



Tilden Wildcat Horsemen's Association Newsletter

February-March 2011

TWHA Annual Meeting

Nearly 50 TWHA members and friends gathered in the Grizzly Room of the Tilden Golf Club for our Annual Membership Meeting on January 24th—our third year meeting there. Once we were seated with dinner, we went around the room and each person introduced themselves to the group, and we then voted to elect the 2011 TWHA Board of Directors. Gary Fitts is our new President, replacing Alison Martin who remains as a Member-at-Large. 2010 TWHA Board Member-at-Large Caroline van Tuyll relinquished her seat—we thank her for her efforts on the board. Otherwise the Board remains the same and is listed later in this issue,

After Gary presented Alison with a gift certificate honoring her 2 years as President, we heard reports from our Treasurer, who noted ~\$21,000 in our account, including over \$3,000 in club funds and \$18,000

in the East Bay Hills ride account, the distribution of which is described elsewhere in this issue. Our membership secretary noted that we have 56 members paid up for 2011, and our newsletter editor asked for people to send story ideas and photos to newsletter@twha.org.

We heard brief reports on 2010 and upcoming 2011 TWHA events, including our Day at The Races last Spring, our trail work day, the replacement of hitching posts at Es Anderson Camp in Tilden, on our East Bay Hills Ride and Hike, and on our upcoming TWHA Night at the Movies. Business concluded, we sat back to enjoy our speaker, the talented, informative and inspiring dressage instructor, Emily Sorenson, who drew on her 15 years of dressage experience. Emily has succeeded in dressage competition and in passing her training and competition experiences on to her students. Through her work with top CA trainers—primarily, Sandy Howard—Emily has gathered an extensive tool box to create a plan for improvement and success across many disciplines. Though dressage has been



This year's TWHA Annual Meeting speaker was Emily Sorenson, in motion here on her half-Andalusian Cristiano in Woodside.

Emily's focus, she enjoys working with endurance and event riders and horses, too. A summary of her talk follows.

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Dressage for Other Horses...

by *Emily Sorensen*

Editor's Note: Our Annual Meeting speaker sent this summary of her talk, which captures her way of presenting ideas well and covers most of what she talked about. She notes that "for simplicity, I've used the phrase "endurance horse," though, in most cases, you could not only substitute "trail horse," but also "horse from ANY discipline" and most points will still apply."

When I'm meeting a new endurance horse, I start with the lower levels of dressage. There's no sense in getting on an endurance horse and asking him for pirouettes and tempi changes. While fully able to do these movements with training (and though really fun to do), they are unnecessary to the success of an endurance horse. I treat the lower levels of dressage as diagnostics. The most important question I ask at this stage is: "How is the horse traveling across the ground?"

After getting on a new horse and walking about 20 feet from the mounting block, I've already asked at least 25 questions. Not verbally, of course, but through little challenges I ask of the horse such as:

- ◆ -did the horse walk from the mounting block with good energy? and straight ahead?
- ◆ -how does the horse respond to the right rein? the left rein?
- ◆ -does the horse stop if I take evenly on the reins?
- ◆ -does the horse bend easily left? do you bend easily right? or does he fall to the opposite direction?
- ◆ -what happens when I apply pressure with only one leg?
- ◆ -is the horse's back up or down? tight or loose? what can I do to make the back looser? or tighter?
- ◆ -what is the pushy hind leg and what is the carrying hind leg?
- ◆ -does the horse feel the same on both posting diagonals in trot?

More challenging horses have most likely become "self-sufficient" and get to the point that they don't want to be asked questions and they don't want any information from the rider. You can imagine the dialogue:

Rider: Hey, can you move away from my left leg?

Horse: Why?

Rider: Why not?

Horse: Because we've always done it this way. Where's my owner anyway?

Rider: How about you try it?

Horse: But...

As a rider, this is where you have to prove yourself to your horse as someone with the ability to guide, teach...as someone with the ability to navigate challenges with new participants and new situations. Remember, intention goes a long way!

I usually ask the above questions in the walk in both directions, in the trot in both directions, and the canter on each lead. Depending on the horse and your own abilities, you might breeze through these questions quickly for all gaits and directions. Each horse is different, so the more challenging gait/direction will be different for each horse. This is what you're trying to figure out!

The more advanced levels of dressage open up options to the horse and rider. The most important question that I ask in this phase is: "How do I want the horse to travel across the ground?" You can start introducing more difficult patterns and combinations of movements to further challenge your horse and yourself. When you add complexity, it allows you to explain to your horse what is required and what the positive response is for the exercise. Essentially, this is where you can establish yourself as "herd leader!" Some examples of more advanced questions for an endurance horse are:

- ◆ -is the rhythm of a gait naturally consistent?
- ◆ -can I adjust the tempo (quickness) of all gaits?
- ◆ -can I adjust the height of the stride?
- ◆ -can I lengthen the frame (length from horse's tail to browband) and shorten the frame?
- ◆ -can I adjust the length and height of the neck?

Again, these questions are asked at all gaits in both directions. Devoting some time to dressage will allow these questions to become second nature. The dialogue that is opened up between you and your horse is absolutely worth pursuing!

In general, if I'm allowed to compare your typical dressage horse to a typical endurance horse, endurance horses are all about GOING! On the trail, they're always thinking very far ahead of themselves, whereas a dressage horse thinks more within himself. I don't expect an endurance horse to exist within the smaller, more specific space as a dressage horse all of the time, but I have had to shorten the distance of attention on every endurance horse I've ridden. This is important because if I see a change in footing in the trail (deep sand, a big root or rock, a road crossing, etc) I want the horse to be thinking back towards me enough that when I make a change in my riding to adjust to the trail, the horse responds as well. When they're thinking SO far ahead and I ask for a change, their attention first has to come all the way back to me, then assimilate the new information, then...well, it took too long and we tripped on the rock.

Teaching the horse to respond more specifically to relative

leg pressure is an important addition to the endurance riders' tool box. If I have relatively more leg pressure on the right side of the horse, I expect the horse to move laterally to the left. These are skills that should be first taught in the arena, rather than on the single-track trail on the side of a mountain!

Remember that intention goes a long way. If you have a good mental image of what you want to look like and what you want your horse to be doing, you're well on your way! Give your horse that information! Even if it's very simple, your ability to guide your horse needs to be proven to him everyday through these

"easy" challenges.

Emily has regular clinics in the East Bay and is available for clinics at other facilities. Her website is www.sorensendressage.com and you can e-mail Emily at ensorensen@sbcglobal.net with questions, comments, or to inquire about scheduling lessons in your area.



Cavalia highlights some impressive training with a very theatrical presentation

TWHA Visits Cavalia

By Gary Fitts

On Sunday November 21, 23 horse-folk from the East and North Bay attended Cavalia in San Francisco. This included TWHA members Renee Benoit, Jane Binder, Elisabeth Chemouni, Gary Fitts, Ginger Ortiz, Ellen Pofcher, Caroline Van Tuyll, and Kim Zvik.

Some describe Cavalia as "Cirque de Soleil with horses". That'll do, roughly. (Other images: Tolkien's Eleven Lords riding in moonlit forests, and an equestrian Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.) Those of you who have never seen it can find clips on YouTube and see some pho-

tos at <http://www.cavalia.net>. There's a good video clip at <http://tinyurl.com/67jzjbx>.

Both Cirque de Soleil and Cavalia have a common founder in Normand Latourelle, and both include some breathtaking acrobatics and brilliant staging. What I remember most about Cavalia are the serene human/horse ballets, but there's also some great trick riding. However this isn't everyone's cup of tea. One very experienced horseman declined, saying that Cavalia "is worth seeing once, if you are a kid who loves horses. It has a very small arena where they race around and one day a horse will lose its balance and slide

into the people sitting around the edge. The rest is riding for whoos and ahhs and not very impressive for people who study dressage."

Some facts: almost half the 49 horses that appear on stage are stallions. (There are no mares.) The cast currently includes: 13 Arabians, 13 Quarter Horses, 9 Pure Spanish Breed, 4 Lusitano, 2 Mustangs, 2 Paints, 2 Percherons, 1 Andalusian, 1 Comtois, 1 Criollo,

and 1 Warmblood. There are 31 acrobats, dancers and riders from Canada, France, the United States, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Live music is provided by six musicians (singer, guitar, keyboard, bass, percussion, drums, recorder and cello).

Cavalia claims that its big top is the largest canvas tent in North America. (110 feet high, covering 26,000 square feet. It takes 150 people 12 days to set it up and 3 days to take it down. 100 truckloads of sand and dirt are brought in to build the stage, which is 160 feet wide. There are nine tents in all, giving the whole scene a fairy-tale appearance.

It was expensive to attend, even after our approx. 10% group discount. Cavalia charges what the market will bear — I noticed that their ticket prices in Denver were about half what they were in San Francisco.

A Fine Day (Not) to Ride...

Better late than never, here's something to remember in case it ever rains again, we reprint this one from the archives...

Here comes winter, and just in time! Gone's the dust and heat. Welcome to cool and moist. But experienced trail riders know to pay attention to the weather and the rain gauge...soggy trails are not the place to be.

When the trails are excessively wet, just a few horses passing through can cause long-term damage to the trail bed. Loose soil, further loosened by horse, hiker or mountain bike travel, can lead to erosion, trail widening and dramatically increased maintenance requirements. Too much trail damage and we all risk losing access to the trails we love to ride.

Real horsefolk already own a working knowledge of mud, and can find trail maintenance lessons right in their own paddocks. Following a heavy rain, compare an occupied paddock to one that is smooth and vacant. The empty paddock will drain and dry days earlier than the turnout where a horse constantly kneads the footing. Hooves make hummocks that hold water. The same phenomenon is evident on trails...a trail allowed to drain well before use will need minimal maintenance, even after many seasons, while a trail used too soon will be a problem forever. Furthermore, the trail not ridden when wet will be ready to ride sooner.



gate, the jump, steep water crossing, Z back, rain slicker, one-rein stop, back uphill, mailbox, lope over, turn on forehand, and serpentine. Bonus: ACTHA TV special from The Horse Show with Rick Lamb (commercial-free)

Included in Part 2: the grid, straddle pole, the bridge, sidepass over logs, trot over, rope gate, ditch crossing, dismount, turnaround box, small stream, emergency dismount, injured animal mount, and hat pickup. Bonus: ACTHA TV special from The Horse Show with Rick Lamb (commercial-free)

Find the going getting sticky? Head back to the trailhead. Better yet, plan ahead and find trails that have been “hardened” for those wet days when you absolutely have to get out and ride. Some rocky fire roads which are well drained are fine to ride when wet. Softer trails through the woods and meadows often need a week to dry.

Got the itch to ride? Maybe you could plan some alternate horse activity—read a horse book, catch up on cleaning your tack, do some ring work, go to a clinic, take a lesson, fix your fences, organize the tack room, clean out the horse trailer, get your truck and trailer serviced.

If you're new to trail riding, you may be wondering why we are so concerned. Trails need a solid base to prevent erosion, and trail use when soil is wet loosens the critical top layer, opening up channels for runoff. Show the land managers that we care about the trails. Erosion and user damage increases the possibility that the trails will be closed, perhaps permanently.

Remember riding on public trails is a privilege, not a right. Please show that we in the trail riding community are responsible enough to deserve that privilege.

TWHA reminds all riders: Please don't ride on wet trails! And spread the word to the less knowledgeable. Your example sets the pace.

Trail Trials Obstacles DVD from ACTHA

The American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) has produced a two part DVD set of training for trail obstacles with Carrie Scrima and Rick Lamb

Trail Tips - Part 1 & 2 DVD

Each DVD, Rick Lamb, NTSC Format, 50 min.

How to properly perform 13 trail skills.

Included in Part 1: cowboy curtain, bag drag, ranch gate, the jump, steep water crossing, Z back, rain slicker, one-rein stop, back uphill, mailbox, lope over, turn on forehand, and serpentine. Bonus: ACTHA TV special from The Horse Show with Rick Lamb (commercial-free)

Want to watch the first Trail Tip online NOW? See it here: <http://tinyurl.com/4s7dl9m>

TWHA Night at the Movies

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

7:00 pm at the Pacific Film Archive Theater, Berkeley



Please join us for a special screening of

COWGIRLS: PORTRAITS OF AMERICAN RANCH WOMEN

With special guest filmmaker Nancy Kelly, editor Kenji Yamamoto and cinematographer John Knoop

followed by

THE HIGHLY EXALTED- BUCKAROOS OF NORTHERN NEVADA

Directed by Kim Shelton
with special guest
cinematographer John Knoop



The PFA theater is located near the intersection of Bancroft and Bowditch on the south end of the UC Berkeley campus.

See www.bampfa.berkeley.edu for location and parking information.

Tickets \$5 for TWHA members, \$7 for guests

How the East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Hike and Ride Supports the Trails

Over the past 8 years the East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike has raised over \$140,000 to support trails in the East Bay and beyond. This has been made possible by the generosity of our donors and volunteers, by the matching funds made available by the Bay Area Barns and Trails Trust, and by the participation of hundreds of riders and hikers.

2/3 of the funds raised have been donated to the Bay Area Ride Trail Council, a coalition of volunteers and agencies, that plans, promotes, builds, acquires and maintains the more than 550-mile Bay Area Ridge Trail, a multi-use trail that, when complete, will connect over 75 parks and open spaces on the ridgelines surrounding the San Francisco Bay. Recognizing the growing recreational needs of the Bay Area's diverse populations, along with the desire of individuals to connect their communities with the outdoor environment, the Council creates links between parks, people and communities.

Over the past 8 years, the East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike has contributed to the following Bay Area Ridge Trail projects:

- ◆ Signage of the entire route of the Ridge Trail through the East Bay.
- ◆ Volunteer work parties that helped prepare Crockett Hills Regional Park, with 4.5 miles of Ridge Trail, for its 2006 opening
- ◆ Funding for a crew to help resolve drainage issues on the Ridge Trail in Crockett Hills in 2007
- ◆ Planning, advocacy and meetings that helped open 7.5 miles of Ridge Trail in the Pinole Watershed
- ◆ Planning and advocacy funds for Ridge Trail staff to help open Ridge Trail in Vargas Plateau in Fremont, on Feeder Trail #1 and on Fernandez Ranch in Martinez
- ◆ Financial support for building 3.5 miles of new trail at Muir Heritage Land Trust's Sky Ranch and Fernandez Ranch in Martinez that will become/are now Ridge Trail
- ◆ Financial support earmarked for a new section of Ridge Trail in San Mateo County
- ◆ Additional planning and construction of Ridge Trail segments elsewhere

In addition the East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride has donated to these other East Bay trail projects:

- ◆ The Volunteers for Outdoor California trail maintenance and rebuilding project in Joaquin Miller Park in 2007
- ◆ The Volunteers for Outdoor California 2008 trail construction project at Brushy Peak near Livermore, and the V-O-Cal trail maintenance project at Las Trampas in 2010
- ◆ Installation of a water tank at Corral Camp at Las Trampas Regional Preserve, making it possible for horse groups to camp there
- ◆ Full financial support of a trail maintenance weekend co-sponsored with the Student Conservation Association on Mt. Diablo in 2007
- ◆ Save Mt. Diablo's project to build a 60 mile Diablo Loop Trail around the perimeter of Mt. Daiblo
- ◆ Maintenance work to preserve and maintain fencing at Sequoia Arena in Joaquin Miller Park
- ◆ Funding set aside for improvements to Es Anderson Equestrian Camp in Tilden Park

2010 East Bay Hills Finance Report



Bay Area Ridge Trail:

TWHA has historically supported the Ridge Trail, starting back in 1990 and 1991 when we sponsored Ride for the Ridge and Tri for the Ridge, and when TWHA and the Quicksilver Endurance Riders were the only 2 user groups that joined with the Trust for Public Land, The Greenbelt Alliance and interested individuals to found the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council. After our success with the first East Bay Hills Ride in 2002, we made it a benefit for the Ridge Trail in 2003, and have now raised \$92,600 for the Ridge Trail. In most years,

The final count shows that the 2010 East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike racked up as one of our best fundraisers ever. With the generous donations of energy from our TWHA, MHA, Ridge Trail and many other volunteers, with Bay Area Barns and Trails providing a generous grant, and with lots of donations both in cash and in kind for our raffle, silent auction and meals, we managed to raise \$20,500, our second highest total ever. This would not have been possible without everyone's stellar efforts, and brings our 9 year total to over \$140,000.

As in past years, discussion of how to use these funds was ongoing prior to, during and following the event, and many ideas are always considered. As in recent years, the combined ride and hike planning committees met and made recommendations to the TWHA Board, which approved the following plan at its February meeting..

The funds raised in 2010 will be donated as follows:

Bay Area Ridge Trail	\$10,000
TWHA	\$2,500
MHA	\$2,000
Ivan Dickson Program	\$2,000
V-O-Cal	\$2,500
Tilden Wildcat Trails Fund	<u>\$1,500</u>
Total	\$20,500

Specifically:

we restricted those funds to be used in the East Bay, and during that time period, 15 miles of new Ridge Trail, all open to horses, has been opened at Crockett Hills, at Fernandez Ranch and Sky Ranch in Martinez, and Pinole Watershed, with Feeder Trail #1 coming soon in Martinez, while in the Southern part of the East Bay 2.8 miles were opened last August in North Garin Park, with more than 10 additional miles in the planning stages connecting that section with Vargas Plateau in Fremont. Funds raised on our ride were used to help trail building at Sky Ranch, Fernandez Ranch, and Crockett Hills, Ridge Trail sign replacement where needed on the entire East Bay Hills route, and planning efforts for many of these projects. And of course with the addition of the East Bay Hills Hike to the event, the Ridge Trail has been more involved with our event, which had more hikers than riders the last 2 years, and nearly as many Ridge Trail and hiker volunteers as from TWHA this past year.

TWHA: Over the years, the ride, which started and for many years was fueled primarily by TWHA volunteers, has raised \$16,900 for the TWHA treasury. This is above ride expenses, including additional costs for club insurance and newsletters, and does not include funds saved for start-up expenses for the ride each year. The amount has varied from \$1-3,000 per year, after the first couple of years when all proceeds were donated to the Ridge Trail. In addition to the new posts at the Es Anderson Equestrian Camp, and a water trough for Redwood Park, these funds have supported TWHA trail advocacy via our newsletter and other club activities.

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2010 East Bay Hills Finance Report

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MHA: Starting with the second year of our event, the Metropolitan Horsemen's Association has been a co-sponsor, hosting our ride for 2 days each year at Sequoia Arena in Joaquin Miller Park, and a major source of volunteer energy for the ride. Over the years the event has raised \$9,700 for MHA, and in recent years they have been saving these funds for the reconstruction of the fence around Sequoia Arena—which needs to be rebuilt after many, many years of deferred maintenance. They also donated \$1,000 from ride proceeds to buy trail signs for Joaquin Miller Park

Ivan Dickson Program: This is the volunteer trail maintenance program of the EBRPD, funded by an endowment started with an inheritance from Ivan Dickson, a Berkeley hiker. They are responsible for 5-10 volunteer trail work days in the parks each year, including California and National Trail Days projects, which in Tilden have done major re-routes on Arroyo, Grizzly Peak, Selby and other trails in the past, as well as projects in Redwood Park and Chabot Park, where the Ranch Trail, used on our event every year, out of Bort Meadow, was largely built on an Ivan Dickson Day. They will be sponsoring upcoming trail improvements on Arroyo Trail in May, and an-

other project in Wildcat Park this year. For the last few years, the EBRPD Regional Trails Department, which runs the Ivan Dickson Program, has provided dinner for one night of our event.

Volunteers for Outdoor California (V-O-Cal): This is the volunteer trail work group that sponsors big weekend projects all over the Bay Area, from San Martin to Napa. In the East Bay they have built new trail at Sky Ranch and Fernandez Ranch in Martinez, at Joaquin Miller Park and King's Estate in Oakland, and at Brushy Peak in Livermore, and have rebuilt trail at Las Trampas (where they camped out and used the water tank placed there by our event). Counting our first donation to the Muir Heritage Land Trust trail-building at Sky Ranch, this will be the 5th year our event has supported V-O-Cal projects—each time the check has been presented at an East Bay V-O-Cal event in front of 100+ volunteers. In 2011, Cathy Moyer, V-O-Cal's Executive Director, will be taking on Bob Cooper's role as food coordinator for the East Bay Hills Ride and Hike.

Tilden Wildcat Trails Fund: The TWHA Board felt that more of the money raised by this event should be used on the trails and facilities closest to home, and voted this year to set aside funds to be used for a project in our local parks or on trails leading to those parks. Because our local parks are the oldest of the East Bay Parks, there are few opportunities to do anything truly new. This money might be spent this year, or we might add to it in future years until we select a suitable project. Let us know if you have any suggestions.

Thanks again to everyone who has donated their time and energy in so many ways and on so many occasions to make all of this possible.

And stay tuned for news about the 10th Annual East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike



Foggy winter move: Bronwyn Swan's Scout runs through the fog at the Orinda Horsemen's Association pasture in January. Photo by Betty Mertens.

Arroyo Trail Rehab Coming Soon!

by *Morris Older*

Tilden Park's Arroyo Trail has been a focus for TWHA for many years. This narrow trail, which connects Big Springs with Seaview Trail, runs parallel to Big Springs Fire Road for a good distance, and then turns and runs roughly parallel with Seaview. We had scheduled a fall trail workday there that got rained out last October, but we had only planned to trim some of the brush encroaching on the trail. The work desperately needed on the trail tread itself seemed beyond the capacity of our group of volunteers.

In the mid-1990s, we participated in 2 significant projects on Arroyo. During the first, part of a California Trail Days gathering that also included significant reroutes of Grizzly Peak and Selby Trails, TWHA volunteers were among the group that built a new switchback through the Eucalyptus Trees on Arroyo. TWHA member Michele Malot and yours truly

volunteered to remove the poison oak from that section so that other volunteers could enter, and I can still recall the hundreds of tics crawling up our white TWHA sweatshirts when we emerged. A bit later, TWHA built the switchback just a bit below that section under the leadership of former TWHA President Juliet Moss. Both of these minor reroutes replaced steep, badly eroded sections of trail, now overgrown with brush.

And although TWHA has returned to Arroyo every 2-3 years to trim brush, water has changed the topography as the years go by, so that much of the trail has deep gullies, and is difficult to hike or ride. In many ways it has become the most damaged trail in all of Tilden Park, and in January I walked the trail with Tilden Park Supervisor Sergio Huerta. I urged action, and offered to mobilize trail volunteers from elsewhere if need be. I spoke with EBRPD's Regional Trails Department, which was in the process of formulating

its volunteer trail maintenance schedule for the year.

We lucked out when the California Wilderness Coalition called them, looking for a volunteer trails project near Berkeley for 60 volunteers just as these discussions were going on. And so a plan has been developed involving some prep work with light trail machinery to break up some of the downhill-side berms along the trail, and the volunteerism of the CWC, directed by EBRPD staff leading an Ivan Dickson Volunteer Trail Maintenance Day on Friday, May 6th. The expenses associated with this project will be paid for using funds raised on the 2010 East Bay Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike. TWHA members may be invited to join in the action that day, but TWHA will also hold its own trail work day on May 14th on Arroyo Trail, to add to the improvements put in place by then. The result should be that Arroyo Trail will be in better shape than it has been in years.

Putting down the vet clinic I loved

Ed Note: Not your usual TWHA Newsletter story, for sure--I found this one in the Tri-Valley Trailblazer News, and we reprint it here because, well, read it and find out...

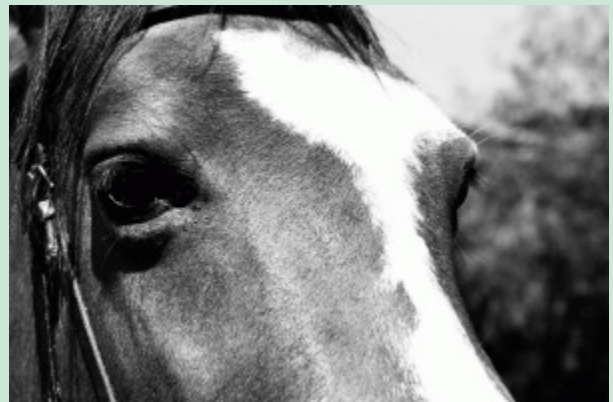
By *Christy Corp-Minamiji*

We sealed the envelopes yesterday. I commented to our technician and our office manager that it felt like euthanasia, a really prolonged euthanasia. As I slid the moistened sponge across the gummed edges, I felt my mind detach in the same way it does when I draw Pentobarbital into a syringe. Except, this time the death hit closer to home; we were serving the execution notices on our own jobs.

Conventional wisdom has held for decades that veterinary medicine is a "recession-proof career." I think, on a pro-

fession-wide scale, this may be true, but not with large animal vets. In Uysalugur hard times, people may continue to seek the same level of care they always have for a dog or cat whose upkeep may total \$40/month. But when the animal in question is a horse, boarded for hundreds of dollars a month and whose value has plummeted, or a cow, when feed costs are sky-high, reality dictates cutbacks — yes, even to veterinary care.

The letters will go into the mail today, white envelopes fluttering in a mass migration to people who have lived along-



side our practice for over 30 years. As I sealed them, I flipped the occasional letter over and glanced at the address before placing it on the stack. My mind drove to these addresses: That's where

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Shutting Down

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the horse went through the fence; he gave me his wife's chocolate chip cookies after I put that prolapse back in; she fostered those horses that SPCA seized from the crazy woman who turned the foals and stallion loose onto the levee so we couldn't take them. Some of the names were unfamiliar — out-of-state addresses, people seen once at a show, or those who had horses at a local training barn. But other envelopes, most of them, bore names so familiar that I can tell you the layout of the property, the types of flowers in the yard, the names and ages of their children and dogs. There were some "bad clients" in the bunch: slow pays, bounced checks, angry shouting, impossible demands, dangerous animals. However, most of the names belonged to good people: people who listened, who wanted the best for their animals, who sacrificed vacations to pay their bills and treat their livestock, people who knew in their bones or who learned through experience the true meaning of labor.



The letters say everything anyone needs to know. This was an "economic decision." In its own way, our practice was a walking dinosaur, extinct for years without knowing it. We were the last of the "James Herriot"-style large animal practices in our area: several doctors, primarily mobile, with a mixed clientele, treating "anything with hooves." The modern trend in veterinary medicine is one of increased specialization. Few practitioners treat all species, and even our model of dividing our patients into "small animal" (dogs, cats, birds, pocket pets) and "large animal" (horses, cattle, small ruminants, pigs, camelids) is outdated. Most "large animal" veterinarians focus on one species exclusively, usually horses or cattle. The practice model is either the solo practitioner working solely out of a truck to keep overhead down, or the glossy, multiple-doctor, referral hospital. Our earnest group of general practitioners with one technician, one receptionist and three trucks was a quaint relic of a different era. Neither fish nor fowl, we were a monument to a time and community that no longer exist.

When I started with this practice, nearly 10 years ago, many of our clients were small ranchers or other agriculture professionals. These people held a lifetime of experience raising animals, and while their DIY nature meant that we would never become wealthy from them, they were a solid, reliable clientele. As real-estate prices in Sacramento County soared, many landowners "cashed out on California," selling to developers and leaving the state. The century-old ranch where I, seven and a half months pregnant myself, once jumped the fence to help a mare deliver her foal is now a gravel pit. The face of our client changed from sun-lined and freckled to polished and plucked.

Our client was now the Silicon Valley refugee, who had sold his Bay Area home for a ridiculous price, purchased a two-acre "ranch" for an equally ludicrous sum, and decided to "raise something." Our client became the post-menopausal

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Calero Adventure

This October, TWHA member Kim Zvik's son, Tal, pictured at left, did his first 25 mile endurance ride. Tal rode Cooper in Calero Calero County Park, near San Jose) while Kim rode Rader.

Apparently there were many yellow jackets. "He was bitten on the back of the neck on a single track trail," Kim writes, and "had to take the wasp off his neck while trotting as there was nowhere to allow riders behind us to pass."

He wasn't the only one--the ride was cut short when another hive attacked 3 front running horses and 2 riders were injured, including one who suffered a broken collar bone and wrist, and required a medi-Vac with a helicopter. "When I saw the helicopter moving down towards us," Kim writes, "I definitely dismounted Rader, who just being 5 might not like helicopters buzzing too close to him! "

The ride was shortened. But Tal and Kim both got a completions. Writes Kim, "I guess that's why they call it endurance!"

Shutting Down

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woman whose children and husband had grown up and left home and who had transferred her affections and energy into a destructive relationship with a “bad boy” horse, usually an untrained colt. We adapted to the changes, answered seriously the calls that began with “I had a psychic talk to my horse,” and began to enjoy our new role as agricultural advisors. We focused on client education and preventive care. We watched children grow from grade-schoolers to college students. As we treated animals, we listened to stories of illness and loss, divorce, triumph, birth and death. Some days I felt more like a counselor than a veterinarian. And then the community shifted again.

We existed in symbiosis with the community, and as social and economic pressures forced change upon the community, that symbiosis began to fail. South Sacramento County, with its pre-2008 real estate boom and proximity to the state capital, was devastated by the recession. Many of our clients worked in real estate or for the state, and the rest had jobs dependent upon both markets. With lawns polka-dotted with foreclosure signs, and furlough Fridays, bank accounts dwindled even as prices of hay, corn and diesel skyrocketed.

In 2005, our practice supported five veterinarians (all but one full-time) and grossed over \$1 million. In 2010, two of our remaining three vets had dropped to part-time work, the third following suit by fall, because there was not enough work to support more than one doctor working on any given day. Our gross last year was around \$400,000. We tried newsletters, educational field days, dental discounts, vaccine clinics. Veterinarians and staff alike cut our own hours, trying to reduce

the overhead, to give each practitioner equal business. We took every emergency we could, tending our patients in the dark and in the rain. It wasn't enough. Our doors will close at the end of business on Feb. 28.

“What will you do?” family and close friends have asked me. I have neither the capital nor the credit to start up my own practice, and at age 40, with three children, a stiff hand from a recently healed fracture, and joints that ache through the winter, I find that the life of a solo practitioner holds little appeal. Friends tell me about stories on the shortage of large animal veterinarians: a newspaper article here, a public radio piece there. This is old news. Fewer and fewer of us elect to treat livestock each year. Yet, somehow, the shortage of new graduates entering large animal practice has not, in recent years, translated into more job opportunities for the rest of us.

I am updating the résumé I haven't needed in nearly a decade, bound as I was to a job that I've worked through

two pregnancies and years of a 150-mile round-trip commute. I will write, picking up freelance articles where I can. I will take whatever work I must in order to keep my children in their school. And I will mourn. I will mourn a job that was more than a job. I will mourn a job that fulfilled a lifelong dream, a job that taught me to reach beyond every limit I had, to strain every muscle, brain cell and ounce of courage to get the work done, a job in which I learned that my purpose was not to treat animals, my purpose was to make someone's day better, or at least, not quite so bad. I will mourn the dissolution of our close-knit, dysfunctional “family,” these people with whom I have worked, laughed, cried and cursed for so many years. And I will mourn for the clients who, when they open those envelopes, will wonder, “Now who do we call?”

Christy Corp-Minamiji is a writer and veterinarian living in Davis, CA. Her articles and essays have appeared in THE HORSE magazine and at Salon.com. She can be found at her blog at <http://corp-minamiji.typepad.com/>, and her website, at <http://www.vet-writer.com/>, when not chasing after her children. More at http://www.salon.com/author/christy_corpminamiji/index.html

Saving Horses

TWHA members may recall the emails a few weeks ago about the quite muddy, hungry horses in Copperopolis. TWHA member **Teri Baron** called up the Re-Rescue Ranch and found out that the horses had been moved to there for demudding, de-worming and nutrition. She suggested that members could send donations, and TWHA members **Christie Lerner**, **Becky Mertens** and **Cheryl Ann Fulton** were among those who did

just that to help these horses recover.

On a larger scale there was the story last month about the herd of 500 Quarterhorses left behind on a Montana Ranch that had been foreclosed on. Close to half had broken through fencing into a larger pasture area, but the ones in the barn area were starving until local horsemen's associations put out the word and managed to raise enough money to airlift in 200 tons of hay to get them through the next months. We may not have heard the last of these stories, but in both cases, it is so nice to see the horse community pulling together –thank you all!

For Bay Area equestrian events go to:

www.horseNpony.com/horsinaround

TWHA Antes Up for Youth and Diversity at California Trails and Greenways Conference

The Tilden Wildcat Horsemen's Association has joined an initiative started by the East Bay Area Trails Council (EBATC) to sponsor youth participation in the upcoming statewide California Trails and Greenways Conference .

The 26th California Trails & Greenways Conference will take place April 11 to 13, 2011 (Monday through Wednesday) at the San Ramon Marriott, located at the base of Mt. Diablo in Contra Costa County. The conference provides trail professionals, advocates, volunteers and users with a venue for sharing practical, up-to-date trail management and advocacy skills; as well as a forum for networking and building support for accessible, inter-connected, sustainable non-motorized trail systems.

In addition to the 3 days of meetings, there will be a number of trail-focused events, including multi-use trail excursion in Sunol Regional Park the day before the conference, involving horses, bicyclists and hikers. Stay tuned for more info on this trail event.

The theme of this year's conference is Youth and Diversity, so EBATC has decided to enable a half dozen full-time students or conservation corps members to attend the conference by paying their fees. TWHA decided at their February board meeting to join this effort by sponsoring two more. Tri-Valley Trail Blazers has decided to do the same. Now we have to find interested applicants who can take the time off school.

We are asking for anyone interested in this opportunity to send a letter explaining what they hope to learn from partici-



pating and what they feel is important to share with attendees, who will include land managers and trail advocates from across California. Letters must be received by March 11. If you think you know anyone who might be interested, please send an email to morrisolder@comcast.net for more information.

This is also a great opportunity for TWHA members to learn about trails all over the state and what goes into planning, constructing, maintaining and managing them. More info is available at http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=24151

Former TWHA member Marie Grisham took this photo at the shared use trail event, attended by 35 horse and 30 bicyclists and some hikers, at Montana de Oro during last year's Trails and Greenways Conference.

A Night on the Silver Seas Xenophon benefit March 5



Please join Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center for its annual Gala fundraiser "A Night on the Silver Seas" at the Orinda Country Club. Saturday March 5th at 6pm. Includes a sit down dinner, dancing, silent and live auction. Tickets are \$100 each and reservations are required. Please visit www.xenophontrc.org for more details and RSVP or contact Danielle at 925.351.8887. Funds raised at this event will be used to support the overall cost of providing riding lessons to children with special needs.

Information about Xenophon:
Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center



is located in a beautiful rural setting in Orinda, CA, twenty miles from San Francisco. We offer life-changing experiences for children with a wide range of disabilities. We provide therapeutic horseback riding in a safe and secure environment. Our children achieve goals that they never before dreamed possible. We focus on enhancing their unique abilities. *With a horse as their guide, there is no limit to what they can achieve.*

Mission Statement: Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of disabled children by providing a high-quality program of therapeutic horseback riding and related activities.

Thanks for supporting Xenophon with a donation or by attending the Gala.

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The TWHA Newsletter aims for bi-monthly publication- Written and photo Contributions gratefully accepted--see email address above. Please reprint anything herein, but do give us credit.

TWHA 2011 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s) _____ new or renewal

Address _____ Phone: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____ Do you have a trailer? _____

Check here if you would NOT like to receive TWHA emails _____

Names/Birthdays of equestrian members _____

Horse name(s) _____

Events or projects you may be able to help with _____

2011 Dues Enclosed; \$20 individual ___ \$25 family ___ \$10 junior _____

2011-12 Dues Enclosed; \$35 individual ___ \$45 family ___ \$15 junior _____

Send form, and check to: Page Schorer, 625 Liberty, El Cerrito, CA 94530 (old_cowboy@lmi.net)

Tuesday, February 5--TWHA Night at the Movies (see page 5)

Sunday, May 14--TWHA Trail Work Day in Tilden Park

Wednesday, Aug. 31-Monday, Sept. 5- EB Hills Trails Benefit Ride and Hike

**Tilden-Wildcat
Horsemen's Association**

www.twha.org

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address correction requested