

Jennifer S. Klein & Caribbean Queen+ (“Cara”)



AERC Decade Team

**3040 Miles, 53 ride completions.
First AERC ride: 1994 Region: W**

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? I was told about her and that she needed a good home. 3 years old and unriden, although a lot of groundwork had been done. When I first saw her she was in her stall with an open door to her paddock eating hay. After each bite she would casually turn around and walk out the door check out what the other horses were doing then come in and take another bite and repeat checking on the other horses. She also has these great eyes!! After I went home I just couldn't get her out of my mind, so I decided to go for it! And what an adventure we have had!! She wasn't very tall. Our vet said, "Endurance? I think Pony Club." She had tons of spirit but was very sensible. Our friends said, "Are you sure she will be able to do endurance? She's so quiet!" I told them that it was all in there I was just keeping her quiet, but it would be there when I wanted it. And it sure was!! It only took her the one 25-mile ride where we rode long and slow, to figure out what it was all about. The first years were a tremendous challenge just getting her vetted. She was soooo excited. We also had to sedate her to shoe her for 9 years!! Even though we worked with her in between rides and with picking up her feet and her manners, round pen work, it just wasn't the same for her as when we arrived at a base camp. Cara is super fun to ride, she is playful and being from racing breeding, loves to run. Very challenging to rate at rides.

What is your horses breeding? Polish/CMK: Sire Barbaados, grandsire Bandos; Dam Four Winds Delyte, Grandsire Wiraz.

Sex: Mare

DOB: 2/22/89

Horse height: just under 14'3

Approx. Weight: 830 lbs

Color: Gray

Shoe size: 0's all 4

Easyboot size: 1 over shoes

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? She was given to me by Sharon and Tracy Huyck, of Occidental, CA. They needed a good home for her when she was 3 years old and not ridden yet. Being sweepstakes nominated they were happy that she would be used for competition. They were also the breeder.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? I rode a few rides on a gray gelding I had, but he wouldn't settle down thought he was still 5 years old. Didn't take care of himself in terms of pacing, eating, drinking, and just about everything necessary for a successful ride or career.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? Two; only campaigning Cara.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Not anything else for competition.

How many years have you been involved with horses? 20 years. ***In endurance?*** I first became a member in I think 1988, but really didn't do much until I started with Caribbean Queen+/- in 1994.

What got you interested in endurance riding? My first horse, grey Arabian gelding, Jameel Yelduz needed more and more riding to keep him reasonable. I decided endurance would be great as the more I rode him the better he behaved. So I started doing long distance training thinking endurance would be a good sport for both of us. I stopped because he wasn't good about eating and drinking away from home. I was showing my Tennessee Walker mare for a few years and then decided that I wanted to start endurance again. Especially, when the opportunity to have my mare came up.

What was it that kept you interested? I like having goals and looking forward to the rides helps to keep my riding schedule more regular.

How old was your horse when first started? I started riding her the fall of her 3rd year just a few times then again started up when she was 4 in the late winter, spring. First ride? Our first ride was the Carson River Rides, 25-mile ride towards the end of her 4th year.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? First season 5- 50's.
Second season - 300 miles, 5 rides
Third season - 510 miles, 9 rides.

What mileage distance did you start with? One 25-mile ride, then 50's.

How long till you top tenned or 'raced'? We actually top tenned the first season and she earned Best Condition the last ride of that season. It wasn't because we were going that fast at each ride; a lot of front-runners were pulled, the usual fast riders weren't there so the times were slower. Each season I start off slower and then each ride see how she is in terms of where we end up. I have only gone to a few rides with the firm intention of racing. I ride my own ride and just see how Cara is doing ending up how the day all unfolds.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? It varies depending upon weather, how Cara is and what else is going on.

If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? It varies, depending on how she is doing. ***What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?*** Again, varying based on her condition and mental attitude.

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? I have only done one multi day ride. I started out slow and just took each day at a time. Not any difference in terms of riding schedule.

What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? Same as usual.

What kind of tack do you use? I use a treeless, Torsion saddle after going through many that didn't work for her back. This saddle is great. Really close contact and super secure seat.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? I use the St. Croix wide shoes with the green impact pads in front.

What kind of problems have you encountered? The biggest challenge with Cara is rating her at the rides. She can be a real *crazy woman* at the start and for many miles. So keeping her energy output even throughout is quite a job. When she is in good shape she will go like an *energizer bunny* the whole ride.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? She had a torn ligament. Unknown to me at the time we actually rode and finished Tevis for the first time when she had a torn lateral collateral ligament! Completely sound the whole ride through, after the ride it was really swollen and she was never off on it at all not even with a flexion test. The vets were amazed at her. The ultrasound showed the tear and she was sound.

How did you work thru it? Ice, wrapping, time off, Then easy start up after 6 or 7 months.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? The one that stands out as best overall was the first time we did the Swanton Pacific 100. Cara was in such good shape and taking good care of herself. She was cantering into the 80+-mile vet check. It was so beautiful with the sunset over the ocean and I was just amazed at how well she had done the job of carrying me those 100 miles!! She was still cantering at the finish!!

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? It was one of those rides I had looked forward to racing and I asked too much of Cara. I felt horrible. She was fine, not needing any extra care or vet treatment, she wasn't lame or anything, and it was the look in her eye that said I had almost crossed the line. She was tired. I never did that again!!

What was your most humbling experience? See above.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? The same old stuff: ride your own ride; pay attention to your horse; watch vital signs; use common sense.

Where does your horse live? At home in her own turn out area by herself.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? At home in her own turn out area.

What are your horse's strengths? She is strong in spirit and body. Loves going in the trailer and going to rides. Loves the chase. She wants to be up front but not necessarily first. Super attentive to what is going on. She has learned her job and lessons in life well. Healthy, good bone structure. Weaknesses? Loves the chase -- will wait for other horses if she is out front. Not good for getting a first place!! Although we did once! Can be really strong headed at the beginning of a ride and use up too much energy unless she is in really, really good shape, has been very challenging to train without breaking her spirit.

What advice do you have for new riders? Take it slow, enjoy each day with your horse as if it might be the last.

Looking back, what would you do differently? I don't know if there really is anything I would do differently with this horse. With other horses and just my own changing attitude after a very severe spinal injury in 1995 I have become much more cautious about riding. Not going on difficult terrain without really determining that the horse can handle it. and not advancing the training as quickly.

What do you feel you did right? I did a lot of reading and researching to see what other people had done in the past that had worked. I stuck to my plan, most of the time, without getting caught up in the moment.

I think the biggest thing was paying attention to my horse and how she was doing each time. Whether that be in training at home, or at the beginning of a ride, middle of a ride, or the end.

What was your highest goal for your horse? I had big dreams in the beginning and due to my accident it is truly a miracle that I am even still riding let alone doing endurance rides. I revised my goals and the 3,000 miles mark has been my most recent one. Other goals along the way were Legion of Honor, Legion of Supreme Honor and now who knows what will be next! ***Did you achieve it?*** Yes!!

Describe your horse's personality? She is very strong in mind and body. Secure in her place in the world, and knows how to take care of herself and loves life! How is it like or unlike yours? Probably a lot, although I have learned to pace myself a little better than she has.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? I like 100's and multadays. I like being out there on the trail when the sun comes up and then still out there when the sun sets. It just amazes me what the horses can do. The 100's are very hard on me now, so I really don't know if I will do one again, maybe! I have only done one multi day ride but would sure like to do more.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. Dose evening before ride, morning of ride and every couple of hours or 10-15 miles during the ride depending upon circumstances.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Cara has always been on a feeding of alfalfa hay at one meal and oat, or a grain hay of some type at another feeding and Manna Pro's Elite 10. I believe that the Elite 10 as an extruded product has made a significant difference in her performance, by the way it is utilized in her system.

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 currently give Gluquestrian a joint supplement, and have generally given some sort of joint supplement throughout her career.

Do you give any kind of joint products? See above.

How far do you usually travel to rides? I have done west region rides going to eastern Nevada for the multiday.

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? Of course, Julie Suhr. I bought and read her book and enjoyed it very much. I admire any rider that puts in the time for training, conditioning themselves and their horse and comes through the ride with a healthy horse at the finish with more to give.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? No, I really didn't. I have done most all of my riding and training by myself. Sometimes just pleasure riding with others.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? I have chosen him. He is in a turn out area on our property with two other horses. He is a gelding! He is 4 years old, similar breeding to Cara, similar build and a character, just like her! The main difference being that he is a gelding. He doesn't fight being

tied, or being shod, or going in the trailer. Also his resting heart rate is much lower than hers. Hopefully he will become an endurance horse.

It sure takes more than just horse and rider to succeed in this sport of endurance riding. I am grateful for All the ride managers, vets, volunteers, the AERC staff, the many unknown faces of people who work to preserve the trails, the riders who have paved the way for this great sport to continue, those that I am forgetting to mention, and of course my husband, Ed, who has driven the miles, done the crewing, shoeing, massage, and many hours of waiting for me. Most of all, God, for this wonderful adventure of life!!

About Jennifer's accident:

I haven't really told this story in a long time. It is pretty lengthy and I'm not sure how much you want to hear, but I guess it isn't a bad idea to put it down in writing even though it was 8 years ago. When I am ancient and no longer riding I'll remember mostly why!

It was in November, 1995 the Saturday before Thanksgiving. A friend of mine and I decided to take a couple of horses to Lake Sonoma for an afternoon ride. I was living in Santa Rosa at the time. We parked in the parking lot where the finish would be for the ride and rode the trail, like riding the Lake Sonoma ride backwards.

At that time we never even thought twice about riding on drop-off type trails, knowing the horses really don't want to go off the edge either and the two geldings we were riding weren't very trail experienced and had never been together before. Everything was going quite well until we came to a creek. We had been riding for about 1/1/2 hours I think and were almost to where we were going to turn around to go back. It was just one of those things that can happen. My friend's horse didn't want to cross the creek, so we were changing places so I would go across first. There was plenty of room to do this change. However, I decided to get off and lead him across just as my friend decided to move her horse and my horse got worried that he was going to be left behind and did a quick right spin putting his front feet up on the bank. Well, since I had already shifted my weight to get off I couldn't get up over him fast enough and went off of him like a rearing, pulling him over also. We both did about a 12 foot slide down the bank and then I did about a 6 foot drop directly into the creek below and landed seated. He landed and rolled and wasn't hurt. Shaken up, sore, but not damaged in any way.

Well, I went to get up, but my back hurt so bad I couldn't get up so we moved some rocks around so I could rest my head on one and I put my hands flat under the small of my back for support with my knees bent. Fortunately she had a cell phone and after tying the horses went up to a spot where she could call 911. We thought we were set. Had the cell phone with us, reception to call 911 and help would be on the way. Not so lucky.

She was back and forth between me and the cell phone to keep contact with the operator and I was getting very cold. We were waiting for the helicopter to come get me. We were waiting, waiting, waiting. When we finally heard it go by she was on the phone with 911 and ended up directing the helicopter from the ground through the 911 operator to where we were. We were down so far in the canyon they couldn't land to pick me up. After that a paramedic showed up from up above where we were. There was apparently a road and he had to hike down, the distance of which I don't think I ever knew only that it was too steep and I couldn't be carried out that way because it was too painful to have my legs lower than my head.

When the paramedic arrived I had been in the creek for nearly 2 hours and was very very cold. I was crashing. I remember seeing and being in a white tunnel and while I was there I wasn't cold, didn't feel like I was shivering, and nothing hurt. I thought about just staying there! That happened 2 times while I was in the creek. Terri had to help the paramedic roll me over to put me in a basket to get me out of the creek and oh my -- the sound that came out of me I had never heard before!! It was dark then. We waited for other people to arrive and for everyone to figure out how they were going to get me out of there. I remember a lot about it and was aware of what was going on, however, my body and mind I suppose had gone into survival mode. My body temp was 92 and my blood pressure was apparently pretty low. Too low for any pain medication right away. Of course my veins were extremely difficult to get an IV in and then finally he did, but it was pulled out during transit by branches I imagine. At any rate, they ended up carrying me (the paramedic tied the basket to himself in case the others lost hold of me I would be attached to him!) down to the shore of the lake.

In the meantime the 911 operator got off work went home and got his own boat as the sheriff's boats were in dry dock, met my husband, Ed and the sheriff at the marina and went across the lake looking for us. It was still dark of course and they had trouble finding us but finally did and then when they tried to come in to shore to load me up they were sinking thigh deep in muck and they couldn't get the boat very close so they kind of put the end of the basket on the side of the boat and pushed me in, I think!

Went across the lake in the boat, very painful, got in a helicopter at the marina and then to the hospital. Total rescue time 6-plus hours!

I knew things were bad as I had never experienced such deep to the core pain before. I figured my spine was broken, but I had feeling in my feet and could move my toes but my thighs were numb.

In the emergency room they did all the tests, x-rays, etc. And even then I went in the tunnel again. I was still shivering, had warmed up some, but was still really cold. I remember the person with me in emergency calling my name and I didn't want to answer but after he opened my eyelids I did.

When I fell I had burst my 2nd lumbar vertebra and fractured the 1st. The burst was in I think 11 pieces and the bone had penetrated my spinal cord 2/3 of the way! Not good!

They ended up keeping me all morphined up until Wednesday and then did the surgery that evening. I don't remember all the technical terms of the procedures, but they put rods in to stabilize my spine, did a bone graft, and put me back together. I was fitted for a clamshell brace, and was partially paralyzed but I was up and walking with a walker a couple of days before I went home. I was in the hospital for a couple of weeks and then went home to recover. Recovering is a long, hard, haul. My ability to persist was what kept me going. Also the fact that I wanted to ride again!! Not just walk, RIDE!! I worked hard at getting better. After a couple of weeks started venturing out side for short walks and worked it up to long slow walks each day. Painful, but good to be able to walk. Plus I wanted to ride!! I had just finished an awesome year with Cara, top tenned Swanton Pacific 100, top tenned Las Trampas and she got best condition, I had great plans!

Things seemed to progress and healing was going on and I was cleared to start riding again I think in May. Of course, my neurosurgeon sure didn't really understand what kind of riding we all do!! The x-rays looked good, bones healed, I'm off and riding again. I wasn't really scared or worried about riding her. She was only 7 at the time and could really show her "wild child" side, but she was also so sensible I really didn't worry about it.

I did three rides that year and was really hurting still. When it was time for my check up I had x-rays taken again and there as clear as can be -- the rod's broken!

Well, I figured out it had been at the Indian Diggins ride. While waiting at the start Cara was being a real stinker wanting to go back to the trailer to be with the gelding we had brought with us and she reared up big time. Well I didn't come off of her back but landed partially down on her side, and oh, dear, I guess the rods broke!! However, they really shouldn't have since the bone was supposed to be fused. I guess x-rays don't really show that well what healing had gone on since it wasn't fused completely. The rods are only there for support, not to permanently hold one together. If the bones had been fused the rods wouldn't have broken. So gee, I, of course, had to do another ride after that one. Had to keep going of course, so I ended up doing 3 50's that year with a still, although unknown to me, fractured spine!! Not a real good idea.

Back to surgery I had to go. This time the doctor fused a longer section of spine down through L4 and two weeks later I had a surgery where they went in through my side and put a plate between L1 and L2. Of course, by then, Cara was in really good shape, so a friend of mine, Heather Parsons, took her for a while and rode her on the Swanton Pacific 100 and the Fall XP.

I had to start over with the healing process. Same old routine again. But, things never did completely go back to normal. In fact I have a lot of residual nerve damage and due to the spinal injury other conditions were triggered. It wasn't the bone breakage that caused the problems but all the soft tissue damage and nerve damage from the fall and multiple surgeries.

So, for me to accomplish riding the 10 consecutive years with two of them having major spinal surgeries in them, and to reach the 3,000 mile mark with Cara is wonderful for me. There are many days when riding from home isn't even possible due to my physical condition. I know that the desire to do endurance was a huge part of why I was able to recover even to the degree I have. I don't know how long it will last, as it seems to get harder each year, even though I keep looking for and trying new things to feel better. I do know that I will keep at riding as long as I can somehow get on the horse!!

Gosh, I haven't thought about all these things in a long time. It is kind of neat bringing up these memories. The bad ones and especially the good ones. One thing about adding horses, and riding, and participating in a sport like this is life is full. We won't be looking back and thinking we should have tried something exciting and didn't. Especially the relationships with our horses. I wouldn't want to have missed having my horses for anything. I didn't start riding until I was in my 30's, and boy did I fall in love. My horses have been a huge part of my thoughts since then.