



## 2021 - ROARING FORK VALLEY HORSE COUNCIL HOLIDAY NEWS LETTER



May this Holiday Season bring Joy to You, your Family and Loved Ones!

Here are some stories by our members :

### **By Shannon Weeks**

My life in these last years, as far as horses go, confirm that horses have a healing power for me. Whenever I had a rough day or needed some alone time, I would be at the barn with my horse. Everyone knew when it was just the two of us, that we needed some space.

I have seen first-hand the miracles that horses provide while working at WindWalkers Equine Therapy Center over the past 6 years. I have witnessed children use their words for the first time after being nonverbal for years. I have watched families rejoice when their children come to meet their new friends. Horses are therapeutic animals that can heal us and help us through obstacles in life.

Horses have also been amazing teachers in my life. It's hard to admit, but I have always lacked patience. It's a weakness I have tried to strengthen for many years as a young adult. I have come to learn that my horses are the only beings that can teach me how to strengthen this weakness.

Thankfully, I am not someone who quits or gives up after a few tries. I have learned a lot about how horses respond when they are learning and when they understand what you are asking of them. Knowing how they respond is the key for me because it means I am making progress whether I can see it right away or not.

So when people ask – why horses? I say why not horses. They are majestic, beautiful animals who are willing to please. They say a herd of horses can sync their heart rhythms to protect the herd in times of danger. I believe my horse can sense my heartbeat especially when we compete and that allows us to trust one another completely.



## By Karin Reid Offield

My life in the spring, as far as horses go, is always making sure my barn full of client horses and lesson horses made it safely through the winter. I had my doubts about Rebel, an aged Tennessee Walker. I found him on Face Book a few years ago and bought him sight unseen. They didn't mention that his thick cresty neck was an obvious sign of further trouble down the road.

At the end of this Michigan winter – there was no sugary grass to eat – the pastures were bare and brown; our Rebel could not walk. He was on a fast track to founder, laminitis and close to being “put down”, due to his insulin resistant condition, damage to his feet and inflammation.

Instead, Rebel wore high heels in protective footwear to lessen the pain, he stood twice a day in ice cubed water dishes and later he was approved to receive a daily drug that he'll stay on for life. We are thankful to Dr. Chuck Makers' RFVHC educational seminars. We learned a lot.

Rebel's life is better now, and he is a lesson horse at my stable in Northern Michigan and he seems glad to help us out. We try, as equestrians, to never give up!





## By Tony Vagneur

My life in the summer, at far as horses go, is packing salt for the cattle we run on the East Sopris Creek drainage, or carrying my chain saw to clear the trails, or sometimes moving the cows from here to there, depending on where their obstreperous moods might take them.

The interesting thing about the horses (and it's been every horse I've ridden throughout my life), is that they remember every salt lick where we've stopped to deliver salt. We cannot ride by a lick without the horse wanting to stop. We do the close-in stops in the spring, and as the cows move up the mountain sides, so do our salt drops. Riding by the first stops we've made in the spring; the horses always want to duck off the trail and drop a block or two. The amazing thing about this is that a new horse, that has never been on an expedition with me, will memorize the salt licks after only one trip.

Horses like that are good to know, for they also remember the way you've taken to get somewhere if you're bush-whacking off-trail. If, for some reason, you have to turn around and go back through an area with no trail, the horse will know where he's going and 9 times out of 10 will get you safely back to where you want to be. It almost seems like they want to step in their same tracks going back.

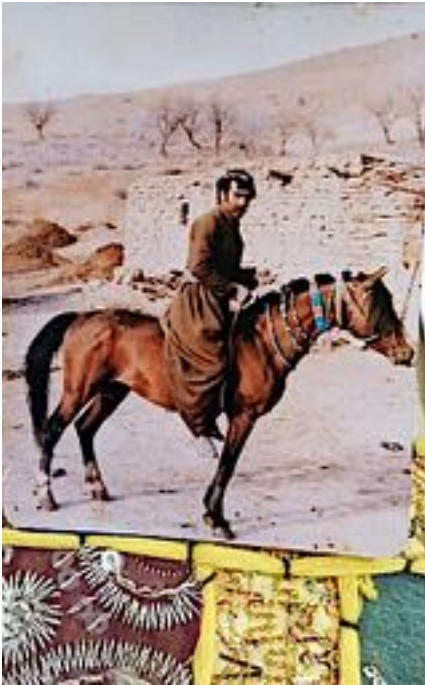
Happy Trails - I've seen some of you on the Buzzard Basin trail . . .



**MUSTANG MAGIC** - Story by Holly McLain & Greg Norton – Photos by Norton Family & Louisa Davidson

In 2021, Greg & Shiva Norton moved themselves and four adopted mustangs from their previous back East home to our Colorado mountains and the Roaring Fork Valley. This journey is a story of generations of horsemen and women with a history of farming and land stewardship.

So let's start from the beginning in the far off land of Iran, known before 1935 as Persia. Shiva Habibian Norton spent much of her childhood on the vast Habibian Family farmlands in North Western Iran, where horses were part of the fabric of life.



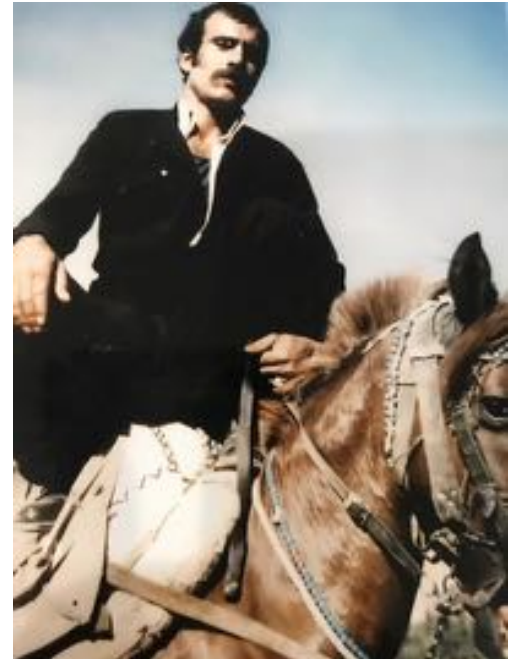
Shiva's Uncle on his horse.  
Horse breeds of Persia –  
Turkoman - Akhal-  
Teke, Dareshuri &  
Iomud horses



Shiva at the Habibian property with  
her pet sheep



Saddi Habibian with his stallion.  
Notice there is no bridle or halter,  
hand signals will suffice.



Shiva's Uncle – Saddi Habibian

The country's monarch, Shah Reza Pahlevi modernized Iran in many ways, promoting the growth of a modern economy and a middle class, and championing women's rights. He outlawed the chador or hijab (the full-body veil), encouraged education of women up to and including at the university level, and advocated employment opportunities outside the home for women. The Shah also ruthlessly suppressed dissents, jailing and torturing his political opponents. Iran became a police state, monitored by the hated SAVAK secret police. In addition, the Shah's reforms, particularly those concerning women's rights, angered Shia clerics.

The revolution of 1979 deposed and removed the Shah replacing him with the current Islamic Republic. The strict "Shiria Law" changed everything. Shiva's life would take a dramatic change and so would the prominence of horses in local Iranian society. Under the new regime, alcohol is outlawed by Shira Law. Many of the horsemen on the border of Iran and Iraq would use horses to smuggle alcohol and other contraband across the heavily mined border to Iraq. Shiva's favorite grey gelding never returned one night from a smugglers' gamble.





Shiva's uncle on the Dareshuri horse named "Koochooloo"



The Habibian Family farmlands bordered Zariban Lake, Marivan, Kurdistan, Iran. Photo of Shiva's Father fishing from the lake.



Saddi Babibian

Under major duress and political upheaval, Shiva's father managed to escape a very dangerous Iran bringing Shiva to the United States through Ellis Island and settling in Portland, Oregon.

Horses were already in Shiva's blood from her early childhood in Iran but they were not part of the new family unit in her new home. But it was not long until Shiva managed to reunite with horses in the United States and it was a neighbor's Mustang that made the connection. From that time forward she yearned to have horses of her own one day and especially to do something good for our country's wild Mustangs.

By 1917 automobiles were replacing horses for transport in the United States. The sensibility for our four legged friends was forgotten. Only recently is there a revival to protect our wild mustangs, now being removed from lands to make way for livestock and energy developers.

As terrible as the Covid epidemic has been for so many, a silver lining for some was the "work-from-home" phenomenon. So after nearly a decade of living in the New York City area, Shiva and Greg packed their computers and Zoom meetings and left the City for a more rural lifestyle and the opportunity to adopt horses of their own. In January of 2021, they sold the house and headed to Tennessee purchasing a farm with the primary purpose to embrace a more simple and natural lifestyle.

In February, they rescued three yearling mustang fillies from BLM's Saylor Creek, Idaho round-up. And to their surprise one morning in March, the paint mare "Savanah" presented them with something very special, "Stormy" a new born colt. And now there were four!



Greg Norton has always been an outdoorsman – skiing, fishing and hunting with his father during his youth in Michigan. And when his father moved from Michigan to Big Sky Montana his appreciation for the great outdoors grew deeper. While Tennessee was a lovely experience and a major break away from New York, moving further West was the aspiration for both Shiva and Greg. When they found their Missouri Heights property they knew they had come home.



Their Missouri Heights property is well kept and beautiful to behold. Both Shiva and Greg continue to gentle their young mustangs with a kind human touch every day. The like-minded love for their mustangs has created a strong and friendly family unit. Each mustang has a different personality. “Tufan” the typhoon is dominant, very smart, loves people and is eager to learn. “June” is somewhat shy, gentle, and the band’s lookout. “Savanah” was at first very fearful of people and we believe she had a hard time in the mustang sorting pens. She knew she was pregnant and worried for both herself and her baby. She is no longer fearful; likes people and is actually the most well-adjusted of the all the girls. “Stormy”, the new colt has been handled from the beginning and he is a wonderful old soul, soon to be gelded this late fall.

Some think that wild mustangs can be difficult, but Shiva and Greg have learned this is not at all true. All of us, in our own small ways can touch a life and together we can make a difference.” RFVHC Gold Medal Members, Greg and Shiva Norton have found their own way to “Make A Difference.”



Greg Norton with his dogs on their beautiful Missouri Heights property

All living things, including the wild creatures who share our world need a safe, loving environment to prosper. We are all connected. The chain of life is evident.

What we do for the smallest of life forms makes a difference.





## The COVID 19 pandemic reality has changed our world.

What have we learned?

Our connection to animals, nature and the great outdoors is healing!  
During the early Covid spread, mankind stopped and took a deep breath and walked outside onto our Open Space Lands. We have a new way of looking at our wildlife and domesticated friends. For the first time in a very long time our skies were clear from pollution, Venice Canal was clear to the bottom, where porpoise were seen swimming.

The pace of the world slowed.

Covid forced a peaceful stillness across our planet.



When India shut down and suspended all transport to contain the coronavirus, the skies over its' polluted cities quickly turned an azure blue and the air was unusually fresh. New Delhi's India Gate was obscured by haze on Oct. 17, 2019, but clear skies are seen in this photo taken from the same spot on April 8, 2020.

The earth healed and all over the world humans reset their priorities.  
Many people made choices that were important to nurture their souls.



The connection with horses is healing. This connection gives us a sense of wellbeing.

Working with horses is an active form of meditation.



## MEMBERSHIP –

We have many levels of horse council memberships. Go to our website to renew –

[www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/donate.html](http://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/donate.html)

The RFVHC thanks our Gold Medal members for their contributions. Your donations encourage the traditions of riding horses and help keep horses and riders safer. Most importantly, you help to establish horseback riding as a rightful recreational user group.

With your help we support horses and their owners by :

- Providing equestrian parking to access horse / hiker only trails
- Partnering with BLM, county governments and other non-profits to benefit equestrians
- Supporting horse shows, rodeos and horses driven carriage events
- Continuing veterinarian educational programs by zoom & news letters
- Supplying “Hay Bank” feed for horse & mule owners in need
- Hosting social events that bring the community together (Covid permitting)  
SAVE THE DATE - Kentucky Derby Party May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022
- Gifting - shop for holiday gifts on our website at [www.rfvhorsecouncil.org](http://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org)
- **MAKING A DIFFERENCE** - We are especially proud of the **Leslie Thomas Large Animal Rescue program with Aspen Fire** that will aid in animal and horsemen's emergencies

Your donations keep the tradition of riding horses on trails and horses in our valley landscape.  
Thank You!



Thank you again Sharon Henley, with her beautiful and amazing horse "Merlin" for her \$500.00 Gold Medal Membership contribution.

## RFVHC Honors "STRANG RANCH"

Established in 1965, this family owned, working ranch is the center of equestrian activities in the Roaring Fork Valley. Kit Strang is the matriarch of this special place. Scott Strang runs the sod farm and Bridget Strang is in charge of the equestrian and sheep aspect of the ranch. Home of the Roaring Fork Hounds Pony Club; Children's riding programs and host to the 2016 & 2019 National Sheep Dog Trials, the Strang Ranch brings families and friends together in a safe beautiful environment. We are thankful for the ongoing commitment of the Strang Family to support our community. Read more about this unique Roaring Fork Valley Ranch : <https://www.avlt.org/strang-ranch.html>



Morning turn out halters



Strang Family – Scott, Kit & Bridget



Bridget Strang



RFH Pony Club



Bob Pietrzak



Giving hope is finding those special moments in our lives, when we touch someone else with kindness and grace.

May this holiday season bring the gift of good will to all of us.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**



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<https://www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails>

*The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization*