

Karen Isaacs & General Jeb Stuart



AERC Decade Team



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Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? When I first started doing endurance in 1988, I rode my Appaloosa gelding but also owned an Arabian mare. She was short and chunky but I wanted a tall athletic horse, so I bred her to a Thoroughbred. The result was Jeb, who is a little taller than his mom, and just as chunky.

What is your horses breeding? His mom has some Crabbet and Polish and his dad was a successful racehorse in France.

Region: SE
Sex: Gelding
DOB: May 1990
Horse height: 15h
Approx. Weight: 1050
Color: Bay
Shoe size: 1
Or, Easyboot size: 1

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? He was born on my farm, and by the time he was 4 years old, endurance was all I was interested in, so that was the career of any horse I had.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? My first 2000 miles were on Rocket, a beautiful Appaloosa. He's now 32 and enjoying retirement.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? Seven - Appaloosa, 3 Saddlebreds, a Racking Horse and two half-Arabs.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Ride & Tie - all the enjoyment of endurance, but even more fun and challenging! I've used Jeb and five other endurance horses for R&T and they have all been good at it.

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? Loved for 44 years, ridden 30 years, owned 23 years, endurance 20 years.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? When I read about it, it sounded EXACTLY like what I wanted to do, and after my first ride, I knew that was completely true. I love being around horses and the outdoors. I very much enjoy riding and also like the competitive aspect because this keeps me motivated. I have also come to love the fun, interesting, generous endurance people.

How old was your horse when first started? 3 yrs First ride? 4 1/2 years (LD)

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances)

1st - 3 LD

2nd - 2 LD, 1 50, 1 60

3rd - 1 50, 3 2-day 100, 1 1-day 100

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

How long till you top tened or 'raced'? (if you did) We won our first LD ride (ha, ha - we were the only entry!). We did continue to consistently top ten even when there were a few more than 10 starters, though it never seemed like we were going very fast. I have 'raced' (as in tried to win) very few times.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? About 3 months with very little riding Dec-Feb.

If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? Usually about 2 weeks with no riding after a 100. I do one 50 OR 1-2 training rides the month before.

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? Same as for a 100.

What kind of tack do you use? (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.) DeSoto saddle, Skito pad, neoprene girth, Kimberwicke curb bit, biothane halter-bridle, breastcollar, crupper

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Easyboots? Steel keg shoes, rim shoes on the front and flats on the back. Easyboots over the shoes for rocky rides such as northern Virginia or New Mexico.

What kind of problems have you encountered? Back soreness. I started Jeb with the Orthoflex I used on my previous horse, but he got a sore back at his first 100. Then I bought a Sports Saddle and used it happily for years. One day he mysteriously developed a sore back during a 100, and I was sadly never able to go back to the Sports Saddle. The last few years I've ridden in a Desoto that we got second hand. It is too big for me, but seems to fit him.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? Jeb does a really good job taking care of himself. About the only thing I can think of was a potentially serious pasture accident. Evidently he rolled too close to a barbed-wire fence then got tangled up in it, bending and breaking a metal T-post and several strands of wire. Amazingly, all he had were superficial scratches and a small laceration on his belly that did not even require a vet.

How did you work through it? I promptly removed that section of fence.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? Alone with my horse on the last loop of a 100, he was trotting strongly, pulled no doubt by his sense of direction telling him the finish line was near. My fatigue and soreness were temporarily gone and the smell and the sounds and the sensation of riding in the night were so appealing that I was actually sorry the ride was about to end.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? No day spent with my horse has ever been a bad day. The worst I can imagine is if I caused him to get sick or hurt.

What was your most humbling experience? I am obviously no judge of potential talent, because I have always underestimated Jeb. It seems hard to believe now, but when starting him out, I thought he was a sissy, too frail, and too lazy. I was so attached to him I wouldn't give up though. He was so fussy that if a fly landed on him, nothing else could be asked or expected of him until the offense was resolved. And a small twig or weed sticking out in the trail would cause a screeching halt until SOMEBODY cleared the obstruction to his satisfaction. He still has a pretty strong sense of self-preservation, but has matured to also have a very good work ethic. He will move down the trail and get the job done, but it will be mostly on his terms.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Always pay attention to your horse. He/she will tell you everything you need to know. Never be in such a hurry that you cannot take the time to stop to help someone.

Where does your horse live? Full time turnout at home on about 10 acres of grass.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life? Full turnout with the herd (5-7 horses)

What are your horse's strengths? He has good feet, a great trot and is very dependable. He almost always finishes, no matter what the terrain or weather conditions. He is calm and doesn't waste much energy. Weaknesses? His big body does not cool quickly and he pants when it is hot and humid. He does not canter down hill very well at all.

What advice do you have for new riders? Start with what you have or what you like, whether it is a Quarter Horse and a western saddle, or a Saddlebred and a flat saddle. If, as you progress, you find that something doesn't work, make changes. I gave this advice to a friend starting out, and after a few rides,

she decided her Saddlebred stud needed changed into a gelding. After that, they won many races and BCs. My husband had a huge Racking Horse when I met him, and the only change he needed to make was to get fit and drop some weight (the horse, that is), then he had a successful endurance career.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Be more careful of his legs when he was young. He had a couple minor injuries caused (I think) by going too fast in mud.

What do you feel you did right? The only thing I can take credit for is not doing anything really bad to mess him up.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? To retire sound when he is 25. We have a ways to go yet.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? Jeb is grouchy, moody, irritable and opinionated. I am happy and easy-going. I think that's why we get along.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? Scenic, interesting, challenging and non-repetitive trails. Each distance has its charms: 50's are fun and easy, 100's are the ultimate endurance test, and multadays have a nice, laid-back atmosphere with good camaraderie. Going to a new place to see new scenery is always enjoyable.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. Pretty standard - pre-ride in their feed, dose syringe at each vet check and mid-way thru long loops based on heat/humidity. I've been using Enduramax and Lyte-Now for many years. Jeb still spends a lot of time chewing on the salt block after a ride.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? No. For good or bad, I pay very little attention to this aspect. They eat what grows in the pasture plus a little sweet feed from the local mill and occasional beet pulp.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem? No.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? Nothing on a regular basis.

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe) Over the last several years I have sporadically given Adequan injections as a preventative or fed supplements. Hopefully they provide some protection, but who knows?

How far do you usually travel to rides? We have two rides within a 2-hour drive, the rest are 5-8 hours away.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? We like to go to at least one new or out-of-region ride per year. Besides SE, we've done NE, MW and SW region rides.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? I could not limit this to three, there are so many I like and admire. Some of our ride managers and veterinarians are the nicest and most giving people I know. As far as achievement goes, I most admire those few horse and rider teams who have accomplished both speed and longevity, since this takes a combination of skill (rider) and talent (horse).

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? No, I started out on my own, learning what I could from books and magazines. I am very grateful to those who take the time to write down their knowledge to share with others, including the web postings we have these days.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? That will be difficult, for good horses come in so many different shapes and sizes. I'll probably just pick one that is cute.

The fact that Jeb thinks on his own so much amuses me greatly and is a big part of my attraction to him, as these two anecdotes illustrate. I very seldom try to plan the outcome of a ride, but one time in particular I got the notion that I'd try to win or at least place high. Jeb was at the peak of fitness, and we had historically been very successful at this ride, with a couple of (unplanned) wins in previous years. Toward this end, we warmed up prior to the start and I positioned him near the front of the pack, two things I don't normally do. To my embarrassment, at the start all he would do was a stubby little trot. Fortunately it was a wide road, and most of the very large pack was able to go whizzing by us on either side. Eventually he decided on his own to speed up a bit, and we completed just fine but were not even top ten.

Contrast that with a time later in his career when weather and other factors led us to be totally unprepared for our first ride in the spring. Leatherwood is our most difficult 50 and we had only taken one or two short rides in the previous 4 months. I thought if we took it nice and easy we might just get through within the cut-off time. For no apparent reason, Jeb picked this time to be as strong and forward as he ever has. For a horse that often takes offense at bit pressure, I could not believe how much I fought to hold him back. He would also fool me into thinking he was slowing down, then slip around horses to get in front. I finally gave up arguing with him on the last loop and we finished second and won BC.