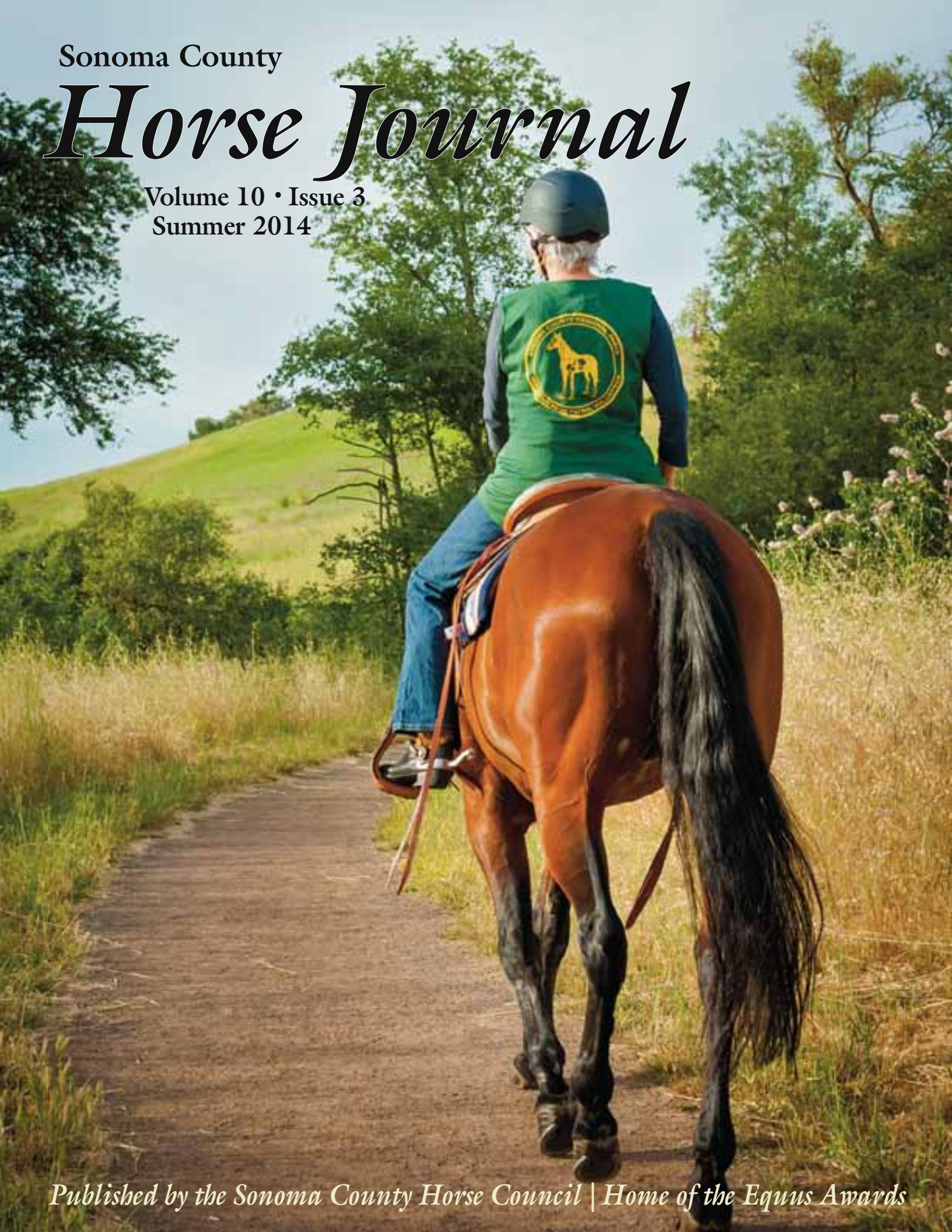


Sonoma County

# *Horse Journal*

Volume 10 • Issue 3  
Summer 2014



*Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council | Home of the Equus Awards*



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**Sonoma County****Horse Journal**

Volume 10 • Issue 3 • Summer 2014

*Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council – Home of the Equus Awards***Inside this Issue**

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

Linn Eikenberry and her twenty-six year old Quarter Horse Billy captured on patrol in Crane Creek Regional Park. Read more about Linn and Billy, and about other older horses, in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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## A Message from the President



Dear Sonoma County Equestrians,

We all know that horses and mules are an important part of American heritage and that they continue to enrich our lives every day. It is truly a blessing to be able to spend time with our equine friends and to enjoy the splendor of Sonoma County's countryside in their company. But growing urbanization, governmental spending cutbacks, and governmental rules and regulations all place challenges on the sustainability of the equine way of life in this county. Your Horse Council is dedicated to helping Sonoma County horsemen and women overcome these challenges.

There are two important ways to get the attention of governmental policy makers: 1) votes, and 2) economic importance. Believe it or not, the Sonoma County equine community has both.

We know that there are more than 25,000 horses and mules in this county and I think it is fair to say that there are probably fifteen

to twenty thousand horse owners, and many more thousands of people involved in businesses supporting the equine industry. Twenty to twenty-five thousand votes represent potential political clout. I say "potential" because if our elected officials don't know that we exist or that we care about the equine industry, we won't have any real political influence.

Your Horse Council provided a grant to Sonoma State University to conduct an updated economic impact study of the equine industry in Sonoma County. That report will be out soon and it will be posted on our website. You will be able to see the results at [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org). The results are very impressive and demonstrate the importance of the equine industry as an economic engine for Sonoma County's economy. Here are some highlights: In 2013 there were approximately 26,217 horses and other equines in Sonoma County and their presence generates an estimated \$613 million in business revenues. These business revenues support over 7,760 jobs across hundreds of industries in Sonoma County, and provide almost \$12 million per year to county and city governments in taxes. The equine and grape industries are the two largest contributors to the agricultural sector of this county's economy. These figures will get some attention.

Please show your support for the work that we are doing for the benefit of all horsemen and women in this county by joining the Horse Council. Go to our website, click on membership and sign up now. It is not expensive, but it is important to preserving the equestrian way of life in Sonoma County.

Ron Malone, President

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MAY 10, 2014- NOVATO HORSEMEN'S CSHA GYMKHANA  
Judge Casey Raubach

MAY 24 & MAY 25- WATCH US RUN STATE BENEFIT JUNCTION CITY

JUNE 7, 2014- STATE BENEFIT CERE'S CA GYMKHANA  
Judge Linda Quattlebaum

JUNE 14, 2014- REGION ONE CSHA AT NOVATO HORSEMEN'S  
Judge Casey Raubach

JUNE 29, 2014- REGION ONE CSHA GYMKHANA  
at Sebastopol Wranglers. Judge Linda Quattlebaum

JULY 12, 2014- NOVATO HORSEMEN'S CSHA GYMKHANA  
Judge Linda Quattlebaum

AUGUST 17, 2014- NOVATO HORSEMEN'S CSHA GYMKHANA  
Judge Linda Quattlebaum

AUGUST 24, 2014- SEBASTOPOL WRANGLERS CSHA GYMKHANA  
Judge Linda Quattlebaum

SEPTEMBER 6, 2014- DOUBLE POINT REGION ONE  
at Sebastopol Wranglers arena. Judge Linda Quattlebaum

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## Sonoma County Horse Council at Work

# Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Greg Harder, Vice President



Though the temperature was in the triple digits and without much of a wind, the mighty few of us gathered to hear a presentation from Steve Meacham about LandPaths. A former marketing consultant, Steve sits on the LandPaths Board of Directors

With all the open space we have and parks to ride in, LandPaths is well known among the trail riders in the group. Did they open that park? Is the trail done? Did LandPaths buy

that? So the next logical question for me is this: Who is LandPaths? And what do they do?

Steve educated us to the mission of his organization. The mission statement says it all: LandPaths' mission is to foster a love of the land in Sonoma County. LandPaths creates ways for people to experience the beauty, understand the value, and assist in healing the land in their local communities.

LandPaths helps manage, rehabilitate, furnish open space with trails, and oversees land that is in transition from private ownership to public usage. Many of the areas that are open for riding have passed from a family, to a conservation group, to a government agency such as Sonoma County. LandPaths acts as an interim custodian.

When Steve talked about the youth of our county, it really hit home. Think about it, most of the children that we are seeing around have no idea what nature, wildlife, and ecology are because they are stuck in the asphalt/concrete jungle. How are we going to have our children become stewards of the land if they have no connection to or idea of what we are talking about? LandPaths helps our citizens to become actively involved in taking care of our environment. There are dedicated outings for the children to hike, listen, and learn about the nature in "them thar hills." Places like Willow Creek People Powered Park, Bohemia Ecological Preserve, Grove of Old Trees, Paulin Creek Open Space Preserve, Bayer Farm Neighborhood Park & Gardens are all used to get people off the couch, turn the TV off, and experience the wonder and splendor of Sonoma County.

Two specific programs, In Our Own BackYard (IOOBY) and Owl Camp stand out. IOOBY brings the kids out to the same spot during all four seasons so the students can see how nature reacts to weather. The sessions are hands on learning (the best kind), as well as reflection and observation. The end game creates a connection to Mother Earth, and oh yeah, the learning activities are based on the California State Science standards.

The other program is Owl Camp. This is a day program that brings the city kids to the country. It's a great opportunity to have fun in nature safely—you know, the way we did it when we were kids. There are college educated, trained outdoor educators there to facilitate the activities and fun!

Sorry for the rant about the kids, as a former Ag teacher I am

passionate about creating opportunity for our children. After all we have to invest the time and effort to be sure they grow up as good, honest, hard-working adults because they will be responsible for our Social Security payments.

There are plenty of opportunities with LandPaths for us to enjoy and give back. Virtually all the sweat equity is put in by volunteers. The Bayer Garden in the Roseland area is an example. The day after the land donation was complete, volunteers had a vegetable garden planted and it has grown to a full blown community garden complete with weekly socialization and a harvest festival.

The presentation was for seventy minutes, and questions lasted another thirty. This is a tremendous resource open to us. We should volunteer to help and work with LandPaths to enhance our equine experience. The land is there we just have to get it up and running. I strongly urge you to visit their web site [www.landpaths.org](http://www.landpaths.org). I have not done this community effort justice in this small editorial. The opportunities for you and your children are bountiful. Please take advantage of what this organization has to offer.

Next time I think we need to deal with the lack of hay supply and start figuring out how we are gonna get through next winter without having to sell the milk cow. See you then.

Happy Trails,  
Greg



### Greg Harder

Financial Advisor

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*The Equine Esquire*

Column editor Patrice Doyle, Attorney at Law, Board of Directors

## Problems with a Handshake: Enforcing the Oral Contract

Many deals have been made simply on a smile and a handshake, especially in the farming, ranching, and horse communities. A person's word had integrity and was equally as good as a signature. This method of transacting can work fine, but unfortunately when a deal goes south it can be extremely difficult to prove the existence and terms of the oral contract.

***Proving the existence and terms of the oral contract***

To be legally enforceable, a contract must have the following elements: 1) an offer, 2) an acceptance; 3) mutual assent to be bound, and 4) consideration supporting the contract. The one that often hammers the death blow to an oral contract is the "mutual assent to be bound" element. Before the contract will be considered enforceable, the party seeking enforcement must prove not only that the other person agreed to be bound, but that the parties agreed on the essential terms related to that contract. Such terms might include price, interest rate, the payment amount, the item to be built or numerous other terms dictated by the agreement in dispute.

Courts typically will require you to present "clear and convincing evidence" of the contract's terms, meaning that you must present dependable, concrete evidence from credible sources to prove that the truth of your claim is highly probable. It might include:

- Proof that the parties have acted in a certain way that supports the assertion of a contract (for example, services were provided by one party to the other in exchange for payment);
- Parties' statements made and actions taken during and following the formation of the oral contract, as well as prior dealings of the parties;
- Documentation - Even if there is no signed contract between the parties, there is very often other documentation to support the existence of the contract, such as correspondence (letters, emails), notes, or even draft contracts which were never signed.
- Testimony from witnesses - If there were any other persons who were present at the time the contract was struck (such as employees or family members), those persons can act as witnesses to verify the existence of the relationship. The evidence might be conflicting, so it is important to have disinterested, credible witnesses who were present during negotiations or who saw, heard or otherwise know the terms of the agreement.

The central issue of an oral contract will almost always be whether

the parties actually agreed on the material points of the contract. If they did, they can begin to battle over what it all means. If they did not, then no contract was ever formed and there is nothing to enforce.

***Contracts that must be in writing to be enforceable***

Even if you can prove the existence and terms of your oral contract, there are some contracts that must be in writing in order to be legally enforceable. California Civil Code § 1624, the Statute of Frauds, specifically describes these transactions. Generally, they are:

- Contracts that necessarily take longer than one year to complete
- Agreements to pay another's debt
- A lease lasting longer than one year, or a contract for the sale of real property.
- An agreement authorizing an agent to purchase or sell real estate, or to lease real estate for a longer period than one year.
- Contracts that last longer than a party's life
- An agreement by a purchaser of real property to pay an indebtedness secured by a mortgage.
- Contracts for over a certain amount of money

As with many legal rules, there are exceptions to the requirements of a written contract under the Statute of Frauds. If you do not have a written agreement for one of the transactions described above, there may be an exception that applies to your particular facts.

***Statute of limitations—Timeline for filing a lawsuit***

If you are satisfied that you have valid oral contract and one which will survive a Statute of Frauds defense, you may need to file a lawsuit to enforce your agreement. California law provides specific time limits for filing lawsuits, called statutes of limitations. The statute of limitations for breach of an oral contract is two years (CCP § 339), and four years for breach of a written contract (CCP § 337). Determining when the statute of limitations runs out is based on the date the contract was breached, which can be difficult to ascertain. Additionally, there can be minor breaches (not legally fatal) and material breaches. If you have any doubts about how to calculate the time you have to file, it's important to seek legal advice, rather than risk forfeiting your right to bring legal action.

***Summary***

People enter into handshake contracts, or oral contracts, instead of getting it in writing, for all sorts of reasons, none of which are usually good enough to forego a written agreement. Time and expense can often be saved by putting your agreements in writing, specifying the parties' respective obligations and detailing the remedies for breach. If you need assistance enforcing an oral contract, or in drafting an agreement, Patrice Doyle can offer the necessary legal guidance.



*Patrice Doyle is an associate attorney at Kornblum Cochran Erickson Harbison, L.L.P., and has been an avid horsewoman since childhood. She can be of assistance in guiding you through equine-related legal issues. Contact her at (707) 544-9006 or [www.kcehlaw.com](http://www.kcehlaw.com).*

*Readers should seek legal counsel to determine how the law applies to their particular circumstances.*

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## Sonoma County Events

# Farm and Ranch Readiness—Emergency Preparedness Fair Atwood Ranch, May 4, 2014

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Treasurer



Photo: Melania Mahoney

*Dr John Madigan of UC Davis lectures as first responders demonstrate how to handle a down horse*

Atwood Ranch in Glen Ellen hosted an event geared toward educating the public in how to be prepared in an emergency, specifically geared toward the farm and ranch community. Organizations and agencies represented at the event included UC Davis, several Sonoma County fire agencies, city and county governments, and the American Red Cross.

Sonoma County is a beautiful place to live and play, and an ideal locale for enjoying our pets and livestock. It is also a spot susceptible to a variety of natural disasters, including earthquake, fire, and floods. And while we love our miles of riding trail, there is always the chance of running into trouble in a remote area. Our county has a number of emergency responders to handle our human population in the event of a disaster or accident, but not all the responders are trained to handle large animals. We also do not have an organized plan for evacuating or sheltering our ranch animal population in an emergency, or to re-unite these animals with their owners. This event brought together those who have experience in putting these plans in place and those who would be involved in carrying out those plans.

Several staff members of UC Davis were on hand, and a VERT (Veterinary Emergency Response Team) vehicle was used in several demonstrations. Dr John Madigan gave an informative talk and demonstration of the handling of the down horse (in this demo, the "horse" was down in the VERT trailer), and vertical lift/drag. A life-sized fiberglass horse was used for the demo, and, aside from losing both ears during the process, was efficiently removed from the trailer with devices known as "glides" and brought to an upright position with the use of a sling (Note: Both ears were successfully re-attached after the demo; it's good to have veterinary staff on hand). Dr Eric Davis discussed safety considerations of the movement of livestock—behavior and handling, including chemical capture. Hint:

an animal tranquilized by dart is apt to run, so be aware of your environment and hazards when this method is used! Dr Claudia Sonder discussed heat stress indicators—your horse's mental state (Has it changed? Is your horse alert or dull?), respiratory rate, dry mucous membranes and gut sounds—as well as demonstrating where to check for your horse's heart rate and gut sounds.

Dr Madigan is the director of UC Davis' International Animal Welfare Training Institute (IAWTI, [www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/iawti](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/iawti)), whose mission is "to facilitate training, education and dialogue for animal welfare by bringing together veterinarians, animal scientists, and other stakeholders to improve animal wellbeing." IAWTI deputy director Tracey Stevens was also on hand for the Fair. Dr Eric Davis is an associate with IAWTI and is recognized for his contributions in rural veterinary services. Dr Claudia Sonder is the director of the UC Davis Center for Equine Health ([www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh/](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh/)),

whose mission is "advancing the health, well-being, performance and veterinary care of horses through research, education and public service."

The VERT vehicle is part of the UC Davis Veterinary Emergency Response Team program, dedicated to providing a community resource for animal-related emergencies and disasters. The team is part of the Medical Reserve Corp, a civilian volunteer organization sponsored by the Office of the Surgeon General. Their specially-equipped trailer includes a two-ton winch, a glide and two slips for moving down horses, and lifting technology including the Large Animals Lift and the Anderson Sling.

The UC Davis team focused on dealing with large animals in an emergency. Several county agencies were on hand to discuss and



Photo: Melania Mahoney

*From left: Tracey Stevens of UC Davis, Julie Atwood (event hostess), Glen Ellen firefighter Lisa Hardy, Dr Claudia Sonder, Sonoma County 1st District Supervisor Susan Gorin, UC Davis student volunteers*





demonstrate general public safety programs concerns in disasters and emergencies. Representatives of Cal Fire, Sonoma Valley, and Glen Ellen fire districts, and the Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services Department were on hand, as well as the American Red Cross. Fire extinguishers were discussed and demonstrated (Do you know what the ratings mean?). My take-away—the acronym PASS: Pull the Pin, Aim, Squeeze the trigger, and Sweep the fire. Roberta MacIntyre, Assistant Chief Fire Marshall, did point out that, although fire extinguishers should be present in your barn area, for a larger Class A fire in your barn a ready and abundant supply of water is your best friend as fire extinguishers have a very limited range. Class A, incidentally, means “stuff” is burning—paper, wood, etc—as opposed to liquid chemicals such as gasoline, or an electrical fire. Water is not your friend in a chemical or electrical fire!

A question-and-answer session ended the presentation portion of the fair, with the representatives of the various agencies and organizations fielding questions from the audience. Panelists included the UC Davis veterinary staff, a representative from the American Red Cross, fire agencies, Assistant Chief Fire Marshal Roberta MacIntyre, and Sonoma County 1st District Supervisor Susan Gorin.

Roberta MacIntyre noted that during the first six to ten hours of a large-scale disaster, you are likely to be your own first responder, so it pays to be prepared! Dr. Sonder offered some suggestions specific to horse owners: 1) Have a photo of your horse and any identifying marks such as tattoos or brands, together with contact and medical information and proof of ownership in an easily accessible plastic bag. 2) In case of evacuation, braid a name tag (such as a luggage tag) into your horse's mane. 3) Microchipping is available for horses, and a microchipped horse is less likely to be euthanized even if the owner can't immediately be found.

One hoped-for outcome of the Fair is to pull together a county-wide plan to incorporate large animal rescue with the existing first-responder teams. Our local emergency response teams will tackle anything, but most team members do not have large animal experience, so having a large-animal team in place to work with the other teams will help ensure the safety of both the animals and the first responders. Knowing how to handle a down animal and being aware of safe handling of the animal (stay out of the kick zone!) will minimize stress for the animal and make the environment safer for rescue personnel. Educating the animal-owning public about emergency preparation helps the safety of the animals and also makes the first responders' job easier. Knowing that an emergency plan exists might also discourage rescue efforts by well-meaning but unauthorized good Samaritans who may show up at a disaster or emergency site with trailers or other equipment



Photo: Melania Mahoney

Dr. Claudia Sonder uses an Atwood Ranch horse to demonstrate how to check your horse's vital signs

and impede the efforts of the first responders by interfering with their efforts or adding to traffic problems.

A starting point for the effort will be the building of a database of Sonoma County veterinarians. Future resources might include an emergency hotline such as the swarm hotlines used by beekeepers to report bee incidents. Having one or multiple VERT vehicles in the county, and personnel trained in their use, is another goal.

For those interested in pursuing the topic further, the IAWTI provides two courses in Emergency Responder Training. The first is titled “First Responder Guidelines for Equine Emergencies: Level 1” and the second is “Loose Livestock and Injured Wildlife and Emergency Animal Euthanasia”. More information is available at [www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/iawti/emergency\\_preparedness/dhs\\_trng.cfm#Equine%20Emergencies](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/iawti/emergency_preparedness/dhs_trng.cfm#Equine%20Emergencies).

As this effort is still at the point of conception, as of this writing, there is not one designated contact person for those interested in more information or in helping out. One place to start is the Sonoma County Fire & Emergency Services Department. Their website is <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Fire-and-Emergency-Services/>.

A wealth of information is available at the websites included above. Additional sources of information include:

- Cal Fire: [www.fire.ca.gov/](http://www.fire.ca.gov/)
- UC Davis Veterinary Emergency Response Team: [vetmed.ucdavis.edu/clubs/vert/](http://vetmed.ucdavis.edu/clubs/vert/)

In addition to the educational demonstrations and discussions, the various agencies had booths set up with information and giveaways, as well as several vendors with related products and services. The Atwood Ranch provided a spectacular setting in the vineyards and utilized their beautiful barn for booth setup. Julie Atwood proved to be a gracious and enthusiastic hostess, and I'm sure I am joined by all the agencies represented at the fair when I express my thanks to her for pulling this event together to discuss and call attention to this important topic.

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten, and now enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. Joan supports her horse hobby by providing bookkeeping services (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at [cowdex.blogspot.com](http://cowdex.blogspot.com). To reach Joan, email her at [joanras795@gmail.com](mailto:joanras795@gmail.com).



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## Sonoma County Authors

# In the Field with Horses: A Conversation with Author Lisa Walters

Written by Tiffany MacNeil

Lisa Walters, founder of the EquuSatori Center in Sebastopol, has woven together science, common sense, and personal experience to illuminate our relationships with horses. She has just written a book, *In the Field with Horses: Exploring the Horse-Human Connection*, and generously agreed to share some of her insights.

## ***When did horses first become a part of your life?***

I was born with a fascination for horses, and had a transformational experience when I was nine years old. A family friend allowed me to spend time with his mare that summer, and then gave her to me as a gift. The countless hours I spent just being with this horse laid the initial foundation for understanding the interconnected nature of humans and horses.

## ***How are humans and horses connected?***

Our bodies are constantly reading and responding to our environment, just like horses. When you are in a state of presence, your awareness expands and you are better able to notice subtle things. Horses live in the present, and respond according to what they perceive in their field of awareness both physically and energetically. Modeling what they feel is one way they communicate with each other. Horses reflect our own energy back to us, and thereby provide a sort of mirror for self-reflection and self-evaluation.

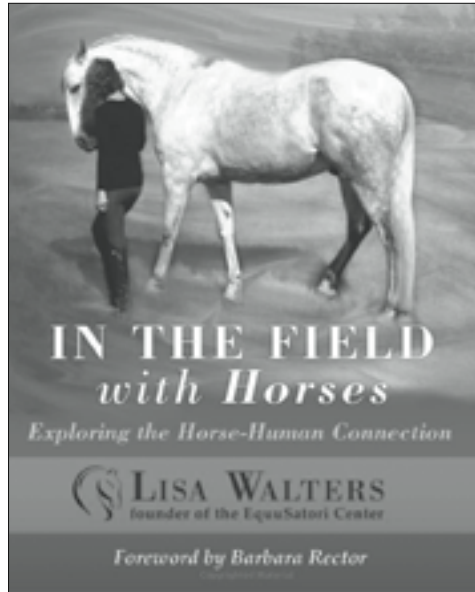
## ***What is the "field" you refer to in your book?***

I'm not only talking about being with horses in the physical field, I am also referring to the energetic field that we share with horses. When we connect with them while in a state of Presence and Coherence, we find an additional level of connectivity and communication. This type of connectivity is more heart-centered than head-centered. It is an expanded state of awareness and really includes all of life. The Rumi poem that I open with beautifully describes this field:

Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing  
and right-doing there is a field.  
I'll meet you there.  
When the soul lies down in that grass  
The world is too full to talk about.

## ***Is there scientific proof that a horse-human connection exists?***

Definitely. I initiated a research project with the HeartMath Institute in Boulder Creek, Ca. Together, we designed and implemented research to determine if there was any measurable energetic synchronization between horses and humans. It was exciting to find that Coherence (a scientific term for the peak performance state where the brainwaves become in phase with the beat-to-beat changes in the heart) looks almost identical in horses and



humans. We also discovered that horses stay in a state of coherence most of the time. In our research, the horses influenced the humans to shift toward coherence, more than the other way around. We saw the most synchronization between the horses and the humans when the humans were sending feelings of appreciation toward the horse. This happened in spite of whether the horse knew the human before, and even if the human was across the arena from the horse. The evidence certainly suggests a connection beyond the physical. This helps to explain why we feel good both physically and emotionally when we are around horses.

## ***How did you discover this heightened sense of awareness?***

I started to notice that when I was in a peaceful state of presence around my

horses, we shared very subtle communications. I engaged in relationship with my horses with a sense of curiosity and play. In this state, there were just too many coincidences to ignore or doubt that something quite profound was happening. The more I believed, trusted, and stayed curious, the more extraordinary things would happen.

## ***Can you describe one of these coincidences?***

Yes, often I will think about the horse I want to ride, and that horse will be waiting for me at the gate when I arrive at the barn. Or I will go out to the field, connect with the lead horse and ask him with mental pictures and words to bring the other horses into the barn, and he does it. These are probably less coincidence than they are evidence of our connectedness in the field that connects us all.

## ***What would you consider the potential of this work with horses?***

We have an opportunity to raise the status of horses and understand them as sentient beings. Horses are excellent teachers in the realm of subtle awareness in relationship, as well as the interconnectedness of all life. I have found that the more I learn about horses, the more I learn about myself.

Lisa works with individuals, helping them learn how to ride from a more connected place, how to read and understand the language of horse, and other related programs. More information can be found at [www.equusatori.com](http://www.equusatori.com). Her book, *In the Field with Horses: Exploring the Horse-Human Connection*, is available at Amazon.com.

*Tiffany MacNeil creates and facilitates inspirational experiences for individuals and groups, with nature and horses as her partners. Her business background, lifelong connection to animals, and involvement with yoga form a diverse collective from which to draw. She is the Founder of Rocks & Rivers Outdoor Adventures ([www.rocksandrivers.com](http://www.rocksandrivers.com)), based in Santa Rosa. This fall Tiffany is offering a class using Walters' book. See announcement p 10.*

## Sonoma County Events

## A Wine Country Mini Cavalia

Written by Wanda Smith



Sue Tomasini performs bridleless Western Dressage

On a warm, breezy Saturday afternoon in early May, the California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC) hosted the first of its capital fund raising campaigns at the Draper Ranch in Santa Rosa. Guests came from across California and as far away as Oklahoma and Texas. And many were relatively new to the horse world. Our goal was to present "a taste of CEPEC," which means we aimed to portray the quality and versatility of entertainment and venues that CEPEC will someday host. From the guests' comments, it appeared we achieved our goal.

The event began with guests being welcomed to the Ranch with complementary CEPEC visor and drink tickets. They then proceeded to a BBQ lunch provided by *Simply Scrumptious* catering. Grilled ribs, chicken, corn, salads, chili, and cupcakes were enjoyed by all in the reception hall and garden. The wine, which was donated by Paint Horse Winery and beer by Lagunitas Brewery, provided an appreciated complement to the lunch.

After lunch and throughout the day, guests could peruse the Silent Auction items in the reception hall. The auction showcased over thirty-three items including an oil painting, giclées, and prints of horses, vacation lodging in Hawaii and Puerto Rico, as well as tickets to a Giants game, the San Francisco Opera, Jack London Park's *Broadway Under the Stars*, ballooning over Sonoma County, a hosted day at the Sonoma County Fair Races, and the Grand Prix Races at Sonoma County Parkway. Donors of other auction items included: Christopher Queen Galleries, Jay Palm's Saddle Shop, Rosso, Palazzo, and Wild Goat Bistro restaurants, The Kenwood Press, and Zanetti Performance Horses.

Visitors got a glimpse of venues and events planned for the CEPEC complex which were displayed on tri-fold posters. They included Western and English riding, Polo, Carriage Driving, and Eventing, as well as facilities such as a conditioning track, veterinary and education centers, horse camp ground, and a museum.

The band *Whiskey and Honey* rocked the afternoon away with the

country music of Miranda Lambert, Zack Brown, Blake Shelton, Lady Antebellum, and Whiskey and Honey's newly released CD. The female fiddler played the *Devil Went Down to Georgia* so hot, it felt like the grounds would catch fire! *Whiskey and Honey* was chosen for The CEPEC Benefit because they are one of the few bay area groups that play popular country rock with both male and female lead singers. They also taught line dancing, which many spectators "tried to learn." It was great fun and everyone loved *Whiskey and Honey's* music.

During band intermissions, entertainment was provided by youths from the *Petaluma Junior Drill Team* and the Novato *Morning Star Vaulters* and by Western Dressage rider Susan Tomasini. The kids on the drill team were immaculately turned out with their crisp outfits, glittered horses, and synchronized riding that charmed the audience. Susan's Dressage exhibition was also impressive, but when she removed her horse's bridle and repeated their Dressage performance, the crowd was awed. As if that wasn't exciting enough, the eleven vaulters left everyone breathless. When one of the smallest girls scaled a huge horse and then did a flip causing me to say "Oh my God," the fellow next to me responded, "I say that every time I see her perform. She's my daughter." He was a definitely a very proud dad. The grand vaulting finale was a back flip off the back of a horse by the oldest member of the vaulting team. A spectator commented that he should audition for *Cavalia*.



Morning Star Vaulters

The Draper Ranch was a great venue for the event, because of its BBQ facility, concert lawn, gardens, covered reception area, and arena providing a welcome relief from the afternoon sun. The many garden alcoves allowed guests to sit surrounded by the vast array of beautiful flowers and lovely water ways. One attendee was heard commenting, "This ranch is so beautiful, in my next life I want to come back as a horse and live here."

As the sun dropped behind the Draper barns, the event ended with tunes of *Whiskey and Honey* and the events of the day being replayed in our heads.

CEPEC would like to thank the event participants, sponsors, donors, volunteers, band, caterers, performers, and especially the Drapers for providing a lovely venue for the CEPEC Spring Fund-raiser. Additional photos of the benefit can be viewed at [www.cepec.us/benefitphotos.htm](http://www.cepec.us/benefitphotos.htm).

*Wanda has owned horses for over four decades, managed a Quarter Horse breeding ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains and in Guerneville, and showed Cutting horses. She has recently branched out into the Dressage world with her horse Chime. Wanda is the author of Horses of the Wine Country and the Executive Director of CEPEC ([www.cepec.us](http://www.cepec.us)).*





## Readers Write

# Old Man and His Friends



Bev and Wyndham

I suppose if I am to tell tales of the Old Man (also known as Wyndham), I would have to begin with Curt. Curt was my dear husband for twenty-six years. He encouraged me to buy Wyndham, put up with my desire to Event, bought me a truck, encouraged me to co-purchase a trailer with my dear friend Anja, and encouraged me to spend far too much money on the "other man" as he was fond of saying. When I decided to pursue trail riding as well, he was concerned about my going out alone, which sometimes happened. So he bought a mountain bike in a garage sale, and announced he would go with me! One of these ventures proved to be very interesting.

We arrived and unloaded at Shiloh without incident. Wyndham was becoming used to the bicycle, and to Curt. We headed out up the long incline, Wyndham and I taking our time. Curt, however, wanted to show how fit he was at sixty-nine and rode ahead as fast as he could go (What happened to protecting me when I was out alone?). I didn't mind. I could ride quietly through the forest, talking to the Old Man, watching his ears move to listen to me, then to listen to the forest sounds around him. He was always more alert when we rode without another rider and horse. Guess he figured it was up to him to find the "cougars" before they found him.

There's a corner at Shiloh where the trail is fairly steep and actually doubles back on itself. In this almost island created by the switchback is a bench. It is a shady spot, and not very visible from below. A group of elderly hikers had left the bench and headed up the steep incline only to have one of their group slip and fall. They were standing in the trail, waiting for the one who'd fallen to recover himself, and get up. And as they waited, they were talking and gesturing and laughing. I could hear them as I approached. I was also wondering where Curt was. As we neared the bend, one could see the people, but only their heads, up above us. Wyndham thought that was pretty weird—floating human heads out in the

Written by Beverly Coons

forest! He snorted and looked, but kept his head, didn't panic. At least not yet.

As we came within view of the bench, I discovered Curt. He had been sitting on the ground, in the shade, just below the bench. He stood up, abruptly, and spoke, "Oh there you are!" Okay, Wyndham thought, now it's time to panic. First heads floating, now a goblin rising from the ground. I'm outta here. With an amazing move that left me sideways in the saddle, he whirled and made a mad dash downhill. Curt was yelling, "What are you doing?" (That should've been obvious). I was frantically trying to stay on, while yelling, "Whoa! Whoa!"

Somewhere in the next hundred yards or so, I righted myself, reclaimed the reins, and stopped my fleeing horse. I coaxed Wyndham back up the hill, lecturing my husband about not startling Wyndham. Wyndham discovered it was only Dad, and relaxed a little, but still kinda tiptoed by the hikers, blowing and snorting. They ooohed and aaahed and commented on what a pretty horse he was.

Curt stayed with me through the rest of the ride, riding in front, and Wyndham relaxed. After all, now he had another "horse" to lead the way. He didn't have to worry about cougars or floating heads any more.

*Bev Coons is a retired middle school English teacher, enjoying her new "career" as volunteer, gardener, and horse woman.*

### Course Announcement

#### Aligning with Horses: Body & Breath Awareness

**Presenter: Tiffany McNeill**

(See related article, p 8)

Horses inspire a sense of wonder, grace, and more when we allow a deeper, subtler connection. Through hands-on horse experiences discover increased awareness, presence, and energy. Drawing on the traditions of yoga to align body and breath, and with the horses as your guides, learn how to more fully and joyfully live in the present. Those interested in yoga and/or meditation will be able to explore another facet of their practice. No horse experience necessary. Course fee includes the book [In the Field with Horses: Exploring the Horse-Human Connection](#) by [Lisa Walters](#).

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## Readers Write

### Billy

Written by Linn Eikenberry

I have had a love and passion for horses ever since I was a young girl. I was very lucky to live with my family on my maternal grandparent's small horse ranch in Modesto from the second grade through seventh. During that time my Grandpie, Ralph Siegman, took me on cattle drives, a camping trip to Yosemite with the Turlock Horsemen Association and many other adventures. My favorite horse was a black gelding with white socks named Shorty. I loved riding him through the peach orchards and the five miles into Modesto to get a hamburger. My friends and I spent many hours daily, or as much as possible with our horses, riding, grooming, and braiding manes and tails. A fabulous childhood for a horse crazy girl!

After I married my husband Dan, we moved to Santa Rosa and had two sons. Grandpie bought me a little black horse who was so gentle we named him Shorty, after my childhood favorite. I was thrilled. I had several other horses through the years, and I took lessons from Sheila Smith. My lucky day was when I had the opportunity to purchase Drift Bar Win, a registered Quarter Horse; Billy was a perfect name. I bought him November 1, 1991. He was six years old, bay, and sixteen hands. We have slightly more than an acre, so I kept Billy at my house where he still lives. He has his own pasture and barn, but finds himself slightly annoyed by having to share with our dog Cookie. Billy was an awesome pleasure horse. I enjoyed showing him for many years in Western Pleasure, Showmanship, Halter, and Hunter Under Saddle. But eventually the number of local shows declined. Because I stopped riding, and because I had a hard time keeping up financially, my husband convinced me to sell Billy. I ended up giving him to Heidi Thompson.

I soon realized what a mistake I had made. After a couple of weeks I was broken hearted and the tears wouldn't or couldn't stop. I was a real mess! So Dan suggested that I call Heidi. I did, sobbing on the phone and asked if I could just keep Billy in my name. After a few moments she said, "I haven't put him in my name yet. I'm glad you love your horse, come and get him!" Billy was mine again! She was so kind and understanding.....She is an awesome lady!

Since I wasn't showing any more, I started trail riding. I rode mostly at Crane Creek Regional Park, and that is where I met my second angel, JoDean Nicolette. Although she was running when I met her, she told me about becoming a park mounted assistance unit volunteer. After that, sometimes I saw her at Crane Creek



Linn and Billy circa 1993 showing in a halter class

riding her horse Jimmie. I contacted John Ryan at the Sonoma County Regional Parks office and joined. Soon I rode in all the beautiful regional parks we have in Sonoma County. At first I was nervous about the bikes in Annadel and the other state parks, but Billy was so bomb proof on the trail that I eventually tried out for the state parks mounted unit, too. Now Billy and I ride in all the parks. And the bikes are no problem. Billy is now twenty-six years old and doing very well. Trail patrol is perfect for him. We can go at our own pace, and he sees lots of new and interesting things. He loves hanging with other horses. I avoid some trails that I know might be too hard on him, but we both love riding the enchanting trails and meeting new friends. We look forward to seeing you out there soon!

Added note: The only thing I've ever wanted was to have my own horse. I must have been out of my mind to give Billy up. I learned a very valuable lesson, and I am so grateful to Heidi for giving Billy back. Thank you, Heidi.

*Linn is a hairstylist and lifelong horse woman. She and Billy patrol for both the state and regional parks.*



Photo: Marcie Lewis

On patrol in 2014



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## Trails and Open Spaces On Elder Trails

Column editor Sarah Reid



*Verdi at twenty-four years old, "Best Condition" awarded Napa Wine Country LD thirty-mile endurance ride*

When I was a kid, a twenty-year-old horse was considered really old. Ancient. A pasture-ornament. Retired. Done. Didn't get out at all. We didn't hear of horses in their thirties or even forties. Now, only a few years later, we know so much more about equine health management, that horses are being ridden competitively on the trail well into the late twenties and beyond. Trail riding can be a great form of exercise for an older horse, as long as they have the mind and ability for it. Always know the limitations of your trail horse, and consult any changes or discomforts with your vet. You, your horse, and your vet know your horse the best. Your horse will tell you if he needs more or less hills, more or less rocks, more or less rest stops...if you listen.

### **Verdi: The arena horse made trail horse**

My first experience with elder horse management came with my other horse, Verdi. He had been my competitive Hunter show horse, was excellent in any fenced area. He was utterly stupid on trails. That abruptly changed when he was sixteen years old, for whatever reason. We went out on trail with an experienced quiet trail mentor, and trails became our theme. Within a year or so, Verdi displayed discomfort at the right lead canter in the arena. After consultation with Dr Kerry Ridgeway, it was determined that Verdi had arthritis in his right hip. Dr Ridgeway said the best thing for him was to continue doing hill work on the trails, to help keep the hip strong, and add joint supplements to his daily goodies. Verdi responded well to the combination of MSM, Glucosamine, and Chondroitin Sulfate, and exercise according to his daily comfort level.

Just four years later, at the "ancient" age of twenty, Verdi and I entered our first Limited Distance Endurance Ride (LD). He loved it. His body thrived on the conditioning. I realized that he needed to have exercise five days a week at minimum to keep from being sore. We rotated activities: arena, liberty play, trails. Exercise management was the key. If left alone in his stall-with-run for more than two days in a row, he would be stiff and sore.

We continued to enjoy as many as four or five LD rides a year till

he was almost twenty-five years old. It was common to hear the ride vet ask if he was about ten years old ... and me smile and admit his ripe old age. He was endurance fit all year-round and had completed a four-hour trail ride in Southern Marin County the day before he died. He and his trail buddy were ready to do another couple of hours when we arrived back at the trailer. He had competed for Best Condition and won on several LD rides the year before. His death had nothing at all to do with age or trail riding. In fact, the staff at UC Davis couldn't believe his age when they looked at how fit and healthy he appeared.

### **And now, another old horse**

Ten years has gone by with my current horse, Mustang Oreo, turning twenty in May this year. In the wild, Mustangs are ancient at nine or ten. As I carefully watch for age changes, I celebrate how happy and strong he is. There seems to be a slight change affecting him this winter, intermittent, and managed by what trails we choose (not rocky Rough Go two days in a row). I find myself again managing an "ancient" horse, and hoping for another ten years as his partner on the trails. He, too, is on joint supplements, and any treats he is offered (Clif Bars, trail mix, granola bars, PB&J, an orange ...). We participate in a variety of physical activities as well: arena rides, liberty play, both slow and fast trail rides. I find joy in every day I have with him, especially together out on trails. As long as he continues to be sound, seems to enjoy the rides, and jumps in the trailer, we will keep seeing you out on trails. Sometimes chasing and passing mountain bikes. Other days, moseying along quietly looking at details of wildflowers, listening to coyotes, and visiting with other trail users.

### **Other "Ancients" on trail**

A friend whose Tennessee Walker helped mentor Oreo and teach him about horse camping was still gaiting and galloping up the hills at Point Reyes when he was twenty-eight years old. Just try to slow him down! Recently I saw photos of a fellow CSHA trail rider in Southern California whose friend ponies her forty-year-old Arabian mare on the trails. She still loves to get out. Another friend with property in Northern California used to take both her horses with her for a week or longer stay. The late-twenty-something gelding used to plod along for a trail ride, at liberty following her on her mare and sons on an ATV. He seemed perfectly content to be included on the adventure. Another local volunteer enjoys trail patrol rides on her twenty-eight-year-old "retired" endurance gelding.

It's all in what the horses' body and spirit can still accomplish, the same as with us. Perhaps in moderation on certain days, but out enjoying Nature at any pace. A riding buddy of mine has a ninety-three-year-old friend she is meeting to camp and trail ride with in Yosemite this summer. Another friend of mine is eighty-two-years-young, and can be seen out on local trails commonly five days a week on her horses. The message: Keep moving and have happy trails!

*Sarah Reid (Equus Award 2012) is an equestrian representative to several open space and park projects. If you would like to share trail or public land news with Sarah, or you have an idea for a story, email her at [trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*



## Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey Risk and Reward

Column editor Jessica Boyd

Like most horse owners I know, I want my horses to live forever. This is not realistic, of course, and like all relationships, loving these beings is fraught with the risk of losing them someday. Some far away and distant day, I say, with all my fingers and toes crossed.

Calabar is now fourteen and Lena is thirteen which, as I tell the curious non-horse people I meet regularly, is not that old as far as horses go.

"How long do horses live?" is inevitably their next question—especially those with dogs and cats who know fourteen can be very old for their animals.

"Oh, they can live into their thirties!" I smile, that answer serving as part prayer, part positive energy, covering both my horses with a protective bubble that ensures many long and healthy years.

Lena and Calabar are in very good health (that sound you hear is me knocking wood) and with only a few exceptions, we have been remarkably lucky.

Lena did colic two weeks after we got her, causing many months of poop counting after a sleepless night trying to keep her from hurling herself into stall walls and comforting her as she lay on her side moaning. That was terrifying and has thankfully never repeated to that degree. We learned in that one night—a trial by fire—to watch her and catch it before it gets bad. It does help that the lovely spotty horse seems to have gotten a bit less dramatic about things as she has aged and matured.

Calabar has had mystery injuries several times and one not-so-mystery wound two days after we got him, caused by breaking free of his paddock and running into something. He has aches and pains, likely leftovers from his racing days, but warms up through them and the bowed tendon that ended his career never seems to bother him at all.

All in all, though, we have been extremely lucky. (Knock, knock, knock...and one more knock.)



*Even at fourteen, Calabar still has a baby face*

But—just like humans—horses do eventually die and there has been more than one time I've driven into the barn to see a tarp-shrouded body and the vet's truck in the driveway. Usually, it's been really old horses but not always. Horses can be, as many of us know, magnets for disaster and their own worst enemies.

There are also horses I've known well, horses that have shaped my riding experiences and taught me, and whose passing leaves a hole in my heart—horses like Lena's half-brother Eclipse. Eclipse was nearly thirty years old and taught many a human how to ride and how to ride well. He even taught a few to cut cows well enough to win. He died last year, during the Yosemite fire, while our friends were trying to decide if he could handle the trailer ride out to safety. He made the decision for them by lying

down and passing away peacefully in his paddock. I happened to call them shortly after, checking in because of the fire, and had to sit in the truck to collect myself before an appointment after I heard he was gone. We're planning a trip up to visit them later this year and it will feel odd to be there at the ranch without him watching over things.

It's part of the risk of life, not just of owning a horse. Caring about other beings means you are in danger of losing them, that's just how it works, and that is a scary thing. Downright terrifying, in fact. I could let it paralyze me or even drive me to over-analyze everything about my horses—their diet, their water, their optimum level of exercise—all in an effort to control the time we have together on this planet. And then I could step off the curb and get hit by a bus tomorrow having spent all that energy worrying about two healthy horses instead of enjoying their beautiful spirits.

So I try really hard not to go down that road and instead take time to notice the good stuff every day. The gloss of Calabar's summer coat as he finally sheds out that fuzzy winter hair. The arch of Lena's neck and her good solid hooves. The strength in both of them, muscles flowing into movement that is comfortable and balanced.

And even so, the death of another horse always makes me go wrap my arms around Calabar's brown neck and breathe him in for as long as he will tolerate it. Lena is not much for hugging, but leaning on her and resting your cheek on her side is okay. They make me smile and turn bad days into days that at least don't completely suck.

Life is short, even if it's not. Go hug your pony.

*Jessica Boyd lives in Sonoma County and blogs with some regularity about her herd and horse adventures at Spotty Horse News (spottyhorse.blogspot.com). You can reach Jessica (and Lena and Calabar) at spottyhorse@gmail.com.*



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## Trails and Open Spaces

# Exciting New Trails Coming to Taylor Mountain Regional Park

Written by Melissa Kelley, Executive Director, Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation

"I call this area 'Rocky Top,' for obvious reasons," chuckled Ken Wells as he and I picked our way across a hilltop strewn with stones shaped like ostrich eggs. The director of the Sonoma County Trails Council, Ken was leading me on a tour of what will eventually become Colgan Creek Trail at Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve. Over the next two hours, I saw fields of wildflowers, breathtaking panoramas, and the burbling headwaters of Colgan Creek. The spectacular views made me eager for the proposed trails that will give equestrians and other visitors access to new terrain at this remarkable park.

Taylor Mountain is already familiar to many local equestrians. Sonoma County Regional Parks opened the 1,100-acre park to the public in February 2013, following its transfer from the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. Since that time, the extensive property in southeast Santa Rosa has been available to the public daily from 8am. to sunset.

This year, Sonoma County Regional Parks, the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation (the nonprofit that supports projects in the county parks) and the Sonoma County Trails Council will collaborate to expand the park's trail system. Current park visitors encounter just four miles of dirt trails, primarily old ranch roads that entail steep climbs and descents on an open hillside.

Eventually, Taylor Mountain will offer more than fifteen miles of



Equestrians and other park visitors will eventually enjoy more than 15 miles of trails at Taylor Mountain Regional Park.

primarily multi-use trails. Construction will begin this year on several of these trails, which offer the added benefit of protection from the elements as they are under canopies of oak trees.

Steve Ehret, manager of the Regional Parks Planning Division, spoke enthusiastically about the improvements park visitors will soon begin to see: "First up is a much-needed new parking lot that provides visitors with safe and convenient access from Petaluma Hill Rd," Ehret explained. "We were fortunate to

be awarded a state grant for \$750,000. These funds will help build the new parking lot and staging area south of Yolanda Avenue this year. This area also will offer bathrooms and equestrian amenities, such as hitching posts and manure bunkers.

"In the coming months, the Trails Council will host volunteer work days to construct a connecting trail that begins at the new parking lot and links to the existing trail system," Ehret added. "Sonoma County Regional Parks is counting on the Parks Foundation and the Trails Council to raise \$30,000 to help cover the expenses involved in building these new trails."

### **You can help the new trails happen**

Equestrians are widely recognized as strong supporters of our county parks. Regional Parks' Operations Manager Bert Whitaker expressed his appreciation to local horseback riders, who consistently support parks with the purchase of the annual county parks membership. "Equestrians' substantial participation in the membership program provides critical support to Sonoma County Regional Parks, including funds to maintain the equestrian staging areas throughout the county parks system," Whitaker observed. "We also are grateful to the many horseback riders who help keep our parks safe by volunteering with the Mounted Assistance Unit."

For equestrians who are interested in taking additional steps to support the new trails at Taylor Mountain Regional Park, a handful of opportunities are available:

- The nonprofit Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation is currently accepting applications for board members and is seeking representation from the equestrian community.
- Donations to help build the new trails are welcome.
- The Sonoma County Trails Council welcomes individuals or groups of volunteers to help construct the trails under the direction of experienced trail builders.

For details about the Parks Foundation or to make a donation for this project, visit <http://SonomaCountyParksFoundation.org> or contact Melissa Kelley, executive director of the Parks Foundation,



Photo: Melissa Kelley

Sarah Reid, a member of the Mounted Assistance Unit, celebrated the opening of Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space District in 2013.



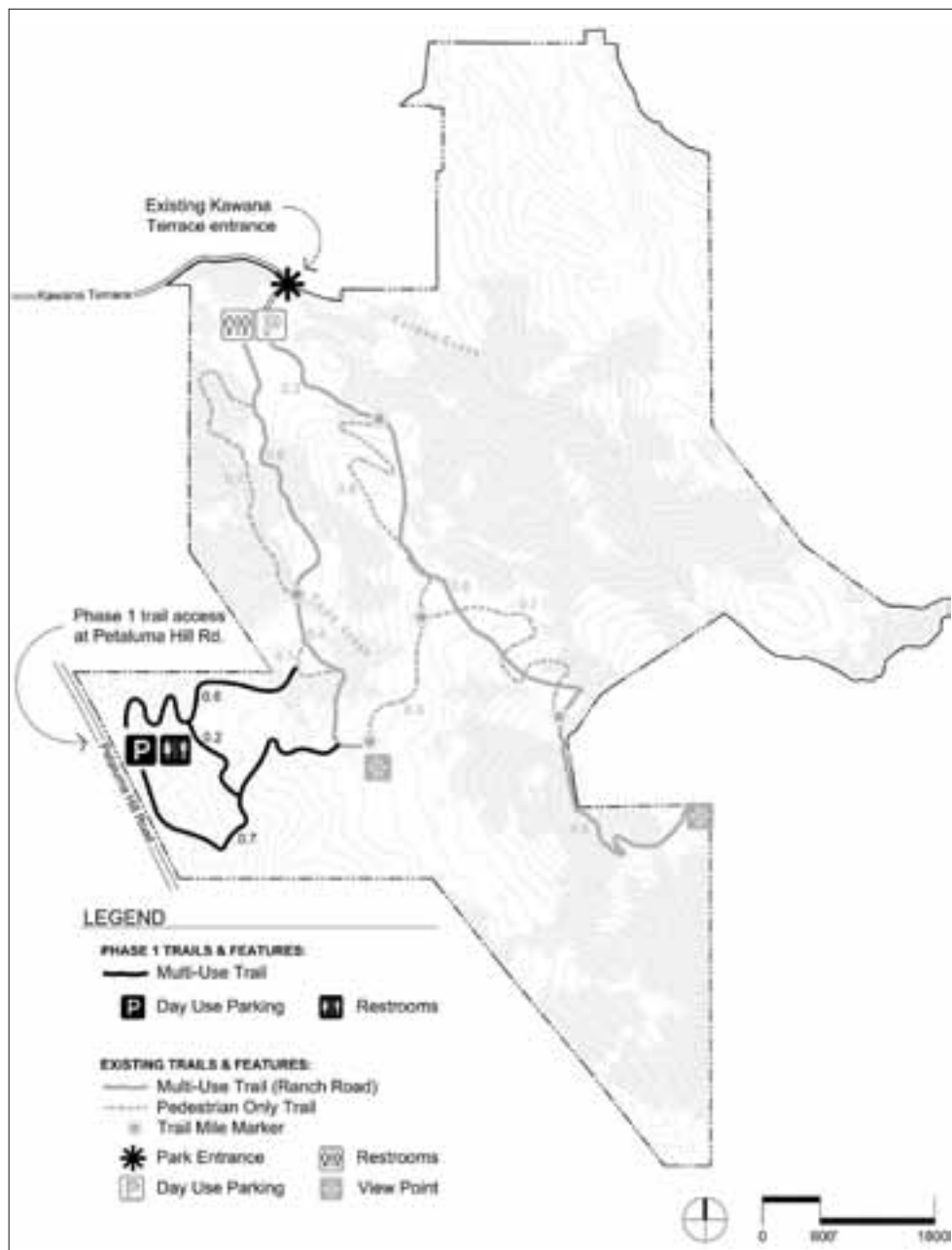
at [Melissa.kelley@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Melissa.kelley@sonoma-county.org) or (707) 565-1830. To participate in a Trails Council workday at Taylor Mountain, contact Ken Wells at [kenwells@sonic.net](mailto:kenwells@sonic.net).

#### **Additional Taylor Mountain amenities planned**

In addition to expanding the trail system, Regional Parks' managers are looking forward to constructing a new natural play area a short walk from the Petaluma Hill Rd trailhead. The natural play area will encourage children to play using natural components such as plants, logs, water, sand, boulders, hills and trees. Man-made components will be carefully integrated to support creative play in an environment that reflects the local sense of place. Also proposed for future improvements at Taylor Mountain Regional Park are low-impact campsites, picnic grounds, a visitor center and other amenities in the sections of the park close to urban boundaries.

Taylor Mountain is an exceptional property because it is located in the midst of an urban area, yet it is home to an amazing variety of natural habitats, including wetlands, grasslands, forests and woodlands. The park hosts wildlife such as deer, fox, the federally-protected California red-legged frog and even mountain lions. Forthcoming improvements will expand the recreational opportunities for human visitors, while continuing to preserve critical habitats and the mountain's scenic beauty.

*Melissa Kelley is the executive director of the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation, the nonprofit that supports Sonoma County Regional Parks' projects and programs. She enjoys hiking at Taylor Mountain, and she's been known to visit at least one county park on horseback. You can reach her at [melissa.kelley@sonoma-county.org](mailto:melissa.kelley@sonoma-county.org) or (707) 565-1830.*



Map of Taylor Mountain Regional Park showing existing trails and plans for expansion

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## Sonoma County Trainers

# Trainer Profile: Daniel Rocks—A Refreshing Approach to Dressage

Written by Patrice Doyle, Attorney at Law, Board of Directors

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Daniel Anderson Rocks. In 2010, I had the privilege of meeting Daniel. I was in a "horseless" period in my life and hadn't ridden for at least a year or so. I explored the area, looking for options to ride. One of the best phone calls I've ever made was to Daniel Anderson Rocks. He was friendly, understanding of my insecurities after my riding hiatus, and was eager to work with me. He had a nice Warmblood available for part lease, and I immediately began taking weekly lessons. What a thrill! I quickly discovered Daniel was different, in a very refreshing way. He is a trainer with the utmost compassion for the horse, but at the same time expects all that the horse and rider can give at that moment and within their abilities.

I'm now embarking on a journey with my own horse with Daniel's help. In January, I imported a three-year old Dutch Warmblood mare from Saskia van Musscher of DWH Stables in The Netherlands. One of the qualities I find most amazing in Daniel is his ability to methodically and successfully train all levels of horses (youngsters to Grand Prix), and also effectively instruct students. Most trainers are very good at one or the other, but rarely both. Please meet Daniel...

Daniel is a Dressage trainer, Grand Prix rider and lifelong competitive equestrian. He was raised in the Connecticut countryside where he was introduced to riding at the age of four. He rode Hunters as a child and adolescent before being coerced onto the Polo field by legendary Connecticut coach Hal Vita. When he was sidelined by injury he sought out Dressage as means to ease into riding again. Dan recounts his experience. "I really thought it would be no problem to just sit and ride, and get my balance back. It's embarrassing how arrogantly I dismissed the true challenge of this sport. Becoming a skilled Dressage rider is the most humbling and rewarding endeavor I have ever embarked upon."

Daniel fell in love with surmounting the endless physical and psychological obstacles presented by Dressage. He decided to put himself in full time training and has spent many years in competition and sales barns committed to pursuance of a world class education. He has traveled extensively, enjoying opportunities to study with and ride professionally for multiple international level German, Dutch, and American Dressage trainers.

Daniel combined his years of formal Dressage education,



Dan schooling Prix St George on San Luqeno, an 8yr old Andalusian owned by Wandamae Lombardi

unwavering work ethic, and common sense approach, to form Daniel Rocks Dressage. Now operating out of Woodbridge Farm in beautiful Petaluma, Daniel's program focuses on the fundamentals of Dressage. He places a strong emphasis on the genius of the training scale in strength training, responsiveness, and coordination. According to Dan, "I have developed a firm belief in the limitless power of correct Dressage training to enhance horses of all disciplines and riders of any ability."

Daniel is firmly committed to giving back to his community, specifically to Coins to Help Abandoned and Neglected Equines (CHANGE) and Cornerstone Assisted Riding & Equitherapy (CARE). Through CHANGE, he has trained several horses that came to him from rescue situations that required a huge amount of both physical and mental rehabilitation. Using Dressage,

and a lot of patience, Daniel has transformed horses that were very weak and down to skin and bones into show quality horses. This is a true testament to the power of skilled Dressage training. Daniel also shares his talents with CARE. As president of the organization, Daniel is firmly dedicated to helping students achieve not only physical strength, but also gain self-assurance, the ability to learn new skills, increased willingness to communicate and an overall better quality of life.

In closing, Daniel summarizes his philosophy and approach very well: "I love the sport of Dressage. I have come to understand that competition horses must have talent and excellent training, but that is not enough. These athletes need to be tended to psychologically as well physiologically. They need to feel secure and be confident in order to express their talent and reach their full potential. There is a level of trust between horse and rider that must be developed to allow the horse to truly excel. My team and I create a safe and loving environment for every horse we handle. We ask them to work hard and really put forth their best effort, a horse will do anything for you if they view you as a safe and trusted leader. It puts the horse into a healthy frame of mind and creates an amazing work ethic."

*Patrice Doyle is an attorney and amateur dressage rider in Sonoma County. She trains with Daniel Rocks at Woodbridge Farm in Petaluma.*

*Readers Write*

# A Feel for Fitness in Older Horses

Written by Daniel Rocks

I recently had the privilege of coaching a client through her Dressage Foundation Century Club ride and the experience has really made me think about preservation and longevity in both horse and human athletes. For those who are unfamiliar, The Century Club is reserved for competitive horse and rider pairs whose combined age is over 100. In our case the horse was twenty-six and the rider was...well, you can do the math but you'd never believe her age if you met her. Monty is a Lippizaner and my client Daisy has had him since he was two. Aside from being a heartwarming and inspirational story, it's one I really think has implications for the way we work and maintain our horses, especially in their older years. When Daisy came to me several years ago her goal was to maintain her horse and enjoy riding him at lower levels for as long as he was happy to be ridden. We were very careful in the beginning to look for any signs that Monty was struggling with the work and, aside from normal stiffness, he responded beautifully. We increased the intensity of his work slowly and watched his topline develop and his hind end engage. It was gratifying to see progress, but I have to say I rode him like he was made of glass. I would constantly remind myself of his age while working him so I wasn't tempted to school pirouettes, changes, piaffe, passage, etc. I fought to ignore the fact that he felt like he was happy to give me more, much more. Then I was struck by an important question... Was I working him like the horse he was or like the horse I had convinced myself he should be at his age?

This was around the same time that my grandfather's health began to decline after ninety years of seeming invincibility and in his case it was so obvious to me what had happened. He was an athlete, an incredible golfer. He retired young and played at least eighteen holes most days of the week, year round, into his late eighties. He was competitive with men half his age and was physically stronger and faster than many of them. Most of his friends drove while he walked and he wasn't about to hold anyone up so he walked fast. I've been told he never sat in a golf cart...once. At ninety he did cut back and finally quit golfing to spend more time with my grandmother, but I feel it was also because of his perception of what a ninety year old should be able to do. His body aged quickly after that and he passed away a few months ago. I firmly believe he could have lived longer if he hadn't allowed himself to feel limited by his age.

It occurred to me that I was placing limits on Monty based on my perceptions of his age rather than listening to how he felt.

With Daisy's permission and participation, and of course regular veterinary oversight, we started to play with advanced move-

*Daisy and Monty demonstrating passage*

ments and expect high quality work from Monty. We used the movements the way they're designed to be used, to challenge the body and thereby create the ultimate equine athlete. My clients often hear me say that I run a gym, not a spa. My horses get joint supplements, chiropractic, acupuncture, bodywork, and all manners of pampering, but not in lieu of a good, hard, foamy workout. The horse Daisy and I created between ages twenty-two and twenty-six is a horse I would happily buy based on feel alone and feel is what we need to rely on more in our training. Monty now works in an upper level frame schooling Grand Prix

movements several days per week. On other days he goes for a long hack into the hills and both he and Daisy come back having worked hard, a program that is clearly good for both of them

I now have no more hesitation pushing Monty than I do pushing Daisy or any athlete and the results speak for themselves. Every aspect of his health has improved with the work and his maintenance requirements have diminished.

The purpose of this article is not to advise riders to throw caution to the wind and push recklessly, but to feel what the horses offer us and use it to make them better. We have to understand that as riders we are creating and maintaining athletes. It's our job to put muscle on them. It's hard work and it's not all fun or resistance free. We're fitness trainers and a fitness trainer who doesn't push their client to be better every session should give a refund. When I see a rider poking around the arena in a lower level frame lacking engagement and building no new muscle month after month or even year after year, I see a fitness trainer who has failed their client and a horse who deserves a refund.

*Daniel Rocks is a Grand Prix Dressage rider and instructor who trains at Woodbridge Farm in Petaluma. He is available for training, lessons, clinics, and sales. Visit [www.danrocksdressage.com](http://www.danrocksdressage.com) for more information, or contact Dan at (860) 810-4317.*



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## Readers Write

# WHOA Farm

Written by Jason Nichols



Farm manager Balyn Rose with the reins

"No need to rush," Balyn said matter-of-factly, without a trace of frustration. He was directing the comment toward me as I attempted to bridle our horse with the check rein dangling down. I stepped back and sorted through the various chains and leather straps in my hand until they looked in proper order. Then I paused and took a deep breath before trying again. That's an essential lesson to learn when farming with horses: Slow down – or perhaps better said at times: Whoa!

I've been learning the ropes as a recently hired hand at WHOA Farm, which stands for Work Horse Organic Agriculture. As the name reveals, we use draft horses to plow and cultivate our fields. Located on Petaluma Hill Road in Santa Rosa, we're one of only a handful of farms in the San Francisco Bay Area dedicated to carrying on this long tradition.

Balyn Rose has been studying the art of driving horses since joining WHOA Farm several years ago. In 2012, he traveled to Montana to learn from a master teamster and horseman. His teacher, Doc Hammill, has been devoted to working with draft horses for nearly half a century. Each summer, Doc holds workshops at his ranch in Eureka (MT), a small town northwest of Glacier National Park. In the fall, he continues teaching on tour throughout the United States, including a stop at WHOA Farm each October.

Doc counsels us to take our time through the inevitable ups and downs of working with draft horses. He writes, "Horses are our ultimate teachers, they make us soar and they humble us, teach us patience and persistence and constancy and the value of repetition and baby steps."

For Balyn, those baby steps were real in another sense. Around the time he began working with horses, he and his wife Elli had their first child, a daughter Olivia. Balyn and Elli, who met each other at UC Santa Cruz in an agroecology class, live on the farm and manage it together. Balyn said the combination of raising a young child and learning to cooperate with a team of horses has taught him a lot about having empathy.

Without an empathetic connection between horse and human, the work is not likely to get done properly (if at all). As you can imagine, there are also risks associated with attaching heavy metal objects with sharp implements to the back of several muscular animals with innate flight tendencies. I'll need to spend some time with Doc before I can safely pick up the lines. In the meantime, Balyn kindly offers me a chance to assist with harnessing the horses and to observe him while he works.

Our horses are Haflinger ponies, brothers named Mark and Chip. Much smaller than the Clydesdales, Belgians and Percherons typically associated with drafting, Haflingers are still a hardy breed, originally raised for rugged work in mountainous terrain between Austria and northern Italy. They're the right size for helping us work the roughly six acres we have under cultivation. And they have just enough patience for tolerating an upstart like me.

"No need to rush," the words echoed in my head. No one in Manhattan would have ever said that to me. Like so many Californians, I'm a transplant from somewhere else. Shortly after college, I spent seven years working on Wall Street where we're schooled in the old adage that time is money. Actually, we have a saying more particular to our profession, "You're only as good as your last trade," and we're practically hazed with it. One day, I'd had enough and walked away in search of a new way of living. My path led to WHOA Farm where our operations are governed by a very different set of values.

WHOA's mission is to produce the best and healthiest food possible and deliver it free of charge to people in need through our alliances with various Sonoma County nutrition clinics, wellness centers and food kitchens. In short, we deliver "the best food money *can't* buy." Last year, WHOA Farm donated more than 40,000 pounds of food to places like Santa Rosa Health Center, Ceres Project in Sebastopol, Forestville Wellness Center, Vista Family Health Center and St. Vincent de Paul Society. Fresh kale, spinach, squash,



Balyn plowing with Mark and Chip



brussel sprouts, all in all, more than forty different varieties of vegetables as well as strawberries, apples and more than 1,000 dozen eggs from pasture-raised hens.

The idea for WHOA Farm began with Eddie Gelsman and his wife Wendy Mardigian who started donating food from a two-acre garden in their backyard. In just a few short years, they purchased additional acreage, established WHOA Farm as a 501(c)3 non-profit and brought Balyn and Elli on board to oversee the farm's operations, along with several other farm workers.

Eddie's long success in the wine sales business has enabled him to provide not only startup capital for WHOA Farm but special expertise as well. He owns The Wine Library, founded in Petaluma in 1993. Several years ago, Eddie leased a neighboring vineyard and reached out to his friends, local winemakers Guy and Judy Davis, of Davis Family Vineyards. They generously agreed to help him produce WHOA Farm Pinot Noir, which is available for the first time later this year. Eddie expects proceeds from the sale of the wine to ultimately pay for at least half of WHOA Farm's operating budget.

Horses are another of Eddie's passions. From the beginning, there was never a question about what the source of the farm's primary locomotive power would be.

As the horses wait in their harnesses, Balyn stands between them, his hands resting lightly high on their hindquarters. He looks straight ahead, seemingly meditative, for at least a minute. You could hear a cotter pin drop (though while driving horses, you'd hope not to). He steps back and takes up the lines and speaks with few words. "Back" and Mark and Chip step back. "Come gee" and the horses pivot to the right. ("Come haw" asks the horses to turn left. The commands are opposite in Great Britain.)

William Safire writing for the New York Times once suggested that the commands gee and haw may be the origin of the popular expression "Yee haw!" This could be how you feel when draft horses respond appropriately, but spoken words are not so exclamatory around the horses. For the most part, communication is expressed through the lines with subtle movements of the hands to the rhythms of the horses as they walk.

Another expression from the American South, "Gee-hawing," refers to those who are not able to reach an agreement, who are not on the same page. So then, a driver rushing to work with his horses may wind up gee-hawing with them. Coming to agreement is where the real work begins, a process that inevitably takes time and experience to build mutual trust.

Most farmers enjoy the convenience of starting up a tractor and using it whenever it's needed on a moment's notice. We plan ahead and set aside enough time in our day when driving horses.

The choice to use draft horses is not to say we



*Halfingers Mark and Chip*

don't value modern machinery. To be sure, we have a shiny orange Kubota tractor standing by when we need to be efficient or when we have a job for which the horses wouldn't be appropriate like shoveling heaps of compost. Neither is our preference for draft horses simply a matter of nostalgic attachment to a bygone era.

For one thing, horses are a smart ecological choice, an integral part of a regenerative agricultural system that combines plants and animals. Horses don't use fossil fuels or emit (much) greenhouse gases. Their manure is an ingredient in the compost we produce on site to promote healthy soil. Fossil fuel reductions, less pollution, moving closer to a closed loop cycle – the benefits of draft horses for the environment are meaningful, but that's not all.

There are costs to the increasing demands for speed and efficiency embedded in our modern culture as a result of technological advances. In the race to do things quickly, we often run roughshod over the details. Tractors come with drink holders and comfortable seats. If you wanted to, you could almost forget where you are, let your mind trail off. Horses ask us to slow down, to value every step in the process, to be present in each moment and to connect with the living world around us.

When you're observant and precise, you wind up getting more things right with less effort and fewer mistakes. The day's work finished, the sun begins to set behind our horses grazing contentedly in the pasture. As Balyn and I walk along the dirt road he smiles as he sums it all up in few words. "Slow is fast," he says.

To find out more about WHOA Farm, visit us on the internet at [www.whoafarm.org](http://www.whoafarm.org). WHOA Farm currently owns a team of Belgian horses (mother and daughter, ages 11 and 4) and they are available free of charge to a good home. If interested, please contact us at [info@whoafarm.org](mailto:info@whoafarm.org).

For more information about Doc Hammill's upcoming workshop on our farm this October, or other workshops around the country, visit his website at [www.dochammill.com](http://www.dochammill.com).

*After stints in politics, finance, and television, Jason found his true calling working with plants and animals. He is a farmhand at WHOA Farm in Santa Rosa and enjoys practicing horsemanship with instructor Lena Haug of Windhorse Ranch, Sebastopol.*



*Harnessing up for a day's work*



## The Equestrian Athlete

### “In-sync”

Column editor Lily Baker-Lubin



Lily and Roxanne

Photo: Jak Wonderly

When we see horse and rider moving as one—two seemingly unrelated beings coming together with a shared purpose and meaning—we are witnessing synchronicity. In this article I offer a perspective on synchronicity from the physical realm. I will present current research trends on phase synchronicity or “coordination dynamics” for the horse and rider. We will view how amateurs differ from professionals. Finally, I will provide a series of tools and exercises rooted

in sport psychology and Pilates geared to assist the eager amateur in acquiring skills to gain higher levels of synchronicity.

Often amateur riders express a desire to “look pretty” in the saddle. While harmony between horse and rider is beautiful, the quiet rider achieves a complex, dynamic balance between stability and flexibility, or immobility and mobility. “An excellent position is like a beautiful, well-made instrument, ever prepared to be used for a delicate operation...we carry ourselves independently and totally harmoniously... A poor position generally impedes the horse’s movement because of awkwardness, tension, or involuntary movement.” (Herbermann, 2003). Lagarde (2008, 2005) presented supporting evidence. He studied coordination dynamics between horse and rider. Motion analysis was utilized to compare a novice rider to a professional on the same horse and to magnify each rider’s ability to either follow the motion with minimal disruption to gait or interference creation.

Not surprisingly the pro demonstrated high levels of synchronicity while the novice displayed a lag in coordination with the horse. “Whereas the novice’s movements displayed transient departures from phase synchrony, the expert’s motions were continuously phase-matched with those of the horse. The tight ensemble synchrony between the expert and the horse was accompanied by an increase in the temporal regularity of the oscillations of the trunk of the horse.” (Lagarde, 2008). The novice was marked by a dramatic shift in form each stride, identified primarily by a loss in plumb-line position from ear to shoulder to wrist. She experiences a disruption in contact and connection. Examples might include a bouncing rein contact or the dreaded “double bounce” that can occur during the posting trot.

In order to improve fluidity of movement we must look at our points of contact. Being able to distinguish among a neutral pelvis (even contact from both sit bones), a driving pelvis (a posterior tilt with slight lumbar flexion potential), or a bracing or half halting pelvis (isometric contraction in neutral with a holding feel to suspend motion) is the first step in confirming an independent

seat. (See previous articles addressing this topic.) A rider’s ability to control these various pelvic positions ensures that her horse’s movement is absorbed correctly instead of bracing and bouncing up the chain.

Working on pelvic and lumbar mobility and trunk stability will help the novice to improve her coordination. The lumbar vertebrae “act as a chief controlling factor through which all aids are transferred to the horse.” (Herbermann, 2003) Shoulder position and trunk stability are also important in achieving a quiet position. Anatomically, the scapula and back of the rib cage form joints along the upper back while the shoulders and arms “act as buffers to the horse’s mouth” (Herbermann, 2003). Thus trunk stabilization exercises help produce a positive bracing pattern for the body.

Here are some ways for riders to develop a “long” spine (your back stays lifted and spring-like). Try seated bouncing on a large exercise ball as an assessment technique. Perform this with your plumb line facing a mirror and as you bounce observe where your compensations occur. The self-generated movement allows for more control and better information collection.

The most common mistake I see riders make when trying to condition balance is to attempt exercises in which fully body integration is required (standing on a BOSU ball or unstable surface). Some gains may be achieved in an abstract sense. However, most likely, the rider will balance with his/her old habits. Our goal is to improve movement patterns which requires awareness of compensation and careful correction. Thus the most effective method is to identify compensations, introduce a correction, and then progressively test the correction by adding perturbations. Much of the Pilates equipment is spring-based and therefore inherently integrates stability due to the tensile property of the resistance.

I generally recommend doing a variety of exercises on the spring-loaded equipment that specifically address stability. Integrating the exercise ball you used in your assessment is something I do often as well to help begin skill transfer and further progress stability. Ultimately having a professional Pilates instructor who is well versed in your sport can help you refine your stability levels and with each Pilates practice you have the opportunity to optimally train your body and mind. As you gain awareness and control over your body, you heighten your own sensitivity levels and begin to build a rider’s body. Transferring these skills into your riding becomes easier. With mindful practice you will be able to receive the power that your horse delivers to you with every stride and shape it with grace and precision—becoming truly in-sync.

*Lily Baker-Lubin is an avid equestrian, and the founder and director of Top Training, a comprehensive performance enhancement program. Top Training offers athletes Pilates and Sport Psychology services. Baker-Lubin has a MS in Kinesiology and has completed Body Arts and Science International’s comprehensive teacher training, Core Align 1 & 2, Ride Right’s coaching certification as well as other extensive exercise science education. She has been a competitive athlete her whole life and has been an equestrian for over twenty-four years. You can contact Lily at [rideright3@gmail.com](mailto:rideright3@gmail.com).*

**Vet's Office**

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM

**Our Old Friends**

The population of old horses has increased over the past decade or so. Improved care and nutrition as well as increased expectations of longevity by horse owners are the likely cause. While an average life span for a horse is twenty-seven to twenty-eight years, I commonly see horses in their early thirties and occasionally older. I have had a few as old as thirty-seven and one who made it to thirty-eight years old.

Age alone is no reason to retire a horse from his career as a riding horse. If "sixty is the new forty" for people, perhaps we could say that twenty is the new fifteen for horses! I recall watching a nineteen-year-old German mare win third place in the Three Day Eventing portion of the Barcelona Olympics in 1992.

**What problems do older horses have?**

Old age is not without its consequences. I occasionally get a phone call from a horse owner who thinks her horse doesn't have as much "pep" as he used to. Often it turns out that the horse is twenty-three. This seems to be a common age for horses to start to slow down (eg, get hit by the old age truck). This isn't necessarily a problem.

Dental problems are very common. Equine teeth finish growing by the time a horse is six years old. At this time each tooth is quite long with most of the tooth residing below the gum line. As the horse grinds his food, the crown of the teeth (the portion above the gum line) gets worn down. To maintain crown height, the teeth continue to erupt decreasing the over all length significantly over the years. Eventually this leads to teeth that are worn down to the gum or teeth with such a short root that they become loose and fall out or need to be pulled out. Additionally old horse teeth often become worn on the chewing surface so that they are excessively smooth and cupped, making them much less effective for chewing coarse feed. These problems typically start at approximately twenty-two to twenty-five years of age.

Another common problem of older horses is Cushing's disease. It is a disease of the pituitary gland which results in a variety of hormonal changes. The most common symptom of Cushing's disease is an excessively long hair coat which does not shed well in the summer. It can lead to laminitis and/or recurrent infections such as hoof abscesses or sinusitis.

Many older horses have musculoskeletal issues. Arthritis or other

injuries from their youth may catch up to them and cause intermittent or persistent lameness. Some become inactive and lose a lot of muscle which may make them weak and lead to difficulty getting up.

Additionally, some horses become partially or completely deaf or blind. Most adjust well but may become spookier than they used to be.

**Do old horses need special care?**

Some may not need to be treated differently than they did when they were young. Horses with significant dental problems often do better on pelleted feeds such as senior horse feeds or hay pellets. Cushing's disease is not curable but most horses benefit from treatment with pergolide which alleviates most of the symptoms. Pain relievers or a variety of arthritis treatments can help some lame horses. Most benefit from exercise whether it is in the form of riding, turn out or being taken for walks. They are not necessarily slow to heal or less able to recover from a disease. In fact a recent study determined that age alone was not a significant factor when predicting which horses would survive colic surgery. Your veterinarian can help you determine how to maximize your elderly equids health and comfort.

**Are there benefits?**

Yes! Older horses tend to be calmer and more predictable than younger ones. They are wiser and tend to do less foolish things. They tend to be better for novice riders and kids than younger or even middle aged horses. If I buy my young daughter a horse or pony in the future, it will be one that is at least fifteen years old. Even if they are retired they can be good companions to other horses and to us, especially when they've been in the family a long time.



This is dedicated to Splash. Thank you for sharing the last twenty-three years of your life with me. You were one of the best friends I ever had and I appreciated your company.

Michelle Beko, DVM, has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, Eventing her horse Zeke, hiking, and travelling. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707-545-3909, check her website ([www.empire-equine.com](http://www.empire-equine.com)), or on Facebook.



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## Readers Write

## The Legendary Little Buck

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Treasurer

*This issue of the Horse Journal spotlights older horses, and would not be complete without including the story of a Sonoma County legend, Little Buck.*

Little Buck was a diminutive (thirteen hands) Mustang-Arabian cross buckskin. Frances Keys (now of Redding) remembers that he was being used as a pack horse for a guide in Six Rivers National Forest in the northwest corner of California when she first came across him in 1951, when she was fourteen years old and Little Buck was about the same age. His price was \$250—a princely sum at that time. Fran traded another horse and \$125 for Buck, and the guide taught her to ride the feisty little buckskin. Buck was all about speed—he would take the bit and run away, and his walk could outpace any horse around. Fran learned his ways well. He was a natural for gymkhana, and he and Fran, then living in Arcata, competed in speed events, especially pole bending, for the next few years. He helped her become the All-Around Cowgirl at the Fortuna Junior Rodeo in 1954. Fran only realized the strength of their relationship after trading him for a wild filly, a move that broke her heart. She didn't rest easy until she got him back.

Fran moved to Santa Rosa, continuing riding in gymkhanas. When she married Don Keys in 1956, Little Buck was loaned to her cousins in Petaluma, where he assisted in delivering the Petaluma Argus-Courier door-to-door. Fran was reunited with the horse when she and Don moved to Petaluma, where they rented a home from the Arfsten family on Petaluma Boulevard North.

Patricia Arfsten, the granddaughter of their landlord, was ten years old at the time and a typical horse-crazy little girl. She spent many hours hanging over the fence watching the little buckskin. Her grandfather eventually bought a horse for her and her sister, and



Little Buck on the poles

then Fran asked her if she would like to ride Little Buck. Patricia was thrilled, and remembers that Little Buck as her best teacher. He appeared to be gentle and easy, often looking like he was about to nod off—until she got on, and then he was all fire! Early in their partnership, her mother, Jeanette Arfsten, looked out the window to see a brown flash zoom by, prompting her to call Fran and insist that Patricia's rides on the little

horse stop immediately. Fortunately, Fran was able to convince her that Patricia was safe on the horse, and the relationship between the girl and the horse continued to develop. Patricia employed several innovative techniques to really get the feel of Little Buck, including getting on board bareback and bridleless and enjoying "quite a ride", a feeling she describes as pure joy of motion, energy and freedom. In April, 1961, when Patricia was eleven and Little Buck was twenty-four, Fran Keys presented the horse to her, complete with a hand-written bill of sale.

Fran encouraged Patricia to try some gymkhana events with Little Buck. Patricia had never heard of gymkhana, but she was game for anything, and after some coaching from Fran and some practice in the pasture, they headed off to their first competition. Little Buck was in his element, and he called the shots in the arena. Patricia remembers that her main job was to "stay put, keep my boots tucked in and not knock over any poles or barrels."

That formula worked well over the next few years as she and the little horse burned up the arena in the gymkhana events. The little girl and the fiery "senior" horse (nobody would dare call Little Buck "old") were crowd favorites, earning applause simply for entering the ring. While this sometimes embarrassed Patricia, Little Buck loved an appreciative crowd! Patricia recollects announcer Merle Bullard introducing them at the Sonoma County Fair: "And here comes Little Buck. He might look like is snoozing outside the arena but once inside, he is all fire and flash! A little champion with a heart!"

Their specialty was pole bending, although they also competed in barrel racing, quadrangle, keyhole and figure eight stake racing. They did not do as well in the quieter events such as "Western Working Horse" as Little Buck tended to dance in the arena and just wanted to go! Over the next three years, they amassed an enviable



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November 1964, Western Horseman Magazine

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Little Buck in the Petaluma Parade in the mid-sixties

three dozen trophies and 150 ribbons. Patricia earned money for entry fees by babysitting and helping her grandfather with tractor work. She and Little Buck were featured in an article in the November 1964 edition of Western Horseman when Little Buck was twenty-seven years old (see reprint). Little Buck was retired from competition later that same year.

The bond between Little Buck and Patricia extended beyond the arena. When not competing, they enjoyed trail riding, they rode in the Petaluma parade and were members of the Petaluma Jr Riding Club drill team, and even did some roping. Patricia remembers him as steady, patient and trustworthy.

Patricia eventually became a teacher and moved to Southern California. Little Buck continued to enjoy retirement at the Arfsten family home in Petaluma.

I met Buck ten years after his retirement, when my roommate and I rented a home on the Arfsten property. Little Buck was thirty-seven years old at the time and, while certainly showing signs of age, he could still fire up and take a canter across the pasture. My roommate and I moved our horses onto the property, and when my mare Bobbie (whom I leased from Fran Keys) foaled in the spring, Bucky became honorary godfather to the bay colt. The horses on the property were named Bebe, Baby, Bobbie and Bucky. Jeanette Arfsten said if we gave the foal a name starting with "B", she would go bananas—so we named the foal Bananas. Little Buck seemed to enjoy having the energetic youngster around, although sometimes you could almost see him rolling his eyes at his antics!

Later that year, Little Buck went down for the last time. His veterinarian, Dr. Kip Smiley, was called out to perform the final mercy for the tenacious little horse. Little Buck was thirty-eight years old.

Patricia Arfsten remembers Little Buck: "Teachers come to us in many shapes and forms. The gifts he gave have stayed with me throughout my life. The thought of him brings warmth and a smile to me even after all these years...my pal, Little Buck!"

Author's note: Special thanks to Frances Keys and Patricia Arfsten for their contributions to this story about a plucky little buckskin that touched our lives and hearts.

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten. She enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy whenever she can. Her latest project is retraining her Off Track Thoroughbred, Dublin, to be her next riding horse as Cowboy heads toward semi-retirement. Joan supports her horse hobby by running a bookkeeping and tax service (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at [cowdex.blogspot.com](http://cowdex.blogspot.com) and [thedublinproject.blogspot.com](http://thedublinproject.blogspot.com). To reach Joan, email her at [joanras795@gmail.com](mailto:joanras795@gmail.com).



## Readers Write

# The Karen Chex Story (Part IV): Miracle Chex

Written by Ted Draper

Karen Chex had a full udder and waxy nipples. Her due date had passed. I felt that she was going to foal at any time. For the last nine and half months, I had been at this three legged mare's side, putting up with her cranky behavior, changing her bandages, cleaning a smelly stump, and looking after her every need. Against great odds she had survived. It had been a year and two months since she had her left front leg amputated above the fetlock joint. Now she was getting ready to foal, another milestone in her life. I now know what "blood, sweat and tears" means, because that is what it took to get her through the year.



*Miracle Chex and Mom, Karen*

Karen started rubbing her behind against the walls and biting at her flanks. She laid down and started heavy labor a little after 11pm. Every one watched from the darkened isle way. The only light was over Karen. She lay flat and began pushing and groaning, and soon a white bubble appeared. Boo Woolsey, now going to Vet school back east, had come out to be with Karen and to assist in the birth. After an easy delivery, Boo pulled the new foal around to Karen's head for her to lick and bite. He was a little small and needed help to get to his feet. His legs were like rubber. Karen kept urging him to get up. Because of his weakened condition, she was very impatient with him. Once he was standing, with help from Boo, he was soon able to steady himself. He took a few nose dives and we helped him back up. Karen Chex had a mother's instinct, and it wasn't long before he was nursing. We named the colt "Miracle Chex."

At first Karen was very protective and wouldn't let anyone near her baby. We were swamped with people wanting to see him. Soon Karen would just stand with her rear end toward us and let the baby come and investigate. She was very jealous of Miracle's attention. I saw this and I started grooming and pampering her while visitors played with Miracle. This just reinforced the bond between us. After a few days, I took Karen and Miracle out to her paddock, where there was plenty of room for Miracle to move around. I was soon back to my regular routine with Karen. Miracle wanted be right on top of me when I changed the prosthesis. I fixed the problem by tying him up a short distance away.

After a few weeks, I built a good size pen that had plenty of grass so Karen and her baby could go out for the day. This was heaven for Miracle, he could run and pivot on his hind quarters and never be out of Karen's sight. She could still move and keep up with him, but she spent her time grazing.

Dr Jack Woolsey came out to see the foal and examine Karen's legs. He was amazed at how well her stump and the other front leg were doing. Dr. Woolsey reported his findings to the owners, Bob and Katie Bryant. They had wanted a filly from Karen and the question of whether she could have another baby arose. Dr Woolsey

felt she could as long as the three good legs held up. Both the stump and the right leg were in excellent condition. The decision was made to breed Karen to a stallion in Red Bluff.

Karen would have to be artificially bred. Dr Woolsey went to Red Bluff, collected the semen and drove back to Santa Rosa, but back in the seventies they had not perfected the freezing and transporting of semen. So the first attempt failed and several more trips were made with the same discouraging results. We decided to find a stallion closer to home. The stallion had to be approved by the Bryants. After several complications, none with Karen,

the breeding season passed, and we had to wait until the next year to try again.

After a couple months of growth, Miracle was small but perfectly proportioned. He had his mother's quickness and agility. He was a quick learner and he proved to have his mother's intelligence. Karen was an excellent mother watching over Miracle's every move. One day two strange dogs came into Karen's small field. She took after the larger dog at a full run and chased him away, then whirled around lit after the other dog, with her teeth bared and almost got him. The way she moved I wouldn't have thought she was a cripple. She was still quick and fast.

Karen proved to be an iron horse. Her good legs held up. A couple more times we found bone fragments working their way out from the stump, but we knew now what to do. One night I was awakened by a different sound coming from her paddock. I shook the sleep from my eyes and saw with astonishment that Karen has lost her prosthesis. She was standing in the door way with her stump exposed. I jumped into my clothes, ran to her paddock, and I quickly got her cleaned up and refitted into the prosthesis. I eventually saw what happened. Karen would lay down every night for a couple hours and bending the leg as she laid down, worked the tape loose. The prosthesis came off when she started to stand up. Other than a little blood, which was a little frightening, there was no damage to the stump.

The next year arrived, and Karen legs were in great shape. We kept our routine changing the bandages on the three legs and the stump, and Karen knew which days. She made a big fuss if we missed. She maintained the same cranky, "leave me alone," attitude. Her sour ears, menacing dark eyes and grinding teeth were the norm for anyone who came near. She always had a little whinny for me and our hired man when we came out in the morning. We wanted to breed her in late February and all the arrangements were made with a Santa Rosa stallion. She was artificially bred standing in the trailer. Twenty one days came and no heat and sure enough she was in foal. Karen was happy spending her days out grazing and in her stall at night. She liked being near the



training stable and the arena, happy being surrounded by ranch activities. She still got upset every time I left for a show without her. I believe her heart was in the show ring working cows. When I returned home, no matter what the time of day or night, she always came out to greet me.

The year moved quickly because we were not preoccupied with Karen's disability. The time was getting close for Karen to foal and her stomach was very big. The last month before foaling, Karen would graze in one spot for an hour and then stand at the gate and whinny to me to let her out. I didn't have to lead her. She would hobble back to her paddock stopping now and then to check things out. One day she made a detour down the aisle way of the barn just to see what I was doing. I could tell she wasn't moving as well as before, but I figured she was uncomfortable with this foal. She had turned eighteen and was starting to look old and a little feeble.

About a month before Karen was due to foal, I noticed some swelling around her knee joint and this disturbed me. This was an indication of inflammation. Dr Woolsey prescribed total rest and some medication to reduce the swelling. The prognosis was not good. Karen must have understood what the vet had said about rest, because she spent a good portion of each day and night lying down.

The baby arrived on the due date. Just the two of us were present when she delivered. This foal was much stronger than Miracle and was standing with just a little assistance. Karen put her problems aside and nurtured her new colt as if nothing was wrong. We named him JW after our vet "Jack Woolsey." He was just like his big brother, Miracle, except a different color. He had very good conformation. Karen produced two good colts with great athletic skill but their worth was yet to be determined. The Bryants didn't get their filly, which was a big disappointment. They got to choose between the colts and decided on Miracle.

Karen was very unsteady on the right leg and after a week, she was back lying down during the day. One day we came out and JW was standing with his front legs up on Karen's back. He was becoming very aggressive with her. She could not discipline him.

The right front leg, that Karen depended on, was not getting better or worse. I could tell from small signs that she was irritated with the lower part of the leg and not the knee. She was biting at the hoof. I should have picked up on her attention to that area, but I assumed the knee was her problem. Karen knew she had to stay off her leg if it was going to get better. Lying down was the answer and she would get up when JW wanted to nurse. He simply pawed at her when he was hungry. She ate and drank while lying down. I changed the bandages on both legs every third day. I would wrap

the right leg in a special way to give it more support, and I could tell she could move around a little easier. I found myself looking in on Karen more and more often during the day. When she felt good, Karen would be standing at the end of her paddock and watching me work horses. Now, she seldom paid any attention to what was going on around the ranch. The right leg was not holding her. She spent more and more time lying down. Her signature "sour attitude" was gone. She didn't have her spunk.

When Dr Woolsey arrived for his scheduled visit, I asked if he would check her hoof. He found an abscess in the foot. This had to be the reason why she was not using the leg. We cleaned out the abscess while she was lying down, and after a few days the soreness was gone. Karen was standing more often during the day. Her attitude changed dramatically. She was back to her cranky behavior, and she even disciplined JW to let him know she was still the boss. I thought we were going to have to put Karen down, but finding the abscess gave us hope that she could last a little longer. JW was a little over a month old and needed her at least two more months. All through the knee was not as straight as before, it was still able to support her. The deterioration of the knee joint was slow, but the ligaments were slowly giving out.

Karen was enjoying her foal and back to watching the activities on the ranch. JW was growing and needed exercise, so I took Karen and JW out to the small pasture for a day. He ran and ran in big circles around his mother. Karen didn't seem to mind and just stood looking off to some distant land. But the walk out to pasture was hard on Karen. The next day she spent a good portion of the day lying down. JW was constantly abusing her while she lay down.

It had been a month since the abscess and the leg was getting weaker each day. She couldn't stand for very long. When she stood, she put as much weight on the stump as she did on the right leg. JW was now able to eat hay and support himself. The decision to have Dr. Woolsey come and put Karen to sleep was made. She need not suffer any more. She had lived long enough to support JW until he was able to get along without her. Karen started out as a six month experiment which lasted three years and two and half months. No one at Davis knew they were working with a super horse.

Karen was a rare horse who had courage, intelligence, determination, character and athletic ability. She was a survivor and her memory will live with me forever. Both Miracle and JW became champions in the "Working Cow Horse Division"

I wish to thank Bob and Katie Bryant for letting me write the Karen Chex story.

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