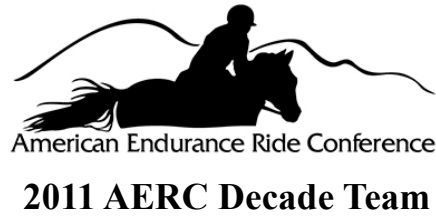


## Cheryl Van Deusen & DA Al Capone+//



**Rider's Name:** Cheryl Van Deusen

**Horse's Name:** DA Al Capone (aka Alvin)

**Region:** Southeast

**Current Rider Lifetime Mileage?** about 11,000 (including CTR mileage)

Endurance: 8800 (some international mileage credit pending)

Limited Distance: 475

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?** Alvin is a home bred who is now 16 years old.

**What is your horse's breeding?** He is an Arabian with Egyptian and Polish bloodlines.

**Sex:** Gelding

**DOB:** 1/9/1995

**Horse height:** 15.3 hands

**Approx. Weight:** 1070

**Color:** Bay

**Shoe size:** One

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse?** Alvin was a show horse in our previous lives who was bored going around the ring. We heard about Competitive Trail Ride and started doing those to stay fresh over fences and in the ring. We then found endurance, which is where our hearts are today.

**Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?** Alvin was one of three horses I started distance riding with. I had ridden one other mare in an LD and CTR before Al.

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?** About 20 or so of my own, and a handful, I've ridden for other people.

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?** Yes, we still show at Class A and the Regional Arabian shows focusing primarily in sport horse classes.

**How many years have you been involved with horses?** I grew up with horses from a young age, got out for awhile while working in the resort industry traveling seven days a week. I got back in and stayed with horses for the past 20 years.

**In endurance?** Now starting into my 12th year.

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?** As mentioned above, we were bored in the show ring. George told me about Competitive Trail Rides and those were fun, and then I met endurance where it all comes together.

**How old was your horse when first started? First ride?** Al was started as a three year old under saddle and rode his first show classes as a four year old. His first LD was at the age of six and he was seven when he did his first 50.

**How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances)** The first two seasons, it seems I did only one LD each year but I was also riding lots of CTR miles in the early distance years which taught me to take care of my own horses – although crews are a luxury that you can have in the endurance world. The third season I rode my first 50 along with 3 LD rides. I decided to focus on rides rather than shows and now compete over a 1000 miles a year in endurance.

**What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.)** I first rode a 25 in the 2000 season on one horse and Alvin did his first LD in 2001. I still ride LDs with the young stock and 100s on the seasoned campaigners. 75s are probably my favorite distance.

**How long till you top tenned or raced? (if you did) –** He actually top tenned his first LD and won BC. I know now how little I knew then!

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons?** Typically, my horses have about three to four months off each year. As their cumulative miles or speed increase, they get more rest.

**If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one?** Typically, I give at least a month off without any work as they don't lose the cardio fitness during that time (we are fortunate enough to have lots of acreage for pasture turnout).

**If you have done multi-days, how much time off do you give after doing one?** I really like multi-day rides and again, I believe in lots of rest in that they may have small changes that we are unaware of which can become major issues if we put them back to work too soon. When I start multi-day rides, I tend to do day 1 and day 3 on the same horse – and then up them to all three days. Regrettably, we don't have many pioneer rides in the Southeast region.

**What kind of tack do you use?** (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.) Snaffle bits, orthoflex saddles and neoprene girths – not the current fad, but has worked well for me on a variety of horses

**What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Barefoot? Barefoot and booted?** I use steel shoes where trails demand it – I start the youngsters barefoot until we are doing enough miles that I have to protect their feet from too much wear. Usually the first couple of years are barefoot as we are building the tendons and ligaments, we put shoes on when we move up to multiple 50s in a season.

**What kind of problems have you encountered?** Florida feet are very soft and thin soles are problematic. Sole guard is a great product. We often have to pad where others don't even need shoes!

**What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?** Alvin is goofy and he typically gets into something with too much time off. When I fed one day at the ranch, he had a HUGE hole in his stomach, probably from running over a limb which popped up and punctured his stomach (about a four inch hole). He also developed an infection/cough/fever after we came back from a ride – found out later that other horses went home and had to be put on fluids from high fevers.

**How did you work through it?** For the injury, straight to the vet, very fortunate that he had not ruptured the peritoneum. Lots of packing the wound with silva sulfur diazanin (SSD), stall rest and then hand walking...for the infection, almost six months of antibiotics and other herbal remedies, followed by very short and slow work. I cried the day we actually went four miles. It took over nine months to get back on track.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?** After Alvin has his infection, the first day he rode a 5 hour 50 was awesome. Also, in 2010, I was going to ride in him in the AERC 55 National Championship ride. My 100 mile horse did not travel well so Al stepped up and finished a 100.

**Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?** Early in my ride career, a ride manager changed the start time on a 50 to starting in the dark for cooler weather. I was new and had no headlights, flashlights, glowsticks, etc – so I rode behind others who were better prepared. I got sucked up and went too fast in the sand and didn't make it through the ride. I injured my horse through stupidity and now know, just wait, it will get daylight and you can make up the time.

**What was your most humbling experience?** Too many to tell, as soon as you think you know and understand, something comes along to remind you that it's a learning curve.

**What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?** Start slow and pick up the pace, although no one ever listens!

Where does your horse live? Full turnout? We are really lucky to have two horse locations, one with over 1000 acres so after rides, the horses are on rest in huge pastures where we grain only once a day. No stalls, ponds, and lots of wildlife to keep them entertained. They enjoy being herd animals.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? (pasture, w/ a herd, etc.) Al grew up in a show barn but with nice paddocks and pastures for turnout.

What are your horse's strengths? He's a great eater with a wonderful appetite!

Weaknesses? Alvin is slow to drink – he gives me ulcers stressing about his first sips at 35 miles or so. He can also be a bully in the trailer with other horses.

What advice do you have for new riders? Never race the short rides – it takes too long to reprogram your

horse into taking care of themselves on the longer distances. And, always wear your helmet, even when training or riding seasoned horses, you never know.

Looking back, what would you do differently? What I do now – take 4 hours to complete a LD ride.

What do you feel you did right? Distance riding has taught me that I MUST learn and understand the anatomy and physiology of the horse. Still getting there, and the international goals have helped make me a better rider.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? We are still getting there – Alvin has had two international trips, one not successful, one successful in that our USA team earned a Silver Medal at the 2009 Pan American Championships. Icing on the cake was that he won the AHA Distance Horse of the Year award. Still active, in July of this year, he was the clean up horse for the USA SE Young Rider team helping the kids win a SILVER MEDAL at the 2011 North American Young Riders Championships in Kentucky. My highest goal for him was the decade club from the beginning and now we are aiming for 5000 miles.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? He's big and bold, gets very focused on the job and likes to be first. There are some similarities!

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? (multidays, 100's, 50's, etc.) – I enjoy any ride because getting a youngster through an LD is just as fun as completing the first 100 on a horse. Each horse comes along in its own time and it's fun to be part of their development.

In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life? This comes through in many of my comments, but developing juniors and young riders and young horses is a huge thrill.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. I prefer mild ones like Perform N Win – use Lyte now during extreme heat and use.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? We add selenium to our grain in that the southeast soil is low in selenium which is critical to heart and muscle development.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program (ie, changed from one hay to another, added something special) that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem? Purina Ultium has helped some of my higher mileage horses that needed to gain weight without too much concentrates. We are lucky also have Perennial Peanut hay (very similar to alfalfa in that its high in protein).

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? I'll be glad to share with anyone if they would like to contact me at [cvandeusen@gmail.com](mailto:cvandeusen@gmail.com)

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe) I'm a huge believer in Adequan, and not the generics. If it matters, use the real stuff.

How far do you usually travel to rides? If there is a ride, we go whether it's endurance or CTR. Last year, I think I was gone 25 out of 27 weekends to a ride somewhere.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Yes

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? Steve Rojek, whose horses always look great and perform well and he is truly a gentleman who will always help anyone; Sue

Jackson in the SE who has over 7000 miles on her current horse, Sir Sedgewick; Becky Hart – not only is she a great competitor, but she took a lot of time to try to help the USA develop better international riders.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them. Joan Woods is a 3 Day 100 CTR rider from way back. She has completed more 3 day 100s than I'll ever complete one day 100s. In CTR, it's only you and your horse plus feed, fly spray, electrolytes and water. No crew, nothing else. Those CTRs are like AERC multi-day rides and it's harder to get through a 3 day 100 than a one day 100.

Describe the first rig you had and then tell us how it compares to your current rig? I used to travel to horse shows so I had a 4 horse stock trailer that was good for moving mares/foals or a six horse slant load- great for horses but no living quarters. The current rig is a six horse trailer with small living quarters with creature comforts like shower, toilet, microwave, ac and heat (for the dog of course)!

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Heart – they have to enjoy the trail.