

BEST OF AMERICA TRAIL CLUB



Your access to all things related to Best of America by Horseback!

www.bestofamericabyhorseback.com



A note from Tom....

As I extend an invitation to all our members to join or renew their membership in the Best of America Trail Club with the television show and myself, I reflect on the warmth and kindness I have been honored to have from people across America, Mexico and Canada.

When we began the trail club, we had no idea it would generate such the interest it has. It has not been easy. To be candid, our computer programs were not designed for the impact of such a response and we are working very diligently and making the necessary changes and improvements that will allow for exceptional service to all members.

We continue to work hard to influence the restoration of trails, to be a voice in the creation of new trails, and to show the riding community new and beautiful places anyone can visit and ride. We are truly grateful to have such loyal members to assist us in our endeavors of preserving and creating trails for future generations to enjoy.



We want to make the club more meaningful to you on a true value basis. We have asked sponsors, both large and small to provide giveaways each month.

(Continued on pg. 4)

Upcoming TV Episodes

- November 15—Dunn's Horse & Mule Ranch, Colorado
- November 22—Brushy Creek Lodge & Resort, Missouri --Part I
- November 29—Circle E Guest Ranch, Tennessee
- December 6—Challenge Ranch, California
- December 13—3rd Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride, NC
- December 20-- Anita-Alta BRHA Horse & Youth Camp, NC
- December 27—Reed Valley Ranch, California

Tuesdays at 7 pm ET on



Thank you to our television show sponsors!

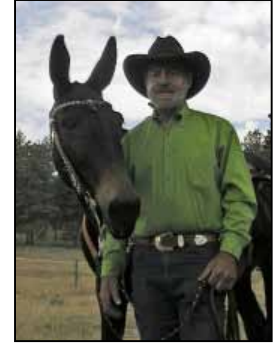


Purina Mills



On the Trail with Mark Laney, CEO

Last month I talked about "big rides", about those that did not want to go on "big rides", and how our Best of America by Horseback rides with a large number of folks did not "seem like" "big rides". In doing a little 'research' by asking questions of our riders during our Brushy Creek, Missouri trail ride and our 3rd Annual Fall Colors Headquarters Trail Ride at Leatherwood Mountains, North Carolina last month, I found that I missed mentioning a key element in many folks' thinking about what constituted a "big ride."



Several riders had mentioned that they did not like to go on big trail rides, so I followed up and asked them "If that is the case, then why are you here on this ride?" (at Brushy Creek we had 88 registered riders and at Leatherwood Mountains, we had 104 registered riders). The responses all contained the same common thread - "Because there is no alcohol on the trail rides with Best of America by Horseback" they all considered a "big ride" that they did not want to go on was one that not only involved a large number of riders, but also involved drinking on the trail.

Trail riding is a wonderful experience, but it is not without danger -- it is dangerous enough without mixing with alcohol.

This month's newsletter is being sent to all trail riders that we have ridden with and for whom we have an email address, as well as any other viewers and fans who have signed up for email correspondence. If this is your first Best of America by Horseback newsletter and you would like to see the past issue, let us know (becky@bestofamericabyhorseback.com) and we will either direct you to a link or send the requested newsletter to you by email.



Stay tuned. Next month, I plan to mention a change that will be quite a surprise to many of you.

Life's a Journey, Enjoy the Ride! ~ Mark

Del Shields, Co-Host & Western Musician

Hello again friends! What a wonderful fall this has been as we traveled from Eastern Missouri to South Dakota to North Carolina to the 3rd Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride at Leatherwood Mountains. We have had some outstanding events and it seems that the rides just get better and better! You, our riders are so into our events that it simply overwhelms us. For this we thank you for your support and involvement. Although our winter schedule slows soon, we ask you to keep up with us as we prepare to release the spring riding schedule soon!

We enjoy receiving emails from you letting us know your favorite episodes or to suggest a great riding location that you want to share. We want to spread out as much as possible and make sure all areas of this wonderful country are highlighted! I also appreciate all those that purchased my new CD, "Let the Cowboy Sing" and have provided much support for it. Be looking for my upcoming commercial for the album on our future shows.

I look forward to our next meeting.

Until then, may the Lord be your guide & "Always Ride the High Trail."

~ Del

www.delshieldsmusic.com



Freedom Horses—Healing Hearts with Horses
by Dutch Henry

One in four women in America have been the victims of abuse, whether it is mental, physical or sexual. Many suffer from all three. That is a staggering and sobering statistic, isn't it? Betsi Bixby has long wanted to find a way to help these women heal. Being a lifelong horsewoman she is well aware of the healing spirit of the horse and she had seen the wonders of equine assisted therapy. It was at a benefit ride for *Morning Star Ranch*, a therapeutic riding center devoted to helping inner city at risk children that a plan began to take shape. When she saw the wondrous change come over the children at *Morning Star Ranch*, she asked herself, "Why can't we do this for battered women?"



Betsi knew she would need a reliable conduit to reach women who were enduring abuse or had been abused and were unable to let go. Sadly, often getting over the abuse is harder than getting out of the abuse. She approached "Freedom House," a marvelous organization devoted to helping battered women and girls cope with the wounds their abuse left them. Betsi's plan to use horses and let the women feel the healing powers in a horse's heart was received with so much enthusiasm at Freedom House they started working on plans to make it happen right away. A dedicated group of about 12 women quickly banded together to make the idea a reality.

Many times battered women will turn inward, put up a hard exterior. A problem often seen in typical therapy is that battered women and girls learn to move on, sort of, but often don't learn how to open their hearts again. That's where Betsi's plan and the spirit of the horse come in. Betsi knows the spirit of a horse can open their hearts again.

Within weeks of her meeting with Freedom House a pilot program was established. The first participant went to Tammy Sronce's, Echo Ranch in Weatherford, TX and was introduced her to her horse, Memphis. "It was overwhelming," Betsi said. "She stood in the barn and looked at the horse, just looked at him. Then she walked over and touched him. We could almost see the comfort flow from Memphis to the girl."

In the weeks that followed more women came from Freedom House to Echo Ranch, and the visits began to develop a structure. The women and girls were introduced to a horse and simply allowed to absorb the horse's spirit. Everything is the participant's choice from brushing the horse to a supervised trail ride. Except for matters of safety, the participants are never told what to do. For many of them it is the first time in years that they were allowed to, or had the desire to make a choice. "We can see them gain confidence from the horses, as they interact with them. They relax while brushing a horse, sometimes they'll hug and kiss the horse. Often they'll tell us it was the first time in a long time that they didn't think of their problems," Betsi said. "There's a special magic in a horse's spirit that connects and can help heal. Their spirit is the heart of our program. We just put them together." Betsi's program adopted the name "Freedom Horses," in honor of the work they do at Freedom House.

Freedom Horses put together a comprehensive, step-by-step plan that anyone who has the desire to help heal battered hearts can use with their own horses at their own home. "We call it, Freedom Horses Success Kit," Betsi said. Everything is charted out from how to select and train volunteers to suggestions of activities. "For instance, one thing we have found that really helps is involving an equine massage therapist," Betsi explained. "Many abused women do not want to be touched. But something happens when they watch the relaxation come over a horse during a massage. It's often the first time in years they can relate to touching without fear."

Freedom Horses' mission is to help women gain courage, compassion and confidence through interactions with horses and their volunteer owners. Organized in June 2011, they already have a network of volunteers ready to welcome women to their barns to experience the healing powers of the horse including two other women's shelters ready to test out the programs in their towns.

(Continued on page 6)

Tom's Words Continued....

We also asked these sponsors to provide new downloadable coupons so that all members may benefit and there is no delay in taking advantage of real discounts on products.

I want to ask you to continue with the kindness and support you have given the television show and myself.

While there are many benefits that will be exclusive to Trail Club members, our monthly newsletter with riding tips, articles from friends of the show will be available to everyone.

When you renew your membership or join for the first time, here are some of the exclusive advantages of being a member of the Best of America Trail Club that you'll enjoy.

***Members are eligible for our monthly product "Give-Aways" ranging from free trail rides, riding equipment to show DVDs and more! Winner's names will be drawn at random and will be listed in the following month's newsletter!**

***Members enjoy a discount on the registration for all Best of America by Horseback trail rides!**

***Members enjoy have access to valuable coupons from quality companies such as Purina Mills, Leather Therapy, E-Z Up Stirrups, Trail Blazer Magazine, CSI Saddle Pads, Pinchless Bits, Twisted X Boots, Horse Quencher, CP Feeders and more!**

***Members enjoy discounts on purchases from Stagecoach West Tack and Supply Store, either in person or online!**

***Members receive discounts on all Best of America by Horseback logo'd products!**

***Members are eligible for another NEW SADDLE give-away and TRAIL RIDE give-away!!**

***Members also receive a FREE DVD of an episode of their choice when they renew or join!**

I want you to join our Trail Club or remain a member as we continue to add more benefits! I also welcome the opportunity to call you on your birthday and if you wish, at Christmas. I'm available to you via phone or email. I do answer emails personally, so please feel free to contact me anytime at tom@bestofamericabyhorseback.com

Renewing your Best of America Trail Club membership is very simple. Just email me at tom@bestofamericabyhorseback.com An invoice will be emailed to you to return with either a check or credit card payment. Or if you prefer, you may call our office at 540-829-9555 and renew/join easily over the phone. (M-F 9 am-5 pm ET). The membership fee has been lowered to \$29.95 for 12 months---less than \$.60 per week.

All the gifts, all the give-aways, all the attention you deserve is here for members of the Best of America Trail Club. As you can tell, it will not take long for the benefits to pay for the membership fee, making it, essentially free! Continue to stay with the largest and most respected trail riding television show in the world, with my personal appreciation and dedication to you!

All the Best! ~ Tom

~ Featured Trail Club Members ~

Jeffrey "DUTCH" Brown

12 year-old Dutch is a 7th grade Honor Roll student at Short Line Middle School in West Virginia. In addition to his love of horseback riding, he is also a member of the school band playing drums, trumpet and baritone.

Dutch began riding horses in 2009 and has accomplished a lot since; such as being the 1st WV Youth to ride horseback across the C&O Canal, 1st WV Youth to ride in a sanctioned ACTHA Challenge, 1st

WV Youth in the ACTHA finishing 2nd in Region 5 and 10th in the Nation. He also is the only WV Youth to ride in the ACTHA Guinness World Record Trail Ride on June 13, 2010. He loves to attend trail rides with Best of America by Horseback and his Aunt Robyn. He is proud to say that he has ridden over 1000 miles in less than two years!

Dutch rides a 14 year-old AQHA mare, named Shez Pretty Zipped, aka "Beauty"

Jonathan "COOTER" Brown

6 year-old Cooter attends kindergarten at Short Line Elementary School in West Virginia. He began riding in 2009 and loves riding with his big brother, Dutch and Aunt Robyn.

Cooter rides as a buddy rider in local competitive trail rides and was a rider at the 2011 "Hoofin thru the Hills" to promote the WV equine trail system.

He enjoys spending time on his family's farm clearing trails and learning to rope. In addition to trail riding her enjoys playing football, basketball and riding dirt bikes and is learning to now yodel!

He was so excited to have the opportunity to ride with Tom, Del and Best of America by Horseback at the Fall Colors Ride at Leatherwood Mountains in October.

Cooter rides a 15 year-old Appaloosa gelding named HezaRootinTootinCowboy, aka "Cowboy"

*World Champion & Clinician, Dave Robart*

I would like to thank Tom for inviting me to the 3rd Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride at Leatherwood and for the opportunity to host some clinics while there. I met some great "Horse People!" My wife, Glenice used to ask me when I would use this term if "Horse People" were half horse and half people? My response to her was that "Horse People" are simply people who have the love of horses in them. I would just like to that the "Horse People" I met at the ride were some of the best yet!

The first clinic of the weekend I used my mustang, Duke to show how to truly capture a horse's mind with no equipment on. I just used my body language to demonstrate this. Duke was a very good student. He demonstrated how he was in an unfamiliar environment by being unsure for a moment. I then demonstrated through my body language how Duke would "Join Up" staying with me. This method teaches him that when we are together he is safe versus when we are apart things can be unsure for him. This method will teach your horse to seek you and teach you how to read the minute language the horse is showing. This teaches us not to yell at the horse, but to listen and watch the horse and creating a partnership between you and your horse. You need to watch and listen just as we do when communicating with people. The secret is that when you listen and watch you are in full communication. If you are doing one without the other, it will be a one-way street. There would not be any willing productive relationship on both sides. For any relationship to work, there must be clear, fair communication. (Continued on page 7)



Congratulations to the WINNERS of this month's Give-Aways!

The following Trail Club members' names were randomly chosen to receive a 1-year free subscription to Trail Blazer Magazine!



Caroline Campbell—Virginia
 Ronnie & Kathy Wilbanks—New Mexico
 Steven McClellan—Mississippi
 Onzie & Donna Culbertson—Tennessee
 Mike & Wanda Phillips—Alabama
 Ashlyn Prehl—Massachusetts
 Aileen Livingston—Vermont
 Robyn Yeager—West Virginia
 Kathy Baldwin---Georgia
 Chic & Linda Evans—Pennsylvania
 Barbara Holder—New York

Levi Krauss—Missouri
 Janet Huffmier—Kansas
 Benny Pitt—Kentucky
 Marsha Smith—California
 Darrell VanHall—Iowa
 Bobby Bowden—Texas
 Lori Gunter—California
 Mark Ogle—North Carolina
 Joe Berens—Nevada
 Johnny Marcuso—Texas
 Helen & Jerry Cary---Tennessee

Dutch Henry continued....

Freedom Horses was started in Weatherford, Texas and is expanding to all states, so whether you are in Texas, Maine, California or anywhere in between and you have a horse who is willing to help heal hearts, reach out to Freedom Horses. They will help you help others. To start your own Freedom Horses program, become a volunteer or sponsor, visit their website. www.freedomhorses.org You can also contact Tammy Sronce at 940-859-6512. You can help heal hearts.

Gitty Up! --Dutch Henry

***Dutch Henry is a freelance writer who resides in Virginia with his wife, Robin of 35 years, his horses, dogs, cats and chickens. His novel, "We'll Have The Summer" is available on Amazon or through his website, www.dutchhenryauthor.com Dutch would love to hear from you at dutchhenry@hughes.net*

Announcement:

Tom, Pat and some very special guests have been invited to return to the beautiful Valle de Bravo, Mexico to enjoy trail riding and traditional cuisine with hosts, Lucia & Pepe' of Mexico Horse Vacations! They will visit in January 2012 when the Monarch butterflies are hibernating in the mountains near Valle de Bravo.

Plan your next vacation at Mexico Horse Vacations!!! It truly is a wonderful getaway where there is something for everyone in your family to enjoy!

- *Deluxe Horseback Riding
- *Excellent Horses
- *Very Professional Wranglers
- *Five Star accommodations in hacienda
- *Authentic Mexican hospitality and charm
- *Your choice of trail riding opportunities
- *All levels of riders are welcome
- *Other activities are available too, such as bird watching, hiking, kayaking, mountain cycling and more!



www.mexicohorsevacation.com

Thank you to our CHOICE PRODUCT sponsors!



Dave Robart continued....

I also covered how the design of a horse's face and mouth affects his response to equipment. Trying to communicate with the wrong equipment is similar to attempting to have a conversation with someone who has ear plugs in. They cannot hear you or it is muffled. You may have to yell or grab them in order to get their attention due to the wrong equipment (ear plugs) which will put them on the defense! Not a good start of the communication process. One of the participants at the clinic had a mare that had an issue of being on the verge of learning to rear. The mare was very high headed, unwilling to give to the bridle. I explained to the rider how the current bit he was using on this mare was digging into the inside jaw line. This was creating pain causing the mare to go into this pain. I have found and firmly believe that horses first go INTO pain before backing off of the pain. This becomes a vicious cycle where the horse does not learn to drop its head in the bridle. If it does drop its head in the bridle through fear of the equipment then we just created further problems somewhere else in the horse's body. For example, the mare I mentioned would lower her head for a while then fear kicks in and she tries to get past the pain for relief. To get the relief the mare raises her head above the center point/saddle horn. These are some of the first steps horses take to escape the pain of the bridle...raising the head. When the rider tries to set the head again the head will go up even higher. As the head goes higher it leads to rearing and possibly flipping over. In this mare's case we discussed that the proper bit to be used on her would be a bit with smooth bends and more tongue relief. This puts more pressure on the back of the jaw line. The horse goes into the pressure of the curb more comfortably and more safely! I'm glad to say with this mare the next day, with the proper bit and technique; the rider had a successful trail ride. To quote the rider "It was a night and day difference." This is one of the many successful "Join Ups" resulting from that clinic.

I want to again thank Tom, Pat, Best of America by Horseback, the staff at Leatherwood and all the "Horse People" for making it a great weekend and trail ride!

~Dave Robart

www.pinchlessbits.com



Above are photos from the October 6-8, 2011 Trail Ride at Brushy Creek Lodge & Resort. To view or order photos-- contact photographer, Dawn Young.

www.freereindesigns.com

email: dlindsay@hughes.net

phone: 417-859-6861