this year. We just starting to get out on trails last month due first to the storms and floods and now the huge number of huge trees that have fallen after the rain came. The trails had not had the opportunity to firm up enough. Be mindful of the trails and footing if you do venture out, even though it is summer. A slide took a horse and rider down in Santa Cruz; luckily no one was hurt, but I see cracks and unstable footing out there, so please be careful and allow the soil to dry out a bit.

In January, the MHC (Marin Horse Council) met with the Tomales Bay Watershed Council to discuss new water quality regulations affecting the barns and stables in the Tomales Bay Watershed. In late April, The MHC and Tomales Bay Watershed Council cohosted a seminar featuring the Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board at Druids Hall in Nicasio. The seminar was designed to inform horse keepers in the watershed about the new regulations that will require permits for commercial facilities to keep horses in the Tomales Bay Watershed. Livestock has been identified as pathogen contributors to storm water draining into Tomales Bay. Water testing will be required along with the acquisition of the permit. The process is not designed to close down equestrian facilities, but rather to promote best practices for keeping horses in order to maintain environmental health. There will be more on this later in the year as a second round of information becomes available.

The MHC also contributed \$1000 to Marin Search and Rescue to help with the acquisition of a "Horse – A – Kin" for the Large Animal Rescue team (LAR). A Horse-a-kin is a life sized horse version of a mannequin used for training purposes. As it turned out, Julie Atwood of HALTER gifted the educational aid to the LAR team and our contribution will go to further the training of Marin Search and Rescue volunteers in handling horses caught in disastrous situations. Robert Eichstaedt leads the effort for LAR and is instrumental making LAR a vital piece in our County's disaster relief plan.

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FROM THE SADDLE



MHC Spring Ride: Horses and riders enjoy fresh air and green vistas at Bon Tempe Lake and Lake Lagunitas, two of the seven lakes which became Marin's first municipal drinking water district in 1912

From the Saddle from page 1

The MHC was present at the Ranch Readiness Day at the Santa Rosa Fair Grounds in April thanks to Robert Eichstaedt, who through Marin Search and Rescue, helps support the good work of non-profits like HALTER whose efforts to educate us about disaster preparedness and the rescue of large animals is vital in both Marin and Sonoma County.

Trail Partners is working on getting the "Slow and Say Hello" message out in front of the visitors to our open spaces. We will be tabling at visitor conflict "Hot Spots" beginning in May; working collaboratively with One Tam, MCOSD (Marin County Open Space) and MMWD (Marin Municipal Water District) to help educate and remind visitors to our public lands that slowing down and acknowledging others goes a long way to avoid conflicts. We could use volunteers to help out. Please check out our e-news communications for dates and locations. Help us "Say Hello" and reinforce the importance of safety on our trails.

June 3rd was National Trails Day. MHC members joined Trail Partners in table sitting at Mt. Burdell, Diaz Ridge, and Phoenix Lake from 10 – 2:00PM.

On June 15th we were at Golden Gate Dairy Stables along with Mia Monroe of GGNRA, Maureen Pinto of Ocean Riders of Marin, and Tom Boss of MCBC to work on slowing mountain bikers down when they approach the stable from the Diaz Ridge Trail. We are looking to fund the construction of a "chicane" (an artificial feature that creates extra turns on a trail to slow bike traffic for safety) and some signage to alert riders of the hazardous condition. The stables are right there on trail and many bikers do not know that until they are on top of them.

As always the MHC is keeping a close eye on Marin County Open Space and the ongoing trials and tribulations of the RTMP (Fire Road and Trails Management Plan). Region 4, which includes Mt. Burdell, Rush Creek, Little Mountain, Deer Island, and Indian Trees Preserve are slated for designations May 13th at the Margaret Todd Center in Novato. Public comment will be accepted at least 30 days after the public hearing May 13th. There will most likely be changes in the designations of some of the trails on Mt. Burdell and the re-routing and closure of others.

An important consideration here to ponder is the proximity of shared use trails on Mt Burdell that lead to Olompali State Historic Park. Olompali has a special historic designation and is closed to mountain bikes. However, the PG&E line that runs straight downhill through Olompali to the frontage road on Hwy 101 is often poached by mountain bikers. The PG&E line is not a trail. Olompali is a historically sensitive park and is sacred ground. Many artifacts and Miwok burial mounds could be destroyed by such behavior.

We are looking for practical solutions to discourage mountain bikers from poaching Olompali State Historic Park. California State Park does not have the resources to enforce the conduct of those who violate the law. Would signage help? A more formidable gate? We're not sure, but something needs to be done to preserve the archeological Coast Miwok heritage of Olompali. It is an actual Miwok settlement, not a recreated village or replica.

We are looking into resurrecting the Mounted Patrol for the various open space entities that lack resources to help visitors on the trails. I've been talking to the Contra Costa County Mounted Patrol and will bring more details to you as they emerge.

Thanks for reading, that's all for now, but stay tuned for more!

— Monte Kruger, President



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AT THE BARN

A SPECIAL GATHERING AT THE GOLDEN GATE DAIRY STABLES AT MUIR BEACH



Our Panelists: Pioneers of the dairies and flower and vegetable farms of Frank Valley, Muir Beach and Santos Meadow.

On April 29, Ocean Riders of Marin hosted a special gathering at the Golden Gate Dairy Stables at Muir Beach. It was a day to reminisce and share stories of the era when dozens of Portuguese Azorean dairies dotted the Frank Valley/Muir Beach area. Mike Moyle, Chairman of the History Committee at the Portuguese Cultural Center in Sausalito, acted as moderator for a panel of special guests: Tony and Theresa Brazil, Shirley Souza Nygren and Amadeo Banducci who talked about what it was like to grow up and work in the area from the thirties to the sixties.

Tony Brazil, age 90, was born in Sausalito at the home of his godparents in Sausalito and then moved to the Brazil dairy, located off Muir Woods Road, where the ranger station is now located. The farm was developed starting when Elias, Tony's father, leased the first 800 acres from William Kent. He acquired more land over years from Kent and others. His ranch reached from Santos Meadows all the way to Stinson Beach! Tony Brazil stayed on to run the ranch, eventually married Theresa Brazil and they lived there together from 1950 until 1965. Tony was a very good friend of our southern Marin cowboy Gene Poole and 7 years younger (for the record).

Shirley Souza Nygren's grandparents ran the Souza ranch, which was located in Santos Meadows where the horse camp is now. She lived in Muir Beach her whole life and spent many hours on the ranch.

Amadeo Banducci came to the area in the 1930s and followed his father's path in raising flowers and vegetables on their ranch, which still exists in Frank Valley, to the west of Santos Meadow. Amadeo is especially proud of the fact that their family grew vegetables for the war effort during World War II.

The gathering of over one hundred people, some with a Portuguese connection and some local history buffs, was held in the historic hay barn surrounded

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MHC Spring Ride: Lunch for all at the Shelter Site

AT THE BARN

NEWS AND UPDATES

MCOSD BACKS OFF PROPOSED CODE CHANGE TO LIMIT HORSE ACCESS *By Delos Putz*

The Marin Open Space District (MCOSD) has withdrawn the proposal it made last November to change § 02.05.020 of the Open Space District Code to limit horses to "system roads and trails specifically signed for such use." Thanks are due to Monte Kruger and everyone who contacted MCOSD and the Supervisors on this issue.

The proposed change would have reversed the long-standing rule that horses are allowed on all roads and trails "not signed against such use." Most roads and trails on the Open Space Preserves are not currently signed to allow horses because such signage has never been necessary. The proposed change would have made horses illegal on many roads and trails that have been open to them since the Open Space District was created in 1972.

The Marin Horse Council immediately began lobbying against the proposed change as ill-considered and unfair to equestrians. During the winter and spring, the Horse Council met with MCOSD management and with all the Supervisors (who are the governing Board of the Open Space District). In early May, MCOSD presented a revised proposal to the Parks & Open Space Commission that does not change the long-standing rule that horses are allowed "on system roads and trails not signed against such use." The Open Space District is still working on proposed wording of a new provision governing carts and carriages. The proposed Code changes will be presented to the Supervisors, sitting as the Board of the Open Space District, for final approval later this year.

This issue is not finally settled. MCOSD has made clear that it intends to revisit this issue as soon as its new signage is rolled out (a process that may take two years). It contends it is required to do so by Policy T1d of the Road & Trail Management Plan that was approved in December 2014. In all previous drafts of the RTMP (fire-Road and Trails Management Plan) Policy T1d applied only to bicycles. It read "The MCOSD will permit bicycling on trails designated and signed for their use." In the final version, the words "and saddle animals" were inserted without any notice to or discussion with the equestrian community. Mountain bikers have claimed credit for the change. It was not noticed by anyone in the equestrian community until last November when MCOSD proposed

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Golden Gate Stables from page 3

by lush green hillsides. Several former residents of the ranches brought their old photographs of the land and local families. Our panelists told stories and answered questions from the audience. We learned about a tavern down by what was then called Bello Beach (beautiful in Portuguese) now Muir Beach, where a fair amount of drinking and live music and happy activities took place. We heard about riding horses as a means of transportation before cars and also about the kids that remember riding for miles across the dairy lands. Tony recalled making a few extra dollars driving children from Muir Beach to school. It was a beautiful sunny day to celebrate community near and far, present and historic.

The event was free but donations received will be dedicated to benefit the future Portuguese Interpretive Center that Ocean Riders of Marin will house in a section of the historic hay barn. We will continue to work closely with the Portuguese Cultural Center in Sausalito to expand our knowledge and to collect more photographs and artifacts from the era. We were fortunate that John Korty, Oscar-award winning filmmaker and long time Marin resident, captured the stories on film. We welcome any additional stories and facts of the area history.

Ocean Riders of Marin is grateful for all who participated and feel we have not only a greater appreciation for the Golden Gate Dairy Stables but a wonderful ever-expanding community. To learn more about what we are doing, take a look at our website oceanridersofmarin.org.

Better yet, come out for a visit!

— Leida Schoggen



Golden Gate Dairy Stables at Muir Beach



Attendees at Portuguese Azorean Dairies talk

AT THE BARN

HEALING TROUGH HORSES: PRESIDIO RIDING CLUB VETERANS PROGRAM



Presidio Riding Club Veterans



When we all know how healing it is to spend an afternoon with our horses. The stress of the day melts away when you see those big eyes looking back into yours, and begin grooming or tacking up for a ride.

Presidio Riding Club (PRC) is offering that same unconditional equine understanding and stress release - free of charge to women and men of the military. Amory Willis, who has been leading the PRC Veterans Equine program for the past 21 months, says: 'It's really amazing. I've seen the horses gently coax these men and women out of their shells - helping make their worlds larger and fuller.'

PRC currently has two levels of programs available to veterans.

The first is an entry program where veterans come twice a month and work with equine therapists for a year to 18 months. Many issues of trauma, disconnection from society, and self-confidence are raised and addressed through the gentle nature of the horses. In the entry programs, PRC works with either Project Hope or Sally Broder Horse Sensing. The horses and equine therapists guide veterans through a series of experiential, trust and confidence building exercises. Veterans work as individuals and as teams, honing their team building and leadership skills. And day after day they slowly but surely gain the trust, and then the love of the horses.

After attending two of Sally Broder's programs one veteran said: 'I'd love to bring this experience back to all the veterans I live with. I guess the horses are praying too, for all these people that are a little displaced mentally or spiritually. It's really a calling.'

Another female veteran explained her experience as: 'I served 26 years army active. Now I'm trying to exist with the public that is much different from what I'm used to for 26 years of my life. I felt like my uniform was my protector, my shield. And without it, I didn't really trust anyone. With the horses I feel grounded, because we're on the same page. I feel like they're watching my back.'

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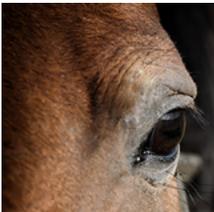
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Dedication is the Key to Success



Healing from page 5

PRC partners with Project Hope to offer their program twice a month, and Sally Broder's Horse Sensing runs quarterly. That's over 25 days of veterans programming a year, and you'll find PRC volunteers on site for all of them.

For veterans who have completed the entry level programs, Brad Silen and PRC volunteers have started a second stage Horsemanship class. These classes provide continuity of contact with the horses, and provide on the ground learning of practical horsemanship skills. This Horsemanship program has been in effect 6 months and PRC is gratified by how rewarding it is to spend time with the veterans and the horses who have helped them.

The continuity is so important to strengthen the foundation of trust and confidence built in the entry classes. Veterans who previously didn't socialize much, visit PRC monthly and work as teams practicing hoof care, tacking up a horse, and safe grooming and ground techniques. And, PRC Horsemanship class has grown to include veterans and non veterans alike.

Brad's longer term goal for the Horsemanship class is for the veterans to graduate to teaching the Horsemanship classes for other veterans, and for the graduates to become an integral part of PRC's volunteer programs.

Asked what one veteran would share with others about the Horsemanship classes, 'It's a challenge to earn the horses' trust. I love to take all afternoon earning their trust. I'd love to tell other veterans, don't spend all day in your apartment, come try this'.

Another veteran sees the natural hierarchy of the herd and how it relates to military structure: 'It's illuminating to realize that horses have a tradition and protocol that is recognizable to humans who pay attention. This rich protocol helps to keep them safe. They have a commander and a first lieutenant. This helps to keep order and discipline in their community and keep everyone safe.'

Amory, who is the heart of the PRC equine program summed it up best: 'I've seen HUGE changes. I've seen an enormous increase in the self-confidence of these men and women. And I have seen them develop new friendships and relationships through their involvement in our programs.'

PRC is currently looking for donations to help expand our veterans programs. Specifically we're seeking the funds for pay insurance for the next six months of Horsemanship classes. Donations to Presidio Riding Club veterans programs are tax deductible, and can be sent to: Presidio Riding Club, PO Box 1961, Sausalito, CA 94965. Mark your donation: Veterans Programming.

— Lynn Keller

Getaway Horseplay

Your horse wants to go!



Karen Vogel 2016

AT THE BARN

SPOTTY'S EYE SURGERY

My name is Morgan Graziano. I am eight years old. I sponsor a pony named "Spotty" at Pat and Mike Duffy's H Lane Vaqueros 4-H club. Spotty's job is to be a lesson pony. He is calm, sweet and has no vices. He had a chronic eye inflammation. Dr. Jimmy Williams suggested eye specialist Dr. Nick Faber DVM, at Willow Oak Equine in Woodland, California to look at Spotty's eye. Dr. Faber removed the inflamed tissue from Spotty's right eye to prevent it from getting cancer. Today Spotty's eye looks much better and he can see better too. Spotty wears his fly mask all day long even when I ride him because it keeps the sun and flies from hurting his eyes. Spotty is the best pony ever!

— Morgan Graziano



Footnote by Pat Duffy, H Lane Vaqueros 4-H Riding Club, Novato:

On January 26th, during one of our worst storms in 15 years Dr. Jimmy Williams transported Spotty the pony to Willow Oak Equine Clinic located in Woodland CA to be seen by Dr. Faber, Veterinary Ophthalmologist from Animal Vision Center in Sacramento. Dr. Faber is a visiting specialist with operating privileges at the Clinic established by Butch Harrison and his wife Dr. Linda Harrison who provide state of the art quality service and personal care for their client and their patient (horse).

After Dr. Faber examined Spotty, it was decided after consulting with Dr. Jimmy Williams a surgical procedure would be performed. Spotty was sedated, the surgery was performed without any complications. The storm was in full motion with winds that would nearly blow you over. I feared the roof would fly off of the clinic. Spotty had to spend the night due to his drowsy condition. Dr. Jimmy Williams walked him to his overnight stall, and then made the drive back to Marin County, only to return the next afternoon to pick up his little senior pony who has serviced the children of Willow Tree Stables most of his life.

How wonderful it is to see such a beautiful relationship with a pony (Spotty) and his personal veterinarian Dr. Jimmy Williams who is dedicated to the health and well being of the equine population.

Spotty is living at the Duffy's in Novato for life, helping 4-H club members adapt to learning horsemanship skills. He even has his own grandmother Marty who cares for him every day.

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OUT ON THE TRAIL

NEWS AND UPDATES

WATER RUNOFF AND THE NEED TO CONTROL WHAT GOES INTO THE CREEKS

2017 will see stable owners and managers charged with the task of protecting the creeks and streams that run through or near their facilities. Horses have been identified as contributors of pathogens into Tomales Bay that cause the bay to exceed the TMDL (total minimum daily limit) of pathogens allowable by the EPA / The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Commercial stables that exist within the Tomales Bay watershed will be required to comply with the San Francisco Bay Water Board's requirements for confined animal facilities (CAF). The Tomales Bay watershed comprises an area of Marin roughly from Bolinas inland to Woodacre, Lagunitas, Nicasio, north to Pt. Reyes, Marshall and on to Tomales. Approximately 15 stables will be required to apply for a permit that includes standards for pollution prevention planning, waste management and water quality monitoring with annual reporting of findings in order for compliance. Members of the Marin Horse Council, Anne Sands, Curt and Monte Kruger attended a meeting of the Tomales Bay Watershed Council and collaborated on a plan to inform, educate and aid stables with the process and resources available to navigate this new regulation.

Anne Sands is no stranger to this work. Anne, who houses her own horses in Bolinas and who is herself a water consultant, organized a Horse Keepers Workshop in 2009 dedicated to educating stables owners and managers about the process of BMP (best management practices) when it comes to horse keeping and water runoff. Anne will again, with help from Curt Kruger, a storm water consultant, team up in conjunction with the Marin Horse Council as we partner with the Tomales Bay Watershed Council in offering a Horse Keepers Workshop this spring. This workshop will highlight the new permit process, requirements and the BMPs to stable owners and managers. This will be the first of two workshops as the process is involved and timing is critical. Testing will begin early this year and facilities will have 2 years to come into compliance with stable plans, record keeping, and scheduled site inspections and ongoing water quality testing. There are exceptions, and a process to file for an exemption. However, it would be wise to attend the workshop to make sure your facility would qualify. If you house horses and have a

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TRAIL RIDE CONCESSION IN GOLDEN GATE PARK



Horses in San Francisco?

Exciting news! We now have horses back in Golden Gate Park, for the time being!

It's been decades since there were guided trail rides in Golden Gate Park. On Saturday, April 15, I hosted a trail ride through the current concession in Golden Gate Park for Marin Horse Council and those who wanted to join us. We did not have a full group, so a few members of the public who never rode before joined us. We met in Bercut Equitation Field, where the horses are kept in the arena, and rode from there.

A friend of mine who also graduated from Smith College, and rode with the Smith College Varsity Equestrian Team, participated in the Golden Gate Park ride with me. We hope that eventually horses can come back to Golden Gate Park full-time, just as we hope that we can save the Smith College on-campus barn from the closure announced by the college administration in December. (When the college administration announced our college barn closure, it also announced demotion of our successful varsity team to a club sport. We continue to protest this decision).

Through Golden Gate Park, we rode with our two guides, volunteers for the current concession vendor called Pot o Gold, mainly on the historic bridle paths, and crossing streets through Golden Gate Park. Our well-behaved mounts remained calm for the most part, as we encountered bicycle riders, people walking with dogs, and cars. However, they did not much care for the Bison!

My friend and I snuck in a trot on a bridle path while the others stayed behind for a while to assist a first-time rider. Mostly, we rode at a walk as we took in the scenery, including the beautiful park landscape, archery range, and the impressive herd of Bison.

Hopefully, this trail riding concession pilot program, which continues through May 20, will get good support and will renew the interest in having horses once again in Golden Gate Park. You can contact San Francisco Park to show your support. The bridle trails are beautiful.

— Karen Poppy

OUT ON THE TRAIL

CALIFORNIA DREAMING ON A VIRGINIA FOXHUNT, AND THE PLOT TO SAVE SMITH COLLEGE EQUESTRIAN

Maybe once in a lifetime you can feel like you are living inside the plot of a novel—or maybe several times, if your life is really interesting. Which of course it is, since you are a horseback rider.

For me currently, the plot is unfolding into many adventurous moments. This includes recently riding in the foxhunt of a famous novelist who is also the Master of Foxhounds and Huntsman of a Virginia fox hunt club.

Questions remain as to how the novel will end. Will I be able to ride in to save my college equestrian program from a tragic demise? Will I help stop the pattern of closures of top-notch equestrian facilities so that future equestrians can live happily ever after?

You have to understand that it all began with the local library because at heart I am a bookworm and nerd. As a young person, the local library introduced me to my favorite writers, whose works and lives inspired my choice of college, my areas of study, and my own writing (poetry and short fiction).

As a morose 12-year-old, I read the poetry of Sylvia Plath and decided then and there that one day I would attend the same college she did, Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts. Then I taught myself Spanish and fell in love with that language's poetry by reading Pablo Neruda and Federico García Lorca. I learned how to write by reading everything I could. Smith College accepted me as a student and I enrolled to study Comparative Literature and Spanish.

One thing that I did not do at Smith College was ride horses. Almost two decades after college graduation, the local library and a certain writer would bring me back to the horseback riding I did as a child.

As those of you who read my previous MHC Newsletter article know, when sick and stuck in bed, I read a couple of foxhunting novels. These novels told me that in the United States, the fox is chased as in a game, but never harmed or killed. They inspired me to make a vow that if I recovered, I would learn to ride English-style, and they gave me the hope I needed to make a full recovery. So I truly believe that the author of those foxhunting novels, Rita Mae Brown, saved my life and made me stronger than I ever thought possible.

I rebuilt my body on the back of a horse because it is important to have a foundation stronger than you. Also, like many of you, I have fallen off that foundation, but we riders dust ourselves off and get back in the saddle. We also pay it forward, since that is what we are meant to do.

For that reason, I started the equestrian Facebook group for Smith College alumnae and current students, "Riding in the Cloud." This space allows us to connect every week on Fridays to share photos with news of our rides and horses. We have almost 200 members and a great camaraderie.

Then in December 2016, Smith College administration announced the closure of the school's on-campus barn and demotion of its successful varsity team to a club sport. So I also started the Facebook group for Save Smith Equestrians and joined its steering committee.

As our website, www.savesmithequestrian.com, indicates: The Save Smith Equestrian Steering Committee is a group of over 15 alumnae spanning the graduation years of 2015 to 1943. The Committee was formed in response to the December 8, 2016 announcement by Smith College. Our mission is to ensure that the Smith College Equestrian Center stays open and that the Smith Equestrian Team continues as a varsity sport at this on-campus facility.

We plan to form a 501(c)(3) organization to further our mission, and we want to work with the Smith College administration to maintain the on-campus barn and varsity team.

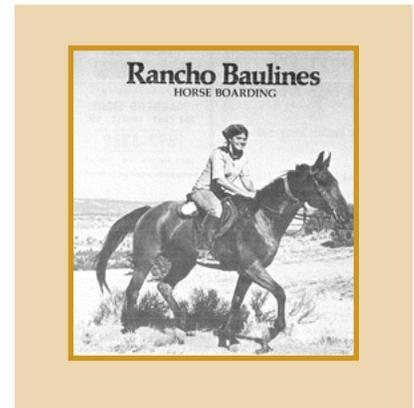
I do not want this true life novel to end with the closure of yet another great equestrian facility, much like the closure of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park Stables in 2001 that I wrote about before for MHC, or the reduction of the Stanford University's Page Mill Pastures from 800 acres to 118. Demotion of such a successful varsity team at Smith College, a women's college dedicated to women in leadership and athletics, also makes no sense when the equestrian sport is one of the only sports in which women compete equally with men.

So to help save Smith College's equestrian program, I called on the master of plot, the novelist who coincidentally saved my life by bringing me back to horseback riding.

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ON THE *Historic* TRAIL

1973



1973



How do 4-H girls get their ponies to a fair when their truck breaks down? Load 'em into a VW bus and off they go. In Beebe on the left holding "Hun" and Ann Halley on the right holding "Pone" took their ponies to a street fair in San Francisco last month where, by selling rides, they raised enough money for some badly needed tack. Both are members of the Marshall 4-H Club Manon Beebe is Pone's owner.

OUT ON THE TRAIL

ON THE *Historic* TRAIL

1973



NORTH AMERICAN TRAIL CONFERENCE RIDE

Connie Berto of San Anselmo and her Morgan mare Nuchief's Misschief, pictured her just after crossing the finish line at last month's North American Trail Conference Ride that started from the San Geronimo Valley Horsemen's Arena for two days of competitive trail riding around Mt. Tamalpais and the water district. Fifty-five horses and riders entered the competition which was organized by the California State Horsemen's Association, Region 1. Connie and her mare placed third in the novice lightweight division and first in the Morgan division. Contestants were judged based on their horsemanship and condition of animals. Other Marin riders out over Memorial Day (1973) included: Rosalie Kessler, Maria Stock, Peggy Wilson, Beverly Sarjeant, Maude Roche, Sophia Drumm, and Kurt Foell.

1973

DRAKES BAY PRE-RIDES

Marin's own 50 miler, the Drake's Bay Ride, will be held on September 22 this year (1973). Stan urges those riders who are planning to sign up for one of the two "pre-rides" which have been arranged by the California Endurance team. Accommodations will be available for both rides, August 4-5 and August 25-26 at Five Brooks (just south of Stewart Ranch). A barbeque will be served on both Saturdays, Stan says, asking those who think they might want to join the ride to call him at 456-1786 to make reservations.

Smith College Equestrian from page 9

If anyone could help, I reasoned, Smith College Spirit Animal Rita Mae Brown could! She additionally is good friends with some influential graduates of Smith College.

I reached out to her. She agreed to help immediately and is championing our cause. When I told her of how she saved my life by inspiring me to return to riding, she also said, "Come to Virginia and throw your leg over one of my horses!"

That is how I ended up on Rita Mae Brown's own horse, Sherman, riding in her foxhunt. As the hunt began, first flight and the hounds advanced. Light snow began to fall on that clear day. Soon a mottle of flurries rested on Sherman's lush mane. Sherman, used to leading the hunt in first flight, did not like his position with me toward the back, and continuously tried to sneak his way up to first flight. He also pretended that his leg itched, and snuck some grass while reaching down to scratch his leg! I spent much of the hunt practicing dressage-like circles with Sherman along the fields and trails to try to keep him occupied. Yet, before I knew it, after a few more nibbles of grass, sneaky Sherman nonetheless brought us to first flight, and we had to circle back again.

The hunt occurred toward the end of the season, and ended in a "blank day," which means we did not find a fox. At the end of the season, Rita Mae Brown explained, usually the only foxes left are those juvenile males who did not find a mate. That made me feel good in a way about not finding a fox, which likely would have been a poor, lonely teenager without a girlfriend. Even with no fox found, the day ended gloriously: on a hilltop bluff with new friends and views expanding onto Virginia's famous Blue Ridge Mountains, which actually do look blue due to chemicals released from trees into the atmosphere.

Coming from California, I thought of myself as fairly unique, participating in a foxhunt. Soon I learned that I am not special after all. Not in the least. It turns out that everyone and their mother, and their grandmother for that matter, has fox hunted at one time or another.

The mother of one of my son's friends at school fox hunted regularly in Pennsylvania as a young girl.

The father of one of the boys on my son's baseball team told me on Sunday, his voice turning into a lilt, "I am from Ireland and we had a farm, so we would just hop on horses. We fox hunt in Ireland. It's not allowed in England anymore, but in Ireland, we still fox hunt. The Master would bring his horse behind my horse to make him jump the fences, some almost as tall as that one," pointing to a seven-foot-high chain-link fence. I tried to look cool, and nodded, like, Yeah, I could do that, no problem!

In an extraordinary twist of plot, one of my housemates and friends from Smith College previously worked as Rita Mae Brown's editor, specifically on the foxhunting novel series, and rode with her in her truck for a fox hunt. I only found out about this when I told my friend that I had just ridden in Rita Mae Brown's fox hunt in Virginia.

One other completely unexpected twist of plot is that preparing to attend the fox hunt led me to a new type of creation, making artisanal soaps—and launch of a business selling them because people say they enjoy the soaps so much.

I knew that I needed to bring a gift for Rita Mae Brown. What do you bring for someone who is a famous novelist, as well as the Master of Foxhounds and Huntsman of a Virginia fox hunt club? The only thing that I could think of was either jam or soaps, and jam could become a mess during travel. So soaps. I looked for the soaps I wanted, ones that looked like the black fox head buttons on certain fox hunting jackets, but I couldn't find them. I decided to make them. Mind you, I had never made soaps before in my life, but I found the molds and the ingredients, and learned to make them. Voilà! They came out perfectly the first time around, which made all of those YouTube soap making tutorials I watched in preparation totally worth it. I now have fox head button soaps in my online shop, www.13foxesdesigns.com, in different varieties, as well as other soaps (horses and mermaids tend to be popular, in addition to the fox head buttons), and vintage/antique books. I hope that the proceeds from my shop will one day fund an online literary magazine.

Of course, I am also hoping for another twist of plot: that Smith College will be able to keep its on-campus barn and varsity team alive, and that equestrian programs throughout the United States can again flourish. This twist of plot should not need to rely on anything extraordinary, just on sensible planning as well as passion for our horses and the future of equestrians.

continued on page 11

OUT ON THE TRAIL

Smith College Equestrian from page 10

In the meantime, I plan to return to Virginia in the next year for the start of the season with Rita Mae Brown's fox hunt club. I now have everything that I need in terms of proper formal hunting attire, and it takes up a full suitcase. It certainly took me ages to find all the "correct" attire for the hunt to fulfill the full page of protocol for "Hunting Attire/Turnout" on the hunt club's website.

Too bad I can't bring a posse of Marin County riders. I am sure that many of you could easily lasso that fox! Also, perhaps someday, Rita Mae Brown may want to take it easy and have a collaborator to continue her foxhunting series. Maybe I have more cheek than that cheeky tailor Thomas Pink in London, and I am emphatically not an aspiring novelist, but a California girl like me can dream, after all.

— Karen Poppy

To learn more about Save Smith Equestrian, join us, and sign our petition, please visit: www.savesmithequestrian.com
<https://www.facebook.com/savesmithcollegeequestrian/>

Karen Poppy may be reached at poppy.karen@gmail.com and you can find her online shop, 13 Foxes Designs, on Etsy at www.etsy.com/shop/13foxesdesigns and www.13foxesdesigns.com

NEWS AND UPDATES

Code Change from page 4

to change the Code to limit horses to roads and trails "specifically signed for such use." Rather than have another fight over changing the Horse Code to conform to language that was slipped into the Policy without any public discussion, it would be better to revisit Policy T1d and remove "and saddle animals" from it.

Water Runoff from page 8

business license, you most likely will need to begin the process of bringing your stable into compliance. The Marin Horse Council will be sending out flyers with detailed information regarding the workshops. Please look for the dates, times, locations and plan on attending.

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Donations are also welcome. Fees and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thanks for joining! Mail your check to Marin Horse Council | 171 Bel Marin Keyes Blvd. | Novato, CA 94949-6183



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THANK YOU!

The Marin Horse Council depends on the continued generous support of Marin's horse lovers. Thanks to all members, and in particular, thanks to those who join or renew at Lifetime, Golden Horseshoe, or Silver Buckle and Business/Club membership levels.

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