

Rick Nelson – UMECRA Hall of Fame

Rick Nelson: The first UMECRA ride I participated in was a 25-mile competitive ride at Forestville State Park. I remember 4 things about that day:

1. It was hot!
2. We were judged on how we mounted our horses.
3. There was a trailer parked in amongst the rest that had a goat and 2 children milling around it.
4. When our ride was over my daughter, Samantha, was very pleased with the completion award she received and she thought we should do this again. (I thought it was the most ridiculous ride I had ever participated in.)

That was 36 years ago.

The next year the trailer with the goat and children was at the ride again. The person that owned the goat is still a member of our organization.

Award Presentation

Rick Nelson was an inaugural member of both UMECRA and AHDRA. According to Louise's notes, he managed the Palisades Ride from 1972 to 1995. He has been on the UMECRA Board of Directors in one way or another since 1972:

- Serving as vice president from 1999 to 2001
- Was an Illinois Director from 2003 to 2007
- Was the only person elected as the Immediate Past President and
- More recently as UMECRA's president.

He also was one of the founding fathers of AHDRA and served as its president for more than 10 years.

He's managed to ride 5,555 recorded AERC endurance miles and 1065 LD miles. Given that I always saw Rick leading his horse on the endurance rides, this mileage amounts to walking from San Francisco to Boston and back again.

His total recorded competitive mileage is 3170 miles

I would now like to provide a few more facts about this gentleman – the good, the bad, and the ugly. I feel I am entitled, since he has been one of my best friends for almost 30 years now, and one of the strengths of our friendship is that we can tell each other the truth. He once told me that the coldest night he ever spent was in my trailer in northern Minnesota in early winter, sleeping between me and Louise Riedel. The two coldest hearted ol' broads he knew. I'd like to thank him for putting me in such great company.

When I think of this guy, three things come to mind. The first is his penchant for accidents. I only have heard about mishaps prior to 1980, but shortly after we became friends, this guy felled a tree on the 4th of July. Unfortunately, he felled it right on himself and it broke his back. But after a few years, he was back competing. Then he took a fall from a green horse and split his pelvis wide open, not to mention deflating a lung, breaking a collar bone and several ribs. But after a few years, he was back competing. Then he got kicked by a horse and suffered a compound fracture of the lower leg. Even after a maggot infestation, he was back riding shortly after that. Two years ago, he broke his knee, but was back riding that season. And Brian Urlacher couldn't play the whole season because he dislocated his wrist!!!! Regular people are such whimps.

The second is his "gift of gab". He always has a story, and he's always willing to share it, no matter how long it takes. I remember one time he and Aaron Mowrer were running up front at a Southern Illinois ride. They both came in to the third check and pulsed down at the same time. They both got busy taking care of their horses, but our hero just had to tell anyone who would listen about how well his ride was going. Listen they did, until the point when he thought to ask a member of the rapt audience if they knew what his out time was. "About 10 minutes ago," he was told. Well, Aaron won the ride, but our guy got the story.

In just a few months, this fellow will hit the 7 decade mark, making him the same age as such famous UMECRA folks as Jan Worthington, JoAnne Gernant, my husband, John, and my mule, Shaman. But he can't blame age for his last character trait – his lack of memory. He's always had a pretty sketchy memory ever since I've known him. A few birthdays ago, I called him the morning after. His first comment to me was, "What's my favorite meat?" I reminded him it was Prime Rib. "Oh yea," he says. I then ask him how his day had gone. "Oh fine," he says. "Terry took me out for supper." "Where did you go?" I ask. He tells me it was a finer restaurant in a nearby town. "What did you have?" I ask. His answer – Prime Rib of course! Another time, he was presenting an award at a UMECRA banquet and was dragging his story out, much like I am, only worse. For several minutes, he kept lauding the achievements of this woman. I finally look at John and say, "He has no clue what her name is." I was right.

I was asked to provide a photo of this man on his horse to use as a model for the award. Even though I have lots of pictures of him, I had trouble finding one on horseback at a ride. And here's the reason. He comes to a ride and the manager immediately corrals him to say they have no timer or no one to run the PR box – blah blah blah. So his horse stays tied to the trailer, and he works the ride. This man has more than anyone I have ever know, dedicated his life to the sport that has made his life worth living. So without further ado, I would like to announce this year's recipient of the UMECRA Hall of Fame Award. He will join the ranks of Grace Ramey, Robert Beecher, Louise Reidel (that cold hearted broad), Bob Mielke, and Joanne Gernant. That man who can yell "AWARDS!" louder than another other person I know. And I'm sorry sir, but I just don't remember your name.