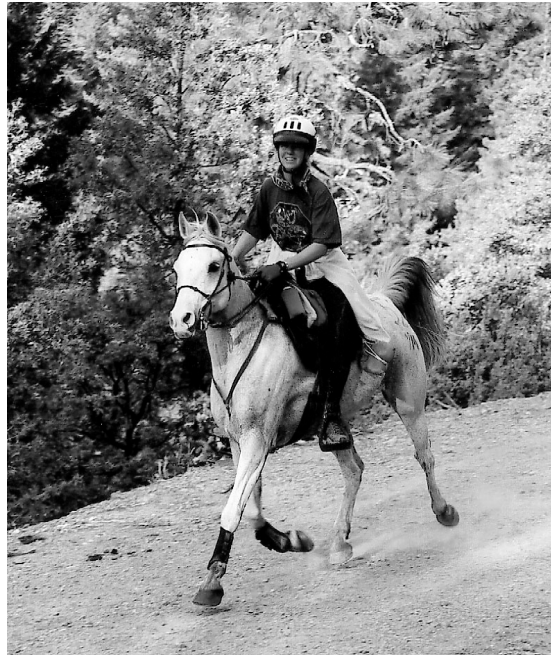


Marci Cook & AA Allusion



American Endurance Ride Conference

2001 AERC Decade Team



Rider's Name: Marci Cook

Horse's Name: AA Allusion "Lu"; 5140 Miles, 93 ride completions.

First AERC ride: 1992

Region: W

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him? Was wanting to get a back-up horse and saw his ad in our local paper: Arab gelding, 5 yrs. \$500. Thought it was worth a look, especially since horses show up in our paper about once every 10 years or so.

What is your horse's breeding? Polish. Sire: Aladdinn. Dam: Alloquence.

DOB: 3-21-86

Horse height: 14h 3in

Approx. Weight: 950

Color: Grey

Shoe size: 0

Why did you decide to purchase this horse? Right price, right age, sound and free moving in the pasture, green broke. I went to look at him and watched the owner ride him. When she turned him back out in his pasture, he took off running, but when I walked out to the middle, he stopped and came back over to me.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? Yes, 1.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? 5, 2 were loaners for 1 ride only.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Did some ride & tie for one season.

How many years have you been involved with horses? Since age 25. In endurance? Did first 50 in 1988, but crewed since 1985.

What got you interested in endurance riding? Did a 9 day equitour trip thru Morocco, rode my first Arab (a stallion) and met my first endurance riders on this trip. When I returned home to my part draft horse that I rode bareback and unshod in and out of the Russian River, I knew I needed a little more horsepower. Within 3 months I'd bought my first Arab and was 1/2 owner of my first truck & trailer.

What was it that kept you interested? So many fine rides and fine people. Having a ride in mind to train for gets me out on the trail. Can't say I'm too tired, it's too rainy, etc. for the horses sake I know I have to go. Then when I'm in the saddle, it's like a brand new day. I have met some wonderful people thru this sport and often go to rides that I know they're planning to attend.

How old was your horse when first started? 5. First ride? 6.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? 1st: 4 slow 50s, 2nd: 2 50s, 3rd: 6 50s & 1st 100.

What mileage distance did you start with? I started with 50s.

How long till you top tenned or raced? We top tenned by accident, once, in the beginning, when all the front runners got lost. Even though Lu is very competitive, I have only let him go fast in the last 3 years. I'm just too afraid that he will injure himself, especially trotting fast downhill. Also, racing is so much more intense for me. I'd rather go with the goal to enjoy the day, the trail and my horse. I have never gone into a ride with the thought of racing or going fast. For me it was just a good day when we got a good start, or we just happened to end up out in front, or we got out of the vet check quickly etc. it was then a conscious effort to maintain that place or decide to back off.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? 2 or 3 months.

If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? About a month. **What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?** A 50 4 to 6 weeks before. 2 or 3 times a week, a 2-3 hour ride and a 4-6 hour ride at a mellow pace; walk the downhills, trot all the ups and most of the flats. Very little cantering until the last few years because in the beginning all he wanted to do was canter. I don't really ride that hard when conditioning anymore. Mostly its just get out and have fun. If we don't have a riding partner, I usually pony my other horse off Lu so he has some company.

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? 2 weeks.

What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? About the same as for a hundred or any

other 50.

What kind of tack do you use? Orthoflex Traditional stripped down to english leathers and girth, Supracore pad, kimberwicke bit and rope halter, splint boots in front only on rides, breast collar only on rides. I do ride with double reins, 1 set attached to his halter. This allows me to get out of his mouth when he's being too strong. I can use the reins attached to his halter to get his attention. When we ride alone I can ride without a bit. I like that best. Often, during the middle of rides, I ride without a bit, but I keep it handy because I might need it again at the end if he's being a little brain-dead.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Steel shoes. Roll the toe on the front feet, square the back. Pads? Yes, only on front. Easyboots? I've used them during rides only for emergencies.

What kind of problems have you encountered? Shoeing. Lu grows lots of toe. Most shoers have a hard time taking into account how short to make him so that his toe will not be too long 4 to 6 weeks into the shoeing. His feet aren't that great. Flat sole, tender footed, hence pads throughout the ride season. Saddle fit has been a problem. I have more money in saddles than I do in horses. I bought Lu's saddle second hand. I was able to use it for a few months and did a few rides before purchasing it.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? He came with a very, very gnarly scar on his back leg, so something significant happened before I got him. Other than that, he injured a check ligament in 1997.

How did you work through it? Time off. Ultrasound to see if he was ready to start up again.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? There have been so many. Two rides come to mind and both involve the finish. Once on Tevis, everything went perfectly! We survived the chaos and dust of the start. Lu was sane negotiating the bogs and boulders through Granite Chief. We got to do the canyons without running into slower moving horses (I did the downhills, he did the uphills.) We had a wonderful leg between Foresthill & Francisco's with 2 other horse/rider teams that he clicked with. Then, Lu and I left the quarry by ourselves and got to ride to the overlook all alone. We didn't see another horse. The moonlight was surreal. Lu was happy to cruise on in at a strong, yet relaxed pace. The same thing happened on the breathtaking Eastern High Sierra Classic. We had a great day riding along alone, or with others. We came into the last check with a group of 5 horses, but left solo and then rode the last 6 miles alone on a loose rein. It was a perfect end to a wonderful day.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? In the beginning the first 20 miles of every ride was such a struggle. Lu always wanted to race and we fought about it all the time. I felt discouraged because I had to work so hard to keep him in control at a pace I was comfortable with. It was very frustrating because no amount of training could duplicate the combined energy created at rides. Sometimes the vets were less than complimentary when he'd dance around during the examination. I truly felt like a failure. After lunch he'd get the after lunch funk and not want to go out again. Finally he'd settle in and pick up a good pace before smelling the end and becoming an idiot again. We'd get about 5 or 10 good miles out of 50. That's when I started doing 100's.

What was your most humbling experience? Lame horse at the top of boulder mountain on Outlaw Trail (pulled a muscle). We had to walk 20 miles to get to the vet check at 45 miles so we could pull. It took us 6 1/2 hours to walk out! Fortunately he wasn't badly injured, it wasn't raining and the beautiful scenery and old wagon ruts in the road gave us lots to look at, think about, be thankful for etc.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Ride your own ride. Don't get caught up in the pack. Ask for help. Enjoy yourself. Check to see if your horse is enjoying him or herself. Stop along the way and graze, it's just for a couple of minutes. Probably the most important thing I have learned is that if my horse comes home with me in the trailer, everything should be ok. As long as I've got my horse, there's always another ride, another day.

Where does your horse live? At home in 3.5 acre pasture w/ grass and shelter. During winter, shelter and about 1 acre (2.5 acre fenced off so pasture can grow again).

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? Not sure, girl I got him from worked at a large Arab ranch in area. She had him in a pasture when I bought him.

What are your horse's strengths? Desire and experience (now). Lu loves the sport. He's a good boy, not mean or dangerous. He has learned how to be tough. He's a good traveler. Knows the routine. Pees and rolls when unloaded at rest stops, empty fields, etc. Weaknesses? Lu internalizes his stress. He's a slow, picky eater. He knows the routine so well that sometimes he doesn't take care of himself the last 5 miles or so because he has the end in sight (refuses water, gets impatient, wants to race, etc.) Lu's thin-skinned, he shivers and gets chilled in the am when saddling, shivers at vet checks, end of rides if cold, etc. He's also a panter, which I don't like, but it has never been a problem with the vets. Even though I wouldn't consider Lu to be a spooky horse, you have to watch quick movements around his head and shoulders when he's tied to the trailer. Don't even try to remove or put a fly mask on then. It doesn't matter that he's had that done 1,000 times already. And watch out for the rider next to you who's flipping their saddle blanket onto their horse. That just might send him flying, too.

What advice do you have for new riders? Start slowly. Be cautious for your horse's sake. Ride your own ride.

Looking back, what would you do differently? I can't think of anything. Except that I would not have bought the very first Arab I got when I came back from Morocco. He was not suited to the sport and I never did a ride on him. Given what I know now, I think I might have been able to recognize that.

What do you feel you did right? Went slowly, enjoyed the trail, the day, my horse. Tried not to let my horse pick the pace if his idea was faster than mine. I trust my horses and my gut feelings. I try not to put my ego or needs ahead of their well-being.

What was your highest goal for your horse? First a multiday, then a 100, and then Tevis. Did you achieve it? Yeah. It wasn't until our 3rd multiday that we were able to complete all 5 days. I feel that those first 2 helped Lu get tougher. On Tevis we're 4 for 4. I learned so much during our first completion.

Describe your horse's personality? Lu's a bit of a looney tune. Kinda gangly. He's not really affectionate, but he is curious and friendly. He's likes what he likes and is quietly stubborn when you don't do it his way. Lu waits every night at the barn door to be let out into the front yard so he can mow the lawn. He waits every morning along the fence line for the elderly neighbor to walk by with her dog and feed him treats of apples or figs. he gets along with other horses. He loves being on trail. His attitude is I can do it, let me go, get out of my way. If he's riding with horses he knows on conditioning rides, he still gets over amped if he's not in front. On rides, he likes to be the lead horse, but can share. He'll even remember roll spots at rides he's been to before. Once, at Ft. Shelbourne, as soon as we arrived, he drug me over to a sandy roll spot on the other side of the highway, even though it'd been 2 years since we'd been there. How is it like or unlike yours? We're both pretty mellow. We both love the sport. I'm a chicken, though when it comes to speed. I tend to be very conservative cuz of the potential of injury.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? Multidays, 100's & 50's. Going to rides I haven't done before, and going to rides where I know I will be able to spend time with endurance friends.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. I electrolyte a lot. Night before and morning of trailering if it's been a long drive and again in the evening. Last thing before we leave camp in the am. Throughout the day, if he is drinking well, I electrolyte every 1 to 3 hours depending on heat and humidity.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? I just give him

lots of hay and he has good pasture most of the year. He gets some alfalfa during the winter and on rides. I like to get my hay locally, whether it be rye, wheat or oat mix. I don't grain much. During ride season he gets about a pound a day with his evening supplement. On days that I've taken him out for a ride, he gets about double that. I make up a mix of rolled oats, beet pulp, and 2 other feeds to give at rides. I give it in small moistened portions. I always carry a small baggie on my saddle. At vet checks I first offer him hay and let him eat all he wants. Only when he loses interest in the hay do I give him a wet grain mash. I carry carrots on my saddle and feed them to him every hour throughout the day, especially on the way into the vet check. Post ride he gets free choice hay and alfalfa. After we've been in camp awhile, I continue with small grain mashes throughout the evening, plus apples and carrots.

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? He was a very hard keeper until about age 12. I tried everything, special feeds, supplements, oil, rice bran, etc., but he was always underweight. I mixed the rice bran right away, even though I kept winning it at the convention raffles. He started looking better when I took him off oil completely. Whether it was the oil or maturity I really can't say.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? Very little. Vitamin c, e & probiotics on rides.

Do you give any kind of joint products? Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate. I use Adequan the first ride of the year and sometimes for 100s & multadays.

How far do you usually travel to rides? 4 to 8 hours.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Yes, I've gone to Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming & Southern California. I have my favorites and I try to pick rides I haven't done before. My work schedule dictates which rides I can go to.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why. The Duck [Dave Nicholson DVM]: he knows so much about people and their horses. His rides are so well run. He's there to help but he's not in your face, unless he needs to be. He's no nonsense, yet he keeps you laughing. Ruthie Waltenspiel: she is always smiling, she is always out there on the trail, she always makes time to encourage those whose path she crosses and she's got great jokes. Kathie Perry: she befriended me when Lu was so squirrely and needed a sane horse to follow down the trail. She rides big bold horses that you can tell are a challenge, yet she always appears calm and in control.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? There was a group of us that all started endurance at about the same time, 4 or 5 women dubbed the horsey gals. (One woman had actually done 1000 miles or so already.) We'd meet and train together. Sunday was always ride day. We joked that we belonged to the Church of the Trotting Horse. It was a great social and learning time. Now, we will sometimes get together, but our life schedules are different. Those early times were so valuable. We learned together, shared our triumphs and heartaches, tack and feed problems, etc.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Young enough to not have been overridden, old enough to get out on trail, safe enough to not risk serious injury from just stepping in the stirrup and affordable.

Add any additional comments or stories that you can think of: Lu has a funny habit of enjoying a bucket of warm water on cold nights (mornings too if I'll bring it to him.) We joke about his hot toddies. I fill a 3.5 gallon bucket of warm water in the bathtub and drag it out to him. He comes right over, swirls a few gulps in his mouth, swallows them, and smacks his lips and then proceeds to drain the entire bucket. It started one spring when he had a mild colic, probably due to a sudden cold front and weather change. After a warm bran mash, I just brought him the whole bucket of warm water. He sucked it down, much to my delight. After then I made it part of my nightly routine. It is absolutely comical to see the utter joy in

his eyes as walks over to enjoy his treat. I tried bringing warm water to rides...Forget it. Poison. Wouldn't touch it. That's another of the many things I've learned. Just because it works one time, doesn't mean it will work the next. Once, on a multiday ride I took a bag of the best grain. Lu loved it at home, couldn't get enough of it. On the ride...no way. I ended up having to go around camp with an empty sack begging oats off of people.