

Peggy Davidson & Dakota Midnight



2013 AERC Decade Team



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Rider's name: Peggy Davidson

Horse's name: Dakota Midnight

Year of First Endurance Ride (first year in the decade): 2004

Region: W

Current rider lifetime mileage?

Endurance: 7425

Limited Distance: 1290

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? Got him at age 4 from a divorce situation – he had to go fast so he was reasonably priced. He was not under saddle yet but had wonderful ground manners.

What is your horse's breeding? Desperado V is his sire (Sheila Varian). Some Khemosabi on his dam's side.

Sex: Gelding

DOB: 4/30/1999

Horse height: 15.0

Approximate weight: 1080 (he's got BIG muscles)

Color: Bay

Why did you decide to purchase this horse? Someone told me I could train him even though I wasn't a trainer – they were right. With his good mind and breeding, he would be easy and he was. Consistency paid off and I ended up with a wonderful partner.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? Yes – on a very hot, competitive Missouri Foxtrotter and a couple other full Arabs.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? 6

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Cattle sorting when I can, packing into the mountains, trail trials.

How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general? 14 years in endurance, on and off 45 years with horses in general.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? The long hours in the saddle and the beautiful places I've seen; challenging my abilities, pushing my limits while being aware of my horse and his limits. I love the people in the sport – I consider them my extended family.

How old was your horse when first started in endurance? 5

How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons? 48 rides. In 2005 Dakota was the National Champion LD horse with 31 LD rides/ 31 LD completions for 895 miles. We travelled all over the Western US and had so much fun!

What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.) 25

How long until you top tenned or raced (if you did)? In general, I am not a racer – I just ride the horse of the day. If he feels particularly good, then I ride faster – Dakota has top tenned 8 times in 5395 miles – you can tell it's really not my thing – when I started with Dakota, my goal was to have a 10K mile horse so I keep him about a mid pack pace.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? It varies. As short as 1 month, as long as 6 months. On average, I think about 2 months.

If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one? 1 month

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? 1 month

Do you use any special type of tack or shoeing with your horse? No

What kind of problems have you overcome with your horse? Arguing over the pace we are setting for the day though the problem still continues! Dakota is very competitive, so I start him at the back after everyone leaves and then move forward throughout the day. He loves passing other horses!

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse. When I went to the 5 day Owyhee Canyonlands ride in Idaho in 2010. I loved getting up every day and feeling how good my horse felt, and wanting to go again. He didn't really feel tired until the 5th day at about 235 miles. We finished strong and he looked great – most importantly, we both had fun!

What was your most humbling experience? Finishing the Tevis Cup on Dakota in 2009.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Listen to your horse; ride your own ride; smile and enjoy the scenery – if you're not having fun, your horse won't be having fun!

What advice would you give to new riders? Find a horse you really get along with and ride him a lot by

yourself to bond strongly with him, before you start endurance – that is what I did with Dakota and he is my true equine partner. The relationship between you and your horse is very important in our sport. You can't be out there fighting and strong-arming your equine around – if you get dumped in the boonies, do you think he'll stick around? If you plan on having a long term relationship with your horse, I think this is very important and I will be doing the same thing with my next horse.

Looking back, what do you feel you did right? Didn't let Dakota go as fast as he wanted to all the time!

What would you do differently? I honestly don't have any regrets except that I probably should have given up on riding the super strong semi-crazy Foxtrotter before I did. He really beat me up and made me not enjoy the sport as much.

What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it? Finishing Tevis and the VC100 – the 2 tougher endurance rides – we did finish both and Dakota was strong at the end. I'm still working on the goal of more miles with him.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? Dakota is very opinionated. I'm more a "go with the flow" kind of person. I'm not competitive, he is. I feel we've reached an "understanding" with each other. If he gets worked up about something, I try to work with him to change his mindset. We never fight, we have animated discussions! I trust this horse with my life.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most (50s, 100s, multadays, etc.)? I love multadays!

In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life? It's a great escape from everyday life. I have met some amazing people and have been inspired by many of them. I've seen things from horseback that I would have never seen otherwise.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Just good quality grass hay with about 25% alfalfa. Beet pulp and Purina Strategy mixed with electrolytes during rides. Nothing special – just this consistent diet.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program (i.e., changed from one hay to another, added something special) that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem? No

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? CocoSoya oil, Red Cell (Dakota was slightly anemic once so I have kept him on the iron supplement).

Do you give any kind of joint products? Yes – Adequan monthly

Describe your electrolyte protocol. At rides I pre-load him the night before in his grain and the morning of and then after the ride. Luckily he likes the electrolytes in the grain so it's easy to do. Depending on how hot it is, I electrolyte him accordingly – 2x in the am and 2x in the pm on a 50 if it's really hot. He's a very good drinker.

How do you choose which rides to attend? Depends on my work schedule. If I can do a ride a month, then that's what I try to do.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Yes I have, but not so much now.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why. Barbara White – she has such a great attitude and has those multiple Tevis buckles – she's a tough lady that is very down to earth. Dave Rabe – he's so humble and such a horseman! Becky Hart – with all that she's done in our sport, she is so helpful and encouraging – her Centered Riding lessons have really helped me!

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? I really like the Varian bloodlines and I like a stocky built horse. As I am getting older, I don't want a horse as competitive a horse as Dakota! Would like a sturdy good minded boy (I'm partial to geldings) that gets down the trail with a happy attitude – one that loves the sport as much as Dakota and I do right now.