

AERC

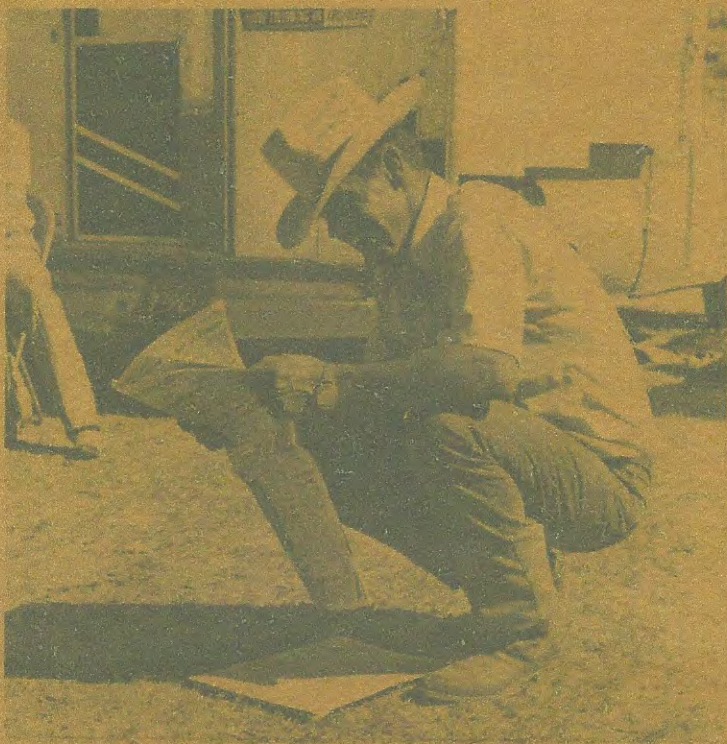


NEWS

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Bruce Branscomb, D.V.M., of Elko, Nevada. Dr. Branscomb has been Head Veterinarian for the Virginia City 100 Mile Ride since its inception in 1968. He is a dedicated and respected Endurance Veterinarian in the West and was inducted into the AERC Hall of Fame for 1978.



Nick Mansfield and Buffalo Bill of the 102 Ranch. They made the Western States Trail Ride together ten times and were awarded this cup and a 1000 mile buckle. Buffalo Bill was inducted into the AERC Hall of Fame at the 1978 National convention in Reno.

**Why not be a part of the
movement by joining the AERC?**

TEN TIMES AROUND THE TRAIL by Phil Gardner

In the spring of 1968 I went to the Pacific Coast Equestrian Research Farm to attend my third endurance ride. There I met two people, Cliff Lewis and Pat Fitzgerald, who were to have a profound effect on my life. I enjoyed their company and was intrigued by their tales of wild rides. I eagerly accepted an invitation to go to Nevada and help mark the trail for the first Nevada All-State Trail Ride, 100 Miles One Day Ride. Little did I realize that ten years later I would still be riding around that same trail, the first person to finish 10 consecutive 100 mile rides on the same trail.

That first ride was an experience that I will never forget. During the summer Pat told everyone that this was going to be a "real endurance ride". No vets, no vet checks, just 100 miles or marked trail and everyone on their own. Now this sounded like my kind of ride! Needless to say, I was somewhat disappointed when I found out that there were going to be Vet checks, Vets, and everything. What neither I nor anyone else realized was that everything included; not 100 miles of trail but 130 miles of trail, a canteen truck that missed all of the Vet stops, a trail so rugged that Pat Fitzgerald said "we must be lost, no one would take a ride over this!" and last but not least, a total eclipse of the moon!

The second year the start was moved to Virginia City. The trail was established about as it is today. The only problem was that no one person knew the trail. It was an exercise in how to lose people in the desert. At one point Cliff Lewis and I held up the entire ride until the person (who shall forever remain nameless) that marked the trail came along to show everyone where to go. In Bailey Canyon, Barbara Suhr White and I followed a trail of ribbons up the side of the canyon. At the top they disappeared. We decided that rather than to decent the steep climb we had just finished we would strike off across country. Eventually we came to a road. Barbara thought we should turn right and I thought left, so we parted company. I understand that a search party found her at 2:30am.

Another year I talked a friend of mine, Leslie Novonie, into crewing for me. She worked in the Bay area so we didn't make it to Virginia City until 1:00am Saturday morning. Unfortunately the ride started at 4:00am. Upon arriving in town we noticed that there were still some riders at the Bucket of Blood Saloon. There we ran into Dean Hubbard. After a few drinks Dean asked Leslie why she was bothering to crew for me when he had a well conditioned horse she could use. It was all vetted in and only needed a rider. Well, there went my crew! The only thing that Dean failed to mention was that Pat had sold him this horse because it was too lazy for the dude string, a fact soon discovered after the start of the ride. After clearing the first Vet Check it became a matter of principle for us to get this malingerer through the ride. The things that happened that day are best not repeated. Leslie and I did finish the ride, dead last with 2 minutes to spare. Odd thing, come to think of it, I haven't seen Leslie since that day.

Along about the sixth year I became aware that I had a perfect record of the ride. I never thought that the luck would hold out ten years. In fact, I made Dean Hubbard a \$50.00 bet that no one would receive their 900 Mile buckle on the 9th year of the ride. As I was the only one receiving said buckle on the 9th year, I had to give Dean a formal I.O.U. before he would accept my entry for the 1977 ride.

At the start of that 9th ride I thought my chances for winning that bet were excellent. I had spent the summer riding across the United States. I started with the Great American Horse Race in New York. Being disappointed with all of the trailering that this group was doing I left that race in Kansas City. I helped form a group that would actually RIDE the old Pony Express Trail from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento. We were successful in this endeavor. It took us exactly 60 days to cover the 1965 miles. We arrived in Sacramento on Tuesday, September 14th. The Virginia City ride was that following Saturday.

At this point, I had been on the road with my horses exactly 4 months. Both Natomas and Hase were more than delighted to get back to the "ol' corral" at home. Neither one would admit to any enthusiasm for doing a 100 mile one day ride in four more days. At this time Penrod was still recovering from surgery for a warble so he was definitely out. I let them rest a couple of days and broke the news to them that someone would have to go to Virginia City. They talked it over and Natome reluctantly said that he would try.

I left for Virginia City that morning confident that I would be \$50 richer that night. Somehow we got through the first Vet Check. Clark Mountain seemed longer and higher than ever before. It was late afternoon when I arrived at the second Vet Check. Here the Veterinarians got even for all past transgressions by okaying me to go on.

For the first time I ended up in Bailey Canyon in the dark. I had always wondered how anyone could go so slow on a ride. Now I knew. The answer: you go that slow because you CAN'T go any faster!

By the time I got to the last Vet Check I was getting worried. Natome was no different that he had been all day. I was sure he would pass and that I would have to face Dean Hubbard in Virginia City.

Actually, if the truth were known, I might have been a little nervous about the 10th ride. I tried not to think about it and hoped no one else would remember it. The plan was just to pretend it was just another ride, go over and sneak through it. Then I was jinxed; the ride brochure came out with my picture in it, I received several letters wishing me luck (what could be worse luck). Then at the ride check-in almost everyone had advice for me, although I noticed that no one asked advice from me. Then, at the start Ernie Perry came up and gave me a kiss! I felt as if I were doomed.

I don't know what it was, maybe it was that kiss, but the day couldn't have gone better. I was riding one of my favorite horses, Penrod the Paranoid. The weather was good and the trail was smooth! The ride went quickly and I finished 12th.

In ten years I have used five different horses on the Virginia City ride. Cricket, Good Trip, Dirty Ernie, Penrod the Paranoid, and Natomas. I owe my 1000 Mile Buckle to them and Lady Luck. To me it is incredible that in ten years one of them didn't go lame, but they didn't.

To me the biggest things about having a 1000 Miles Buckle are the memories of the ride, the people and the horses of the last ten years.



Appaloosa Distance Riding Trophies

The Appaloosa Horse Club, Inc. has announced a new addition to their aggressive distance riding program in the form of trophies to be presented to the top Appaloosas in American Endurance Riding Conference and North American Trail Ride Conference competition.

The trophy to the best Appaloosa in AERC will be awarded to the horse that completes more miles in completed AERC rides. The Appaloosa NATRC trophy will go to the horse that accumulates the most points. The miles and points will accrue in one year periods.

The annual awards will be presented at the respective AERC and NATRC annual conventions.

According to Laurie Campbell of the distance riding department of the Appaloosa Horse Club, Inc., these new trophies will be designed to be fitting of the accomplishment, and will be in keeping with the fine quality of the other Appaloosa distance riding awards.

The annual trophies are joining the other Appaloosa distance riding awards, including the saddle log program which awards hours on an Appaloosa, the medallion system and 1000 miles awards, and the Chief Joseph Commemorative Award.

Distance riding is 25 percent of the total national awards system of the ApHC, and the programs are getting significantly more Appaloosa riders into distance riding, and more distance riders on Appaloosas. In keeping with the trend, the top awards from the distance riding organizations are frequently going to Appaloosa riders.

