

# BEST OF AMERICA TRAIL CLUB



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Best of America by Horseback!



[www.bestofamericabyhorseback.com](http://www.bestofamericabyhorseback.com)

## A note from Tom....

This is Christmas time. If you are like me, we are not afraid of the word. Humbug to political correctness. It is not Seasons Greetings.... it is Merry Christmas.

It is my favorite time of the year. It is a time to reflect on religious beliefs, time to honor our family and it is a time to celebrate friendships.

Country or "rural" people seem to have a deep appreciation for family, friends and the Christmas season. My father used to say, "Enjoy 365 days of doing what you wish, but come home at Thanksgiving and Christmas." Our family, all of them, still carry on this tradition today.

As we approach Christmas, take a few extra moments to reflect on the good things of the year, meditate on the true meaning of Christmas. Appreciate our animals and be proud of our way of life.

For me personally, I deeply enjoy calling my friends during Christmas. I would love to have the opportunity to call you this year as well! Please send an email to

[ChristmasCalls@bestofamericabyhorseback.com](mailto:ChristmasCalls@bestofamericabyhorseback.com) to request a personal phone call to you or someone you love....a gift to you from me. On behalf of Pat and our whole family, make the best of what you have and have a most joyful Christmas!

~Tom



## Upcoming TV Episodes

**December 13**—3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride at Leatherwood Mountains, NC

**December 20**—Anita-Alta BRHA Horse & Youth Camp Trail Ride, NC

**December 27**—Reed Valley Ranch, CA

**January 3**—Reagan Ranch, CA

**January 10**—Annual Potato Blossom Festival & Trail Ride, ME

**January 17**—Western Caribbean cruise & Belize trail ride 2011

Tuesdays at 7 pm ET on

**RFD TV**

Thank you to our television show sponsors!



### **Congratulations to our MONTHLY PRIZE WINNERS!!!!**

Cheryl Cotton from Elba, New York---Horse Quencher gift set  
 Rita Sole from Marysville, Washington---Leather Therapy gift set  
 Lori Wheeler from Newport, New York – Best of America by Horseback T-shirt  
 Anne Varljen from Liberty Hill, Texas – Best of America by Horseback T-shirt  
 Cynthia Coniglio from Quakertown, Pennsylvania – CSI Saddle Pad  
 Jacci Perry from Springdale, Arkansas – Twisted X Footwear  
 Candy Perez from Bakersfield, California – E-Z Up Stirrups

**There will be winners EVERY month....Renew your membership today for only \$29.95 for an entire year! Renewal is quick and easy – just choose one of three ways!**

1. Call our office at 540-829-9555 to quickly renew over the phone
2. Visit the Trail Club website and easily renew online by clicking on “My Subscription”
3. Email [becky@bestofamericabyhorseback.com](mailto:becky@bestofamericabyhorseback.com) your renewal request and we’ll be happy to send you the renewal form.



### *On the Trail with Mark Laney, CEO*

Folks that know my wife, Brenda will not believe this. Brenda, who once said, “if I can just get this mule (LaneyB) it will be the last equine I will ever own,” now owns a Missouri Foxtrotter!

Here is the story behind this unexpected switch. Brenda loves to ride---riding is her passion (next to me of course). But in the past few months, after just 2-3 hour rides she was hurting so much (from an old tail bone injury) and because it was taking 3-4 hours after each ride to recuperate to just function half-way normal, Brenda had said on more than one occasion, “I just don’t know how much longer I can continue to ride, I hurt so bad.” When we were at our Grand Tour Trail Ride at Brushy Creek Lodge & Resort near Black, Missouri ([www.brushycreeklodge.com](http://www.brushycreeklodge.com)) in October, my mule was having an issue with giving his front left leg, (which later turned out to be fine), so I had asked Brushy Creek Lodge owners, JoAnn and George Becker if I could ride one of their horses in order to give my mule, Mountain Man more rest. They said sure. They raise Missouri Foxtrotters and their company, in addition to the lodge is Valley Springs Foxtrotters ([www.missouri-foxtrotter.com](http://www.missouri-foxtrotter.com)) Brenda told them she had always wanted to see what a ride on a Foxtrotter was like and asked if they had another for her to ride. They did. After 3 consecutive days of 3 hour rides on a Missouri Foxtrotter, Brenda had absolutely no pain or soreness after any of the rides! In fact, she felt better after than before. Well, needless to say, when you compare a situation that is headed toward elimination of your passion, to an alternative that will allow you to continue with that passion...Brenda now owns a Missouri Foxtrotter named Cassanova. After the ride at Brushy Creek Lodge & Resort, we rode at the Flying R Ranch near West Plains, Missouri ([flying-r-ranch.com](http://flying-r-ranch.com)) and then traveled to North Carolina to Leatherwood Mountains, our Headquarters for our Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride. ([www.leatherwoodmountains.com](http://www.leatherwoodmountains.com)) After leaving there we headed back home to Texas, by way of Caprock Canyons State Park in Quitaque, Texas ([http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/caprock\\_canyons](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/caprock_canyons)). After all this riding, Brenda remained pain free. The thing that impressed us the most about JoAnn and George is that they do not trade horses—they breed and raise their own line of Missouri Foxtrotters and they have bred them for their great disposition. They know exactly what they are selling. Although Cassanova is only 5 and had been in a pasture for a year before because the prior owners who purchased him from the Beckers could no longer ride and asked them to find him a new owner...he does everything! *(Continued on page 4)*

Here we are right in the middle of the holiday season with Christmas just around the corner. This means quality family time together and sharing in that special feeling we get at this time of

year. I personally cannot go through this season without reflecting upon the year's events and the wonderful friends I have made over the past year and years traveling with Best of America by Horseback. As I give thanks this year, I want you all to know you are a special part of my life and what it means to me to know you are part of the fabric that makes me who I am. The miles ridden together, the stages and campfires we have shared all add up to a whole cup full of blessings! I am truly honored to be able to share the music I love with such appreciative audiences and know that you support my efforts. As I echo the sentiments of one of my heroes, the late Marty Robbins, you are "not Fans, but Friends."

*Del Shields, Co-Host & Western Musician*



As we look to the coming year and the events we have lined up, I look forward with much anticipation and excitement knowing we will see many of you again and have the opportunity to ride together once more. I have some very exciting news to share with you that I hope you can be a part of. However, you'll have to wait for the announcement just a little longer until the details are finalized. Until then, keep tuning in to each episode for the beautiful scenery that is brought to you living rooms by Best of America by Horseback! You may even see yourself on TV! We love hearing from you, so keep in touch through Facebook, email or phone calls and we'll get through the winter together sharing memories and dreams for the new year to come!

*God Bless, Merry Christmas & "Always Ride the High Trail."  
~ Del*

### UPCOMING BEST OF AMERICA BY HORSEBACK TRAIL RIDES & EVENTS



**Plan NOW to join us at these 2012 rides & events!**

**March 3-8:** Western Caribbean cruise with port stops in Belize & Cozumel! Trail riding at Banana Bank Lodge in Belize!

**April 13-14:** Tom will be attending the Great American Trail Horse Sale---Lexington, Virginia

**April 20-22:** Spring Ride at Flying R Ranch—West Plains, Missouri

**May 18-20:** "Gathering at the Farm"—Culpeper, Virginia

**October 12-14:** Grand Tour Trail Ride at Flying R Ranch—West Plains, Missouri

**October 19-21:** Grand Tour Trail Ride at Sycamore Spring Ranch---Locust Grove, Oklahoma

**October 26-28:** 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride at Leatherwood Mtns---Ferguson, North Carolina

**More rides being added to schedule soon!!  
[www.bestofamericabyhorseback.com](http://www.bestofamericabyhorseback.com)**

*Mark continued.....*

You would think he was several years older and just have finished intensive training! Like the mules, we have found that Cassanova is very surefooted in rough terrain, for which the Foxtrotter is known for, even when traveling 12-15 miles an hour in a foxtrot. The Foxtrotter originated in the Ozarks and has been known to be an all around good horse, used as a ranch horse, worked cattle, plowed the family garden, hauled feed, took young men courting on Saturday night and then pulled the family buggy to church on Sunday morning. The Foxtrotter has the reputation of being the epitome of an all around versatile horse, whether it is for trail riding, competition or ranch work—known as the “poor man’s” horse because the Foxtrotter can do it all!

PS....How do you keep the healthcare records for your equine—worming, shots, Coggins, shodding, etc? If you do not have a “system” in place, take a look at the free form at the following link for documenting everything about your equine.

<http://www.farnamhorse.com/promos/healthrecord.php>

*Life's a Journey, Enjoy the Ride! --Mark*

### *Leatherwood Mountains—“A Gathering of Kindred Spirits” by Dutch Henry*

Howdy Folks!

On the weekend of October 22 at the beautiful Leatherwood Mountain Resort there was a grand gathering of folks celebrating friendships. Friendships that were years in the making and those that had just begun but will last a lifetime. The common threads running through those friendships are horses, Tom Seay and the Best of America by Horseback family. I was honored to be part of that gathering.

There were 120 riders from all across the country, sharing fun and fellowship that weekend. Twenty-three of the folks who took part in the Mexico to Canada Trail Ride in 2009 came for a reunion. Small groups from Texas, Florida and West Virginia, too. In addition riders and horses from more than a dozen other states! We enjoyed daily rides through stunningly beautiful mountain trails amount trees sporting their finest fall colors. I reckon that’s why they call it the “Fall Colors Trail Ride!” This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual.



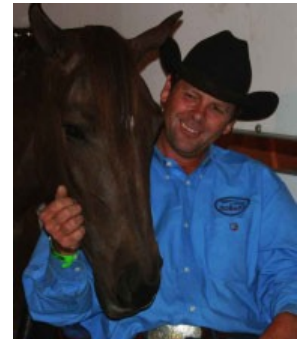
Each morning folks gathered for a fine breakfast in the clubhouse. That usually took 2 hours. There were lots of stories to tell and listen to, you understand. The top shelf staff kept the great food and hot coffee coming and Tom could always be found at the end of the big table, holding court. There were plenty of stories floating in the air at all times, carried atop the laughter. The voices lively, the stories funny, serious and sometimes exaggerated, but always well told. Also carried in the air was the feeling of togetherness and welcome. The deep camaraderie was palpable. I have written 10 stories now for our newsletter and always the folks I interview tell me the BOABH family has a special feeling and spirit. I felt that

embrace all weekend.

After breakfast we’d set out on our daily rides, but the story telling didn’t stop. Riding along I enjoyed listening to folks talk about the time they’d ridden with Tom and BOABH family in Texas, California, Wyoming or Florida. I even got to ride ol’ Tom’s horse Willie on Friday and Saturday. Willie has a most delightful slow jog. He made me smile. Rode some with Del Shields too, I’m proud to say. What a wonderful man he is. Well, I coaxed him into singing a few songs as we rode along and to his delight, some of us joined in. What a treat! Didn’t much matter if you could carry a tune in a bucket or not. Del would lead and we’d sing along. We’re all family after all.

Each afternoon there were clinics like fly fishing or Dave Robart’s training and his Pinchless Bits clinic. I even conducted an impromptu clinic for a few folks on stretching and pre-ride exercises for your horse. I think the horses liked it too! *(Continued on page 6)*

*World Champion & Clinician, Dave Robart*



Hey "Horse People!"--- inside joke from the last newsletter. If you didn't read the November newsletter, pull it up, it was a great issue! I'm excited about the upcoming year 2012! This coming spring I will be providing clinics for Best of America by Horseback trail rides as well as private 1:1 sessions for the riders. I cannot stress enough how much I enjoy clinics and sharing what I have learned over the many, many years (I won't say how many!) of working with and around horses. I grew up around horses and I'm a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation horse trainer. When I was a young teenager I was quiet, but was always watching how the trainers trained and treated the horses...and always watching how the horse responded. I watched and learned what I wanted to do, what I didn't want to do and what I would never do. I have been blessed to able to train horses for 25 years. I have a strong desire to share what I've learned. I mentioned I was a quiet teenager...well now when it comes to horses, I can't stop talking, even when I'm asked to! Haha!

One of the things I will be covering is how to recognize the smallest of signals the horse is giving as communication. I compare this to a traffic light signal with green meaning all is good, yellow meaning something is about to happen and red meaning the horse just \_\_\_\_\_!! and it is too late to respond. We know when the light changes green, the yellow caution lights up. You may think yellow is the pre-signal, but the green going off is your first signal that change is about to happen. Most riders see the big signals such as a horse that runs backwards wanting to fall down after being saddled. This is most definitely the red light, but the small signal (yellow) prior would be the stance change, the position of the legs changing, the look of the eye changes or even the horse's breathing changes. There are all sorts of yellow light signals that can be observed. What I want to share with you are those pre-signals I've learned and recognized. Learning these will help you as a rider to communicate and respond instead of reacting after a red light issue has occurred. This change in your approach will improve your relationship with your horse. Your enjoyment of your horse will greatly increase. With this new understanding your horse's response to you will also greatly improve as well as safety for you and your horse.

Please email me with any of the "red light" situations and questions of missed "yellow light" signals. I will select one, addressing it in a future newsletter. [Pinchlessbits@aol.com](mailto:Pinchlessbits@aol.com)

[www.pinchlessbits.com](http://www.pinchlessbits.com)

*Enjoy Your Horse! ~Dave*

I'm not much for gadgets but every now and again a new product comes along that isn't a gizmo and is really worth having.

During the week of Thanksgiving I was doing extensive fencing by repairing old fences & adding new fences. There is a fellow by the name of Jerry Simmons who perfected the typical hammer and it is the best I have ever seen for safely stretching wire and a multitude of other tasks making it a "must have."

I could actually do the work of two people using this hammer. You can get in touch with Jerry at [www.ranchhandtools.com](http://www.ranchhandtools.com) or by phone at 936-333-7168. (He did not know I was putting this in the newsletter). Every farmer/rancher really needs this.

It is the perfect gift and it has a lifetime guarantee!!

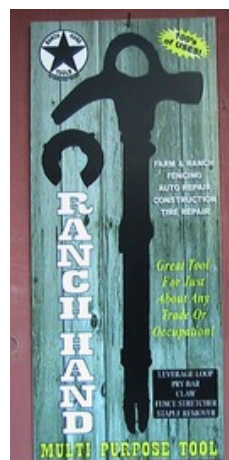
~Tom

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*(Dutch continued...)*

When we gathered for dinner more laughter and stories filled the air. Del would sing and a few times folks grabbed their fiddle and banjo and joined right in. There was clogging and dancing, hooting and clapping—an all around high-spirited fun day! Friday night Del was set up on the stage and putting on quite a show when Tom introduced me and asked me come up and read from my novel. I do a lot better writing than reading to folks and by golly I don't telling you I was a bit nervous. Tom and Del picked up on my nervousness and cracked a few jokes and chased most of the worry out of me. Del adjusted the mic and told me "You'll do fine." That's how this family supports each other.

We had a grand banquet Saturday night in Leatherwood's big pavilion and while many functions and weddings occur there, I doubt there has ever been a gathering more filled with friendship and bonding than that night. I looked around the room some, just to take in the smiles and atmosphere. When the 23 riders from the Mexico to Canada Trail Ride took the stage with Tom while Del led them all in singing his song, "The Best of America," I felt my eyes tear up. I wasn't alone. In that pavilion was a gathering of kindred spirits.

There's a magic in the air at Best of America by Horseback gatherings that just hugs a person and touches you with a special kind of warmth and friendship. If it has been awhile since you rode with them or if you have not yet had the pleasure, treat yourself to a helping of their unique camaraderie real soon!

**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](http://www.dutchhenryauthor.com). Dutch would love to hear from you at [dutchhenry@hughes.net](mailto:dutchhenry@hughes.net)*

The home of the Best of America by Horseback's headquarters, Leatherwood Mountains and Best of America by Horseback just concluded its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fall Colors Trail Ride with a record number of 117 folks attending, plus staff from BOABH and Leatherwood. We also had a record number of folks who are thinking about a vacation home and/or an eventual retirement home take us up on our offer to show them the heart & soul of the Leatherwood Mtns gated community, including the real estate offerings that are currently available. We invite all readers to join us in 2012 when we expect an even larger number of BOABH fans to ride and see the beauty and serenity of Leatherwood Mtns as well as to ride on the "Tom Seay" Trail which was dedicated to Tom during last year's annual fall ride. We look forward to having you with us!



~Phil Whitson

[www.leatherwoodmountains.com](http://www.leatherwoodmountains.com)

**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
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- \*Five Star accommodations in hacienda
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- \*All levels of riders are welcome
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*Steve Edwards, Horse & Mule Trainer*

www.queenvalleymuleranch.com

### **Conditioning Your Equine for the Trail and Trailer—Part I**

Today folks are sure hitting the highways and trails all across the USA and the riding atop an equine is the favorite for the baby boomers to see the USA by. I'm seeing "Pop" with his 1-ton truck and "Mom" has her horse trailer with living quarters. Yep, the horse, mule or donkey is in some cases taking the place of man's best friend, the dog. We see this best friend packing us up and down the trails. Now that we have the truck, trailer and the saddle, then need to prepare our equines for the long hours in the trailer and on the trail. I want to make some suggestions on how to prepare your equine mentally and physically for the life you have chosen for them.

You need to have a good nutrition feeding program at home and one feeding program for the road and the trail. For this month, the part of the nutrition I'd like to focus on is your equine's hydration. Dehydration occurs when your equine's body loses excessive amounts of water. When all is normal, both you and your equine lose body water on a continual basis in the form of sweat, urine and feces. Dehydration is estimated in terms of percentage of body weight that the equine has lost. It is very difficult to detect losses that are 5% or less. At this point, the skin may become less elastic, which is seen as "skin tenting". If you pull up a loose fold of your equine's skin, it may take a longer time to return to its normal state than when they are well hydrated. As dehydration progresses, their heart rate will increase because there will be less fluid in the blood vessels causing the heart to pump the blood faster to achieve the same results as when the horse is not dehydrated. In addition, the equine will urinate less frequently or not at all. Their performance will also deteriorate because the dehydration contributes to exhaustion and eventually with severe dehydration, they will not be able to perform at all.

At the most basic level, electrolytes are salts, such as table salt, dissolved in water. Having the proper balance of electrolytes in the body is vital to proper nerve and muscle function. The most important electrolytes include sodium chloride, potassium, calcium and magnesium. After a trail ride or endurance ride your equine's proper levels of these essential minerals will likely be unbalanced and they will likely be dehydrated. Losses tend to occur early in the ride, even though your equine may appear normal. Signs that you might look for are dry mucous membranes, sunken eyes, fatigue, an increased heart rate or an increased respiratory rate that down decrease with proper cooling down measures or colic.

I prepare my animals for a change of water and environment by putting Gatorade (the Gatorade will mask the smell of the water) and salt in the water just to give them some electrolytes but also to make them think they are drinking the same water as they have at home. I start training to feed and drink from the trailer one week before I load them in the trailer. Do Not give your equine just the water, Gatorade and salt mixture....you must also give them just fresh water as well. The method that works for me is 1 tablespoon of salt, Gatorade to 3 gallons of water. You may have to adjust to your equine's needs.

I will continue this topic in the January issue discussing what I have found works for my equines once the day of departure arrives and also our arrival to the riding destination. Contact me with your equine questions! [steve@muleranch.com](mailto:steve@muleranch.com)

~Steve



### **Sheriff's Posse Christmas Toy Program**

Since 1961 the El Paso County Sheriff's Posse has been collecting and distributing toys and gifts for the needy children of the El Paso areas. The program has grown tremendously since 1961 where it served 30-45 children to now where it benefits over 500 children the local area! Each year the Posse's "Santa Claus" arrives in the Posse's 1860's vintage stagecoach loaded with toys to the wonderment of the waiting children. Our Santa Posseman, Mike McKee talks to the children in both English and Spanish and makes each one feel so very special! Seeing a child clutch what may be his or her only present of the season is truly what makes for a "Posse Christmas!"

We need your help to make a children's Christmas magical this year....

Please donate today to this worthy organization.

[www.epsheriffsposse.com](http://www.epsheriffsposse.com) Call 915-511-1321 or 915-422-8286 to donate