



• Riders dismount to give their horses a rest as they head down a steep slope that was part of the rough terrain on the 1969 Nevada All-State Trail Ride.

Desert E-n-d-u-r-a-n-c-e

Nevada All-State Trail Ride

TO THE casual observer, 100 miles of Nevada desert may look pretty dull and uninteresting. But on September 20, 1969, 54 persons from throughout the western states found it to be one of the most fascinating pieces of real estate in America.

This was the day they pitted themselves, their horses, and their months of training against the pre-dawn chill, the noon heat, the endless sagebrush and rocks, the snakes, the gopher holes, and, most important of all, the clock.

It is of sagas such as this that endurance rides are made. And it is perhaps sad that settled America cannot accept such challenges as this en masse, because the look on an endurance rider's face is enough to con-

By JEANETTE WARREN

Photos by Charles Barieau

vince almost anyone that it is a unique experience with rewards that far exceed the sacrifices made in order to participate.

The center of all activity for this, the second annual Nevada All-State Trail Ride, was historic Virginia City. It would be hard to find a more fitting locale in which to hold such a ride. And when 54 riders and horses are collected on the main street between the Bucket of Blood Saloon on one side and the Delta Saloon on the other, a certain aura pervades which even a Hollywood promotion man would find hard to beat.

The president of the 1969 Nevada All-State Trail Ride, Pat Fitzgerald of

Reno, was on hand to greet all riders as they arrived on Friday afternoon for the pre-ride veterinarian check. Mixed in with a lot of familiar faces were those of newcomers to the sport who thought they had better find out what all the shouting was about.

Ages of riders varied from 12 into the 60's. Background sketches of participants would find a cross section of America — school children, businessmen, cowboys, and suburban housewives. It was a diverse group with participants brought together by the common bonds of liking horses and sharing the same objective on this particular day — to conquer 100 miles of desert in 24 hours or less.

Led by Dr. Bruce Bansom, a team of top-flight veterinarians gave each horse a thorough physical examination

before passing judgment as to whether or not the horse would be allowed to start the ride. Most riders were given the "okay" sign and retired early to try to get a little rest before the early morning start.

By 3:45 a.m., the horses were at the starting line in front of the Delta Saloon, and the shuffling of hoofs on pavement and the soft nickers showed that the horses found the enthusiasm of their riders contagious.

President Fitzgerald led the riders down the main street. The only light in the darkness came from sparks of horseshoes striking the hard macadam surface and the vehicle headlights of the Virginia City Jeep Posse. This group was invaluable in guiding riders at strategic points, keeping track of the entrants, and standing by in case of emergency.

This controlled portion of the ride lasted for two miles after which the riders were turned loose and were on their own to proceed at a pace which suited them. Though rocky, the jeep-width trail was easy to follow and a sense of real adventure prevailed as the riders pushed on at a fast clip to take advantage of the early-morning coolness.

Passing ancient Indian writings and crossing volcanic rock fields, most riders arrived at the first mandatory, one-hour veterinarian checkpoint within four hours. With daylight came the sighting of formidable Clark Mountain. The riders appreciated the opportunity to rest and feed and water their mounts while they contemplated the nine-mile uphill trail that lay ahead of them.

The second veterinarian stop, at Horseman's Park outside Reno, saw a pattern beginning to develop. It was pretty well determined by this time



• Fifteen-year-old Korbie Klise of Reno and her horse, Cobby, appear undaunted by the seventy-five miles of desert they have already covered.

which riders were pushing for top place and which ones were content to set a slower pace and assure themselves of finishing the ride in the 24-hour time limit. The former group knew that when they started pushing their horses, their chances of disqualification increased.

The veterinarians were there to protect the horses, and by pulse and respiration readings were able to tell which animals were being over-ridden and which were in good-enough physical condition to withstand the stresses of the ride. Any sign of exhaustion disqualifies a horse from further participation.

With some riders voluntarily drop-

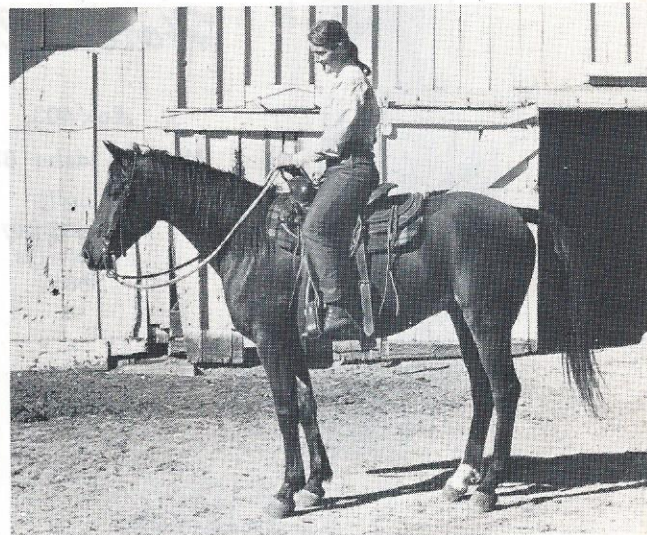
ping out, and others being forced to withdraw by veterinary decision, the field had been reduced from the original 54 to 38 following the third checkpoint on the shores of Washoe Lake. From there, 14 windy miles remained to the bonanza town of Virginia City and the loop trail would be completed.

A little drama was developing, however, as the ride became a contest between two riders. In this last section, which covered the most difficult terrain of the entire ride, Cliff Lewis, the 1968 winner, on his good horse Black Jack, was dueling with Australian Susan Scantlebury for first place.

(Continued on page 112)



• Cliff Lewis and Black Jack, who shared first-place honors with Susan Scantlebury on the 1969 Nevada ride, take a break on their way to victory on a ride held prior to the Nevada All-State.



• Susan Scantlebury tries out her best-condition award, a trophy saddle presented to her at the awards dinner. The horse is the six-year-old gelding, Witezarif, that carried her to the win. Witezarif is owned by Pat Fitzgerald.



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Desert Endurance

(Continued from page 7)

At Virginia City the suspense was building as to which would cross the finish line first. Sue was mounted on Pat Fitzgerald's bay Arabian gelding, Witezarif. Having come to America for the sole purpose of endurance riding, she was looking for her first victory and figured she had a nearly unbeatable horse.

Cliff knew his own horse's capabilities were far from exhausted and he and Sue rode side by side with each assessing the other's mount. When it looked as though the only way to decide the issue was a flat-out horse race, they both decided that the welfare of their animals, that now had over 90 miles of rough and rugged desert behind them, came first.

And so they walked to the finish line, crossing side-by-side with a display of sportsmanship that drew the applause of the crowd. They had covered the course in a record time of 10 hours and 59 minutes which meant they averaged more than 9 miles an hour over some of the roughest country the west could throw at them.

As more weary riders brought their horses full circle back to the starting line, they were welcomed by the vice-president of the Nevada All-State Trail Ride, Cliff Ford, who greeted each successful contestant with a hearty handshake and congratulations.

Since the ride had been declared a tie, the big question now became "Who would win the best-condition trophy?" This award, given to the horse among the first seven to finish that is judged by the veterinarians to be in the best physical shape, is kept a secret until the awards dinner.

The Delta Saloon, site of the awards banquet, saw a capacity crowd on Sunday—reminiscent of its heyday of the 1870's. The presentation of awards started off with Cliff Lewis and Susan Scantlebury sharing first-place honors. But Sue also won the best-condition trophy for her mount's near-perfect condition at the end of the ride.

Witezarif had done something that no other horse has ever accomplished in United States endurance riding competition. His name will go down in horse annals as the first horse to ever receive both the first-place trophy and the best-condition trophy in a 100-miles in *one-day* ride—quite a feat for the six-year-old, 850-pound gelding. And it was quite a feat for the girl from Australia who bested some of America's top riders.

Fitzgerald awarded buckles to each person completing the ride and special breed trophies to the first Appaloosa,

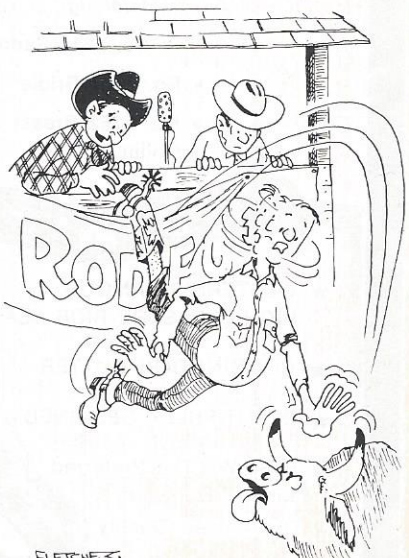


• "I have a strong hunch that they went that-a-way!"

Thoroughbred, Arabian, and Quarter Horse to finish, plus trophies for the youngest rider and the first lady to finish. Of the 12 youngsters between the ages of 12 and 16, all but one received a completion buckle.

With the Nevada ride over, Fitzgerald could look back on a highly successful year of campaigning on the endurance circuit. Members of the Nevada All-State Trail Ride Endurance Team had won many rides in the western United States. These included the Castle Rock Challenge Ride, the Blue Mountain Endurance Ride, the Pacific Coast Equestrian Research Farm Ride, the Tevis Cup, the Peaceful Valley Lodge Ride, and now had shared top honors on this desert ride.

The 1970 Nevada All-State Ride, a sure bet to draw many top endurance competitors, is scheduled for September 19. Additional information may be obtained by writing: NASTR, P.O. Box 7083, Reno, Nev. 89502.



• "Your foot is hung up, but I'll get it unhooked in a jiffy!"