



Old Dominion News

August 2009

33715 Snickersville Turnpike Bluemont, VA 20135 • www.olddominionrides.org

Fort Valley Rides Set for Oct 23-24

The 25/50 Fort Valley Rides will be held Friday and Saturday, October 23-24, 2009 at Fitchett's (same location as last year). For entry forms, visit www.olddominionrides.org in the next few weeks.

Fall foliage should be at its peak, and hopefully we'll have sunny skies to enjoy the scenery!

Those interested in volunteering (including those who want to ride one day but are able to volunteer the other day) are asked to contact ride manager Claire Godwin, crgdvm@aol.com.

The Fort Valley Ride is the third leg of the Old Dominion's Triple Crown. If you and your horse completed any distance at both No Frills and the

June 13 Old Dominion rides, you can receive a Triple Crown Award at the OD Holiday Party on December 12 if you and the same horse also complete any distance either day at the Fort Valley Rides. Those who enter all three OD Rides, even if they don't finish all of them, will earn a Triple Crown discount towards 2010 ride entries. ♦

OD Yard Sale at the FV Ride!

Those coming to the Fort Valley rides are asked to bring clean, gently used horse-related items to donate for a yard sale to raise \$\$ for the OD. Details will be provided with the FV ride registration confirmation, or e-mail Lenora Keener at lwsowers@aol.com for more information.

Ride & Tie Clinic at OD Basecamp

Thanks to all who attended the OD Ride & Tie weekend at Orkney Springs on July 25-26. We had 14 different teams of two people/one horse compete in the four different events and several first time competitors, who got a great introduction to the sport. Lisa Stanton shares her story on pages 5-8 of this issue.

Upcoming ride & tie events include:
Sept 11-13 **Big South Fork Ride & Tie**, Oneida, TN
Sept 18-20 **Chesapeake Fall Ride & Tie**, Fair Hill, MD
Oct 23-24 **Fort Valley Ride & Tie**



Janice Heltibridle leads discussion during the clinic held on July 25 before the 6 and 12 mile evening ride & tie events.

July 25-26 Ride & Tie Results

Saturday night 12 mile:

- 1st: Rhonda Venable/Lauren Rosser on Tanner (2:17)
- 2nd: Bethany Asplundh/Cynthia Glendening on Rosie (3:27)
- 3rd: Joyce Frank/Lisa Stanton on GT Laredo (3:28)

Saturday night 20 mile:

- 1st: Ann and Kevin Townsend on Major (2:05)
- 2nd: Theresa Trader/Kate Kane-Joyce on Little Man (2:24)
- 3rd: Mark Trader/Janice Heltibridle on Sammy (2:24)
- 4th: Lani Newcomb/Jenny Jones on Beryl (2:50)

Sunday 6 mile:

- 1st: Rhonda Venable/Lauren Rosser on Tanner (1:24)
- 2nd: Erica Simel/Amelia Hellman on Rajah (1:45)
- 3rd: Ann Townsend/Kathryn Toth on Major (1:48)
- 4th: David Geier/Maria Muzzio on Mo-Hawk (1:51)
- 5th: Yancey Crandell/Natalie Muzzio on Z (1:51)

Sunday 20 mile:

- 1st: Theresa Trader/Kate Kane-Joyce on Little Man (2:07)
- 2nd: Janice Heltibridle/Levi Hochstetler on Frisky (2:13)
- 3rd: Lisa Green/Wendy Fournier on Spry (2:18)
- 4th: Ann Crandell/Catherine Farnan on Sheza Bold Image (2:18)
- DNF: Lani Newcomb/Jenny Jones on Spicey

December 12 is the OD Holiday Party

Winter may seem a long time from now, but the annual Old Dominion Holiday Party and Awards Banquet is just over three months away, on Saturday, December 12.

Organizers Joe Selden and Nancy Smart have found a great deal at the brand new Holiday Inn located in the Blue Ridge Shadows Resort, just off Rt 340/522 about 4 miles north of Front Royal.

Rooms are only \$85 per night (call 540.631.3050 and mention you are part of the OD to get the group rate) and there's a nice restaurant for breakfast the next morning.

Invitations will be mailed in November, and you are encouraged to bring friends or pass along the address of additional folks you'd like to receive invitations to longevityfarm@hughes.net. ♦

Silent Auction Donations Needed

Those with donations for the Old Dominion Silent Auction at the Holiday Party are asked to contact Lisa Green at 540.331.3404/e-mail forest3@shentel.net or Mary Howell 434.906.1778/e-mail countshiloh@gmail.com by **Nov. 20** with details.

Be creative! Auction items do not need to be horse related! Some of our highest bid items in recent years have been AKC registered puppies and use of a member's time share or vacation home. You can also donate services such as painting or massage. ♦



photo by Hughes Photography

The OD wishes to recognize our members and their horses who traveled to Tevis this year. Above, Claire Godwin and Sundown Reveille (in his first 100!) tackle Cougar Rock.

Old Dominion Board of Directors

President: Bob Walsh	bwalsh@creelman.com	301.743.7295
Vice President: Joe Selden	longevityfarm@hughes.net	301.934.3824
Secretary: Mary Howell	countshiloh@gmail.com	804.932.9328
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John Proudman	miles2go@shentel.net	540.933.6514
Bonnie Snodgrass	chicamuxen@netscape.com	301.246.4934
Jack Weber	hollyhillwebers@aol.com	540.933.6614
Karen Wickens	wickens_wish@comcast.net	540.578.0550

Old Dominion members are welcome to attend monthly meetings, which are normally held at 6:30 pm on the second Saturday of each month at the M.A.R.E. Center in Middleburg.

American Beauty Ride set for October 4

by Mary Murphy

A few years ago, I rode in Cate Peloquin's Chesapeake 30-mile CTR. Having wanted to manage a CTR for some time, I conceived of designing a trail in rocky, mountainous Fort Valley that would emulate the lovely Fair Hill trails. The task was easier than one would expect thanks to Jack and Marie Weber, who allow us to ride on their Mill Run Farm and two neighboring farms. Barbara Horstmeier and Barney McGinniss created trail for us on their farm, and the Mine Mountain Property Owners Association, Inc. allows us to ride on the back, gentle roads of Mine Mountain Estates. Roswell and Harriet Curtis have given permission to use Curtis Field as basecamp and Steve Adams, president of the Mine Mountain Property Owners Association, Inc., offered his property to get riders off Boyer Rd.

The trail has rolling pastures, wooded trails, and gravel roads, along with eight creek crossings. Awards include Grand and Reserve Champion, Lightweight, Middleweight, and Heavyweight Division 1st-6th, Junior 1st-5th, Best Arabian, Best Half Arabian, Best Morgan, Best Appaloosa, and Best Grade Horse. This Sunday, October 4 ride is limited to 50 entries. For entries, e-mail mmurphy@eds.com or call the Ride Secretary, Virginia Ingram, at 540-933-6071. ♦

OD MEMBER PROFILE: Mary Murphy



Mary and Bubba O. won the 2006 OD 50.

When did you get involved with the Old Dominion Endurance Rides? In the late 80s, Dr. Jeannie Waldron, DVM, and Lynn Golemon encouraged me to get into endurance riding. Riding 50, much less 100 miles, was a daunting prospect, and I had no idea where to begin. In 1990, I attended the U.S Trail Ride seminar, which covered all major aspects of endurance riding from Paul Semmler's "Ride Your Own Ride" talk—to tack, conditioning, and pit crewing—to giving your horse electrolytes and slurpies. I then entered the U.S Trail Ride 25-mile ride. On ride morning, the skies opened up, and, being new, I could not believe they were still going to start the ride. But they did, and it never stopped pouring. They had to stop the 100-mile ride at 75 miles because of the swollen creeks. Nevertheless, I had a wonderful ride and was eager for more. That same year, I was honored to assist Dr. Joyce Harmon, treatment vet at the OD June ride. What a day and night that was! I was totally hooked but totally ignorant of the skill, patience, and intelligence it took to ride endurance well over the long term. After doing several CTRs that year on my mare, Gamila, and being awarded several 1st place in my division awards and reserve champion, I entered the 1990 Fort Valley 50. Gamila carried me to a 10th place finish. My wonderful Gamila and Lynn Golemon's teaching made my success.

What is your current role with the Old Dominion? As a member, I help mark, unmark, and clear trail. I have been a station head at numerous rides, including two vet checks at the 2006 AERC National Championship Ride. In the past, I have served on the OD board for five years and have been the Awards Committee chairperson and a major fund raiser. In 1995, I conceived of the Old Dominion Triple Crown. The board accepted my idea and established the program, which has been running successfully ever since.

What do you do for a living? I am a retired Navy Commander and also taught Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British literature on the college and university levels. Currently, I'm a technical writer/editor for an Information Technology services company and edit the engineering documentation for the largest and most secure computer network in the world.

Where do you live? I live on a 16-acre farm in The Fort Valley with three horses, three cats, and two dogs.

What do you do when you are not riding? I work (someone has to pay the bills!), hike, take care of my farm, visit with friends, entertain, and manage the ECTRA-sanctioned American Beauty 25-mile CTR - a great tune up for the OD Fort Valley rides two weeks later.

Reflections on the OD Organization: The Old Dominion people, rides, and organization have been a great benefit to and influence in my life. It took me a long time to realize that those people who complete the OD 100-mile ride year after year made something that is very difficult look very easy. I am extremely fortunate to have so many highly skilled and knowledgeable equestrians teach and encourage me. Valerie Kanavy once told me that endurance riding is like life, with the highs, lows, plateaus, the successes, failures, frustrations, and growth. In 2008, after many successes and some failures, learning patience and gaining an understanding of the knowledge and skill of the OD giants in this sport, I accomplished the long-term goal of completing the OD 1-day, 100-mile ride on my lovely gelding, Bubba O. Again, Jeannie helped and encouraged me. At vet check 4 (Rogers), I needed help and without hesitation, Jeannie said: "I would be very happy to." Before beginning training for this ride, I asked several successful Old Dominion riders how they trained (Jeff and John Crandall, Bob Walsh, Martha Ann Romoser, and Dr. Matthew McKay-Smith, DVM). They all gave me good advice, although none trained the same. I think the best advice came from Matthew: Enjoy one mile at a time. I took that advice and did just that. It was the most wonderful experience of my endurance career. ♦

OD Member Profiles Needed: Want to be featured in an upcoming issue?
E-mail information and electronic photo to Mary Howell, countshiloh@gmail.com.



Message From the OD President

Greetings OD members:
As I am coming to the end of my term, I would like to recognize the current board of directors as perhaps the most accomplished we have ever had. I have been associated with the Old Dominion for over 20 years and have never before witnessed the cooperation and sacrifice this group has put forth. They have taken us from the brink of having lost our trail and base camp, to successfully moving the ride and finding a permanent home and trail for years to come. This takes dedication, resolve and a will to keep the tradition of the Old Dominion moving forward.

To say that I have enjoyed working with this group would be an understatement. Even though there have been hard financial decisions to be made, they have found a way to put their differences aside and pull together for the common good. My hat is off the each and every one of them. The next time you see a board member take the time to thank them for what they do. It is obvious that without them there would be no Old Dominion.

Regards,
Bob Walsh

Member Classifieds



LR Bold Desert Rose: 9 year old Arab mare, out of Bold Soldier, trained by Joe Crandell. Rose is an awesome mare, not mare-ish or hormonal, giant ground-covering trot, sound and sane; over 500 AERC & ECTRA miles; needs an endurance home; ready to go for this season; asking \$6,000; Call Joyce Warren at 717.259.7823; joycewarren1@verizon.net.

Size 72 horse wardrobe. Rain sheet(green w/blue trim), fleece blanket liner(green), cotton sheet(green w/blue trim), waffle

sheet(black/green), new green halter and matching lead line plus other gear including a rump rug, halter bridles, etc. Please contact April Dobson, april.dobson@fauquierbank.com.

For Sale: 15 acres in Wildersville, TN by Wrangler Camp-ground and the Natchez Trace trail system. Brand new 40X60 metal building with 25X40 living quarters and the rest for stalls or trailer parking. Great retirement or starter home. Go to RE-MAX and enter Wildersville for a slide show or contact Mary Coleman, 814.448.2821 or caf@raystownwireless.net.

For Sale: Four year old chestnut/white registered tobiano paint mare that spent 8 weeks with professional trainer in 2007. \$2500 OBO. Email Janice Heltibridle, heltibr@shentel.net

OD Store Update

As OD store manager Samantha Austin continues to expand our store, she welcomes feedback on what to stock in the coming year. Contact Sam at 540.746.8614 or S.I.austin@comcast.net with your questions and suggestions. ♦

Annual Permit Now Required to Ride & Bike in VA State Forests

A new Virginia law took effect on July 1, 2009 that requires certain recreational users of the Commonwealth's 19 state forests to purchase a \$15 annual permit. This State Forest Use Permit is required for anyone 16 years and older who hunts, fishes, traps, rides mountain bikes or rides horses and is good for one year from the date issued.

Those who are just walking, hiking or canoeing in a state forest do not need the permit, which replaces the state forest license that used to be required of those hunting or trapping on the state forests.

The annual permit can be purchased at the same places you'd purchase a hunting license (like Wal-Mart), or you can pay online at www.dof.virginia.gov and the permit will be mailed to you. This permit does not apply to national forests, national parks, state parks or state-managed wildlife management areas. ♦

Cadence Farm
RIDING IN RHYTHM
Quality Products for the Trail Horse and Rider
www.CadenceFarm.us
1-866-RHYTHMO

Amy Cieri of Cadence Farm invites riders to call in your endurance supply orders in advance of rides she will be attending (such as the Virginia Highlands Ride on August 28-29) so she can make sure to have them on hand and save you on shipping costs!

Experienced Endurance Horses: **Royal Gal MA:** 14yr old, 14'2 hand mare, perfect junior/ladies mount for a rider who is riding competitive LD/50s. \$5,000OBO; **XXXArch:** 13yr old, 15'2 gelding. Goes well alone/group or front/back. Looking to win 50s and move to FEI 100's? You Found Him! \$6,500. Contact Marisa Nottarnicola in Fredericksburg: mmnagf@aol.com or 540.455.4434.

Considerate Horse Hauling: Visit www.equinehauling.com or call Debbie Schultz at 267.664.2790.

To have your classified ad included in the next issue, e-mail countshiloh@gmail.com or call 434.906.1778.

Many thanks to these businesses who support OD events:



Provenance • 2009 OD Raffle Horse

Here's the 2009 OD raffle horse Provenance, a promising young filly bred by Asgard Arabians.

Asgard means "Home of the Gods" in Norse mythology, and Tom and Holly Sayvetz' breeding program has resulted in such accomplished horses as Heraldic, winner of the 2006 Old Dominion 100, 2006 Tevis and 2006 100-mile National Championship, and Theatric, ridden by U.S. endurance team member Kathy Brunjes.

Visit www.asgardarabians.com for more about Asgard horses - or talk to one of the many OD members who will attest to the athletic ability of these horses!

Tickets are \$10 each or 5 for \$40 and the drawing will be held at the Fort Valley Rides on **Saturday, October 24, 2009**. You need not be present to win.

If you haven't already purchased your tickets, contact an Old Dominion board member or add this to your Fort Valley ride entry. Thanks for your support! ♦



The Skinny on FAT (article by Kentucky Performance Products, www.kppusa.com)

Since fats provide 2.25 times more energy than carbohydrates, they are an effective energy source for horses in steady work, such as those used in distance riding. While horses pastured in a natural state normally consume only small amounts of fats, horses can digest and absorb fats very well, breaking them down into fatty acids in the small intestine and storing them as triglycerides in the adipose tissue of the body.

Some fat is necessary for all horses to ensure proper absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. It provides horses with the essential omega-3 (alpha-linolenic acid) and omega-6 (linoleic) fatty acids, which horses are unable to synthesize in the body. These EFAs perform numerous important functions within the body, including regulating inflammatory response and immune function.

Feeding fat is a safe, effective way to meet the increased energy demands of modern horses as it is utilized to fuel long-term, slow work. One of the goals when designing a feeding program is to keep the concentrate portion of your horse's meal small. Adding fat to the diet can increase the energy content of the diet without increasing meal size. This lowers the risk of digestive disorders by allowing the concentrate portion of the meal to be fully digested before it passes into the hindgut. Improperly digested concentrates can ferment in the hindgut, disturbing the delicately balanced bug population.

Fat is often referred to as a "cool" energy source, since it produces less body heat when metabolized. Horses engaged in long-term work or those working in hot conditions benefit from this reduced heat production by using less sweat to cool their bodies. The term "cool" or "cold" can also be used to describe a feed's effect on a horse's temperament. Feeds high in soluble carbs tend to produce hormone surges that some researchers feel may cause horses to become more excited or "hot"-tempered. Fat burns at a

slow, steady rate, reducing the hormone spikes. Horses using fat for energy tend to be less excitable, so fats are known as "cool" energy sources.

Horses fed fat accumulate less lactic acid in their muscles and maintain lower heart rates during work. Lactic acid accumulation leads to muscle fatigue and soreness. Horses utilizing fat as an energy source for long-term work often show increased stamina and tend to recover faster after work. Horses suffering from certain muscle disorders benefit from high-fat diets. Research has shown that horses suffering from problems such as RER (tying up) or PSSM (glycogen storage diseases) do not tolerate the soluble carbohydrates found in grains. Fats are an excellent source of energy for these horses. Horses suffering from metabolic disorders where insulin sensitivity is a problem also respond well to diets high in fat.



Horses can utilize many types of fats. Vegetable fats are higher in unsaturated fatty acids than animal fats, which can become rancid when stored improperly. Rice bran, a common fat source, can be heat-stabilized to prevent rancidity. Some commercially available fats contain low levels of vitamin E, an antioxidant that prevents or delays rancidity. Supplements or feeds that contain fats should be stored in cool, dry places and used by their expiration dates.

When shopping for high-fat feeds and supplements compare like with like. Many feed companies offer "high-fat" feeds containing fat levels ranging from 6% to 10% fat. High-fat supplements can contain much higher levels of fat, so check the label. If a supplement contains 20% fat, then one pound of supplement will supply 0.2 lbs of fat. If it contains 50% fat then one pound of supplement will contain 0.5 lbs of fat. You need to consider this when making cost comparisons. Always follow the feeding directions on the label and make all feed changes slowly. ♦

It all started innocently enough. While manning the Old Dominion Endurance Rides booth last winter at a local horse expo, I came across a flyer announcing a Ride & Tie clinic scheduled for July.

"Wow, that sounds like fun, wonder who I could get to go with me" I thought to myself. An experienced endurance rider, who is also a friend, was working the booth with me. She said she had done a few, but her knees were not up to it.

Sometime in the following weeks, I received an email from Joyce, another riding friend. "Did you see the flyer for the R&T clinic and nighttime ride? Doesn't that sound like fun? Would you have any interest in teaming up with me?"

Why on earth didn't I think to ask Joyce right away! I knew that no matter what happened we would have a good time. After discussing it with my husband, George, and consulting the calendar, I wrote her back.

Hmmm, 12 miles in the mountains, part of that on foot, guess I'd better start doing some running. Now, I'm not a runner, and do not have what one would consider a runner's build. In fact, the last time I had done consistent running was over 15 years ago when I still worked as a professional firefighter, and even then it was only 2 miles a day.

Since that time I've had a child, spent a few more hours in front of the computer or sitting reading than I should have. Not to say I'm in terrible shape, I do ride several horses a day, garden, hike, etc., but nothing like running up hills. I mulled over the fitness program I needed to start, but winter refused to loosen its grip.

Finally in April, George said "It's four months to the clinic, when do you think you need to start getting ready?" He's right, it was time. Out came the running shoes I had purchased a year earlier with good intentions, but had really not seen any use. George, being the dear husband that he is, agreed to run with me for encouragement. Off we go through the streets of our town, walking the first 1/4 mile for a warm up, then we pick up a slow jog.

"You pick the pace, I'll match you" said George. I'm already gasping for air, unable to answer so I signal to slow to a walk. We'd only run a few hundred feet. My goodness, this was pitiful. We finished the 3 mile route we had planned, with far more walking than running. Two days later, we did it again. Then again.

I'll never forget how good it felt the first time I was able to go an entire mile without stopping, no matter that we weren't breaking any speed records. We picked routes that had hills, running up as far as I was able, and always down. I was still unable to run the entire 3 miles without walking here and there, but I was able to do far more running than not. George, bless him, was with me every step of the way.

Joyce and I were discussing the upcoming clinic, when she asked "Can we use Laredo, your gelding? He'll probably stand better on the trail since he hasn't done any endurance rides, plus he's not as tall as my mare. Besides, he's pretty mellow." Hadn't even thought about the height, but Laredo is about 14.2, while Joyce's mare Rose has to be at least 15 hands, maybe more. Laredo it was.

Ride & Tie was not an entirely foreign concept, as I've frequently volunteered or crewed at endurance rides the past 10 years. I knew my horse needed to learn to stand tied alone on trail, so he accompanied me on trail clearing days around the farm, standing tied to trees while I fought with the wild rose bushes. He needed to be introduced to runners with headlamps, so he stood tied to trees in the dark while George, Thomas and I jogged

past. And he needed to be ridden by Joyce, as he's never had anyone but me on his back, which proved to be a non-issue.

Two weeks before the clinic, Joyce and I met at a local park to practice. George accompanied us with his mare, Luci. The plan was for Joyce and I to R&T, while George rode up by Laredo passing him but hovering around the next bend in case he got loose. The last thing I wanted was my horse running around a park that was 20 some miles away from home.

The day dawned hot, muggy, and extra buggy. After consulting the park map, we agreed to do several loops through the wooded, higher area of the park avoiding the stream bottom (and most of the deer flies). Since the trail isn't permanently marked, George and Luci ended up being our navigators, making sure everyone was on the same loop. Laredo did get tied that day, but the practice of being passed and left by another horse didn't pan out. Oh well, we'll figure that out at the clinic. That's what clinics are for, right?

Forms were printed and filled out, checks were written and sent in. Joyce and I consulted each other about food (hummus, Irish cheese, home-made bread and tuna salad? George and Thomas just shook their heads and said "Why not peanut butter and jelly for lunch, hot dogs and baked beans for dinner? Make it easy on yourselves.")

We decided to trailer down on Friday, to make all of the packing and tent pitching worthwhile. I thought that Laredo should have company if we were going to do that, so he wasn't all alone Friday night and morning, so along came Luci. I checked with Lani Newcomb, the clinic organizer to make sure we could bring an extra horse, she said "Of course you can, maybe George would be interested in helping by patrolling part of the trail during the nighttime ride". Bless him, he said "sure, why not."

George arrives home, we eat breakfast, pack last minute clothes and toiletries and head to the farm 15 minutes away. Feeling as if I've already packed half of everything we own, I make the decision that we do not need rain gear as the forecast has been consistent for days in predicting a low chance of rain. I know better than this, but some lessons need to be learned more than once apparently, at least for me.

Grab the horses, quick leg check & trot out to make sure they're both sound. Huge sigh of relief, we are finally on the road and should arrive in 2 1/2 to 3 hours. I started out driving, Thomas was navigator, and George tried to get some much needed sleep. An hour later, as we approached Harper's Ferry, WV, I round a corner of the highway and traffic is at a standstill. Barely enough room to brake without throwing the horses around too much. Then we sit. And sit. And sit. I call Joyce, and she's behind us some

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The start of the 6 and 20 mile Ride & Tie events on Saturday evening, July 25 at OD Basecamp in Orkney Springs.

Lisa Stanton's R&T Story, continued

distance, so able to take a different route. One hour and 3 miles later, we pass the reason for the backup - road paving - on a Friday afternoon - in a tourist town - in the summer. Whose bright idea was that?

We are two hours into the journey (and only 50 miles from home), have making sure we stay well-hydrated, and now all three of us have to pee like crazy. We make it to the Super Walmart in Charles Town, WV, park in no-man's land so there is room for the trailer, and head in. I powerwalk in the store only to find the women's bathroom at the front of the store closed for cleaning. To the back of the store I head, suppressing the urge to run. Thank goodness, no line. Finish up, start back to the front of the store when who do I spy but Lani! Quick chat, she draws a map of the camp, shows us the layout and makes a few suggestions on where to park.

On the road again, we hit a backup outside of Winchester, VA, but thankfully it's brief. Pretty drive into Orkney Springs. Joyce arrives about 10 minutes after we do, we discuss where to setup camp, settle on a spot by the creek under a walnut tree so the horses have some shade. A bit of stress while unpacking & setting everything up, but finally all is well - the horses are munching grass and hay, we're enjoying a dinner of rotisserie chicken, zucchini salad, potato salad, wine and home-made bread, with lots of stories and laughs. Made the day worthwhile.

The next day, the clinic got underway at 1pm and was very informative, with all of our questions patiently answered. The evening R&T was originally scheduled to start at 8pm, but due to a shortage of glowsticks a decision was made to begin at 7. George and Luci were to head out on the trail at 6 with the other trail patrol riders, then position themselves about 2.5 miles out to make sure all the riders/runners made the correct turn along a paved road. Joyce, George and I spent some time arranging bags & water bottle holders, packing them with stuff we thought we might need (mealbars, water, desitin, and a few first aid supplies). A little before 5pm, we applied the boots to the horses, with George adding cotter pins to make sure no clips came undone, then time to vet Laredo in. This is where things started to go awry.

Now, I had expected some "buddy" issues with Luci and Laredo, so I planned to halter Laredo in his rope halter and long lead for a bit of groundwork about 20 minutes before presenting to the vet. He has "vetting in" experience from 2 CTRs that we rode drag and the one LD distance ride we started last year (RO'd halfway due to footing), so the process was not unfamiliar.

What ended up happening was I lost track of the time, someone came over to ask if we were ready as everyone else had vetted. Plan B, grab Luci and take her with us - I looked around but George, Thomas and Joyce were all busy. Darn. I grab a lead, don't change halters, and head over. We make it about 10 feet from the corral, when both horses have a mental meltdown. Drag Laredo to Dr. Kathy B., with him behaving like a complete idiot the entire time.

Time to tack up Luci, I decide to tack Laredo up now as well, worried that he will be a raving lunatic once George and Lu leave camp. Once they leave at 6, I'll be able to do some groundwork with him to get him settled and focusing on me. Meanwhile, shortly before 6 it starts to shower. I feel like

such an idiot as our rain jackets are at home (this is not the first time I've done this - sorry Ivy!), luckily it is a short shower.

We look around and realize the other trail patrol riders haven't begun to tack up. Finally they're tacked by 6:30, so George and Lu head over to the start area while Joyce and I make sure we have everything. As soon as they leave, I'll start the groundwork with Laredo. George rides Luci around in circles, she's very excited and giving him a bit of trouble. Some of it was because of being separated, but I think some was excitement to go.

Laredo on the other hand is in mental meltdown part II, and I'm not far behind him. 6:45 rolls around and the patrol riders are still in camp, visiting with friends that haven't been seen in a long time, and poor George is still trying to keep a very woundup Luci going in large circles. No time for a groundwork session, and I realize that if they leave camp now I'll be lucky to even be able to get on Laredo. I called over to Joyce that I

needed to get him over near Lu now to mount, so the three of us hurried over & she held the far stirrup while I mounted. Just then George & the group realize that it's 6:53 and the runners/riders will be hitting the trail in 7 minutes and that they need to boogie to get out there. The other competitors are mounted, their horses calmly (or so it seemed to me) walking and trotting around. Meanwhile I'm sitting on what feels like a keg of dynamite with way too short a fuse. Just kept telling myself to breathe deeply and keep him moving forward, Laredo keeps sucking back and threatening to rear, I glance around for Joyce and see her standing under the tent looking slightly concerned.

Then the call "trail's open" is given and we're off! There are 7 teams going out, 4 on the 20 mile and 3 on the 12. The first 5 horse & rider teams are flying - no way am I going to let Laredo go that fast as I only have the complete attention of

about 3 of his brain cells, so I focus on trying to keep him in a trot.

The trail travels along a gravel road for about a mile, then turns right and starts uphill. Joyce and I have agreed that I will find a place to tie shortly after leaving the road as I owe some uphill foot time to her from our practice several weeks back. There isn't a good place to tie, as the hill drops off steeply on one side of the trail with a steep bank on the uphill side, besides Laredo is now performing airs above the ground now that I'm on foot and forward motion has slowed. Lani is just ahead on foot, so I catch up and make sure I'm allowed to wait here for Joyce to catch up so we can make the exchange. She assures me that it's fine, so I turn around and head a short distance back down the hill (I owe Joyce big-time from that training session). One rider is just behind me, riding Rosie, an adorable Fjord. She asks if I'm ready to tie, and offers to tie nearby to help my horse calm down. Sounds like a wonderful plan, but then we realize our runners may not be traveling the same speed, and will not know of our plans to ride together, so we scrap the idea. I do truly appreciate the offer, she seemed like someone I'd have enjoyed riding with.

Joyce quickly catches up, but Laredo is still bouncing about quite a bit. We decide the safest plan is to hand walk him a ways, and he starts to settle again within 1/4 mile, so Joyce mounts. Soon they are walking & trotting their way down the trail. This gives me a breather (mentally not physically) and I start to wonder how George and Luci made out, and wonder what's going to happen when Laredo has to pass Lu on the trail just ahead.



Lauren Rosser on Tanner and her mother Rhonda Venable placed first in both the Saturday night 12 mile and Sunday morning 6 mile events.

George's ride out was pretty fast as well, and Luci has quite the competitive streak. He placed her behind the first two horses, with one more behind and she settled in. What I found most interesting is that when Joyce and Laredo came by both horses kept their cool, Lu didn't try to follow Laredo, and Laredo didn't try to linger with her. George said that as soon as Laredo passed and disappeared down the trail, Lu let out a big sigh and relaxed. She stood quietly the rest of the evening with her head facing toward camp except when he walked/trotted her a little to prevent stiffness (she's 20 this year), even when the other teams passed by on their way home.

Finally Laredo kept it together as long as he was moving, and Joyce and I were able to make exchanges. The tying portion of the program didn't go as planned due to an issue with the girth. It seemed a bit loose now that Laredo was sweated up, and Joyce and I were starting to find it a bit more difficult to bounce up there between the saddle packs in the way. When I went to tighten it, I notice it's on the last hole on the near side, so head around to the off and discover it's already on the last hole there. It's already snugger than I usually have it (while I do dismount to jog with my horses at home, bouncing back up then isn't as difficult, plus I don't have the saddle packs in the way), but not snug enough for the task at hand, so I tighten it up and tie it off. Joyce asks if the knot is going to slip, and I reply that I hope not. After a few more exchanges we agree to assist each other with mounting so neither of us has to deal with a slipped saddle. This hurt our time, but that really didn't matter to me. I had three goals for this ride - for all three of us to make it back to camp in one piece, for all of us to have a good time, and for Laredo to learn something positive.

We settled in to our own rhythm, and started to really enjoy the trail. We were passed by the first team of returning 20 milers - wow they were fast! Then came upon

one of the patrol riders. About a mile from the turn around met the first team of 12 milers on their way home. Greetings were made all three times, and all looked like they were having a great time. We soon were passed by Rosie, the Fjord, and her humans with greetings that we were very close to the halfway point where we would turn and take the same trail home.

Joyce rode to the halfway point, where Gus was waiting to direct everyone back in the correct direction. He kindly offered to hold Laredo until I arrived, and then held the stirrup while I mounted. Darkness was falling, and whoever was running needed to use their headlamp. I kept mine on the red setting, quickly caught up to Joyce and agreed to ride on 5 minutes. The headlight started to sag & bother me at the trot, so I turned it off and pulled it down around my neck. I thought of all the ride stories I've enjoyed over the years, of riding in the dark and trusting your horse to carry you safely down the trail. Laredo was enthusiastic yet sane so I went for it. He trotted strongly and confidently down the trail, slowing when he needed to pick his way around rocks or muddy spots, then we came to a place where the footing was terrific and he asked to canter. Off we went flying down the trail, with a loop in the reins and two handfuls of mane just in case he tripped or spooked. It was as magical as all of those stories had claimed, even if only for a short distance. I cannot wait to do it again.

Joyce and I exchanged places a couple more times, until finally I didn't have one more mount in me. We passed George and Luci, then down a steep hill towards the gravel road. As I listened to Laredo and Joyce ahead, I was really proud of my boy as he never took a bad step going down that hill. We hit the gravel road and trotted/jogged the last mile in - though I will admit having to fall back to a walk more than once. It was a wonderful feeling coming in to a cheering group at the finish line. Laredo vetted out and we had completed! It took us 3 1/2 hours, we turtled everyone, but I believe all three goals were met. Funny how the last 8 miles made me forget how frustrated I had been the first 4.

George and Luci arrived shortly thereafter, we sponged both horses down, removed their boots and fed them their dinner. Then we enjoyed a bowl of hot chili and a beer. We'd been seeing lightning flashes off and on for an hour, so we threw cotton coolers and rain sheets on the horses. I was the last to shower, and just as I climbed into the sleeping bag the skies opened. Sheets of rain fell for what seemed an eternity, then the wind gusts started. It eased about 30 minutes later, only to start up again as fiercely as before. A few times we thought our tent was going to blow away, then eventually it passed and we got some sleep.

We woke to a steady rain the next morning (where was my rain gear?), but it soon started to clear. Joyce and I talked about going back out on Sunday. I just couldn't bring myself to do it, not because I was too tired - I felt surprisingly good - but because George and Thomas had been so patient and helpful all weekend. And because our horse trailer was three feet deep in wet, muddy horse tack and buckets and human clothing and goodness knows what else that needed to be pulled out, sorted through and put away. And the tent and contents needed to be dealt with.



On the 20 mile Sunday R&T, Wendy Fournier (left) and Ann Crandell run in ahead of their teammates Lisa Green (on Spry) and Catherine Farnan (on Sheza Bold Image).

We were on the road by 11:30, and the drive home was uneventful.

So what did I learn? **That I dislike saddle packs for R&T.** We used a pommel pack as well as a cante pack, and they were definitely in the way for mounting. The only real reason we used them was to carry enough water for both of us. A camelback would be much easier, then a small easyboot bag for first aid stuff and a waistpack for mealbars, map, etc.

To check the amount of adjustment available on your girth. We were so slow because of needing to assist each other mounting.

That there are some holes in my horses' training, we need to address the buddy issue in both of them. No excuse for my Laredo's behavior, particularly during the vet in.

To always bring rain gear, it will be the first thing that gets packed.

I liked the red lamp for when I was on foot, my eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness when I was mounted.

Two green glowsticks on the breastcollar were enough light to prevent me from having vertigo. We hung a glowstick on each side behind our leg as well, plus one in his tail. They would have been sufficient to spot him had he been tied no matter which way he faced.

Guess that sums up the weekend. Think I'll go check out the ride & tie schedule for this fall. Then email Joyce. ♦