



Lake Washington Saddler

January 2019

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Greetings! Welcome to 2019, and to the LWSC Newsletter, "The Saddler". I'm your new editor, Suzanne Hitz. I just joined the Board of Directors this year, and look forward to connecting with many of our members. One of the things I find most interesting about this club, is the longevity, and the wide variety of interests that our equine enthusiasts enjoy. Bridle Trails State Park is an unusual gem, located in a now urban area, that provides a gathering place for equestrian enthusiasts of all varieties, as well as runners, walkers, and local individuals who enjoy the trails.

During my tenure as editor, I'd like to focus on the community of LWSC; Who we are, what we like, why we come to Bridle Trails. The first time horse owner, coming to the park to Trail Ride, the beginning rider coming to their first horse show on a school horse. The trainer bringing new clients and horses along. The trail riders enjoying an obstacle clinic and meeting new friends. We all have stories.

Some of these individuals are serious competitors who are using the park and its activities as schooling or a stepping stone to higher levels of showing. But many are ordinary people who will never see their name in print, or have their stories told. These are who I want to focus on.

Based on my 'wanted' plea on our Facebook page at the first of the month, I have several contacts to interview. I will be following up with these over the next few months, and hope to introduce you to them in subsequent issues. But in this issue, I'd like to introduce you to the new Board Members for 2019. I've asked each for a short bio and some pictures. First up. . . .

CAITLYN DYWER

Caitlin has been a long time support of the LWSC Hunter/Jumper shows and has brought both horses to many of them. We are excited to have her on the board!



I was lucky to start riding lessons at the Evergreen Equestrian Center when I was seven. Under the guidance of their array of great instructors I learned how to ride and jump, and participated in the LWSC schooling shows. After high school at the University of California, Davis, I worked



part time for Dr. Dennis Meagher, a retired equine surgeon, where I rode racehorses rehabilitating from injuries and/or surgeries. It was there that I learned how to break horses, and spent the next three years riding a combination of rehabbing racehorses and breaking young thoroughbreds. Later I commuted to the Bay area where I worked as an exercise rider at Golden Gate Fields and Bay Meadows until I finished college.

After that I went to southern California where I worked at Santa Anita, Hollywood Park and Del Mar exercising racehorses for almost 10 years. In June of 2011 I was given Launching Pad, a horse I used to ride on the track, retired now because of a tendon injury, and in October of 2012 I was given Bronster, another horse I rode at the track, because of a lung problem. I moved back to the Pacific Northwest in 2014 where I started showing them at the Lake Washington Saddle Club Hunter/Jumper schooling shows. I will be eternally grateful to the LWSC and to the trainer that gave me these wonderful horses for the amazing experiences I have had with them.



BETH NOVAK

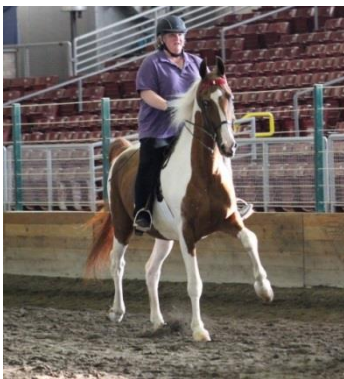


I grew up in Montana and was fortunate to get my first horse for my 8th birthday. Ginger was an unusually homely, irritable Heinz-57 who took every occasion to remove her rider from her back, but, to me, she was the most beautiful horse in the world. From there, I got an ancient, blind-in-one-eye, turn-on-a-dime feedlot cow pony, who was the kindest, gentlest soul to walk this planet. When the completely-misnamed Rebel passed away, I bought, (for a song), a well-bred, fancy, recently-gelded Arabian, (mind you, this was Quarter Horse country), who I later found had tried to kill his old owner, who then sold him to the first person who responded to his advertisement – this 12 year old 4H-er! Despite that, Fantal would become my heart horse. Then, life intervened – college, career, family. It wasn't until I had an "apple", who apparently fell directly under the tree, that

horses came back into my life. My daughter Alexis' love of horses and riding offered me a path back, and (after a year or so of borrowing her horse), I took that path. Now, in addition to Alexis' Capilano (chestnut OTTB), I have Poet Aureate (um, another chestnut OTTB – because you can't have too many redheads in your life). I recently joined the board because I recognize how very fortunate we are to have fantastic riding and showing opportunities in our community. We have benefited from them greatly and would I like to ensure they remain for generations to come.

SUZANNE HITZ

I had the impossible good luck to be born to a horsewoman, whose mother (my grandmother) was also a horsewoman. Although we lived in Seattle, from the time I was 10 my mother made sure that I had opportunities to ride. In the 1970s, I started riding lessons at Sterling Stables, and later, Gold Creek Stables, and finally finished out my junior years riding dressage with Sonja Vracko. During that period, I got to ride some wonderful horses, and had great instruction. At the same time, I rode out at a family friend's place a couple of times a week, 'the farm', as we called it. They had 90 acres, 5 Arab/Morgan crosses, and 2 ponies. There I did all the things that kids and backyard horses were supposed to do – playing hide and seek on horseback in the woods, chasing cows, and just hanging out. So I really had the best of both worlds growing up – the fancy barns, and the backyard ponies.



During college, I worked as a wrangler at Warm Beach Camp during the summers; teaching, training and taking out trail rides. After college, I rode and showed Hunters on the A circuit, riding with Sally Collins for almost 25 years. I had some truly wonderful horses. I taught and I judged, and even learned to drive horses from a Morgan trainer at the barn Sally trained out of. After I turned 50, I no longer wanted to jump, and really wanted to try something new. Since then, I've been riding saddle-seat on American Saddlebreds under the training of Les and Troy Corbett. Although primarily a hunt seat and dressage rider the majority of

my life, and having owned mostly TBs, I've had incredible opportunities to try new things, experience different disciplines, and meet wonderful people of all interests. Ultimately, we're all in it for the horses. The soft nicker, the gentle snuffle on your shoulder, and quiet rustle of a barn at night is what draws us all together. And that bond is what draws me to LWSC and the opportunity to serve on the board.



Windstorm Wizards!

By Caroline Callender

We've had our share of windstorms in recent weeks, with two small, and one larger one just in the months of December and January. It tends to make a mess, and someone's got to clean up that mess, right? Guess who does that? No, not your mother. It's our very own ranger, Matt Birklid, and his crew!

Out riding one day after the storm, it seemed half the trails were blocked, yet two days later all the trails were open. This IS impressive. I decided to find out how this big job is done. So, I went straight to the 'horse's mouth'; Matt himself.

Matt grew up in Alaska, near Fairbanks to be exact. His family ran a gold claim on the Totatlanika River, out in 'the bush'. Out there, things are pretty rustic. A person learns to manage a chain saw, and a rifle. They learn the woods, the animal signs, the smells, the trees. He has many fond memories of time spent there, in the woods. But, eventually it was not enough. Matt had a passion for the sport of curling, and in order to get into the big leagues of this unusual sport, he had to come south, to Seattle.

But, the city of Seattle did not sit well with him. He missed the trees, and the natural world. So, he checked out Washington State parks, looking for what kind of work might suit a 'woods savvy' guy like himself, and about 3.5 years ago he ended up as Park Aide, at St. Edwards and Lake Sammamish State Parks. This eventually led to working as a Ranger I, at Bridle Trails State Park, a place he admits to LOVING passionately.



Matt showing me his chainsaw grip.

Matt's skills with a chainsaw were so appreciated that he ended up training the staff at St. Edwards state park in this important 'art'. Using a chainsaw to both cut down or 'cut up' a downed tree is never as simple as it might seem. It takes experience to learn to interpret all the signs that will tell a cutter just exactly how to most safely approach a task that could kill you at every turn.

This talent was really put to the test just a couple of weeks back when we had 3 wind 'events' in relatively rapid succession. No sooner had he and Demetrio, (our Senior Park Aide), cleaned up from one, than another came through. The last one brought down perhaps 30 more trees, to add to others that were still awaiting the attention of the staff, in the smaller trails.

First, Demetrio would go out in the gator to survey the damage. He would methodically map all the downed and blocking trees, starting with the larger, more travelled trails, and working down to the smaller ones, bit by bit. Blocking windfalls were noted, and a plan was created. Matt and Demetrio went out with as many as 4 chainsaws (you never know when one will stop working, or become so dull that it can no longer do the job) to start the Herculean task of cutting all these obstacles away.



Then, they approached each downfall as if it were a puzzle; what tree is leaning against or on top of which, and where are the forces that once released, may explode, and if so, in which direction?

As Matt said to me, “The trunk can kill you, the tree that the downed tree is leaning against can kill you, the root ball can kill you, and your chainsaw can kill you.” So many fun ways to die!! So, there needs to be a lot of thought put into each approach. Matt said that as his ‘helper’ is also in danger, he consults with his aide, to make sure they agree

with his assessment on how best to approach working their way out of ‘the puzzle’. There needs to be solid communication every step of the way.

There is simply SO MUCH latent energy in a tree that is down, under tension, as it’s perhaps wedged between two or more standing trees, or a tree with a huge root ball that is down, but is held down by only one other tree on top of the trunk, that a person must cut in the right place first. As Matt knows that he may need to jump out of the way at any moment, one of the first things he does is clear his “escape route”, around the area where he will stand to make his first cuts. Sometimes this means he clears at the base of a ladder, since he must cut a tree that is well above his head. It may mean he will have to actually jump quickly off a ladder, ‘tossing’ the chainsaw and dropping to the forest floor. The chainsaw has a safety brake, and Matt is young and limber, so can handle these emergency ‘dismounts’.



When I commented to him how scary the whole thing sounded, he smiled and said, “I love that kind of stuff.” So far, he has been lucky and we wish him continued good luck and good grace in this very hard and risky job.

So the next time you see where a downed tree has been sawed up and neatly rolled to the edge of the trail, you know that our brave park ranger and aide, were out there, using their skills to do a job that could kill them at any moment. All I can say is . . . “Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!”

Oh, and by the way, Matt is heading out in a day or two from this interview to go to ‘Nationals’ for curling, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Let’s all wish him well! Go, Matt!!!!

It is our quiet season now. During the down months, the state parks will be considering upgrading the main parking lot to encourage better drainage, and to develop an optimal parking layout plan that will help to reduce snafu’s on show/event days. Also to deal with are things like manure management, putting up temporary stalls, laying out parking, and port-o-potties, and such are dealt with during these dark and cold months. In past years we have graveled the trails, too. This is a good time to put in suggestions if there is something you think needs attention. It’s also a good time to thank our Rangers, if you happen to see them, for all the work they do, in dark and cold and often unappealing conditions, for OUR benefit.

Here’s what is coming up in the next few months, and it’s going to get here a lot sooner than you think!!

March 31 EI Dressage Schooling Show

Equestrian’s Institute will host their earliest show of the season here! Let’s hope the weather cooperates. More info at: <https://www.einw.org/schooling-shows-at-bt.html>

April 13 BTPF Egg Hunt (Bridle Trails Park Foundation)

Our partner in supporting the park has wonderful activities for non-riders who love the park. This is an egg hunt, for kids. Please consider avoiding the main arena that day, unless your horse enjoys meeting gremlins popping out of bushes.

20-21 LWSC Hunter Jumper Clinic

Noel Clark clinic. Full information at : <https://www.lakewashingtonsaddleclub.org/clinics.html>

Volunteers work on various projects to maintain and improve the environmental health of our park. This is our 'sister' organization, with whom we work closely to support our beloved park. More information on this great organization at: <http://www.bridletrails.org/welcome.html>

27 LWSC/EI Ride & Review for USDF Region 6 Youth

28 EI Dressage Schooling Show

More information at: <https://www.einw.org/schooling-shows-at-bt.html>

We sincerely hope that you are enjoying the dark days of winter, in gentle preparation for an active and fulfilling season of riding in the coming months. Please remember that we welcome all communication to the board, and the editor of this newsletter. All feedback is welcomed; suggestions, complaints, praise. This is YOUR club!

Cheers!

Oh, and by the way, Puxetawny Phil , the ground hog, predicted an early spring this year. Look for green leaves on the Indian plum bushes in the park by Valentines Day! It's usually the very first plant to leaf out in spring.

