



Rider's Choice Award 2021

Lily Creek Rhythm 5/1/08

Owned & Nominated by Sherry Aune

I am nominating Rhythm because she is the best horse I have ever had the privilege of riding, caring for and competing on. Lily Creek Rhythm started her endurance career with me in 2012 when she was 4 years old. We did a lot of conditioning that year and completed 4 LD rides, finishing in the ribbons in all 4 rides. Rhythm was my 3<sup>rd</sup> horse to do distance competitions (I still had the first 2) and it was evident to me Rhythm loved this job. It was a challenge the first few years to keep her under control at the start of rides because she just wanted to run and be out front.

In 2013, Rhythm completed 535 LD miles, receiving 8 best conditioned and was named UMECRA Limited Distance Champion. In 2014, Rhythm moved up to endurance distance after her first ride and did not disappoint. Her strength and heart for the job was a thrill and a challenge. Rhythm completed 785 miles in 2014, most notably completing all 5 days of Shore to Shore ride of 250 miles and earned overall best conditioned. She also had the honor of being named UMECRA HW Endurance Champion, AERC Midwest Middleweight Champion and AERC top ten National War Mare.

2015 was the year to see how Rhythm would handle longer trailer rides for us to travel out of region. Our first attempt was a success going to the Biltmore and completing 50 miles, finishing 22<sup>nd</sup>. Rhythm travelled so well that we rode Glacier Trails 50 mile ride the next weekend and finished 1<sup>st</sup>. Our miles were cut short to only 135 for the year due to my meniscus injury and surgery.

2016 was going to be our year and I took Rhythm back to the Biltmore ride to start the season. About 5 miles into the ride my ankle gave out and my ankle up to my knee was killing me. I had to ask Rhythm to walk, and she did....like she knew. She walked 4mph with a loose rein. We cantered some to finish within the time limit, trotting was impossible. That day Rhythm took really good care of me and I know I was tough on her back and not well balanced. Janet Sarver also took good care of me at the holds. I would never have finished that ride without Janet's crewing and help. We finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to last, with only minutes to spare. I decided to breed Rhythm since I wasn't able to ride.

Rhythm did not compete in 2017. She had a beautiful ½ Arabian chestnut colt who is now gelded and stands 16.2h tall. Rhythm proved to be a very good mom as well, not over protective and happy to wean her colt when the time came. Rhythm was ridden with her colt by her side as we worked on conditioning for 2018. In 2017 Rhythm was also invited to attend a Shagya inspection in Illinois. She attended, with her 2 month old colt by her side. Rhythm passed the inspection, and was named the most rideable of all the horses by Martha Rattner, professional rider for the inspection.

2018 was a banner year for Rhythm. Rhythm took all the travelling in stride with no problems. She competed in Florida, Georgia, Florida again, North Carolina, Montana and in the Midwest. Rhythm completed 860 competition miles, had 9 wins and 8 best conditioned. She was AERC top 5 War Mare, 4<sup>th</sup> AERC Endurance Best Conditioned and Midwest Middleweight Endurance Champion. At AHA/Breed Nationals 50 mile championship ride, Rhythm was awarded Champion Shagya Arabian.

In 2019 Rhythm went back to the breeding shed as I was not going to be able to ride much. May 12, 2020 Rhythm delivered another colt, a full brother to the 1<sup>st</sup> one. Rhythm, again, proved to be a good mom. We conditioned with colt by her side. Two weeks after weaning her colt, we rode the 50 at DRAW Finale and finished 2<sup>nd</sup>. Rhythm did not hesitate to let me know how happy she was to be back out there competing and the following weekend she won the 50 at Iron Oak...far exceeding any expectations I had.

That brings us to 2021, our best competition year yet. For the 1<sup>st</sup> time, we attended the AERC National Championship ride in Fort Howes, Montana. Rhythm finished the 50 mile Championship ride 4<sup>th</sup> over the line and received Middleweight Champion. I was beyond proud of her as the competition was tough. She didn't have the 'go' at the beginning of the last loop. I was okay with it, as it was a thrill just to be there so we slowed way down, hoping to finish. We came to the 1<sup>st</sup> water tank and she drank well. When we left that water tank she wanted to be all 'go' again, so we did. I love this mare!

2021 has not been without setbacks trying to keep Rhythm's hormones in check after babies. At AHA/Breed Nationals in TN I scratched Rhythm from the 50 mile championship ride, after pulling her the day before when she was not herself at the hold. She had passed vet check. When I announced I was pulling her, I took her back to the vets for final check. She was then having minor metabolic issues and I treated her with calcium. The next morning she was herself again so I saddled her up, after the 50 mile ride had started, and took my granddaughter out on a trail ride double on her. She behaved perfect, like she does this all the time, not. Even when the front runners were passing us coming in from their 1<sup>st</sup> loop, Rhythm walked along with us, like she knew. After I got home, I had Rhythm vet checked and learned she had an infection that needed treatment. Even though she was hurting, she kept going, a war mare for sure.

This year Rhythm also has the honor of being named AERC Reserve Champion War Mare, AERC top 5 Regional Best Conditioned, AERC Reserve Champion Middleweight Endurance, UMECRA Heavyweight Champion Endurance and DRAW Reserve Champion Endurance.

Lily Creek Rhythm is an incredible competitor, excellent producer and best friend. Christmas 2021 we also did our 1<sup>st</sup> parade together and Rhythm handled it like a pro. Next year will be her 10<sup>th</sup> year of competition. My journey with Rhythm and the people we've met along the way has been the best! I hope you will consider Rhythm for this award.

