

Flora Hillman & Beaverwood Spiderman

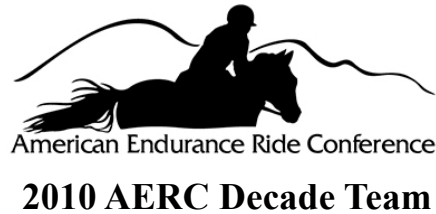


Photo by Hugh MacDonald

Rider Name: — *Flora Hillman*

Horse Name: — *Beaverwood Spiderman*

Region: — *NE*

Current Rider Lifetime Mileage? — *1675 miles (combined)* Endurance: — *1625 miles*, LD: — *50 miles*

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? — *I heard from a friend that this Welsh/Arab driving pony was going to be at a Virginia auction, and that he was part of a half-Welsh pair of large ponies originally owned and shown as a tandem and pair by a well known carriage driver from Wisconsin. I purchased him at the auction, but was outbid for the other half of the pair. Since I didn't need a single driving pony, I decided to start training him as a child's pony hunter.*

What is your horse's breeding? — *Welsh/Arabian. Registered in both the Welsh Stud book (half Welsh), and the Arabian stud book (half-Arab)*

Sex: — *Gelding*

DOB: — *April 1990*

Horse height: — *14.1 ½ hands*

Approx. Weight: — *800*

Color: — *Strawberry Gray*

Shoe size: — 0

Or, hoof boot size:

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? — *I had videotaped this pony as a 3 year old at a carriage conference in Williamsburg, VA, and was very impressed by his beauty and his movement, When he was consigned to the Sport Horse Auction in Frying Pan Park (Northern VA) at age 9 I went to the auction to bid on him. He turned out to be a lovely jumper as well as a lovely carriage pony. We sort of fell into endurance by way of me schooling him under saddle — I hate riding in the ring and prefer to ride cross-country, and was very impressed with how this pony enjoyed going down the trail, and how he always wanted to see what was over the next hill. He loved to trail ride, and I enjoyed that.*

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? — *No. He was my first*

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? — *None*

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? — *I participate in foxhunting and carriage driving — both sports I began almost 40 years ago — with my Thoroughbreds. Today my husband and I have a pair of medium Welsh ponies for driving, and my Decade Team pony and a pure-bred large Welsh for foxhunting. My Decade Team pony is now in his 8th year of foxhunting. I used to ride Dressage (and competed at Dressage at Devon) and also competed up to Preliminary in eventing riding Thoroughbreds, but that was well over 20 years ago, and I no longer do either of those sports.*

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? — *I've been involved with riding and driving for over 40 years. I began riding in Endurance in 2000.*

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? — *This pony got me interested in endurance. I'd always wanted to do distance sports, but never had a pony/horse that I felt could do a competitive job. This pony's half-Arab background encouraged me to try the endurance sport.*

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? — *He was 9 when I purchased him, and 10 when we started our first endurance ride. The first 50 mile ride was the Doncaster ride. It was the worst ride of my life — the temperatures were in the 90's and the humidity was 90% — enough to make you want to die. We took almost the full 12 hours to complete, and I was both sick and exhausted the next day. On the other hand, my pony was raring to go the next morning, quite excited as he watched the horses going out the 2nd day — which really impressed me. Guess I was the "weakest link" and the one that really needed to get myself fit to do the sport.*

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances) — *I started my first year doing 1 ride — an LD...and got lost on the first loop when I made a turn on a trail that was to be used the next day!! So I never completed. The next year we started with 2 LDs, and finished the year with my first endurance ride (the Doncaster ride — see above). The third season we had gotten our act together, and did 5 rides — 1 LD, 4 endurance, and 1 2-day 100*

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

How long till you top tenned or raced? (if you did) — *3rd year, at the end of the year. We placed 3rd at the Fort Valley ride — racing the final 2 miles to the finish. My pony thought that was the most fun he'd ever*

had! We also placed 2nd at the 2day 100 at the Mustang Memorial. There were several more top tens in the upcoming years, and a few “almost top tens”. By then we had truly become a team.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? – None, really. We foxhunt during the winter (our season is from August to end of March). In the early part of the decade we whipped in for a private hunt, so we were busy all winter long. Come April we went right back into endurance.

If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? – Only did two 100's – both were 2-day 100s – and they were at the end of the endurance season. So we did no more endurance until the Spring, but foxhunted instead.

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

What kind of tack do you use? (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.) – Treeless saddle (Barefoot) and bitless bridle.



2008 Fort Valley 50. Photo by Hugh MacDonald

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Barefoot? Barefoot and booted? – St. Croix Eventers (aluminum). Durashock pads. We don't do boots – can't get them to stay on, and the gaiters rub. I do my own shoeing, so I don't have to worry about scheduling a farrier – I simply schedule myself!!

What kind of problems have you encountered? – No problem. Because I do my own farrier work, I have complete freedom to try out and to use the type and style of shoes I think my pony goes best in. I think in

all the years we've been doing endurance, he has lost only one shoe.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? – *Annular ligament tear – occurred while foxhunting in 2010. It was the reason we finally had to retire from endurance.*

How did you work thru it? – *time and rest, and oral HA. He is back to foxhunting full time, and we will try another endurance ride in 2012.*

What was the worst or most severe injury you have ever had relating to horses or endurance riding? – *27 years ago I had my hip broken when kicked by a horse, but that was many years before starting endurance, and never caused an issue with my riding. The only true injury during a ride was when a branch hit my eye during the Mustang Memorial. That branch missed my cornea by only a fraction of an inch! Then having to drive 5 hours home on I95, at night, with one functioning eye and one blurry one!! Fortunately, the injury wasn't serious, but it was pretty painful until it healed.*

How did you work thru it? – *seeing a doctor, and then rest...and being careful to duck next time and not to hurt the eye again!*

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? – *Gosh, there have been so many. I think it might have been the year we did the Biltmore in the rain. That was a blast, and my pony was a pistol, enjoying it to the hilt. Also doing our first OD ride, and galloping across the finish line. What a thrill!*

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? – *It would be a toss up between the Doncaster ride in the horrible heat/humidity, or the Armstrong ride where the temps suddenly soared close to 100 with 90% humidity. We pulled in the first loop. I hate the heat/humidity, and don't do well in it. My pony hates it, too.*

What was your most humbling experience? – This may sound strange, but...my most humbling experience in all my years of endurance came as a result of a pull in a ride. Not in the way most people are humbled – because of the pull itself – but...because the result of that pull (which was a small sting from a rock, a simple “ouch” that my pony had recovered from an hour later, but not soon enough to continue) meant I was in camp to see, and write about, an experience that ended up putting the sport of endurance out in front of a national audience.

In 2006 Endurance News published my article – of a friend's horse that tied up during an endurance ride – and subsequently submitted it to the USEF for entry in the 2006 USEF Pegasus Media Award for the Best Feature Article in a Magazine. Well, the article won – winning top place over all the other articles submitted by over one hundred horse magazines throughout the US!!!! It was the first time EN ever won an award like this, and, as the author, I was invited to the USEF annual conference in KY to receive the award – a stunning bronze winged horse statue – from USEF President David O'Connor in front of an audience of about 1,000 people. Both my husband and I went, and I will truthfully admit the award and presentation was a very humbling honor for me, and also a gratifying thrill to see an article about endurance riders and endurance vets put forward with great fanfare in front of this august audience of all the USEF riding and driving disciplines. I was so happy for the staff at EN – especially as all the magazines that entered could submit only one article each. They were beside themselves with glee!! I had won awards for my writing before, but never at this level. I still look back on that moment as being both wonderful and humbling that the EN had thought enough of my writing to submit it for consideration of this national award. Who would know that a simple pull would have such an ending as winning a bronze statue!!

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? – *Food is important if you don't want to run out of gas, so carry it with you and feed yourself and your pony often.*

Where does your horse live? Full turnout? – *At home. We have a lovely farm in the middle of foxhunting country of northern Virginia. We have 4 ponies – 3 Welsh Section B's, and 1 Welsh/Arab. They do live out in their separate fields with run-ins. They only come in the barn during the summer (to get away from the bugs) and when we have bad blizzards. Otherwise, they are out (and blanketed during the winter) 24/7*

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of it's life in? (pasture, w/ a herd, etc.) – *He was in a herd of ponies while turned out, stalled when in. His breeder had him to create a pair. She sold the pair when they were 8. The next owner wanted to compete in combined driving, and ended up ruining both ponies with poor training. He subsequently starved the pony I eventually purchased too but because the pony had started to rear and refuse to work in harness. The pony was put out in a bare field and left there all winter. When he was taken to the auction, he was all ribs and bones, and very nervous and upset. It was very sad. It took months to bring him back physically, and a whole year to bring him back mentally. He was that badly messed up.*

What are your horse's strengths? – *Boundless enthusiasm, and intelligence. He's very, very, very bright, outgoing, bold, extremely talented, and a lovely jumper. He adores foxhounds, too. He was probably the best whip horse my huntsman had in her staff of us whipper-ins. He likes having a job, and the harder it is, the more he likes it!*

Weaknesses? – *Too competitive sometimes. And not eating as much as he could. He tends to stress traveling in the trailer, which means he arrives having wasted a lot of his energy being worried.*

What advice do you have for new riders? – *Take time to listen to your horse/pony. Learn to be a team, and learn to work together. It takes two to get down the trail efficiently and effectively. Horses aren't machines, so don't use them like they are.*

Looking back, what would you do differently? – *Probably I would have spent more time conditioning myself to get fitter. And I would have gotten a treeless saddle sooner, too!*

What do you feel you did right? – *Paid attention to ensuring I conditioned my guy the right way to be fit enough to easily complete a ride with plenty of gas still left in the tank.*

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? – *The Decade Team!!!! Yes, we did achieve it!! Hooray!!! That was our 1st goal. Our 2nd goal was to make the 3,000 mile mark, but I was unable to do so due to getting heat exhaustion in 2003 and not be able to ride in the summer for several years. There are not a lot of rides in the NE in Virginia, so that limited our ability to accumulate miles during the year.*

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? – *He is competitive, self-assured, bold, and likes to be in front. Over the years he has learned to be a good partner, but that took lots of time and lots of hours under saddle learning that if he worked with me, life was much easier and I was far happier! We share a lot of the same personality traits, which is probably why we clicked together to make a great team.*

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? (multidays, 100's, 50's, etc.) – *2-day 100's, although they are now rare.*

In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life? — *Taught me that if I had the drive and the desire, and the right partner who shared my enthusiasm — I could do anything.*

Describe your electrolyte protocol. — *Perform N'Win — before the ride, during each check, and after the ride. Mixed with applesauce. My pony loves it.*

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? — *Feeding lots of carrots during the ride to keep the energy level, and electrolyte level, up, and my pony's stomach full.*

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? — *No*

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? — *Brewer's Yeast, powdered garlic, Lysine, Flex-Free oral HA*

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe) — *Flex-Free oral HA. I have seen first hand that it makes a HUGE difference.*

How far do you usually travel to rides? — *Generally just 2 hours for the OD rides. Up to 5 hours for the NJ rides.*

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? — *No. I did the Biltmore ride, once, but that was the only one outside my region.*

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? — *John and Ann Crandell, and also Mary Howell. All three are highly enthusiastic, love Endurance, and go to great lengths to encourage and mentor others into the sport.*

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them. — *Adirenne Hewitt (now deceased) She was my neighbor and a 100 mile rider. When I told her I was interested in Endurance and wanted to know more about it, she immediately swept me under her wing to teach me all she knew. She was a great motivation, and a true friend.*

Describe the first rig you had and then tell us how it compares to your current rig? — *I have a 4 horse 18' steel gooseneck with an open floor plan for transporting the pair of ponies and carriage. Several years back I insulated and paneled the front part to use as an LQ, and added an inverter, battery, and solar panels, plus removable walls to separate the back stalls from my LQ area. I still have this same trailer, and use it for carriage driving, foxhunting, and endurance riding. It has removable stalls, is VERY versatile, extremely comfortable, warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and super quiet with tons of room for both me and my ponies.*

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? — *Excellent manners on the ground and under saddle, smooth gaits, easy going, happy to go down the trail, happy to lead; happy to follow. I do have my next endurance pony ready to go — a lovely, sweet, large (14 h) purebred Section B Welsh pony who is everything I listed above. I hope to compete him to be my next Decade Team pony, and also the first *purebred* *registered* Welsh pony in AERC to go over 1,000 endurance miles.*