

How it all began

Virginia City 100 ride camp, 1972. Photo by Charlie Barieau.

BY PHIL GARDNER
AERC'S FIRST PRESIDENT

In the beginning, endurance riding was wild, undisciplined and untamed. It was the Wild West come back to life in the middle of the 20th century. I first heard about it in Went Tellington's "Let's Go" column in Western Horseman magazine, shortly after I had bought my first horse. The only ride was the Tevis, which drew me like a magnet. A letter to the ride brought an invitation to ride with Wendell Robie on the weekend. The river of my life flooded, overflowed the banks, and entered a new, unexpected channel.



Phil Gardner leaving Howard Meadows on an early AERC 100-miler. Charlie Barieau photo.

I lived for endurance riding. At first there was only the Tevis. Then the Castle Rock Horseman's Association put on the first 50-miler. The Tell-

ingtons had a couple of 50s at their Pacific Coast Equestrian Research Farm. Jerry Hammer and Hank Gibbons started the Blue Mountain 50.

All of a sudden rides were cropping up all over the place. Some were endurance rides, some were hybrids somewhere between endurance and NATRC rides.

It was extremely controversial. All of these wild people doing those terrible rides. Many Arabian breeders refused to sell a horse to an endurance rider! Endurance riding was truly the ugly stepchild of the horse world.

Some thought it could be modified by taking the racing out of it. Others thought it had to be banned totally.

One group of enthusiasts in Auburn, California, wanted to put on a 50-miler from Sacramento to Auburn. They were starting the American River Ride. At the meetings, I started talking about forming an endurance ride organization. Everybody seemed to think that it was a good idea, but the group could not reach a consensus on how to proceed. Then, as now, the only thing that endurance riders liked as much as riding was arguing about riding.

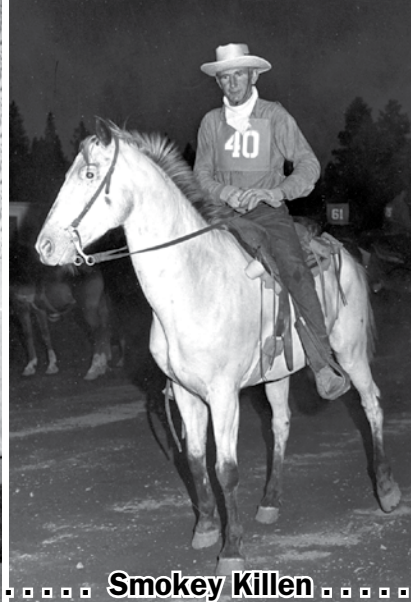
So . . . Charlie Barieau did a little research and found that it took three people to incorporate a nonprofit organization in California. Charlie, Marion Robie [now Arnold] and I wrote and



Charlie Barieau photos from long ago:



Cliff Lewis Hal Hall



Smokey Killen



Diane Marquard

filed the bylaws and incorporation papers. We had defined the sport. We would record the results of all rides that met our definition of an endurance ride. We established a non-voting membership, and vowed to award a national championship at the end of the year. This was not met with enthusiasm by all, but, on the other hand, there was a surprising amount of support.

From the beginning, one of the primary purposes of AERC was record-keeping. We felt that the statistics of the rides, horses and people had to be preserved if the sport was to have any continuity. Shortly

after the incorporation, Kathie Perry took over the job of secretary. No one ever worked harder on a job than Kathie did through the next few years. The fact that we have the records of the early years, and probably the existence of AERC itself, is due in large part to her labors.

AERC emerged a sound, competent organization able to represent and lead the sport.

We worked to build the credibility of AERC. The board of directors was expanded, but still retained the power to select its members. Then as the organization continued to grow, the bylaws were changed to allow the membership to elect the board.

At the same time a sanction fee was established for the rides. Money from the fees were to be used for a paid staff. The workload had become too much to expect it to be handled by volunteers.

It didn't come easily. The establishment of sanction fees was bitterly resented by some rides. Many felt that a paid staff was unnecessary. People who had no idea of what they would be getting into volunteered to do the office work. Somehow it all came together and we survived crisis after crisis.

As the years passed, many of the old controversies faded and AERC emerged a sound, competent organization able to represent and lead the sport.

Now is not the time to become complacent. There are new challenges ahead. What has been accomplished is only to build the tools that we need to survive.

Phil Gardner served as AERC's first president. This article first appeared in the 1989 AERC Yearbook.

1972
TOP TWENTY FIVE

This Chart was compiled from the records of 695 horses and riders, as reported by the 24 Endurance Rides in which they rode during 1972.

Place	Miles	Rider	Horse	Points	19 March CALICO 50			1st April DERBY DITCH 50			23 April ROGUE VALLEY 50		
					1st Place	Top Ten	Finished	1st Place	Top Ten	Finished	1st Place	Top Ten	Finished
1	600	Hal Hall	El Karhaj	1285									
2	600	Sam Arnold	Kharin	1210									
3	400	Diane Clagett	Crickat	1020									
4	400	Marion Robie	Prince Kosca	795									
5	550	Bill Bentham	Prince Kalaf	715									
6	300	Schrode Powers	Ed's Girl	675									
7	400	Donna Fitzgerald	Wilzarif	645									
8	450	Cliff Lewis	Prince Pancake	590									
9	400	Kathy Creighton	Prince Raff	580									
10	450	Christy Petersen	Flying C Glauw	515									
11	250	Berry Hecker	Alizan	485									
12	250	Linda Creighton	Hallany Star	435									
13	200	Susan Morstad	Pa Mas Ahab	420									
14	250	Rho Bailey	Han Shannon	405									
15	200	Juliet Suhr	HMR Ramadi	370									
16	200	Joe Hampton	Tarbie	360									
17	300	Shirley Wheeler	Buggs	350									
18	350	Vickie Blaklee	Daisy Mae	345									
19	300	T.E. Schmidt	Tezron	340									
20	300	Debbie Wheeler	Ferbaha	330									
21	250	Phil Gardner	Penrod	305									
22	300	Dave McLane	Glory I Go	305									
23	300	Mary Shimmick	Rally	300									
24	300	Paul Lyons	Sweet Pea	280									
25	200	Nora Johnson	Merink	250									
26	250	Alexeda Kostner	Flying C Safari	250									
27	250	Mary Ann Jones	R.C.	250									
28	250	Sandra Knox	Dante	250									
29	250	Bruce Greenwall	Mission Impossible	250									
30	100	Pat Fitzgerald	Jake	250									
31	250	Colleen Combes	Dixie	250									
32	250	Bill Cary	Monte Wolf	250									
33	250	Jessie Bentham	Runners McCoy	250									
34	250	Warren Vieter	Astra	250									
35	150	Peggy Kallerman	Sutox	245									

AERC final year-end tally sheet from 1972