

## LuAnne Thomas & SVR Flambeau



### 2014 AERC Decade Team



Photo © Bill Gore

**Year of First Endurance Ride** (first year in the decade): 2005

**Region:** West

**Current rider lifetime mileage?** 6420

**Endurance:** 6420

**Limited Distance:**

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?** I picked Beau up from Sharon and Gordon Westergard in Oregon in 2004. He was just 5 yrs old with barely 30 days under saddle.

**What is your horse's breeding?** CMK. Sire: FV Stoic Dam: Sparkling Flame

**Sex:** gelding

**DOB:** August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1999

**Horse height:** 15h

**Approximate weight:** 950

**Color:** chestnut with chrome

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse?** I trusted Sharon & Gordon when they said this horse will be something. It was years of hard work and perseverance with Beau.

**Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?** My first police horse, R Macguyver

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?** About 14 different horses

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?** Was a mounted Police Officer for years with Sacramento Police Department.

**How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general?** With endurance since 2004. With horses in general, since 1998 with my first horse, Mac.

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?** Loved riding trail. Never heard of endurance until I moved to Cool, CA.

**How old was your horse when first started in endurance?** Beau was 6 yrs old on his first ride at the Rides of March. It was not a smooth ride.

**How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons?** Not many. I did 2 LD's my first year. Then just a few 50's second year and had a chance to mentor under Fred Emigh and ride his horses and Beth Felton who was patient and taught me so much. There is a lot to be said about mentoring. The chance to ride other horses helped me bring Beau along nice and slow which was what he needed.

**What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.)** My first ride was a 25. Ha ha, I thought it was so long and going to be so hard so I rode my horse so slow. We were overtime. My horse cantered in with a 48 pulse. Vets laughed at me when I said I was worried it would be hard for my horse. When it was done, I realized I probably rode that distance a lot when just pleasure riding but did not understand my mileage or pacing yet.

**How long until you top tenned or raced (if you did)?** Beau's 2<sup>nd</sup> ride was a top ten but we were being mentored and rode someone else's ride. After that, we rode slow and did not top ten for a year and half after that.

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons?** Depends on the goals. Year I raced for points, Beau did not have much time off. Otherwise he gets about 3 months off for arena work and slow pleasure riding with lots of picnics and wine.

**If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one?** I give 3 weeks off and next ride is just a slow hack to check that systems are working and feeling ok. Bodywork is also done before and after every 100.

**If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one?** About the same as a 100.

**Do you use any special type of tack or shoeing with your horse?** Nope. Steel shoes. Pads for rocky rides. I ride in a German made saddle, Sommer.

**What kind of problems have you overcome with your horse?** Lameness : collateral ligament on left front in 2010. In 2013 we missed almost entire season as Beau had a rare brachial remnant cyst and it took months to heal with prognosis unknown as to whether we could beat this cyst or whether he could ever do endurance again. I had to flush a hole in his neck with iodine through a catheter for a month then for 3 months I had to use forceps and pack iodine soaked gauze deep into the cyst hole and hope it stayed. I did that twice a day for 4 months. We beat the cyst. Surgery was not an option. Almost always 100% fatal.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse.** We ended this 2014 season with an LD at the Quicksilver ride in San Jose. He was very fit having just done Virginia City 100. We just played that day and romped. He was doing his happy snorts and I enjoyed riding with only him and no other rider and we

had so much fun. Romped to first place but I think we enjoyed every minute of that ride.

**What was your most humbling experience?** Fort Schellbourne in 2008. I was in the lead by about 40 minutes. The trail had been changed and we had been warned. I did not pay attention and got lost. Ended up 5<sup>th</sup> but because I realized I was lost I pushed my horse and injured him with an overreach injury pulling a shoe off and leaving him bleeding. The error was all me and I hurt my horse because of it. Lesson learned.

**What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?** Too many to list. I am still learning. Every horse is different. Work with the strengths of individual horses. Don't force them to be something they are not.

**What advice would you give to new riders?** Be PATIENT. You will reap the rewards by learning from a lot of different people and putting it all together to find what works for you. Build your equine partner slowly. Do not push too soon.

**Looking back, what do you feel you did right?** I started Beau with patience and worked on lots of things besides endurance. We did lots of sensory and ground work and arena work and camping.

**What would you do differently?** Nothing

**What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it?** My goal after Beau had his cyst injury was to try to get one more 100 completed. We did. He has 7 100's now and is Silver Level. That is all he needs for 100's and making Decade Team has been my goal for years now. Longevity. I did not want Beau's career ended after only 2 or 3 seasons.

**Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?** We are both clumsy, love trail more than anything and both of us have body issues and old injuries to nurse. Sometimes my lameness makes him lame. We both have a strong work ethic.

**What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most (50s, 100s, multadays, etc.)?** After a near fatal injury in 2008, 50's are my favorite now. Used to be 75's or 100's but it is hard on my body. Beau and I may concentrate on LD's in the future. That way he gets to do the sport he loves for a long time without beating up his aging body.

**In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life?** Taught perseverance, keep going when you think you can't and seeing areas of our country I never would have been able to see if it was not for this sport.

**Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?** Good quality hay and looking each day to see what was truly eaten or left and knowing the look in my horse's eyes to see if there is a problem I can catch early.

**What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?** Beet Pulp with lots of water is a must for us. LMF Gold is the grain. Redmond Salt as well.

**Do you give any kind of joint products?** No but really need to get better about it.

**Describe your electrolyte protocol.** I electrolyte on very strict schedule. About every hour and half to 2 hours during a ride. I use Perfect Balance and BCAA.

**How do you choose which rides to attend?** Last couple years it was based on fuel prices. I usually try to pick rides my horse has strengths in. Beau loves hills...the steeper and bigger the better.

**Do you go to many rides outside of your region?** We used to but fuel prices diminished that.

**Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why.** Beth Felton and

Fred Emigh who both mentored me and taught me so much when I was starting. Erin Riley-Kelley who is my best friend. She was the one who after my near fatal accident, rode with me and had to talk me through my fears that I never had before when I rode. I had always wanted to do Tevis. After my accident I had panic attacks on narrow trails. Erin took me along on training and got me through my fears.

**In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?** I wish I could find another Beau. The main quality is finding a horse who loves the sport even more than you do and has a sensible mind.