

Rider Name & Horse Name



AERC Decade Team



Photo © Becky Pearman

Rider Name: Mary Howell

Horse Name: AM Baskin Count Shiloh

Region: NE

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? Shiloh was advertised as a "flashy half Arab, e/on trails" in a Feb. 1995 Trading Post newspaper ad. I became good friends with his breeder, who switched to breeding Paints but agrees Shiloh is probably the best foal she bred.

What is your horse's breeding? Arab sire, QH dam

Sex: Gelding

DOB: 3/27/92

Horse height: 15-2

Approx. Weight: 1060

Color: Chestnut

Shoe size: 1

Why did you decide to purchase this horse? Shiloh was the first and only horse I looked at when I was ready to buy my first horse; I'm a sucker for chestnuts and even as a young horse, he had a calm, quiet disposition - his name means 'place of peace'! I didn't get a prepurchase exam or critically assess his conformation. I also didn't find out until many years later that he had good bloodlines. Knowing all I know now, I'd still buy him today!

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? I was given an old TB in high school. but Shiloh is the first horse I ever bought and my first endurance horse.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? About 6 but only competed the others in 1 or 2 rides

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Shiloh was staff horse for a local foxhunt for about 7 years, but now that he's older now I'm saving his legs for endurance. He's also done fun shows, parades and team penning.

How many years have you been involved with horses? About 12 **In endurance?** 10

What got you interested in endurance riding? The Old Dominion 100 was mentioned in a horse-encyclopedia type book I read shortly before I bought Shiloh. I rode NATRC and pleasure trail rides for 3 years before tackling our first 50 mile endurance ride in 1999.

What was it that kept you interested? I was addicted to this sport from day one because of the competition element and multiple goals you can have.

How old was your horse when first started? When he was 3 and a half, I rode him 25 miles on back roads to my boyfriend's house and back. We did a 2-day 35 mile NATRC ride when he was 5 and our first 50 was just after he turned 7.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances) We completed all 5 rides I tackled our first year. Our 2nd year, I tried to do too many rides too close together '6 rides in 4 months, including 2 100s. I was overconfident and getting pulled rides later that season taught me a big lesson. Our third season we only did 3 rides to keep him fresh for the Pan Ams in Vermont, held that August.

What mileage distance did you start with? I did so many 'LD's with NATRC and local rides that I've only done 50s and higher with AERC.

How long till you top tenned or 'raced'? We got 5th at our first ride, but keep in mind that Shiloh had lots of base from NATRC and pleasure rides plus all those foxhunting miles.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? We have mild winters in SE Virginia and I ride year round. He's had very little down time except for about 4 months in fall 2001 after the Pan Ams to give his splints time to heal.

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?** I've usually done a few fast 50s earlier that season but don't ride him the week before the 100. I concentrate on getting his weight as high as possible since he'll lose about 50 lbs during the ride.

If you have done multiday, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride? About the same as for 100s, but the most we've ever done is two days in a row. I wanted to tackle the 5-day Shore-to-Shore as soon as I upgraded from a bumper pull stock trailer to a GN in 2006, but diesel costs and work duties have put that goal out of reach.

What kind of tack do you use? (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.) I used a Sharon Saare his first 4 years of competition and switched to a treeless Ansur in 2002 after trying it out during a dressage lesson. His gait is much freer in a treeless saddle and its much lighter for me to take on and off, especially on 100s. We've always used Skito pads with a variety of girths. I may start a ride in a jointed snaffle with running martingale for more control when he's fresh, but switch to a Arabian S hackamore as soon as possible so its easier for him to eat and drink on trail.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Easyboots? He wears St Croix eventers with clips; we very rarely pad. Only use EZ boots as a spare tire.

What kind of problems have you encountered? No metabolic problems that he couldn't get himself out of (thankfully/knock on wood). Lameness usually caused by rider error - going too fast, especially on downhills. He is flat footed so I always look for the softest part of the road to help him out.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? He's survived 3 trailer accidents, but came through each remarkably unscathed. He sliced his inner leg on a guard rail when he was 8 and that required daily wound care for about a month. It was very tough to not be able to ride him when he got splints the following year just before we left for the Pan Ams in Vermont.

How did you work through it? For the splints, cold hosing and soaking his legs in 5 gallon buckets of ice water at each hold during the ride itself. He's such a Steady Eddie that he played a key role helped to pace some of my teammates' horses. I was thrilled we made it as far as the 86 mile mark before the granite roads later in the course took their toll.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? We've had many, but the two times he won at Biltmore (80 in 2002 and 50 in 2007) were highlights of his career. He loves cold, rainy weather, which was the situation both of those years. When the full Arabs are getting cold and cramping up, my 'Mud Pig' is in his element. He can tuck his QH hind end and safely scoot down slippery hills like nobody's business. I chose Biltmore 2006 as the ride where we reached his 3000 mile mark and enjoyed riding slow that day!

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? In 2002, I drove myself all the way out to the National Championships in Kentucky and got pulled at the first hold. While the vet and I were talking, we looked down to see blood starting to come out of a lower front leg where he had nicked himself on trail. Why it didn't bleed before then I don't know! The weather that day was especially hot and humid, so maybe it was a blessing in disguise. Instead, I helped crew for others until sunset when it started cooling off so I could start on the 10 hour drive home in my non-air conditioned truck.

What was your most humbling experience? My first pull in 2000. We were going too fast and learned our lesson. Again, I ended up helping out instead - a local dog had been attached by a porcupine and I helped the ride vet pull out the quills while he was anaesthetized; I also got to see a horse that had tied up on trail receive treatment.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Respect the trail and ride carefully along treacherous sections, then make time where you can. Be friendly to everyone you meet because they may one day become a dear friend!

Where does your horse live? Board? At home? Full turnout? I boarded Shiloh the first 8 years I owned him at several different places but finally got my own place in 2003. He dislikes being kept in a stall and I don't have a real barn anyway, just run in sheds. My pasture is small so I use 'auxiliary grazing' in my yard and borrowed neighbor yards as much as possible. He lives with one other horse and is finally top on the totem pole.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? Shiloh must have had excellent care and feeding as a youngster because he stands a full hand taller than his sire and dam. He lived with several other mares and youngsters until I bought him just before he turned 3.

What are your horse's strengths? He is the toughest horse I've ever seen metabolically - has never had colic or tied up. I've overdone electrolytes a few times but he pulled through after slowing up on trail to allow his system time to adjust itself. Weaknesses?

He has flat feet and is big bodied so hot, humid rides are problematic since he pulses down much faster than he cools down.

What advice do you have for new riders? LOVE your horse and show them kindness whenever you can - they will give you everything they are capable of in return. If the trail is rocky and the weather is hot, I like to get off and walk, feeding Shiloh grass pulled from the side of the trail if I don't have carrots. He seems to appreciate this and it really perks him up when the miles are inching by!

Looking back, what would you do differently? Not try to go fast at every ride - pick and choose your fast rides depending on weather and how your horse feels that day.

What do you feel you did right? Lots of noncompetitive trail riding before our first AERC ride. I knew my horse's baseline behavior since we'd traveled so much together.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? I wanted to make the USA East Team and we did that twice, in 2001 and 2003 (I wasn't able to travel out to Washington State in 2003 and gave up my place to a friend)

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? I'm very Type A and intense - Shiloh keeps me calm most of the time! Now that he's older, we call him the grouchy old man because he wants to be left alone when he's not 'on duty.'

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? I love all types of rides, but my favorite is riding a new trail for the first time. Biltmore is special because it is scenic, has enough elevation changes to be challenging and has good footing.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. I use Enduramax from Kentucky Performance Products buffered with ground up NeighLox. I sometimes use Perform N' Win for the latter stages of a 100, especially a hot, slow 100.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? 'My yard is full of clover and that's his favorite before and after a hard ride. If grass is scarce, I take time to provide lots of hand grazing. Once he wasn't eating well the night before a ride and I took him for walk through fresh grazing until he started eating well. I've never worried about letting him eat whatever weeds that appeal to him - I trust his judgment.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem? For many years, I've used Myoguard from Kentucky Performance Products. It's a top-quality Vitamin E and selenium supplement. He has never gotten a cramp and always scores well on muscle tone!

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? Besides Myoguard, I use KPP's hoof supplement Ker-a-Form and their new high-fat supplement EndureExtra.

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe) For the past 3 years, he's gotten monthly injections of hyaluronic acid - 6 cc each time.

How far do you usually travel to rides? No rides are closer than 200 miles but I rarely can afford to go more than 400 miles each way.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? I'm on the border of the NE and SE regions. I would like to do more Midwest rides but can afford to get there!

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why?

Tom and Rita Swift for their sportsmanship, willingness to try new things (their barefoot horse Junior won the Biltmore 100 this year!) and their open advice. Rita once told me I needed to memorize what my horse legs looks like so that when the vet asked me if a swelling or cut was there before the ride or was new, I could answer confidently.

Jennifer Smith, who served as my farrier from 2001-2006 and who took me to rides for many years. Her coaching advice contributed to several rides we've won, and she continues to be a great source of ideas for ways to solve various issues.

Bob, Becky and Jennifer Supinger for their generous, kind friendship. When I was going through some tough times and could not afford to compete Shiloh, I sent him to stay with them. They took better care of Shiloh than I did, as attested by Jennifer successfully completed two 100 milers with him. Last fall Becky made the difficult decision to put her favorite competition-age horse down because he was living in pain from the effects of Lyme disease. Their courage and composure in the face of bad luck has been an inspiration. Bob is also my favorite diesel mechanic!

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? I wanted a shorter horse but that didn't happen - my half Saddlebred Frank is well over 16 hands! But he does have a playful, affectionate disposition and is entertaining to ride (I'll admit good old Shiloh is a bit boring after all these years). I'm not sure I'll ever be able to - or even want to - attempt all the accomplishments I had with Shiloh. I see myself working more rides and not competing as often. Mentoring others has been a great source of satisfaction for the several years now.

Add any additional comments or stories that you can think of: Owning Shiloh and becoming successful with him in endurance has transformed my life and helped me through difficult times both personally and professionally. I see Shiloh as a gift from God. Sharing him with others has been a source of pride and joy. He has taken several friends on their first endurance ride. I hope that before he retires he'll be able to take my best friend's daughter Lexie, who will turn 4 this year, on her first endurance ride.