

MORAGA HORSEMEN'S NEWSLETTER

March 2006

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY MHA 1956 TO 2006

March 2 MJHA/MHA Poluck dinner
Presentation on Combined Driving
21 MHA meeting at the Fend's,
Walnut Creek

April 6 MJHA meeting at Mara's
Lafayette.
8 MHA meeting
29 Arena Clean-up



Your Board of Directors hard at work at the first
Board meeting of the year.

MJHA/MHA Potluck Dinner

March 2nd at 6:30

Join us at the Willow Spring Church.
(Directions are below).

Harriet Merrit will be there to talk about
Combined Driving. This should be an
interesting topic and something different
to hear about in the horse world.
The potluck will start at 6:30 and the
juniors are providing the lasagna.

MHA and MJHA members please bring
either an appetizer, salad, or a dessert
to feed 10.

Last Names:
A-F: Appetizers
G-L: Salads
M-R: drinks
S-Z: Desserts



Also, we are having a White Elephant
raffle and a silent auction. If you have
anything that you think someone else
would like, please bring it. If you have
anything that is brand new or a more
exclusive item, please bring it for our
silent auction. Raffle tickets will be \$1
each or \$5 for 6 tickets. This will help
cover the cost of renting the church,
which is unfortunately not free anymore,
so the juniors are going to pay for it.

Directions to Willow Spring Church:
from 24W - Exit at Lafayette/Moraga
exit. Take Moraga Road into Moraga to
Moraga Way intersection (where
Safeway, Jack In the Box are). Turn
right onto Moraga Way. Turn left onto
School Street (across from Wells Fargo
Bank). Follow School St. thru 4-way
stop. Willow Spring Church is on the left
side of the street (across from Saklan
Valley School). Park in the large lot in
back of the building. Enter through the
arched doorway in the back.

from 24E - Exit at Orinda exit and take
right at stop light onto Camino Pablo,
which turns into Moraga Way. Stay on
Moraga Way into Moraga. Turn right on

School St. (after Country Club Drive). Follow School St. thru 4-way stop. Willow Spring Church is on the left side of the street (across from Saklan Valley School). Park in the large lot in back of the building. Enter through the arched doorway in the back.



Got Root Beer?

John Allen has the Board of Directors tasting a huge variety of root beer as a possible fund raiser for MHA.

also send entries by snail mail to Karen Bottiani, Lafayette, CA 94549, or email to Laura Fend ljfend@pacbell.net . Questions? Contact Karen Bottiani kbottiani@comcast.net .

To view photos of Moraga Juniors, go to Photobucket online. The account name is MJHA 2006, and the password is Moraga.



MHA 50th Anniversary LOGO CONTEST

Help create the logo for our club's 50th Anniversary! The winning design will be chosen by the Anniversary Planning Committee: Laura Fend, Zette Thierry, Gayle Jackson, Lauren Harrison, Liz Peterson and Karen Bottiani.

Contest Rules

*Deadline for submission of entries is April 1, 2006.

*The contest is open to all members of MHA and MJHA.

*All entries must be in 8 1/2x11 inch format.

*Black and white, or possibly 3 color design.

*Keep it simple! (The winning design will need editing for size and other considerations. We plan to use this for a variety of projects this year.)

*Original art work only. No "clip art".

*Include "MHA 50th Anniversary" or "MHA 1956-2006".

Please bring your designs to the MJHA Potluck if you can. You may

MHA Installation Dinner

Zette did an outstanding job of planning an installation dinner that set the tone for 2006. According to Madam President Thierry, "This year is going to be fun!" There are rumors that there will be no Robert's Rules of Order, only "Zette's Rules" (of disorder?)



Susan William's was presented with the tradition silver buckle for a long tough year as president. Thank you, Susan for all of your hard work!

The 2005 Board of Directors commissioned Karen to create a model of Cisco that was presented to Gayle Jackson for her repeat performance as Chairman of the Board.



Other awards included a crown with root beer bottle tops for root beer King John Allen. Each Board member was given a ribbon with significant wording...Liz Strauss got a ribbon with “dynamite” for adding so much to each meeting. Steve Peterson felt that his kids would be jealous of his “Bravo” ribbon. Many thanks to all who served MHA last year, and many good wishes to those who will forge ahead this year!

GOING TO THE DOGS?

The Board of Directors has asked that the following reminder be posted in the newsletter. It is important that the MHA set a good example for other EBMUD trail users. To this end, the Pasture Use Guidelines require members to abide by EBMUD trail use rules. One of the EBMUD rules require dogs be leashed at all times while on the trail. Within the Arena/Pasture vicinity, leashed dogs are only allowed on Riche Loop Trail and Kings Canyon Trail. They are not allowed at all on Rocky Ridge Trail. Dog owners should also be diligent in cleaning up after their dogs – it’s much worse than stepping in manure!

San Ramon Horsemen’s Potluck Dinners and Speakers

Annie Bradfield from Equitours will give a presentation on their rides that cover 7 continents with lots of photos. The potluck is at the Alamo Womens Club at 1401 Danville Blvd, 6:30 cocktails at no host bar and 7:15pm is dinner. Bring main dish, salad or dessert to serve 10 people. The cover charge is now \$8 for SRVHA members and \$10 for non-members (to cover rental cost of the clubhouse)

The last potluck of the year is Friday, April 10th and SRVHA will have the new executive director of Xenophon program, Chris Moisenco along with Judy Lazarus speaking about the program, along with a silent white elephant auction.

Xenophon needs horses

Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Program had a streak of bad luck this last year, and lost some it’s cherished program horses. They are looking for good solid replacement horses to work with the children. If you know of any possible mounts, please contact Chris Moisenco at 510 339-6047 or

cmoisenco@xenophontrc.org.. Below is a poem written in memory of Sunny, one of the sweet ponies that passed on just before Christmas.

A Tribute to Sunny

by Jan Bindas

Walk on Sunny said her special riders for almost 14 years, most softly, one loudly for everyone to hear.

Sunny was special, so gentle, trustworthy and kind. Ask her to do anything, she never seemed to mind.

She was one in a million, loved by all. And she taught many, many children to sit up tall. Sunny did jumping, dressage, vaulting and trail, yet challenged her riders to keep her on the rail.

She took care of her students and gave everyone her best, always giving them the confidence to do the rest. Yet Sunny was a character, she enjoyed a bit of fun, it was this spark in her that made her one of the favorite ones. She is gone too soon and will always be missed. Walk on Sunny, walk on Sunny, you were the best.

First Endurance Ride in the USA

The first organized ride documented in this country was put on by the Morgan Horse Club of Vermont and a couple of Arab breeders in 1913. The purpose was to show the government that Morgans and Arabians would make good cavalry horses. The ride was between White River Junction, VT and Saint Johnsbury, VT, approximately 154 miles. An Arab won.

Over the following years the government took over these "remount tests", and held them till the 20s. There were a variety of rides and rules, ending up with a model of 300 miles over 6 days carrying 200+ lbs, judged on speed and soundness. The bad news was the Arabians beat the remounts and won every ride. It was their soundness that was the outstanding factor. This was an unfortunate result, because the cavalrymen did not want to give up their remounts to ride the unpredictable, small, relatively uncomfortable Arabians. The last ride ended up at the Washington Monument in 1926.

Once again an Arab won, I believe his name was Crabbet.

The government moved on to mechanized transport and lost interest. A group of Vermonters decided to keep it going, and from that came the Green Mountain Horse Association 3-Day 100, which has been held annually for SEVENTY ONE YEARS. That's impressive. During the war, people would ride to the ride, ride 100-miles of competition, judged on the "fit to continue" principal, and then ride home, adding up to several hundred miles in transit.

The first endurance rides in the area was a 50/50 in the late 60s or very early 70s. It is not easy to find the date, because there was embarrassment and shame surrounding it, because a horse died. Endurance rides were not held again till the Vermont 100, some 25 years ago. The ride was picketed for several years by one of the old timers, who remembered endurance races prior to AERC.

Dinah Rojek, Education Committee of AERC

Who Spreads the Weeds? Don't Bet on the Horse

Study of how nonnative plants invade parkland focuses on the long-held notion that manure carries the seeds. So far, it looks like a myth.

By Andrew H. Malcolm, Times Staff Writer
January 20, 2006

Some California university students and their department chairman have launched an unusual study of an ordinary substance - horse manure - that could help protect the state's parklands from invasive plants. And protect the reputation of horses all over.

The study is the first scientifically rigorous effort to determine if noxious weed seeds accidentally consumed by horses end up spreading the weeds into new territory through horse droppings,

as many outdoors enthusiasts have long believed. Fears of contaminating virgin lands with rogue plants have already caused several states to require expensive certified weed-free feeds for horses using public lands.

"Weeds are an enormous problem in our nation's parks," said Holly Bundock, a spokeswoman for the National Park Service, one of numerous federal, state and county agencies charged with the never-ending battle against weeds.

But weeds are not just aesthetically displeasing, said Rita Beard of the Park Service's Biological Resource Management Division. "Invasive weeds like the yellow star thistle systematically seek to create their own monoculture on wild lands," she said. By taking over large land areas aggressively, they consume sparse moisture and destroy the biodiversity that wildlife and insects depend on for food and shelter. Some weeds, such as the knapweed family, even create a zone of poisoned soil around each plant that prohibits growth of other plants.

Completely halting the spread of seeds in the wild is a hopeless task, given that nature has designed them to propagate so well. Seeds have the ability to float on wind, to be consumed by birds and expelled, or to grasp onto passing animal fur. But humans also inadvertently accelerate the emigration of seeds to new territory in the mud on mountain bikes, off-road vehicles and even in the hooves of animals and boots and clothing of hikers.

Many have long suspected horses too. Bundock says the new study, being conducted by Dominican University in San Rafael with a \$100,000 Park Service grant, is still a year from completion and officials are reluctant to draw conclusions yet. But preliminary indications from Northern California sites indicate the horse as demon weed-seed spreader may actually be a rural legend. The study expands into Southern California this year.

"Weeds make a fire problem," Bundock added.

"Weeds make a drought problem. Weeds make erosion problems. Weeds are very serious and

they're becoming a more serious problem every year. Thirty years ago we rarely had wildfires in the desert. Now dried weeds have created abundant fuels there."

Federal and state land management agencies have long had in place integrated weed management strategies to combat existing populations of undesirable plants. Less focused have been efforts to prevent new infestations, and increased human use of wild lands also creates increased opportunities for further spreading.

Last year the Park Service awarded the grant to Dominican to study the perceived problem of horses and to devise a variety of public educational materials to combat the spread of weeds. One result, for example, has been pilot tests of a simple mountain bike tire scrubber to remove clinging mud and its tiny cargo of seeds at trailheads.

Horses are frequent visitors to roadless park areas transporting both riders and supplies. More than 700,000 horses a year cross onto national park land in California alone, according to one estimate. They consume hay, grains and available grasses. Requiring that the animals be fed certified weed-free feed imposes significant costs on owners and others. But would that make any difference in curbing weed spread?

"We've had all sorts of comments, assumptions, hypotheses and anecdotes," said Sibdas Ghosh, head of Dominican's department of natural science and a research leader. "Many believe that seeds pass through the horse gut and, once in horse manure, they sprout and germinate in a new location.

Theoretically, these could involve noxious weeds." But Ghosh's research of the professional literature on weeds and wild lands found this widespread belief based on absolutely no documentation.

Ghosh, colleague Mietek Kolipinski and their students developed a strict scientific protocol to guide the studies. They employed student biology majors to collect dozens of horse manure

samples from trail, paddock and pasture sites in the Bay Area. This year, they will report on additional collections from both Northern and Southern California.

The samples were separated, labeled and cultivated in weed-free soil in small pots at a university greenhouse free of contamination. Of the 90 pots, 34 plants germinated in 21 of them. All plants were then identified by a native-plant specialist. They included toad rush, dooryard knotweed, summer mustard, bur-clover, purslane, cheeseweed and 25 Italian ryegrass plants.

Some of the cultivated plants were nonnative to the areas where that manure sample was collected. But none of them was listed by California's Department of Food and Agriculture as a noxious weed, probably indicating the horses are already eating weed-free feed, avoiding such plants and not spreading weeds. The next round of tests will determine if that initial pattern holds true for horses in the rest of the state.

"While we await the study results," Bundock said, "we can still proceed with an aggressive education program to make individuals aware of their potential role in spreading weeds."

Alien invaders

Public land managers are trying to stem the spread of invasive plants, which are referred to as noxious weeds. Most of the weeds listed below spread quickly and displace native vegetation. Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*), from Mediterranean region

Description: Yellow flowers on prostrate stems up to 2.5 feet long

Problem: Foliage is toxic to livestock, especially sheep, when consumed in quantity. Produces many stout-spined burrs that can injure people and

animals and puncture bicycle tires.

Yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), from southern Europe.

Description: Up to 6 feet tall

Problem: Plants typically develop impenetrable stands. Causes a disease in horses that permanently damages the animal's ability to control fine motor skills, including mouth and lip movements.

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), from Eurasia

Description: Green aquatic plant

Problem: Aggressively forms dense stands or large subsurface mats. Pieces that break off form new plants, making eradication difficult.

Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*), from southeast Eurasia

Description: Bushy weeds with white, pink or pale purple flowers atop a spiny bract. Reaches 2 feet tall.

Problem: Usually forms large, dense infestations. Produces toxins that affect other plants, often displacing native vegetation.

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), from Western Europe

Description: Spiny evergreen shrub, up to 10 feet tall, with yellow pea-like flowers.

Problem: Mature plants, which form thickets, contain flammable oils. Older shrubs develop center of dead material and are highly flammable. Branchlets end as thorns.

Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), from southern Europe, northern Africa

Description: Shrubs grow to 10 feet tall, with green stems and yellow to dark red pea-like flowers.

Problem: Forms dense stands that displace native plants and wildlife.

Infestations increase fire hazard. Flowers and seeds contain quino-lizidine alkaloids and can be toxic to humans and livestock when ingested.

Foliage may be mildly toxic.