

HCC GAZAL +/

CSHA Lightweight Champion 1986 - CSHA Best Condition Champion 1986

HCC Gazal and I are sort of ancient history at this point, but Audra has asked for my story so here it is. I first met this bay horse when he was 5 years old and I was more than 11 times that. I knew he was something special the first time I rode him. He had a joie de vivre attitude..the world was his to romp in with exuberant riders upon his back. He was just born happy and he shared it with all who came within his contact.

He completed over 8000 miles of endurance which included 17 multi-day rides of 250 or more miles. He completed the Tevis Cup Ride seven consecutive years, was Top Ten four times and Haggin Cup winner three times. In all those mountains, in all those valleys, down every desert trail and every wooded trail, he went proudly and I can honestly say, that Bob and I never winded that horse. Regardless of how hot the day, how fast the ride, how long the trail, a couple of deep breaths and his pulse and respiration were normal.

So actually Gazal put me on the map rather than the other way around. I never felt I rode him well. He was straight in the rear end and he threw me out of the saddle, especially at the canter, which he much preferred. I spent two years trying to teach him to trot, but he always won and we cantered many, many miles.

Bob and I shared Gazal. I knew he was AERC National Champion material, but I was very afraid of getting caught up in a horse race and harming him. So Bob and I traded on and off as his rider so neither of us would chalk up the points required.

We stopped riding him in 1991 after three unexplained falls. He was allowed to run free with us when we rode others. His total exuberance of racing by and flipping up his rear heels in total self abandon brought the practice to a stop, however. He lived a good life in retirement until age 27 when the proud head was not held so high and the shifting of weight from one leg to the other told us it was time. He was buried with a stomach full of oats, apple and carrots dampened with the tears of those who loved him.

Julie Suhr