

## Tom Noll & Frank



American Endurance Ride Conference

### 2011 AERC Decade Team



**Region:** Northwest

**Current Rider Lifetime Mileage:** Around 7000

**Endurance:** Around 6500

**Limited Distance:** Around 300

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her:** I was looking for a horse to ride endurance. I looked at a few horses and one of my friends, Regina Rose, mentioned that Kathy Arnold had a horse that I should consider. I rode Frank and the rest is history.

**What is your horse's breeding:** Frank is claimed to be pure Arabian, but I think that he probably has a significant proportion of Morgan in him, perhaps he is a full Morgan. But, the claim is that Frank is one-hundred percent Arabian. There are mysterious stories about his past. Really, Frank is a tough little ranch horse from Wyoming.

**Sex:** Gelding

**DOB:** Likely sometime between 1985 and 1990.

**Horse height:** 14.2

**Approx. Weight:** 900 pounds

**Color:** Dark Bay

**Shoe size:** 0 or 1

**Or, hoof boot size:** Easy Boot One or Easy Boot Two

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse:** My intuition told me that he is the right horse, my friends told me that he was the right horse, and he is the right horse.

**Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse:** No

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport:** About ten or so, I enjoy riding different horses although Frank is my favorite horse.

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities:** I do not participate in any other equestrian activities. I am involved in human endurance activities and I am hoping to enter and complete a Ride-and-Tie sometime.

**How many years have you been involved with horses?** I learned to ride in 2002 so that I could ride endurance

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested:** A long time ago while running the Wasatch 100-Mile Endurance Run, I saw a rider training his endurance horse on the trail while on the section of the course from Big Mountain to Lamb's Canyon. As I watched him ride, dismount and run, I said to myself, "That looks like fun, if I ever get the chance, I am going to try endurance riding." I started endurance with the goals of learning to ride, and riding a 100. I enjoy being out on the trails and sharing the experience with a member of another species. I like rides with an element of adventure.

**How old was your horse when first started?** First ride: Frank's first ride was in 1997. My first ride was in 2002.

**How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances):** Frank had about 300 endurance miles when he came to me. Bud Arnold rode Frank when marking the canyons section of the Big Horn trail so Frank is a seasoned mountain horse. Frank is a hill-climbing machine. On my first year, we did a few LDs and one 50. On my second year in 2003, Frank had a phenomenal season.

**What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.):** According to the AERC records, Frank's first AERC ride was a 50.

**How long till you top tenned or raced? (if you did):** In 1997, Frank started with two days of the Outlaw Trail ride and he finished in the top ten on his second endurance ride. He was somewhere between seven

and twelve years old at the time.

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons:** Frank gets light riding during the winter from November through March.

**If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one:** I usually only do one 100 in a season. In 1996 Frank did two 100s, Big Horn and Tevis, three weeks apart. We finished both; Big Horn overtime, and Tevis in the mid-pack with 45 minutes to spare. There are stories behind that Big Horn ride, but Frank finished the entire course that day.

**If you have done multiday, how much time off do you give after doing one:** Frank usually receives a few weeks off between rides.

**What kind of tack do you use?** (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.): For many years I rode Frank without a bit, but Frank is one determined son-of-a-gun. On the 2011 XP, I switched to a bit the day we rode west from Mud Springs Nebraska and Frank has been in a bit for the past few months. Frank does not like the bit. Otherwise, I use a Wintec Australian saddle – it is Frank's saddle and I have used it for nearly all of his over 5,000 miles.

**What kind of shoes do you use on your horse?** I ride in steel shoes. Lately, I have switched from Eventers to Natural Balance shoes. I like the Natural Balance shoes and I have a very good farrier. Frank has tough feet but sometimes I put boots over the shoes. Frank goes barefoot in the off-season and Frank has run 50s barefoot.

**What kind of problems have you encountered;** Intermittent lameness — Frank has some old injury or arthritis in his right hip or right hock which has manifested itself through intermittent left front lameness.

**What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had:** In 2004 or 2005 Frank's was apparently miss-diagnosed with navicular syndrome by a very competent vet and I was told that Frank's endurance career was over. Frank never understood the diagnosis and his career continues, even today. Frank is in his mid-twenties and last summer on the XP, Frank received BC on one long and tough day in Nevada.

**How did you work through it:** Slowly. After the diagnosis, we did a few LDs to test his stamina. There was one 50-mile ride where we were about three miles away from the vet check with twenty miles or so to the next check. Frank was off and I thought our day was done. Rather than walking back, I got off and walked forward with Frank. Slowly, Frank began to recover. By the second vet check, Frank was sound at the trot. That was day three of a five-day ride, and Frank went on to complete 50s all five days. The lesson: "It ain't over 'till it's over."

**What was the worst or most severe injury you have ever had relating to horses or endurance riding:** Occasionally, Frank stumbles hard while on the trail. Early on in 2002, Frank was cantering and he stumbled. We both went down. I separated my shoulder and had surgery. In hindsight, and in consultation with MDs, I should have never had the surgery. My shoulder surgery is a source of vexation to me today.

**How did you work through it:** Slowly, it was just an injury and I figured that I would recover.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse:** There have been many “best rides.” One that I will always remember is that Big Horn ride where we finished overtime. That day was hard and we worked for the finish even though we were not recognized for a completion. Through that day and night, I made three friends and those three are friends today. Spending all night together on a tough 100 builds strong bonds between riders and between riders and horses. Many riders might regret that ride, and I did for some time. Looking back though, I would never trade that ride for anything and I would go back on the trail with Chris, Max, and Tracy with no hesitation. Frank never wavered and never complained but I think he was disappointed because he was on his home course. That day and night on the Big Horn trails with those three and their horses, was very special.

**Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse:** That day is still to come and it is the day that we all dread.

**What was your most humbling experience:** Looking into Frank’s eyes after climbing the canyons of Tevis while running by his side and questioning, “How much can I ask of my friend?”

**What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important:** There is a quote that I remember is from ultrarunning but it could easily apply to endurance, “You have enrolled in the school of ultrarunning. You may think the lessons are irrelevant or stupid. It doesn’t matter what you think. The lessons will be presented until they are learned.”

**Where does your horse live?** Frank has full turnout 24 hours a day, year-round, in pasture.

**What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of life?** As I mentioned earlier, Frank’s early years are shrouded in mystery and Frank doesn’t talk about his early years.

**What are your horse’s strengths:** Frank is tough, he is determined, and Frank is the most forward horse that I have ever met.

**Weaknesses:** Frank is tough, he is determined, and Frank is the most forward horse that I have ever met.

**What advice do you have for new riders:** It has become cliché in endurance but it is true in endurance and in life; ride your own ride, and listen to your horse. It doesn’t matter what anyone else says or does, listen to your horse and think long term because your horse has no idea how far you are going or where the trail ends.

**Looking back, what would you do differently:** I would have started with the natural balance shoes earlier, switched to my current vet earlier, and run along the side of Frank more often. Frank is not an easy horse to run beside. He is forward and he thinks that my pace is too slow. When I go too slowly, Frank will try to run in front or else he will head-butt me from behind.

**What do you feel you did right:** Listening to Frank and avoiding being competitive. Early on we rode in the front, but one special ride vet, Gene Nance, had a talk with me, I thought about my goals, and I backed off — thank you, Gene.

**What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it:** Frank has accomplished significant achievements in endurance, but the Decade Team has been my goal since I first heard of the award.

Another significant event that I remember experiencing is starting the 2011 XP with Frank on the bank of the Missouri River in Kansas, and still going strong on Frank two months later at the finish in Virginia City Nevada.

**Describe your horse's personality?** How is it like or unlike yours: I would like to think that Frank and I are very similar, but I know that Frank is tougher, a better endurance athlete, more of a gentleman, and far more handsome.

**What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most?** (multidays, 100s, 50s, etc.): Big loop or point-to-point 100s are my favorite rides, but the 2011 XP was an unequaled experience. My least favorite ride format is "three-loops out of camp." I prefer rides that contain an element of adventure. Frank retired from 100s after completing the 40th Anniversary Big Horn 100 in July 2010, his home course and favorite 100, in the top ten. The Big Horn truly is his favorite 100 and you can see and feel his excitement in the camp prior to the ride and on the Big Horn trail. In my dreams, I ride Frank on the Big Horn 100. I think Frank runs the Big Horn 100 trails in his dreams too.

**In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life?** Through endurance riding, I have met friends that will be with me forever, met horses that changed my life, and shared the trails as partners with legendary horses and riders. I have seen historic trails from the back of a horse and experienced history on those trails. I have ridden moonlit trails, and in the moonlight, I have seen the shadows of riders and horses from the past. Frank and I have traveled together to other eras and other times. Together, we run endurance with feeling.

**Describe your electrolyte protocol:** Frank gets a tablespoon or two of salt (three parts sea salt, one part lite salt) in his bran mash at vet checks during a ride and again at the end of the ride. One of the very few times that I remember giving him an oral dose of electrolytes was on Tevis. It was hot, Frank was hot, and I could tell from my own experience that he needed electrolytes. I was fortunate and another rider very generously gave a syringe of electrolytes to me while on the trail and I administered the electrolytes to Frank at Last Chance (actually, we shared the syringe of electrolytes). Most riders seem to electrolyte more than I.

**Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success:** No special supplements, just hay, water, and salt. Frank does very well on alfalfa hay and benefits from the calcium in alfalfa.

**What kind of supplements (if any) do you use:** Now I use Remission for the metabolic benefits and the probiotics. I started the Remission to treat metabolic laminitis in my mustang horse and I give all three horses a bran mash with Remission so that no horse feels neglected. I think the probiotics, the biotin, and the other nutrients in Remission certainly can't be detrimental.

**Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe):** Frank is in his mid-20s and for the last three years or so, Frank has received joint injections in his right hock and left front pastern because of wear and arthritis. Frank also receives Adequan about once a month. The joint injections and the Adequan have made a significant difference in his comfort. Frank's back is still strong and he still has amazing stamina.

**How far do you usually travel to rides:** The shortest distance is about 50 miles and the longest is generally around six-hundred miles.

**Do you go to many rides outside of your region:** Even though I am in the Northwest Region, the Mountain Region rides are some of my favorite rides. I like the Mountain Region trails, the vets, the ride managers, and the general attitude at the rides. I try to go to several Mountain Region rides each year.

**Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why:** Dave Rabe because he is a savvy rider and a fun partner on the trail, Dave Nicholson for his contributions to endurance, and Steph and John Teeter because they are such a gracious hosts.

**Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them:** Regina Rose found Frank for me, mentored me for the first season of endurance, and I owe much of my success to Regina Rose and her patience. Regina Rose is a true endurance rider from the old-school and I hope that I have lived up to her teaching. I miss Regina on the trails.

**Describe the first rig you had and then tell us how it compares to your current rig:** I still use a two-wheel drive 1993 Ford van (E-250, gasoline fuel, 351 V8, Sportsmobile camper conversion) and a Sundowner slant-load two-horse bumper-pull trailer. We had one of the smallest rigs on the 2011 XP and Cindy Davis and I enjoyed living out of that rig for almost three months. Simple is good.

**In choosing your next horse, what would you look for:** My horses find me. I prefer a horse that is forward, determined, independent, with a bit of a stubborn attitude, about 14.2 hands, with solid bone and a short back, and one of my endurance friends found just such a horse for me in a rescue situation. I am training that horse now. Also, many know that I have large and difficult orphan mustang that I found on the trail when he was only a few hours old.

My last thoughts are that Frank is a true outlaw horse meaning that if we were living 150 years ago and I had to leave town in a hurry and make a good run, Frank would be my first choice. And, if my run turned out badly and my only escape was to cross the Rainbow Bridge, Frank would carry me across that bridge. There will never be another horse like Frank.