

AHDRA II Endure for the Cure

25/50/2-day 100

June 14, 15 & 16, 2006

East Peoria, Illinois

Midwest Region

A story of endurance and triumph:

Patricia Bullock of Kentucky was compelled to compete in the AHDRA II Endure For The Cure 25-mile limited distance ride, just six weeks after a mastectomy. Her participation in the Endure For The Cure Ride was to let other women know that mammograms are important and that cancer doesn't have to be a death sentence.

But the ride became even more enduring when Bullock made a wrong turn in the sweltering Midwest heat and humidity. Well over an hour behind, she became frustrated because her goal of completing was in jeopardy. But then competitor Marge Dixon stepped up and told her, "You are coming with me, and you will finish." Newfound friends Marge (left) and Patricia (right) did complete – despite the adversities of the day.



Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, 618-658-5507

BY LORI WINDOWS

En-dure (*en-dyoor'*) 1. to tolerate pain, fatigue, etc. 2. to last or continue 3. to bear pain without flinching.

The AHDRA II ride of July 14 to 16 certainly lived up to the "endure" part of the ride's subtitle. Held at Farmdale Park in East Peoria, Illinois, the three-day event, sponsored by the Arabian Horse Distance Riding Association, "enjoyed" temperatures in the high 90s each day with a heat index in the 100s.

Despite the weather, 105 horses participated in the event which offered two 50s, a two-day 100, and three days of LD as well as competitive trail ride each day and a competitive drive.

Riders came from 11 states to bask in the heat and humidity. They got to enjoy something else, too—a superbly organized endeavor to keep horses and riders comfortable and safe despite the weather.

Ride managers April Hammer and Bonnie Iten, along with a host of other volunteers (Bryn and Dana Iten, Lucy Veigel and Dana Hirstein, to name a few), worked together to host this ride, now in its sixth year.

The Farmdale Park trails, while multi-purpose, are maintained by the local bike club. April, Bonnie and crew—masters of diplomacy—have gained the trust, respect, and co-operation of the bikers. They also used their diplomacy skills to convince the Corps of Engineers to allow the event to take

place in an area where overnight camping is generally not allowed. Ranger Todd gave the thumbs-up on the ride as he has every year prior, remarking that the park looks as good Sunday evening as it did Thursday morning.

The trail was a 17-mile loop repeated three times, with the LD riders using a shortened version of that trail. Creating a 17-mile trail in a 600-acre park is no mean feat. There was some open field riding, but for the most part, the terrain was through the shaded woods.

A huge storm on Wednesday filled the plentiful water crossings. It was fun to ride the bike trails and see the ramps and berms and obstacles that the bikers negotiate. Luckily, there were bypasses around them!

One section of trail took riders across a huge dam. The variety of scenery and the abundance of wildlife made up for having to repeat the same 17 miles three times.

Several thoughtful touches helped make up for the heat. A huge cooler of towels sat just outside the pulse box, available for everyone. Lucy Veigel's brainchild, these towels were soaked in lavender and sage oil, then packed in ice. Volunteers would hasten to drape them across the necks of riders at the check. Another cooler held water and Gatorade, also free to riders and crews.

One World Café ran a lunch wagon that featured several ethnic delights as well as hamburgers, hot dogs and an out-of-this-

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Wes Elford, DVM, had great fun during the day splashing riders (and anyone else who got close) with buckets full of cool water.



But revenge was at hand when several people bodily tossed the good doctor into a watering trough.



Somehow, it doesn't appear that Dr. Elford suffered much after his "punishment"!

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“one world” portabella sandwich. The atmosphere the whole weekend, despite the discomfort of temperatures, was upbeat and pleasant.

Wes Elford, DVM, of Wisconsin was the head vet, ably assisted by Drs. Jon Quenton from Illinois and Dan Beatty from Indiana. Parameters were set at 64, and very strict attention was paid to heat-related symptoms. In spite of the abundance of fluids the doctors brought, the idea was to catch a problem before it became something that had to be treated. As a result, no horses got into trouble, although a one-on-one with a tree (the tree won) sent one rider to the hospital—not until she finished riding her 50, however.

At the weekend’s close, Dr. Elford commented on how “awesome” our horses are. He said it was “somewhat beyond comprehension that they can travel 25, 50, and even 100 miles in that heat and humidity carrying lots of weight, in some cases. If we humans were asked to do that, we wouldn’t be able to do the half of it.”

But it was not just the horses that Dr. Elford praised. During the awards presentation, he spoke of the education the riders and caretakers of “these superb beasts.” Said Dr. Elford, “We understand so much more than we used to, and we have the tools to keep the horses healthy and going on.”

Now for the second part of the ride’s subtitle: For the Cure. Six years ago, April Hammer, a oncology nurse in Peoria, Illinois, decided to do something to help cancer victims and cancer fighters she dealt with in her profession. Being an endurance rider, she contacted the Arabian Horse Distance Riding Association (AHDRA) and asked if they would help put on a ride as a fundraiser. April chose the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation to be the recipient of the monies raised. The global Komen Foundation is involved in support and education as well as cancer research.

How to find out more

- Endure for the Cure maintains a website (www.endurefortheCure.org), where you can read the story of the evolution of this fund-raiser.
- For information about the Komen Foundation, go to www.komen.org.
- AHDRA is a nationwide club that promotes the Arabian and Half-Arabian in the distance riding sports in which they excel (www.ahdra1.com).



Staying cool—by whatever means possible—was the name of the game at the AHDRA II Endure for the Cure! Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, 618-658-5507.

Over the past five years, April has been proud to hand over checks amounting to \$80,000 to the Komen Foundation. Two years ago, April was named the Susan G. Komen National Volunteer of the Year for her efforts. Riders at the event bring in pledge donations and receive prizes donated by corporate and local sponsors.

For the past three years, a saddle has gone to the rider who brings in the most money. Two years ago, the saddle went to a rider who had just gone through chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer. The presentation of the saddle that year was pretty special.

This year, Mortack, Inc. donated a Kanavy endurance saddle to the rider who collected the most donations. It went to Donna Ozmet of Chicago who brought in more than \$3,000 in pledges. Her friend and riding partner, Deb Searle, was second with \$2,400. These two women were also first and

second last year, and together are responsible for \$10,000 of Komen donations.

Rider pledges bring in the bulk of the money, along with corporate donations, and AHDRA turns over most of ride’s profit. Those of you who manage rides know that “profit” is often a laughable goal. Once again, thanks to the generosity of local corporations and businesses,

there is a profit. The porta-potties were half priced, the water tanks were donated and the trucks to carry them were lent by a local car company. The busy man who hauled water all weekend charged nothing. One World Café donated the Saturday night catered banquet (much too tasty to just be called a “dinner”). A local hotel donated two nights of rooms for the veterinarians. Water and Gatorade for the riders? Donated. Most of the awards were donated, including several bottles of Illinois wine and several sets of antique wine glasses. (When I went to a local antique store that also offered wine tasting of Illinois vintages, I told the store manager why I was buying the wine. She said that she has been a cancer survivor for 24 years, and I could take what ever I needed. That has been the general response of almost everyone we approached for a donation.)

The final total for this year’s donation was close to \$35,000!

TRAIL RITE