

V.C. 100 HISTORY

By: Cliff Lewis

1968 saw the turning point of modern day endurance riding. Where as a couple of years previously there had been only the Tevis Cup and a few "Pony Express Races", there were now several good endurance rides. The Castle Rock, the Tellington's, the Peaceful Valley Ride (in Colorado), and much talk about others.

In the early spring of 1968 I was doing a lot of training with Dean Hubbard. It had been as easy winter with little snow and we were able to get way up into the mountains. We looked at wild horses and searched for a crashed airplane. We saw many deer and coyote, and talked enthusiastically about the coming endurance rides in California. I told Dean about a fifty mile ride I went on the year before, that went twice around a twenty-five mile circle. On that ride we were given the combinations of several locks so we could open gates along the way. We were now riding atop Clark Mountain and could see for 40 miles out across the lava beds. There wasn't a single sign of a fence, a gate, or a "No Trespassing" sign anywhere. Dean looked at me and said, "Why don't we have an endurance ride here"?

I never would have dreamed that this simple statement would eventually foster so many rides.

Dean and I realized it would take more than the two of us to put on an endurance ride. We decided we would start looking for support. We talked to most of the horsemen in the Reno area. We asked if they would be interested in putting on an endurance ride. The responses were mostly negative but some did say they would support a ride if we could get it organized. We had a hard time finding anyone who would jump in and get his feet wet.

It was decided at this time to attempt to have a meeting, and formally "get the ball rolling". We never expected much response but went anyway to the 102 Ranch to approach Nick Mansfield about our idea. We were surprised by his enthusiasm and were told that if we were willing to make it a 100 Mile One Day ride, that would start and finish at his ranch, he would get us all the support we needed and generally insure the success of the ride. We set a date for the first meeting to be held at the 102 Ranch Cafe. About ten people showed up. When at least half of these people declared they would ride there horses 100 miles in one day, we decided then and there to have the ride, even if we were the only ones to enter, knowing that the Tevis Cup started with 5 riders the first year. We had an election of officers: Nick Mansfield was elected President, myself as Vice President, and Andy Steen as Secretary/Treasurer. We laid out some of the general details, and hashed over many names and accepted Nick Mansfield's suggestion to call it the Nevada All-State Trail Ride, implying that although it was a Nevada based ride, it would be open to riders from all states. The goal for the next meeting was to have more people attend. Over the next two weeks Andy Steen and I called every horseman in the Reno/Sparks area. At the next meeting we had four people less than the first time. This was discouraging too, and we realized we would have to do all the work ourselves.

On the 1968 ride we had 33 starters and 13 finishers, which in my opinion was very good considering that we had a complete eclipse of the moon and a trail we found later to be far in excess of 100 miles. There were no casualties among the horses but considerable mental anguish among the riders. All of the problems that arose that day were the result of extending the trail to the west side of Highway 395 to include some of the Sierras for variety in the trail. Going into the Sierras is like going into California - fences, barbed wire, cattle guards, and locked gates. Fire danger was high that year and riders were nearly arrested when pre-riding the trail. One five mile section of the trail wasn't marked until the day before the ride. A fence had to be cut and two were literally turned back at gun point, by an irate farmer, for trespassing.

Was there going to be a 2nd Annual Nevada All-State Trail Ride? It was debatable. Relations among the members were strained.

Many of the people in the club were in favor of several changes and they showed it by moving the start and finish to Virginia City, where there was ample facilities and they were ready to make it a permanent part of the By-Laws of the NASTR, that the trail would never cross Highway 395 again.

The Nevada All-State Trail Riders became a very close knit, well organized club. They worked hard to try to earn respect of endurance riders everywhere. They organized an endurance team that won nearly every ride west of the Mississippi, many times five out of the Top Ten were from NASTR. They worked together and rode together, and the harmony and cooperation showed in many successful rides.