

Sue Mullen & Huntah (“Hunter”)



AERC Decade Team

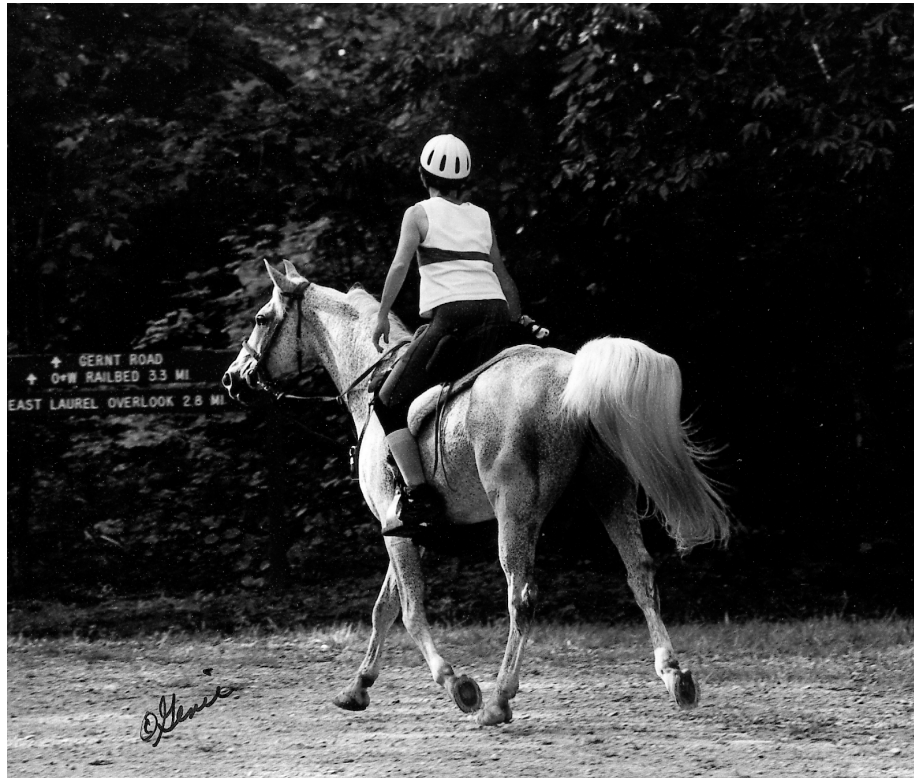


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2910 Miles, 55 ride completions
First AERC ride: 1994 Region: SE

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? I bought Hunter as a 4 year old stallion for \$500 at a Paramount Arabians auction. He had been trained to race but never made it to the track because of an injury. The auctioneer said they guaranteed him sound for anything except jumping or long distance riding. I had taken a couple of dressage lessons and was looking for something I could do dressage with. I soon learned that he hated ring work - and still does.

What is your horses breeding? Polish, by *Flis out of a Grandorr daughter.

Sex: Gelding.

DOB: 1-30-86

Horse height: 14.3 hands

Approx. Weight: 850 lbs

Color: Flea-bitten grey

Shoe 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)? I liked his conformation and the price was right.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? No.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? Only Hunter.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Pleasure trail riding.

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? I was born horse crazy (my folks are still waiting for me to outgrow it) and rode at my grandfather's farm till I got my first horse when I was 9. I'm 53 now. Hunter and I did two years of competitive trail and then did our first 50-mile endurance ride at Spook Run in 1994.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? I liked the idea of being out on the trail, the lack of politics, and the thought that it was a horse sport I could afford. Course we started out tent camping, riding my old western saddle, etc. The trails and all the time I get to spend with my horse are what have kept me interested. Support and encouragement from my husband has also helped a lot.

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? I don't know how old Hunter was for sure, but I'd guess 2.5 or 3. He was broke but didn't know much when I got him. He was 7 years old when we did our first 50.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons?

1st year - 1 50 miler, 2 25's and 7 competitive trail rides.

2nd year - 3 50 milers and 3 competitive trail rides.

3rd year - 5 50 miles (only completed 3) and one competitive trail ride.

What mileage distance did you start with? After those two 25's in 1994, we've only done 50's plus 3 100's.

How long till you top tenned or 'raced'? We placed 4th on our first endurance ride. I had a lot to learn!

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? Usually about three months.

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? Two weeks at least. I usually ride 2-3 times during the week, after work for about 1.5 hours and then do a longer ride on the weekend. I pay more attention to the terrain I'll be riding in than the distance.

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 above.

What kind of tack do you use? Desoto saddle modified with leathers instead of fenders, EZ ride stirrups, Cloud 9 pad, neoprene girth, eggbutt snaffle.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Wide web, bars on front feet. I carry an Easyboot. Put pads on only for really rocky rides.

What kind of problems have you encountered? I had a vague lameness problem starting in 1997. It wouldn't show up till 30 or 40 miles into a ride. A local vet said Hunter was navicular and told me to put a wedge shoe on to give him some relief. That made it worse since it put a strain on the suspensory ligaments. It was very frustrating and I considered giving up endurance or finding another horse. Instead I took him to U of GA in Athens and they did x-rays, nerve blocks, etc. and said he probably just had sore heels. So I started using bar shoes in front and haven't had a problem since.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? A curb (strained plantar ligament) at the Biltmore ride a couple years ago.

How did you work through it? Pasture rest for two months.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? Biltmore last year. Not so much because we won, but because it was so unexpected and unplanned. Hunter was fighting me to head out of camp on the last loop and I felt like he was really having as good a time as me.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? Biltmore 100, three or four years ago. It was my first 100 and Dave (the pit crew) was away on business. I didn't eat or drink worth a darn and got a bladder infection mid way through the ride, so I was pretty much a wreck. Plus I felt pretty bad about keeping the vet waiting up for me. Hunter did fine!

What was your most humbling experience? Not coming down to criteria at the finish of the Natl. Championship ride three years ago. It was a good learning experience though. After that I started feeding beet pulp and using more electrolytes.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Try not to pay any attention to the front-runners. It's a long way from that first five miles to the last five and a lot can happen in between. Not the least of which is passing people in the vet check. Give more electrolytes. Feed beet pulp before and during the ride. Drink boost.

Where does your horse live? Full turnout in 7-acre pasture with two other horses and two run-in sheds. This is at our house.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? He was at the breeding farm in either a manicured pasture or stall. He freaked out the first couple of times we went trail riding and weeds touched his belly!

What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses? Hunter is very consistent and he loves woods trails. He gets very bored and lazy road riding. He's a great camper. His biggest weakness is that he's a fussy eater, not at all food motivated, and he refuses to drink till 20-30 miles into a ride.

What advice do you have for new riders? Have fun and enjoy the trails and companionship. Be REALLY nice to the vets and volunteers. And if you're lucky enough to have a crew, be REALLY, REALLY nice to them. Get off and walk or jog awhile and you'll have more empathy for what your horse is doing.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Gone directly to an equine vet with a problem. Not tried to top ten the first year or two.

What do you feel you did right? Starting out with a couple of years of competitive trail was great training for Hunter. I don't care to do it again, but think I have enough experience now to start my young horse slowly.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? I set a goal every year, like to do a 100 or to top 10 a particular ride. My goal now is to get 3000 miles. We have 90 to go. One year was particularly bad, and we got pulled about every other ride, always for something different. So the next year my goal was to finish every ride we started. We ended up 5th overall in the region. That was a pretty good lesson for me.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? Hunter is not flashy or playful. Too serious; sometimes I want to tell him to lighten up. He does have a competitive streak, as do I. We are alike in that we just keep going when a more sensible person would give up. I don't know why I do it, but Hunter does it just because I ask. That's pretty amazing when you think about it.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? 50's and multadays if its different trails each day.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. I give Enduralytes mixed with Maalox daily for 4 or 5 days before a ride, then the night before, the morning of, at each vet check and at the end. I also carry Lite Now and give it on the trail if I think it's necessary.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? I have been feeding Triple Crown 10% sweet feed for a long time. I think feeding beet pulp the night before a ride, the morning of, and at vet checks has really helped with hydration.

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? See above about beet pulp.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? Vitamin. E and Joint Combo (glucosamine and chondroitin).

Do you give any kind of joint products? Joint Combo daily and a shot of Adequan a week before each ride.

How far do you usually travel to rides? 50-400 miles.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Rarely.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? Julie Suhr - I can relate to her stories and I love the fact that she's the age she is and still seeking riding adventures. Becky Hart - She has been so successful and seems so down to earth. Duane Barnett, DVM - He rides, manages rides, and vets rides, so I know he can see it from all view points.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them. Brenda Kenley and Barb Jefferson gave us lots of help and advice when we first started competitive trail riding. Also Connie Caudill when we lived in the Midwest. I've never had a trail partner.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? I just like an overall balanced horse with good legs and feet. However, I think attitude and try is more important than conformation, and only time and miles will tell with that.