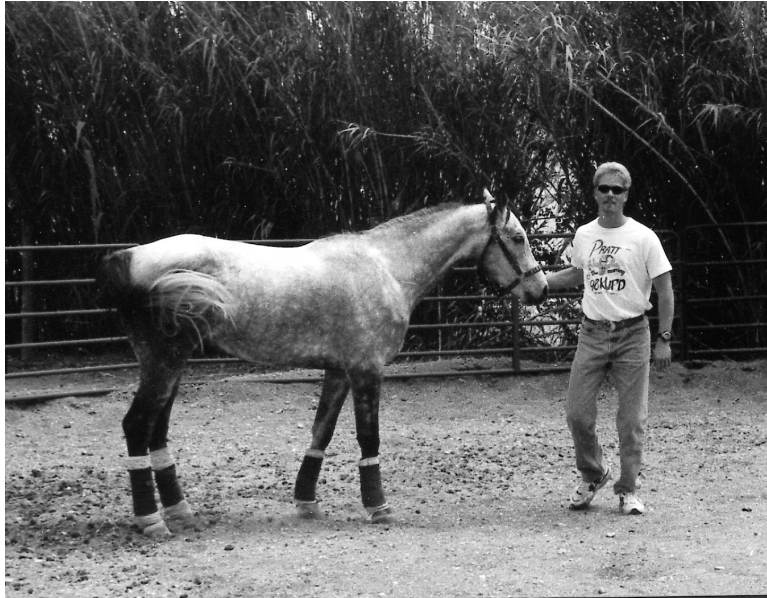


## **Bruce A. Weary, D.C. & Heisman**



### **AERC Decade Team**



**2035 Miles & 37 Ride Completions**  
**First AERC ride: 1996 Region: SW**

**Q: Tells us about your horse when/how did you come to get him?**

A: I answered a newspaper ad in the Phoenix paper for a young Arab gelding that a woman had salvaged from an auction and put 30 days training on. He had been culled from a herd of Arabians bred by a doctor in Phoenix. And although I feel he has excellent confirmation, he apparently did not suit their standards and was sent to auction. Ill never forget the day I went to see him--it was very hot....over 110 degrees.... and the woman who sold him to me put a western saddle on him and turned him loose in a round pen by himself. He was all fired up and made some of the most athletic movements Id ever seen a horse perform at liberty, and I decided with that level of athleticism, I wanted him. I brought him home and had my horse trainer put the finishing touches on him, so he was safe to ride, and put him to work in endurance training almost immediately.

**Q: What is your horse's breeding?**

A: Heisman is purebred Arabian

**Q: Sex**

A: Gelding

**Q: DOB**

A: 1991

**Q: Horse height**

A: 15' 2"

**Q: Approx. weight**

A: 1050 lbs

**Q: Color**

A: Flea bitten gray

**Q: Shoe size**

A: 2

**Q: Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?**

A: Yes, I began endurance riding in 1984, and campaigned a few different horses before I purchased Heisman in the early 90s. I'm not sure of the exact number, but I have ridden more than 20 different horses in endurance rides over the years.

**Q: Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?**

A: Yes, I regularly participate in the competitive sports of manure gathering and equine meal catering. I've also been known to compete in trailer washing and saddle maintenance.

**Q: How many years have you been involved with horses?**

A: My first ride on a horse was at the approximate age of 5, on a pony ride in my father's grocery store parking lot, wearing a red felt cowboy hat with a white drawstring. At age 12, I advanced to a pony named Smokey whom I rode extensively on my grandfather's farm. I first became a horse owner at age 25 and began my involvement in endurance riding in 1984. I've been hooked ever since.

**Q: What got you interested in endurance riding?**

A: Initially, I'm sure my impression of endurance riding was very immature, as I envisioned myself galloping across the countryside for miles on end, while hearing the theme to The Magnificent Seven in my head. The first time I tried a 25 miler I thought I was gonna die! I did Clair Toomey's Gamblers Special 25 miler. There were 3 of us in the ride, I threw a shoe, won it, and got BC. Experienced a huge endorphin release and decided that this was the sport for me. Since that time, I've come to feel that we live in a very entitled, undisciplined society where we are rarely exposed to the need for true self-discipline or hardship. Entering endurance rides forces me to experience those things and I hope makes me a better person. It also keeps me in shape physically and serves my need to bond with my horses.

**Q: How old was your horse when you first started?**

A: 5 yrs old

**Q: First ride?**

A: Cinder Lakes 25 miler. In 1996

**Q: How many rides did you do the first, second and third ride seasons?**

A: First year: One 25 miler and one 50 miler.

2<sup>nd</sup> year: one 55 miler.

3<sup>rd</sup> year two 60 milers, two 50 milers, one 75 miler, and an attempt at Tevis.

**Q: What mileage distance you start with?**

A: 25 miler

**Q: How long till you top tenned or raced?**

A: I have rarely raced or pushed to be a front-runner with Heisman. On his first 25 miler he completed in

5 hrs 58 mins and actually took 6<sup>th</sup> place.

**Q: How much time off do you give between ride seasons?**

A: I don't really give seasonal time off. My horses get plenty of rest between rides, which may be anywhere from one to six weeks.

**Q: If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one?**

A: I try to give the horse a month off, but somewhere in that time I'm usually riding them at least lightly, just to keep them limber.

**Q: What is your schedule in the month leading up a 100 miler?**

A: I don't do any other rides at least 2 or 3 weeks prior to a 100, but I do ride them lightly up until the time of the 100 to keep them flexible.

**Q: If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?**

A: My answer to these questions would be pretty much the same as those I've given regarding doing 100 milers.

**Q: What kind of tack do you use?**

A: I ride an Abetta endurance saddle. I use an Equipedic saddle pad, a mohair girth and I have ridden in hackamores, halters and various bits. I have better control with my horses with a bit, however I prefer their freedom to eat and drink, which is improved in a hackamore or halter. It seems like horses can swallow an awful lot of air when drinking with a bit in their mouth.

**Q: What kind of shoes do you use on your horse?**

A: I ride in a rim shoe. For extra protection, I have historically used Easy boots, but lately I have been experimenting with the Bosana boot, which I like very much. I have also used pads from time to time. My choice for foot protection depends on the horse and the conditions that I anticipate at a ride.

**Q: What kind of problems have you encountered?**

A: I'm happy to say my endurance career has been largely trouble free. I ride and train conservatively and in 22 years of endurance riding I've never experienced a tendon or ligament injury, fracture, or even a popped splint, and I've never retired an endurance horse unsound. The worst experience I've had was when Heisman colicked at Tevis in 2004 at Robinson Flat, due to my over zealous pre-electrolyting. He was more than fit enough to do the ride and had been ridden conservatively but his gut motility shut down and he required fluids. He was in significant pain and could have been in real danger were it not for the skill and attention of the Tevis veterinarians. They have my eternal gratitude.

**Q: What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?**

A: Heisman has never sustained any significant injury

**Q: Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?**

A: I've had so many good rides on Heisman, but one of the most memorable was the 2004 Californios 100. We were preparing Heisman for another shot at Tevis and my wife and I rode that ride together. It was very hot that day with virtually no shade, and we were out on the trail approximately 22 or 23 hours. The Californios ride is extremely challenging in that it has endless hills to climb and really demands the utmost effort from the horse. The temperature hit 96 degrees by 10:00 in the morning and did not relent until 5:00 or 6:00 that afternoon. Anticipating relief with nightfall, we were met instead with 40 to 50 mile per hour crosswinds until we descended to lower elevations on our way home to the finish line. On

the final descent, which was fairly steep, Heisman seemed to float in the dark and I could barely feel his footfalls as he made his way along the final stretch of the trail. He was flawless that day and my experience on him the last 10 miles of that trail is probably the closest I've been to heaven in this life.

**Q: Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?**

A: The worst experience with Heisman was again probably his colic experience at Tevis. There is so much work and preparation that goes into Tevis and your attention shifts abruptly from chasing the elusive Tevis buckle to facing the mortality of your horse and watching his every movement and bodily function for several hours until you know he's out of danger. That transition is difficult and painful but I think it made me a better horseman, for having experienced it.

**Q: What was your most humbling experience?**

A: My wife and I decided in 2004 to try to top ten together on our hometown ride, the Man against Horse race. We succeeded in doing so placing 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, but both of our horses, although they passed their final vet check, were sore in their hocks and somewhat lame the next day. It was another reminder to me of the immense task we ask of these horses to simply complete an endurance ride much less try to do it at speed or at a competitive level. Our horses will truly give till it hurts.

**Q: What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?**

A: I've learned that endurance riding is supposed to be fun and I work hard to keep it that way. I've learned that my horse's life and well being as well as my own are dependent on my judgment and that my judgment can be distorted or impaired by highly competitive situations, among other things. It's my job to enjoy the trail and yet stay focused at all times regarding the well being of my horse. He has to get us both home safely at the end of the day. I've learned that a lifetime of miles with the same horse is worth far more than any award received at any given single ride. I've learned that I like my horses more than some people. But I've also learned that there is hope for those people. If they just got more fiber in their diet and a little more exercise, they could be more like my horses. And I've learned that my favorite view of the world is between the ears of my horse.

**Q: Where does your horse live? (pasture--# acres, dirt lot, paddock, etc.) Board? At home? Full turnout?**

A: Heisman has always lived on my property, roaming at liberty in a very large corral with his stable mates. He has recently however, changed residence. I loaned Heisman to Barbara White to ride Tevis in 2005, and the two of them struck up a romance behind my back. And, as I have other horses to train and campaign now, my wife and I felt the only decent thing to do was to let Barbara and Heisman spend time together. So, Heisman has packed his bags and moved to Northern California, so that he may keep a closer eye on Julie Suhr and Barbara White. Heisman reports back to me frequently and keeps me informed as to the goings-on up there. So far he seems quite happy and Barbara has a new spring in her step.

**Q: What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? (pasture, w/herd, etc.)**

A: As far as I know Heisman was kept in tight quarters, I don't believe he ever had access to large pastures. He was part of an Arabian breeding program in Phoenix where large parcels of land are rare for keeping horses.

**Q: What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses?**

A: Heisman's strengths include his soundness, his physical strength, and ability to carry weight. He has a gentle nature, as he can be ridden in a halter and has carried children on endurance rides. He has a world champion appetite and will eat anything, anywhere during and after a ride. In addition, he is a kind horse and would never hurt a human being. His weaknesses include less than perfect heat tolerance, which can



sometimes delay his heart rate recoveries. He can shy occasionally with the best of them at rocks and tree stumps and other inanimate objects which threaten to eat him.

**Q: What advice do you have for new riders?**

A: Go slow and get there quicker. Find a truly qualified mentor rider and learn as much as you can from them. Always put your horse first. Take your time and train sensibly. If you find a good farrier, tip him well and bake him cookies. If you think you want to race in this sport, ask three other experienced riders whose opinion you respect, and who will be honest with you, if they think you are ready to do so. Your horse will thank you for it. Finally, and most importantly, no matter what is going on around you, always ride your own ride within what you know to be the capability of your horse.

**Q: Looking back, what would you do differently?**

A: I don't think I can say I'd change anything fundamentally about my experience in endurance riding. One thing I would do differently is I would have married my wife 10 years sooner.

**Q: What do you feel you did right?**

A: I feel I've been a good sportsman, that I'm pleasant on the trail and always willing to help riders in trouble. I try to ride by example and ride within the metabolic and orthopedic capabilities of my horses. I hope 22 years of having injury free horses shows that. I read constantly in the field of endurance and am willing to experiment with new training methods and new tack and feeding strategies in order to help my horses perform better and more comfortably. I hope I also helped my children to experience and appreciate joy and hardship from the back of a horse.

**Q: What is your highest goal for you horse? Did you achieve it?**

A: My highest goal for Heisman was to keep him sound and healthy through many years of endurance riding. I have accomplished that. Another goal was to complete Tevis on him. I failed in that, through no fault of his. Another goal was to win the Southwest Heavy Weight Endurance Championship. Which we did successfully in 2004.

**Q: Describe your horse's personality. How is it like or unlike yours?**

A: Heisman is a very docile, happy-all-the-time kind of guy. He will carry a beginner rider quietly with his head down across an open meadow or he can light up like the full blood Arabian he is, but is always manageable and under control. If you offer him food, he will be your friend forever. I am a bit faster moving than Heisman and have a lot more to say. I am not a mean person by any stretch of the imagination. But, I don't think my wife would describe me as docile, either. Heisman and I got along very well on the trail but he has also carried many other different people and personality types to the finish line of endurance rides over the years, and has proved himself very versatile in that respect.

**Q: What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? (multidays, 100s, 50s etc)**

A: I suppose I enjoy 50's the most, however there are few things more satisfying than finishing a 100 miler. When you're sleep deprived and you've ridden through the heat of the day and the dark of the night and your vet at the finish line tells you that your horse looks good and you could have ridden him harder that day, I'm a pretty proud Papa.

**Q: Describe your electrolyte protocol.**

A: The more the horses eat at the vet checks, the less I electrolyte. And recently I have used the method of giving tiny doses frequently to give the horse what some have called "potato chip mouth", which keeps him a little thirsty, and always ready for a drink the next time water is available. I learned my lesson on over electrolyting.

**Q: Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?**

A: I feed Diamond V yeast daily. There is some research done that indicates adding yeast to the horses feed reduces their lactic acid levels as well as their working heart rates and improves their recovery times. It also helps in fiber digestion and production of fatty acids that the horse can use as fuel during aerobic exercise such as endurance riding. I've also learned a few tricks from Tom Ivers as far as the proper times and ways to use carbohydrates to keep the horse going during a ride.

**Q: Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program, that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem?**

A: I have recently begun adding alfalfa on a limited basis to the horses diet. They seem to have more strength and stamina without the negative effects of grain in their workouts as opposed to feeding straight grass hay. Our horses are also more tempted by alfalfa hay at vet checks than grass hay and will likely eat it when they won't touch anything else. Also, I'm more confident about feeding grain during a ride. I let them eat pretty much all they want within reason, and will even offer it to them out on the trail as well as at the vet checks. I have a lot more horse this way.

**Q: What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?**

A: I feed Source, Diamond V yeast, and add a dash of salt to the horse's daily feed. They are on free choice grass hay with some alfalfa pellets. I only grain them during or after their work.

**Q: Do you give any kind of joint products?**

A: My veterinarian is a source for an off brand of Adequan, which I give occasionally to horses that have been working hard lately or show any tendency towards joint stiffness. Otherwise, I don't give a daily joint supplement, even though two of our horses have nearly 4000 miles.

**Q: How far do you usually travel to rides?**

A: Anywhere from 4 to 10 hours.

**Q: Do you go to many rides outside of your region?**

A: Yes, we do rides in the Mountain, Southwest, Pacific Southwest and West regions.

**Q: Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why.**

A: First: My wife Dayna. She's the most pleasant and hard working person I know. She will do anything and everything to help get our horses through endurance rides successfully and safely. She's an excellent rider, she reads trail well, and is fit enough to hike a Tevis Canyon. And, she guards her horses well being with the ferocity of a mother bear.

Secondly: Barbara White, who has found a way to hold the world record in Tevis completions and yet remain as personable and approachable as she is. I have a lot more to learn from her, I'm sure.

Thirdly: I admire the couple we know as Bob and Julie Suhr. I admire Bob for having the courage to never say No to Julie, and for having the sense to know when it was time to stop endurance riding and enjoy other things in life. He is an amazing and very funny man. I admire Julie because she is as passionate about horses as when she was 12 years old, and because she continues to climb into the saddle to "take a crack" at the endurance trail at her advanced age of 59. Oh, and because she lets me call her "Babe."

**Q: Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them.**

A: Ron Barrett, who manages our local Man against Horse Race served as sort of a mentor to me in my early years in endurance riding. The most valuable lesson I learned from him is how to pace a horse and to use him steadily over the course of the endurance ride. Today, if I know the distance to the next vet check, I can usually pace a horse and arrive within 5 to 10 minutes of the predicted time. This is a useful skill as it helps me to avoid inadvertently overusing my horse. I drove Ron nuts with my singing on the trail and he refused to continue to ride with me because of it. But we remain friends to this day. I think he

was just jealous because he can't carry a tune in a bucket.

Now, my wife is my trail partner, and she reminds me at the beginning of every ride, to ride conservatively. At the start of every ride, she repeats a quote from the movie Hidalgo: Easy boys, its a long way to Damascus, and then we begin our day.

**Q: In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?**

A: I'm not currently searching for my next horse. I have been working with gaited horses over the last 3-4 years and have found a Tennessee Walker and a Missouri Foxtrotter that seem particularly suited for the work, with good recoveries, plenty of forward movement, sure-footedness and excellent eating and drinking habits. I enjoy their smooth gaits and their tractable attitudes, and I'm also saving a ton of money on Ibuprofen.

**In conclusion:**

One of my favorite stories to tell occurred at the Man against Horse Race several years ago. I ride as a heavyweight, and that year there was a new rider who had more money than sense, and decided very early on that he was going to be a competitive rider. He was rather boastful, and made no secret of his intentions at basecamp. He also rode as a heavyweight and pursued me throughout the day, attempting to win First Heavyweight. I escaped the second vet check with approximately a two-minute lead on him. I cantered out of the vet check to put some distance between us, knowing he'd be right behind me. I ducked into the trees and allowed him to pass us unseen. He chased a ghost all the way to the finish line pushing his horse harder, and when he got to the finish line his horse didn't recover and he did not receive a completion. I came trotting in merrily behind him with a smile on my face and won First Heavyweight. Needless to say, his jaw hit the ground when he saw us trotting in and in realizing what he had done. I call this technique "Take a cab and fool the neighbors". It's still a fun story to tell around the campfire, because I think there's a lot to be learned from it.