

Judy Houle & Felex



AERC Decade Team

First AERC ride: 1993 Region: W

Judy had two horses that she rode for 10 or more years, Felex and Shatir – both are mentioned in this write-up.

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? Felex was bought from a big breeder who bred pure polish with good bone and let him grow up on 300 acres. Shatir was a backyard breeder's product whose mother was an endurance horse.

Sex: Geldings

DOB: Felex 7-27-87 Shatir 6-15-75

Horse height: F-14.1† S-14.2

Approx. Weight: 850 both

Color: Grey both

Easyboot size: F-#1 S-#2

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? F-Good bone, good conformation, smooth gaits, well broke.†S-Good conformation, big feet, smooth gaits.

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

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? 7

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? 37 total, 25 endurance

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? My mom bought a horse that had done the Tevis. There were a lot of both NATRC and endurance riders in my area.

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? F-3, 6 S-4, 5

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? F- 1, 0, 2 S- 2, 0, 4

What mileage distance did you start with? F- 50 S- 25

How long till you top tenned or raced? F- 6 yrs. Age 12 S- 4 yrs. Age 9

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? 4-5 months

If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? Two to three weeks. Ride one long or a long and a short ride per week, last ride the weekend before.

What kind of tack do you use? Sport Saddle, woolback with equalizer inserts, no bit- rope halter.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Standard shoes, pad only for VC 100, started doing the barefoot thing. Felex's last season, did 100 with Easyboots only.

What kind of problems have you encountered? Muscle cramping, impaction gas colic from wrong feed. Caught strangles at a ride.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? F- pulled shoulder muscle in a fall, put neck out in a fall.

How did you work through it? Massage and spinal adjustment.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? F- top tenning the IAHA National Championship. S- Placing 5th on the Tevis.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? F- the day he died of a basketball sized tumor in his gut. S- The day he colicked on a ride and looked like he was at death's door.

What was your most humbling experience? Getting pulled at the North American Championships in Carson City while running in 6th place after being warned by a foreign vet that he was going off in the rear.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Listen to all input from vets, pay attention to your horse's well being, ride according to your horse's ability on that day with the amount of preparation he has, have goals but play it by ear.

Where does your horse live? Pasture, varied from acre to 100 acres. Mostly at home.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? F- 300 acres. S- 5 acres.

What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses? F very strong, especially uphill, unfazeable, bombproof S- great in very hot weather, fast, conserves energy, takes good care of himself-not hot.

What advice do you have for new riders? Train with experienced riders. Try CTR first to learn all the ins and outs of trail care and pacing. Start with an experienced horse. Don't be afraid of a little fat reserve on your horse, especially for 100s.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Trained a little harder. I had a tendency to be a little underconditioned.

What do you feel you did right? Never overrode or overconditioned my horses, addressed all their problems, kept their stress level to a minimum.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? F- to top ten a 100. Yes. S to top ten the Tevis, and finish it ten times - yes.

Describe your horses personality? How is it like or unlike yours? F very self-confident and brave. I'm not as self-confident. S spooky, wary, likes to be comfortable, I like to be comfortable on rides not too much pain or hardship.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? 100s. **Describe your electrolyte protocol.** I mix powder with probiotic liquid in a syringe.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? A variety of hays and high fat grain.

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? The high fat grains or adding fat to grain.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? ABCs plus, Missing Link with Glucosamine, †DMG.

Do you give any kind of joint products? Glucosamine.

How far do you usually travel to rides? 1-3 hours.

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? Julie Suhr for her upbeat positive attitude, Wendell Robie for his vision of raising the standard of horsemanship and achievement and giving us all the opportunity to participate in a world-class event. Kerry Ridgeway for being an innovator (invented CRI and spearheaded equine sports medicine).

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them. I was exposed to a lot of high-level people. When I was 15, I did a CTR with the junior horse club that was judged by Ed and Eileen Johnson. They rode with us on none other than Cougar Rock and Crystal Rock. †I was totally impressed with how quiet the stallions were and how well they rode. I got a lot of advice from them. †I did a lot of NATRC and learned from people like Bev Tibbetts and Nora Cook. I went to a seminar at U.C. Davis in 78 and learned a lot from people like Kerry Ridgeway, Ruth Waltenspiel, Jim Steere, Becky Hart, ect.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Good bone, big feet, good hip and shoulder angles, well balanced, smooth gaits, easy going temperament. (not Hot)