June 2020 Beth Skaggs (by Elayne Barclay)

Beth Skaggs stands out in a ride camp with her exuberant personality and colorful flair in attire and tack. She is a fiercely devoted care-provider to anyone sick, injured, or dejected and is a vet check volunteer extraordinaire, welding a stethoscope in one hand, helping sponge your horse with another, and somehow helping you untack with a third. Not surprisingly she has quite an interesting tale to tell for our PNER member focus about her life-long love affair with horses.

Beth admits to having always been enthralled with horses. She was fortunate to have grown up on a 40 acre farm in Clark County, Washington (and still lives on 4 acres of the property). She recalls that, “My Mom said I could not ride until I could saddle a horse by myself. Family lore has it that I was “assisted” by my beloved grandfather, and saddled our mare, Bonnie Gay, when I was only 7 years old.” It wasn't long before she was riding constantly with neighborhood friends. Beth fondly remembers, “I got grounded once, for riding after dark (we rode all over Clark County back then) and my mom said that I could not ride for a month. So, I decided to ride one of our milking shorthorn cows, bareback with a twine bridle. I had fun, walking, trotting, and loping her in patterns, but she bucked me off when I attempted to teach her flying lead changes!” Beth's desire to ride did not wane and eventually she used money she earned from picking berries, beans, and walnuts to buy her first horse: “a gorgeous registered flaxen-chestnut Anglo-Arab gelding.” She called him Son E and she proudly recalled that he “developed into a fabulous horse, winning me a 4-H trip to Chicago in 1972 due to all our accomplishments together. He was extremely versatile, we competed in local 4-H and open shows in English, Western, Bareback Equitation, Saddle Seat, Hunter Hack, Stock Horse, Showmanship, Trail Horse, Working Pairs, Driving, Tandem Bareback, Western Riding, and Gaming to name a few.”

Later, Beth competed with Son E on a drill team she initiated, the “Clark County Rangerettes”, where she met a life-long friend, Donna Lacy-Bacon (who would become an endurance competitor as well). A small world coincidence occurred when she met future PNER ride manager Gail Williams for the first time at state competitions. A second small world situation happened because she used Son E as a mount for riding lessons and she was giving lessons to the daughter of another PNER ride manager, Marilyn Milestone!

Beth gave an example of how important horses were in her life, “At our wedding in 1979, during our reception (held at our farm after the church ceremony), I traipsed out to the barn, in my wedding dress and heels no less, followed by many guests, to showoff our brand-new filly born just 5 days previously! This filly was my one-in-a-million endurance horse, Saedda-bruk (Saedda).” This was eight years before Beth was first introduced to endurance riding though, “Saedda was pure CMK, which was a happy accident for me as I later learned this is a very coveted endurance line.”

Beth continued to compete with the “Clark County Rangerettes”, but in 1987 she saw a flyer for the Rock Creek Endurance Ride posted at a local feed store. She explained, “I decided to attend this event, rode Saedda in the 25-mile distance and we won it! I loved the freedom of competing as a team with just my horse, loved the challenge of navigating the trails, and loved the atmosphere of this endurance community. I was hooked. So, in 1989, I joined PNER and AERC riding Saedda exclusively. She was 10 years old now, in excellent condition since I rode trails at “endurance pace” before I ever had heard of endurance riding. Saedda and I were a great team, she was very athletic and extremely sure-footed. She was amazing at navigating tight, twisty trails, and steep slippery downgrades. Saedda and I continued to compete through 1995, the year she made 3125 AERC miles. Her record shows eight 100 mile rides with 8 completions, my only regret, is that I never attempted The Tevis with her.”

Even though she didn't attempt Tevis with Saedda, she did come in 2nd on another famous ride, the Virginia City 100. It was her first “out of region” ride and Beth learned that every region does a few things differently, “Boy, was it an experience, beginning from setting up camp in the streets of Virginia City, Nevada to starting the ride in the dark on pavement no less, with hyper horses via a gunshot blast! 83 teams started and only 48 teams finished. Turns out, this ride is as hard if not harder than Tevis!”

During her 33 years of riding endurance Beth has given back to the endurance community by serving on the BOD for PNER as a Washington State Rider Representative. She has also been the Junior Adviser, and has spent many years sponsoring Junior riders. “Sponsoring Juniors has been a true joy and pleasure for me, mentoring young riders, making up and singing songs as we rode merrily down the trails.” In addition Beth states, “I have loved helping many, many riders throughout the years, assisting them in completing their rides when they felt overwhelmed, agreeing to mentor their young horses at a slower, steadier pace, and bringing them in on time.” Beth worked as a registered nurse for 38 years, retiring in 2013, and has often used her nursing skills to help other riders at ride camp by monitoring dehydrated and/or overheated riders, attending to riders with concussions, even stabilizing a compound ankle fracture before the rider was driven to the hospital.

Lucky for us, Beth says, “I am really enjoying this more laid-back pace, taking my time to “smell the flowers” and help my other competitors. I usually ride the LD’s now, which gives me more time to visit in ride camp and to volunteer!” Thank you Beth!