

## Kathleen Robbins & Alert's Shadow



### AERC Decade Team



*2050 Miles, 31 ride completions*  
*First AERC ride: 1993 Region: NE*

***Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?*** I called on about 25 horses and looked at 10. Shadow was advertised as “eager, loves to trail ride.”

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

***Sex:*** Gelding

***DOB:*** 7/5/85

***Horse height:*** 14.2 hh

***Approx. Weight:*** 920 pounds

***Color:*** Black

***Shoe size:*** Size 0 all the way around

***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 has excellent conformation, doesn't interfere, and travels straight. Always enthusiastic to go down the trail. When I went to look at him, he just seemed tough and athletic.

***Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?*** Yes, I had a 16 hh Arab gelding and a 15 hh Arab/Quarter gelding.

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

***Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?*** Competitive driving with Shadow. I grew up in California eventing, showing English and Western and gaming.

***How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance?*** I've ridden since age 3. Did my first endurance ride in 1981, the Sunland 50.

***What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?*** I read about the Tevis when I was 8 years old and made it my goal. I met Robbi Pruitt one day out trail riding and she encouraged me to try the sport.

***How old was your horse when first started? First ride?*** Shadow was 8. Spur of the moment 50, 9/11/93.

***How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons?*** First Season: 1993 - 4 CTR's at 25 miles each. 4 non-judged pleasure rides at 20 miles each. One endurance ride - 50 miles. Second Season: 1994 - Four 50 milers, one 60 mile endurance ride. Third Season: 1995 - Two 50 milers, two 2-day 100 mile endurance rides.

My first CTR was 6 weeks after I bought Shadow, January 9, 1993 - 2nd Lightweight and "best dressed" award.

***How long till you top tenned or 'raced'?*** Second season - 1st 50 miler top ten. Third season 1st 100 miler top ten. I've never raced Shadow at the start of a ride. He is very strong. Didn't want him to become even more competitive than he already is. He leaps and bucks for miles!

***How much time off do you give between ride seasons?*** Winters in the Northeast are long and cold. I give him three months ñ December, January and February.

***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?*** Shadow gets one day off for every 10 miles we ride. If we trailer 8 or more hours I count that in for the extra day off. I condition 3 days per week, light riding 1 day the week before a 100 mile ride.

***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?*** We've done one three day 150 in Virginia. I rode a 50 in April, one 1-day 100 in September, and then the 3 day 150 in October.

***What kind of tack do you use?*** I've been through a number of saddles - English, all purpose Wintec's (2), Big Horn endurance, 3 different Orthoflex's. Shadow's back keeps changing over the years! I've used the same biothane halter, bridle and breastplate for the past 7 years. That replaced the original nylon set I had. We've gone thru three bits, snaffle, then kimberwicke for the first couple of years, mostly a tom thumb now, occasionally a long shanked snaffle. A hackamore the last 25 miles of a 100 miler. Depending upon the saddle, a fuzzy girth or cinch with coolback or woolback and elastic so he can breath.

***What kind of shoes do you use on your horse?*** My farrier, Robin Martel is awesome. She is very careful to keep angles and toe and heel length correct. She uses St. Croix Eventers with shock tamer rim pads.

***What kind of problems have you encountered?*** None, Shadow has nice round tough hooves.

***What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?*** We fell through a snowmobile bridge. He leaped off but caught a hind leg and hung for 45 minutes. We chain sawed the bridge and dragged him off of it. He was cold and shocky. I led him to a trailer and got home. Three days later he was tearing around the pasture. We had a dog attack us and chewed him up badly. I spent an hour three times a day flushing puncture wounds on his right front leg for two weeks to save his leg. Two weeks after I finished treatment we completed the Old Dominion 50.

***How did you work through it?*** If my horse gets injured or pops a splint or gets a hoof abscess or whatever, I am diligent with treatment!

***Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?*** The Race of Champions in 1997. We finished! I wore a 10 pound lead vest and I had 10 pounds of lead on my saddle.

***Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?*** 1994, a ride in Pennsylvania. We were camped in a shale pit. My riding partner's horse tied up. Shadow got stung by bees, he'd had bad shoeing and he could barely walk at 40 miles, we got pulled.

***What was your most humbling experience?*** Getting pulled 6 miles from the finish on a 2-day 100 in Nova Scotia. Wind and sleet for 2 days, did not electrolyte enough and Shadow cramped in the hind end.

***What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?*** Do not over condition, too much wear and tear. Do not under condition, not fair to expect the horse to go the distance if not properly prepared. Stick to a good feeding program.

***Where does your horse live?*** I am fortunate to have my horses on pasture. Wasn't always the case with dirt paddocks. Hay is their main source of entertainment. Now they have room to roam and woods to explore. My guys have access to their stalls to eat hay if they choose and get away from the bugs or inclement weather. Grass is wonderful for shiny coats, keeping weight on and keeping them from getting bored.

***What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in?*** He was raised on a farm with his mom, sisters and a brother. He was handled from the time he was foaled and trained in English, dressage and driving.

***What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses?*** Shadow never quits, he is stoic. His determination gets him through in all kinds of weather and trail conditions. He is good on mountain trails, gets bored on the roads. We've had to keep lots of water on him when it's hot. Being a heavily muscled Morgan, he doesn't cool out well!

***What advice do you have for new riders?*** Don't be too eager to go fast right away. Put a good base on your horse. Keep his brain quiet and his body healthy and conditioned.

***Looking back, what would you do differently?*** I would've given electrolytes at 2-hour intervals in the beginning of our career instead of double dosing at the holds. I wished I'd been able to stop muscle cramping. I now know more in regards to electrolytes and supplements.

***What do you feel you did right?*** I've been criticized for finishing at the back of the pack for the most part. Shadow is still clean legged, sound and eager at the age of 18. I've been very careful to not hurt him or take chances.

***What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it?*** The Old Dominion 100. We started in a hurricane, dodged downed trees, made it 78 miles and missed the hold cut off by 15 minutes. He was in the best condition of his life, coming in at 42 for a pulse, trotting out and back at 40. I cried!

***Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?*** Shadow is determined, tenacious, mischievous, enthusiastic, exuberant, fun loving and adventurous; I like to think I possess the same traits!

***What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? Definitely the 100 milers!*** The excitement of getting horse, crew and equipment together, then riding all day and all night. Quite an accomplishment!

***Describe your electrolyte protocol.*** One dose the night before the ride, one dose the morning of the ride, one dose every 2 hours throughout the whole ride.

***Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?*** I feed low protein, 10% and high fat grain, good quality hay, good pasture and fresh water year round and vitamins.

***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?*** Adding in dhenghi alfalfa in the morning and at night, alfalfa cubes has added calcium and helped with muscle cramping. I don't give a lot, one grain scoop ( 2 qt) morning and night.

***What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?*** 3200 mg of Vitamin E, 3000 mg of Vitamin C, E and Selenium. Min-a-mix, plus good quality grass hay and pasture every day. During this ride season I started adding one scoop of imyo-guard to his grain at the holdsóadded vitamin c, e, and calcium as well as every 2 hours in a syringe.

***Do you give any kind of joint products?*** Just one season I added shark cartilage, chondroitin sulfates, etc.

***How far do you usually travel to rides?*** Anywhere from 2 hours to 2 days.

***Do you go to many rides outside of your region?*** Quite a few.

***Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why?*** Boyd Zontelli, he gave me sound advice. I rode with his daughter, Cheyenne as well. Julie Suhr, what can I say? She's amazing. Lani Newcomb, vet from Virginia. Lani has consistently supported Shadow and I. She has been always ready to lend an ear and give advice.

***Did you have a mentor or first trail partner?*** Irving McNaughton from Maine. We've ridden 1500 miles together, and laughed and talked all day and all night!

***In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?*** I brought home another Morgan gelding one year ago. Foster is 15.2 hands, 8 years old, very laid back and big moving with 8" cannon bones and big feet.

I rode the Ojai Topa 50 (1984) and chased Mae Schlegel all day. She was on Pardner, who was 19 years old. Mae turned 72 that day and got Best Condition. I was so impressed! She was headed to the ROC and that became my goal from then on. It took me 13 years to get there.