

Susan Friedman & TR Be My Love (“Meela”)

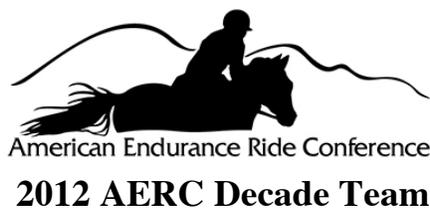


Photo copyright Annie Libby, Annie Libby Photography

Year of first endurance ride: 2003

Region: Pacific Southwest

Current rider lifetime mileage: 2395 (2170 endurance, 225 LD)

About the horse: I had just lost a kidney to kidney cancer and was afraid I might not survive (I am now 11 years cancer-free). While still in the hospital, Charlene Lewis, after sending me flowers twice, told me that she had saved the perfect horse for me. That was Meela, a nondescript dark bay mare that turned out to be a magnificent teacher, outstanding horse, and who gave me much-needed confidence. I believe that she looks into my soul.

Breeding: Sturgeon Creek Arabians (Manitoba, Canada) mare, born 4/14/96, height 15-1, 1000 lbs.

Why did you purchase this horse? I got into horses late in life -- 45 years old and was quite fearful. Meela is a confident horse and I learned to be confident with her.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this one? Yes, one limited distance ride on my Appaloosa, Jane.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? Four

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? No.

How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general? 13 years in endurance and 20 with horses in general.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? I was looking for a sport that involved long hours in the saddle that involved some speed. I love the challenges, accomplishments and people in this sport as well as the teamwork I feel with my horse.

How old was your horse when she first started in endurance? Six.

How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons? Eight. I have been limited by the amount of rides I have been able to do because of subsequent surgeries that have had to have over the years, as well as a couple of lay-ups for Meela.

What mileage distance did you start with? 25

How long until you top tenned or raced? Eight years

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? None. Meela was my only endurance horse.

Do you use any special type of tack or shoeing with your horse? No.

What kind of problems have you overcome with your horse? Meela is race-brained (my fault) and gets angry when I try to slow her down. This has scared me.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse. Bar H, 2008. I was having so much fun riding with Peter Claydon and Ron Belknap and towards the end they said we were in first place. I hadn't noticed and didn't believe them, but we ended up tying for first. That was one of my lifetime goals.

What was your most humbling experience? The Manzanita 25, early in my riding career. I had never ridden in rain, had a brand-new rig that I didn't know how to work, had never worn rain gear. It was pouring rain, Meela was trying to blast the ride. I was alone, frazzled, and Meela fought and scared me to the point that I jumped off, crying. I did get back on and finished the ride, totally humbled.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Value and take care of your horse, ride your own ride, appreciate other riders and everyone else involved in the ride.

What advice would you give to new riders? The above.

Looking back, what do you feel you did right? I would like to think I listened to my own advice.

What would you do differently? There were a couple of times that I overrode my horse.

What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it? Win a ride while having a lot of horse left, which I did accomplish.

Describe your horse's personality. How is it like or unlike yours? Meela is smart, confident, calm, sure-footed, kind, affectionate, athletic, strong, argumentative, opinionated. She is more confident than I am and certainly more sure-footed and strong. In other ways, I think we are alike.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? I have been called a "one-day wonder." I like one-day 50s because of pain issues.

In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life? It has given me the confidence to go after my dreams. Since I was a child, I obsessed about horses, but never had the opportunity to be around them. I knew nothing about horses other than what I saw on television. At 45, when I finally set out to ride, I was so fearful that I had to pay people to ride with me and they usually stood me up. Teachers told me to quit horses. I didn't listen to them and started studying with Pat and Linda Parelli and through them, started to see results and get confident around and on horses. I have learned from many people in endurance and I thank all of them for their patience and for taking the time to help and teach me along the way. It has given me the confidence to know I can overcome daunting obstacles and achieve my goals.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Not really.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program? I give less alfalfa.

Do you give any kind of joint products? Legend and Adequan shots in the last couple of years.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. A dose after a good drink, particularly if Meela is sweating.

How do you choose which rides to attend? Since I travel alone, I go to rides in my region.

Name three people that you look up to, and why. Callie Thornburgh Brown for her knowledge, generosity, kindness and her willingness to be available for my constant questions. Debby Lyon for her accomplishments having also started to ride late in life. She inspires me. Cheri Briscoe for her knowledge and experience that she has shared with me. Heidi Helly for being available to answer my countless questions. (Yes, I know you said three.)

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? I learned a lot from Tammy Robinson, who took me under her wing in the beginning. Fortunately for me, she was local. She has successfully done endurance over many years and was willing to share her experience and wisdom with me. I also learned a lot from Sandy Scott.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Calm and confident personality. I still get afraid.

Quotes about my horse:

The late Dr. Huey Hewitt (ride vet) said, "You have a fine animal."

Linda Parelli said, "You have an amazing horse."