

## Sonja Willitts & Chipov Karahty



American Endurance Ride Conference

### 2019 AERC Decade Team



*Photo © Mackenzie Castleberry*

“Chip” came to be after I saw a picture of Wazir’s Karahty in EN sometime in either 1993 or 1994. I decided then and there to have one of his get. I needed to lease a mare first. In July of 1995 Chip was born in my backyard and I had a literal hand in his delivery since his shoulders were stuck. I pushed one front leg back and he slid right out, almost into my arms.

Chip’s personality has always been playful. While still a colt, he would chase my daughter around in the corral, and if she had a hat on, he would steal it from her head and run off with it. It was a joy to hear her laughter and silly screams while she and Chip played. My daughter is one year older than Chip. She in turn would run under his belly (with me threatening her with dire things to NOT do that), she still did it and Chip would stand stock still and let her.

Unfortunately, during Chip’s 6th year, he was spooked by gun fire and ran away with me over a cattle guard, not breaking anything, but sustaining significant bowed tendons in both front legs. Bad enough that 2 different vets told me he would never compete in endurance again. These bowed tendons continue to haunt him. His first Tevis pull was from a re-occurrence of one bow.

We’ve lost many competition years to that unfortunate runaway day, but I never gave up on him. We still did lots of miles together, just not always competing. He astounded his vet when we completed VC100 nearly in the top ten! Chip gets a thrill out of competing, and if he still gives me a buck or 2 out there, I know he’s feeling good! Love this boy to pieces. We share a bond brought on by many, many hours

together, not just riding but walking, jogging and working cattle together. His nick name is also Chicken Chip since he's still a spooky boy, but working cattle has helped give him confidence.

I didn't work towards this Decade Team award, just went with the ebb and flow of life. So glad Chip has given me so many years together and still counting...coming 25 years this year! Hugs my boy, thanks for being you.