June 2022 Deb Porter (by Elayne Barclay)

Since the Mary & Anna Memorial Ride just wrapped up last weekend, it is fitting that the member featured in the next focus was welcomed into the PNER family by Anna Sampson. “I met so many people and the experience left a lasting impression on me when I volunteered in 2017 at the Still Prineville Ride. I got to meet Anna! She was so kind, let me sit in her trailer by the heater, fed me a snack, I couldn’t believe how nice she was.” Anna probably didn't realize her investment in making a new volunteer feel welcome would result in that person taking on a huge PNER responsibility in the future, but it did. That PNER member is Deb Porter and she stepped up to lend her skills to the organization as the newsletter editor in 2019.

Like most PNER members, Deb has had a life-long love of horses. She has many fond horsey memories from her childhood, “I begged my Dad to ask my grandparents’ neighbors if I could sit on their horse for my sixth birthday. [I think it is so sweet that she didn't even ask for a horse, just to sit on one for her birthday!]. When I was about 12, after we had ridden every chance we got at a local rental barn, dad bought me and my three sisters a $125 grade bay mare named Babe, and she was a gem. Babe would let three of us sit on her at a time, and she never caused trouble. We rode Babe and our motorcycles in the sandy hills near Kennewick, WA and even through town on the irrigation canal roads; after junior high school I never rode again until I was about 35, but I never forgot the freedom that my childhood days provided.”

Deb currently lives just east of Portland, and has two horses that help keep her active, “I have Annie, a Morgan/Arab cross, and Hank, a Spotted Saddle Horse. They are both older now and have their quirks, but I love them dearly. We just mess around in the arena, and we are starting to ride more with our barn mates, who all have older horses.”

When asked how she ended up volunteering at a ride Deb recalled, “I have always loved thoroughbreds and horse racing, and I followed racing pretty closely. Then years ago, I saw a video on PBS about the Oregon 100 featuring [Lois Fox](https://www.facebook.com/groups/42322454616/user/100000755550605/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWNHNrgDCjXpPWlKbu8vFYn7BWU23dO0eEOOkQz93_MO-wMBrm8K92a2FCa_L0mQJLbOD0RLmjJasUTt1TlItl5LS9C2Tl7OMBolkvlS49RDF9-ksbt9okqI3-OKKnDxRA2Iq-7Q6tE9hWXGWT7xyDG&__tn__=-%5dK-R) and I looked into local endurance which is how I found out about PNER!”

Besides meeting Anna at Still Prineville in 2017, she also has fond memories of volunteering at Bandit Springs, “At Bandit I camped by the meadow, which was lovely. The wild horses came in that night, but I heard that [Suzy Zurcher-Tompkins](https://www.facebook.com/groups/42322454616/user/100000609848594/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWNHNrgDCjXpPWlKbu8vFYn7BWU23dO0eEOOkQz93_MO-wMBrm8K92a2FCa_L0mQJLbOD0RLmjJasUTt1TlItl5LS9C2Tl7OMBolkvlS49RDF9-ksbt9okqI3-OKKnDxRA2Iq-7Q6tE9hWXGWT7xyDG&__tn__=-%5dK-R) chased them off with her four-wheeler! I volunteered as a timer, near the vet check and I learned a lot. And I remember [Cassee Steed Terry](https://www.facebook.com/groups/42322454616/user/579541749/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWNHNrgDCjXpPWlKbu8vFYn7BWU23dO0eEOOkQz93_MO-wMBrm8K92a2FCa_L0mQJLbOD0RLmjJasUTt1TlItl5LS9C2Tl7OMBolkvlS49RDF9-ksbt9okqI3-OKKnDxRA2Iq-7Q6tE9hWXGWT7xyDG&__tn__=-%5dK-R)'s children playing with their dog and sitting up on the RV so they could see all the action. I was really hooked! Even though I haven’t been able to go again, I read as much online about your ups and downs as I can, and I am with the riders in spirit.”

I was intrigued by Deb's willingness to jump into such a big responsibility in our organization despite her relatively recent introduction to the sport. She elaborated on the skills that made her feel comfortable taking on this role, “I’ve written freelance for such publications and Capital Press, the northwest’s weekly agricultural newspaper, and East County Gazette. I wrote for The Trophy (a regional horse-related monthly paper), and have had pieces reprinted in several publications. While working at a call center for the Oregon University System Chancellor’s Office, where I answered phones and spoke to people about college access, I taught myself Microsoft Publisher. This knowledge, along with digital photography classes, led me to write a series of monthly newsletters over nearly three years, so we could send targeted career-specific information to our callers.”

When asked about her editor duties, Deb stated, “The PNER newsletter takes me about 10-12 hours of work for each issue. I hope that the readers will find the content to be varied and interesting, and I know that they expect certain information. I try to incorporate feature stories, submissions from members and hot links that readers can use to quickly do their own research. I like to add landscape photos so that members like me who can’t always go out to rides can at least dream! I have volunteered at a few rides and hope to do more this year, but it is fulfilling to write again and to feel needed and so appreciated by members.”

In addition to being the editor for the PNER newsletter, Deb recently became the chairperson for the Scholarship Committee, “becoming the PNER scholarship chair is in line with my background in education. I really do want to get out there to volunteer again at at least two rides this year, but in the meantime, I live vicariously through all of you!”

When asked what the organization represents for her, Deb said, “For me, because the welfare of the horse is paramount in endurance, I see PNER and the larger organizations as protectors of the animals above all. But the appreciative family-friendly atmosphere, concern for the environment, and the goal-driven people I have met have made it so fun!"

It is often hard to realize how important our interactions with other riders and volunteers can be for the future of our organization. Did someone do some small thing at the last ride to make you feel welcome or appreciated? Did you do something for someone else to make the ride a better experience for them? Did you sincerely thank the volunteers, veterinarians, and ride management for their efforts? In the memory of Mary & Anna, I hope you can think of examples of all those for every ride you are lucky enough to be able to participate in as a rider, manager, or volunteer.