

**AERC Decade Team (2011)**  
**Dale Raymond and My Desert Sun ("Sunny")**



**Rider's name:** Dale Raymond

**Horse's name:** My Desert Sun (Sunny)

**Year of First Endurance Ride** (first year in the decade): 2002

**Region:** Pacific Southwest

**Current rider lifetime mileage?**

**Endurance:** 3085

**Limited Distance:** 370

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?**

Sunny was bred and owned by Shelli Sexton. In 2001, I started riding him because she needed exercise riders for her endurance horses. He was going to be an endurance horse for her son, who was born in 2001. I rode him for her and took him to endurance rides by myself. Her son decided he did not like Sunny. Shelli did not want him because he was too small. In 2006, Shelli decided to sell him.

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

He is Egyptian and Polish Arabian. His sire is Wazirs Karahty, a winning endurance stallion. Out of 55 starts, Wazirs Karahty had 28 first places and 21 BCs before he was retired to stud. Sunny's dam was SF Tiffany Star, an award winning Arab show mare.

**Sex:** Gelding

**DOB:** June 5, 1997

**Horse height:** 15.0 hands

**Approximate weight:** 800

**Color:** Blood bay, no white

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse?**

At first, I did not want to buy him, although I had been riding him successfully for five years. Then I noticed that whenever I rode another horse, I wished I were riding Sunny because Sunny was such a wonderful riding horse. So, on April 6, 2007, I bought Sunny.

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

Not formally. I did one AERC 25 miler in 1998 on another horse (FM Liberty), and a second AERC 25 miler on another horse (Always a Star) before I started riding endurance with Sunny.

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?** 13

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?** Fox hunting, jumping, and trail riding.

**How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general?**

I have been involved in AERC endurance for 11 years.

I have been involved with horses in general since 1963--Western, Hunter/Jumper, Dressage and Endurance.

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?**

I started endurance riding as a way to stay conditioned for fox hunting. What keeps me interested is that I like to ride faster than a walk.

**How old was your horse when first started in endurance?** four

**How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons?**

First season with Sunny (2002): 3 LD, 3 endurance

Second season (2003): 13 endurance

Third season (2004): 4 endurance

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

**How long until you top tenned or raced (if you did)?** I top tenned my first season (2002). It was Sunny's third endurance ride.

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons?** No set time.

**If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one?** Not applicable

**If you have done multidays, how much time off do you give after doing one?** One 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?**

My biggest problem has been finding a saddle that fits. I had a saddle that fit him well, but that wore out in 2008. I could not find another saddle like the one I had. I talked to saddle specialists, tried many saddles, spent thousands of dollars and many months before finding something acceptable. It was 2010 before I had a saddle I could use in an endurance ride. I would not say that I have found the final answer yet.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse.**

I have had many good rides, but the best ride is my first, and only 100. It was Californios FEI on June 4, 2005. Sunny did very well. I felt that I went too slowly. I rode with Carl Bruno much of the way. I could have and should have gone faster so I did not get caught in the dark. I had a lot of horse left at the end. The last vet check was three miles from the finish. It got dark when I was there. I got one minute behind Carl Bruno because I did not realize where the vet box was. I started out from the vet check, but I could not find the trail in the dark, even with my glow sticks and flashlight. I had to wait for the next rider catch up with me. Fortunately, I

had to wait for only about five minutes and thankfully, the rider was on a large white horse. Sunny had no problem keeping up. Sunny's time was fast enough to be awarded an FEI COC. It was then that I knew Sunny was a very special horse.

### **What was your most humbling experience?**

My most humbling moment was at Yosemite Gold FEI 50 on April 21, 2012. At the third vet check, Sunny did not pulse down for over 30 minutes. I had no clue that that might occur.

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

The most important lesson I have learned is to trust my own judgment. Others may think they know what I should do, but others really do not know me or my horse like I do. When I have listened to other peoples, it has been to my regret 99.99% of the time. On the other hand, I have never regretted following my own judgment. I know the basics without realizing that I know the basics. If I do not know the answer to a problem, it is because it is a complicated and difficult issue without an obvious or easy resolution. I have learned that when the other person's advice does not work, they do not accept responsibility or blame, but blame me instead. They tell me that I did not have to take their advice, regardless of how much they pressured me or how much they insisted that I was wrong. So, the most important lesson I have learned is to trust my own judgment and stick to my guns.

### **What advice would you give to new riders?**

Focus on enjoying the experience. Take things one day at a time and be patient.

### **Looking back, what do you feel you did right?**

I do not race. People do not believe me because I top ten so often, but I do not race.

### **What would you do differently?**

Out of caution, I did not enter certain rides when I had the chance. One of these rides was Tevis in 2003. If I had it to do over, I would have entered those rides.

### **What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it?**

I my two highest goals for Sunny are (1) to complete Tevis and (2) do an FEI\*\*\*\*. I have not achieved either goal.

### **Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?**

Sunny is a horse that prefers to be with other horses, but he goes along well by himself. He is a kind horse, although he is not people-oriented. We have similar personalities.

### **What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most (50s, 100s, multadays, etc.)?**

My favorite distance is 75 miles. I like to ride all day, but I do not like to ride at night.

### **In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life?**

I have learned something valuable from everyone. Through endurance, I have met many wonderful people who are a privilege to know.

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

No.

**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?** I use oats, corn, rice bran, and vitamins.

**Do you give any kind of joint products?** No.

**Describe your electrolyte protocol.**

Sunny does not drink before 25 miles. I make sure he gets enough hydration by feeding him soaked carrots the night before a ride. I give him electrolytes at lunch if he drinks. I use either the pre-made ones or I use apple flavored ones mixed in apple sauce.

**How do you choose which rides to attend?**

Rides I am able to train for and get to. If a friend wants to go to a ride, I am much more likely to go.

**Do you go to many rides outside of your region?** No.

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

I am going to name only one person: my mother. She rode what we call endurance before it was called endurance and when all the endurance rides were 100 miles. She completed Tevis in 1971, when the trail was more difficult and when they did not have many of the aids we have today. My mother got stronger the longer she rode. She wished that she could ride Tevis again. She rode horses until she was 88. She will always amaze me.

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

My first mentor was a riding instructor named Jim Wylie. He taught riding at colleges—UC Riverside, California Lutheran College (now California Lutheran University) and Pepperdine. He was an old school rider. He was strict, but cared about his students. He made riding fun while teaching the fundamentals.

My first endurance trail partner was Shelli Sexton. When I started riding with her, she had already been doing AERC endurance rides for a number of years. She already had thousands of miles. By following her, I learned about the basics of doing AERC endurance riding. I also got updated on the new developments in endurance riding since the 1960s, like synthetic tack, electrolytes, heart rate monitors, and GPSs.

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

A horse I can handle and that I enjoy riding.