September 2020 Jannelle Wilde (by Elayne Barclay)

With so many PNER members having to evacuate due to devastating fires it is heartening to see so many other PNER members jumping in to offer help and sanctuary. PNER truly is a family that supports each other in good times and bad. This member focus highlights someone who appreciates the community PNER has brought to her and her family over the years and who has given back to the community by being a ride manager for more than a decade (in addition to being an awesome human with a truly super sense of humor).

Jannelle Wilde grew up in a suburb of Kansas City and while she didn't own a horse she took advantage of any opportunity to ride through rental horses or the horses of friends. Despite not having her own horse, Jannelle had big plans for her future: “I was the little girl who wanted to be the first female owner, trainer, groomer, and rider of a Kentucky Derby winner! I spent spare time making lists of good names for horses and running them by my dad, who encouraged me in all things horsey.” She bought her first horse when she was 27 years old, an appaloosa named Thunder.

Jannelle's pathway into endurance was led by her husband, Adam Falk, who wanted something he could do with their horses (by this time Jannelle was breeding Al Khamsa Arabians) that wasn't showing and didn't cost a lot. Jannelle recalled, “Adam went to Prineville to ask questions and then to Sunriver to do his first ride…in jeans and an old western saddle. Spencer was just two years old and Lincoln was seven. That began our family’s journey into endurance, eighteen years ago!”

Jannelle lamented that raising Spencer and Lincoln didn’t leave much time for her to ride, but she did have the opportunity to volunteer. She spent her time at rides with Anna Sampson and felt very much a part of the PNER community. Before long, even before she competed in an endurance ride herself, she became a ride manager. Jannelle and her family took over managing her favorite ride, Bandit Springs, in 2007 and has been managing it ever since.

When asked about her favorite memory involving endurance Jannelle had a hard time and reflected on her family's many years of involvement in the PNER community, “You know, I don’t have one favorite memory. I have bunches of them because we spent so much of our free time at endurance rides or putting on endurance rides. I have so many memories of Bandit Springs since we’ve been the ride managers for 13 years. A memorable moment includes Oso, Darlene Merlich’s dog, getting lost overnight and being found while being chased by an antelope. There are several years that we’ve had visits from wild horses, some years more traumatic than others. I remember before we were the ride managers at Bandit, sleeping in a tent and changing diapers in said tent. Maybe my favorite memory was the first time we took our living quarters trailer to a ride! I felt like I had arrived! Most of all, I just get the warm fuzzies when I think of people sponsoring my kids and telling me what nice kids they are. It has been a great community to raise the kids in. Spencer talks about when he takes over Bandit as ride manager. Good god, I hope his wife loves horses, too!”

Finding time to ride while raising a family and pursuing her career as a teacher has been one of her biggest challenges. She remembers, “I have always supported my family in riding even to the point that I gave my horse to my kids to ride, but now I’m the main rider in the family.” When asked about her favorite mount Jannelle talks about Wilde Ivey LaRue who she has been riding for 13 years, “We bicker and have disputes but there’s no one I’d rather be on when push comes to shove on the trail. Probably the story I will tell over and over about/with LaRue is the time at Klickatat Trek that someone opened up the water in the irrigation canal and the water raised to over 4 feet. I asked LaRue to jump in, off the side to avoid the mud. Her legs did not hit the bottom and were swept out from under her. I went under her and was kicked a couple of times before I surfaced on the opposite side of the ditch from her. Man, that was a scary day! Oh and then there’s also the ride at Pacific Crest where 1 ½ miles from the vet check, about 11 trees went down the night before the ride. Bees were everywhere. It took us (Spencer, Adam and I) about 45 minutes to go that short distance. LaRue decided to stomp on every in-ground bee nest the rest of the day. She even backed up a hill, bucking, to get back to a nest and promptly dumped me in it.” Jannelle is thinking of retiring LaRue from endurance but she will still trail ride and do Search and Rescue with her. Adam and Jannelle have been putting their 4 years of SAR training to good use during the fires by helping their local community near Glide, Oregon.

In summary of her years of involvement with PNER, Jannelle said, “I think I am a perfect example of someone finding a place in PNER even though I don’t ride a lot of rides. I feel sure of my presence and feel respected for the information I’ve learned over the last 18 years. There’s a place for everyone!” PNER is lucky to have Jannelle and her family as part of our community.