

## DECADE TEAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Riders Name:

Barbara Holmes-Balmer

Horses Name:

Shimelhawa

Region:

North West

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?

A neighbour of mine owned and rode him as a 4 and 5 year old. I could see what a truly great horse he was, both mentally and physically, by the way he dealt with an inexperienced, frightened, heavy rider.

One day he was going too fast for her and she yelled 'Whoa!' He did. She came off and broke her shoulder. It took another year of whining for me to finally get him (at an inflated price, I might add!). The rest is history!

What is your horse's breeding?

Arab - Abu Farwah lines

Sex:

Gelding

DOB:

May 16th, 1988

Horse height:

15 hands just

Approx. Weight:

857 lbs

Color:

Chestnut

Shoe or hoof boot size:

Size 1 easy boot

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)?

He has the perfect conformation, attitude, and was a great age - 6! He is a radiator shape, good feet, large nostrils and, again, attitude. Good work ethic under duress, loves to win and compete.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?

Yes, my Egyptian Arab mare, Gamil Roc-Ette. We did over 3,500 miles together in 12 years (another Decade Team!).

Before Roc-Ette I had a 7/8th Arab who was a game player. He was young (3) when I got him. I learned a lot of what not to do and sold him to a polo player after deciding he was truly bored on the trail! He went on to play polo very well and happily!

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?

About 10 I would say, some just one or 2 rides.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? (if so, describe)

Cattle round-ups and just plain trail riding

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance?

With horses for 58 years, in endurance for 25 years

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?

The challenges! All the challenges!! And the recognition of what you achieve with your horse, not what someone else thinks you achieved (or not).

How old was your horse when first started? First ride?

He was started at 4, did his first ride at 5 (LD) but his first ride with me was when he was 6 (50)

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances)

First year - 5/50 3 completions

Second year - 4/50 - 2 completions

Third year - 4/40 - 4 completions

What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.)

50 miles

How long till you top tenned or; raced;? (if you did)

Top tenned in first year - raced in the 4<sup>th</sup> year

How much time off do you give between ride seasons?

3 to 4 months during the cold, cold, winter months

If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?

I have not done 100's on Shim as we raced the 50's and I couldn't get him slowed down! but I've done plenty on Roc-Ette. My schedule with her was plenty of rest, gradually upping the distance and time of our training rides till we could do 5-hour training rides and recover well. Slow and steady. I would give 2 weeks off after a 100.

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?

Again, slow and steady. I've done a number of 2,3,and 5-day multi-day rides with Shim. I train all season and do the longest one at the end of the season. We never race if Owyhee is coming up in September! We just finish.

At least 3 weeks off after a 3 or 5-day multi-day.

What kind of tack do you use? (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.)

Australian poley - so safe! Equalizer pads- I have 4! and Dixie Midnight pad recently, Neoprene girths work very well with all my horses. I ride in a hackamore but start in a D-ring snaffle

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Easyboots?

My farrier makes shoes from bar stock; I use snow pads in the spring with barium and then pad (or not) again with snow or rim pads before each ride depending upon the terrain we will be going through. I carry an Easyboot but never have had to use one. Knock on wood!

What kind of problems have you encountered?

Just the usual strained tendons, splints,etc., metabolics with my mare, breaking stirrups, leathers, headstalls. Shying for no reason and coming off till I got my Aussie. Slight inexplicable lamenesses - lots of guess work!

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?

Shim got kicked in the shoulder during a pecking order fight and caught his front legs on the top rail of a fence pulling the shoulder muscles right under the scapula adding to the first injury.

How did you work thru it?

Time off and more time off. Starting slow. Walking down hills. Yoga. Massage. Acupuncture. The only good thing about that injury was that it happened in late summer and so he had the time through the winter to heal. I still stretch him and massage under the scapula after he's warmed up.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?

All our rides were good! Too many to mentioned and hard to choose, however, I think the days we rode at the Owyhee Canyonlands were the most challenging, beautiful and adventurous.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?

I have been and still am the Ride Manager for Ride Over the Rainbow in Merritt BC for the past 17 years. It is really exciting for me to ride those trails but Shim knows them so well that he wants to run, run, run!! This particular year my daughter was doing her very first ride on my Husband's horse. I was doing the 50 - she was doing the 30. Shim was fighting and fighting me to go faster. I just wanted to finish having a different agenda than he apparently! So I was really tired and angry. When I finished my 2<sup>nd</sup> loop I heard through the Day Manager and the "radio guys" that Karen had not gone through one of the radio checks and was not in

camp. When I left (after making doubly sure she had not gone through) I wanted to go as fast as I could to the next radio point but Shim, bless his little pee brain, said, no way, you are angry and worried and I don't want to go with you. So it was a fight to get him along the trail at all! When I finally reached the radio point and spoke to them, they had heard from base came that Karen had arrived - they had just missed her number in the rush that went through with her!

What was your most humbling experience?

Relating to the above; I was so pleased and happy that she was safe I hollered at Shim "Whoopie, let's go" and he did! through the next 10 miles to camp. Afterwards I figured out that he had picked up my emotions so well that he was right there with me mentally and emotionally and I didn't even "hear" him.

That was very humbling that he could put up with me even with the anger I was showing against his behaviour.

This connection has happened again and again and I now am aware of how little it takes for a horse to know 'where you are at'.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?

Definitely connection with your horse and what a huge part it plays in your riding

To be a better rider;

Know how to fit a saddle and what an important part of behaviour saddle fit is;

Rest time is as important as riding time;

Where does your horse live? (pasture--# acres, dirt lot, paddock, etc.) Board? At home?  
Full turnout?

We have our 4 horses in 5 acres of pasture at home.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? (pasture, w/ a herd, etc.)

Some stalling mostly turned out with the herd in at least 1 acre varied pasture

What are your horses strengths? Weaknesses?

Strengths: His confidence, willingness to work, competitiveness and confirmation.

Weaknesses: I have to say this with tongue in cheek, but competitiveness!

I can't really think of anything else.

What advice do you have for new riders?

Be patient. Don't over-ride your horse, listen to it!

Get a proper fitting saddle - keep checking it for fit.

Build them up, don't break them down.

**SLOW AND STEADY WITH SMALL INCREMENTS OF INCREASE IN SPEED AND DISTANCE**

Looking back, what would you do differently?

Be a better rider earlier - spend more time on the groundwork - be fitter.

What do you feel you did right?

I don't really know specifically - just listened to Shim, let him set the pace. I have a really good Farrier - Shoeing is very, very important

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it?

I wanted to do a 100 on Shim, as I had done so many on Roc-Ette. All I got to was 75 miles of the Oregon 100. He suffered a hind leg soft tissue injury, probably because he was not conditioned for sand. It is rocky where we live, not sandy. You never stop learning!

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?

He is what some people call a Rock Star. Dominate, Energetic, Curious, and Friendly. He knows his job and enjoys it tremendously. He is always happy to see me and looks for me when I'm moving about camp. He can be very bossy on the trail - me too!

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? (Multidays, 100s, 50s, etc.)

Multidays

Describe your electrolyte protocol.

I use Northern Lytes, an electrolyte developed and manufactured here in Canada by Trisha Dowling DVM. I usually give  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce doses the night before a ride, with breakfast and at every vet check and on the trail (if he is drinking). Depending upon the horse, the weather, the pace, etc. I will give 1-ounce doses. We mix the lytes with apple juice although Shim will eat them in his mashes.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?

No, not special - just feed him like a horse and introduce changes to his diet gradually.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program (ie, changed from one hay to another, added something special) that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem?

Time of feeding before a ride - we get great results with a small beet pulp mash about 3 hours before start time. Also, no alfalfa (unless he "steals" it at a vet check).

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?

Northern Lytes, Probiotics

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe)

During the competition year I use a Recovery supplement. Of course, it's hard to say if it is working! He's doing very well - is that a result?

How far do you usually travel to rides?

Three to six hours. We never do more than 8 or 9 hours in a day with breaks every 4 hours. Once or twice a year we will travel to multiday rides or Championship rides 10 to 20 hours away taking 2 or 3 days to get there

Do you go to many rides outside of your region?  
Not many - hope to though!

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why?  
Terre O'Brennan, - see below

Grant Balmer, - My husband, very very supportive and encouraging. I have threatened to sell his horses so that he can just crew for me! I have learned so much from him about horse language and body talk. He's made a huge difference in the way I look at horses and how I treat them.

Julie Suhr - I'm approaching 67. I'm riding a green horse. I hold Julie up as a measuring stick to my inevitable aging. If she can do it, so can it!!

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them.  
Terre O'Brennan was/is my first trail partner. She started endurance in 1983 a year before me. We shared a rig (the infamous Phlash), went to lots of rides together, learned together, and boarded together. She did my first 50 with me and my first 100, crewed for me when I went "to FEI". I crewed for her when she went "to FEI". We are Co-managers of Ride Over the Rainbow. We were the executives for a local club and the provincial club (ERABC) for many years. Now we live in different areas of the province. We see each other at rides and get together whenever our lives take us to the same place.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?  
There won't be a next horse - I already have Roc-Ette's son, Dancer whom I'm starting this year and when he's 20 I'll be 80 - perhaps we'll do the Tevis like Julie!! LOL!

Add any additional comments or stories that you can think of:  
Just go for it! Take up the challenge be it small or big, 15 miles or 100 miles, slow or fast, easy or difficult. Git 'er done!

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