

Shaman of the Wallowas

Lori Windows

"I don't know what life in the womb was like for most of my kind, but for me, it was hectic! We were always going somewhere, and we were always going there fast! Then, the day I was born, I found out why. My mom, an appaloosa named Wallowa, licked me dry and whispered in my fuzzy ear: 'Son, I'm a distance racer, and I'm good at it. And you will be, too. You may not be as fast, but you'll have the strength. Long after I am gone, you'll still be beating the trails. There will be those who laugh at you, but pay them no mind. You can handle their laughter - your ears are as long as your back is broad.'"

A long time ago, Shaman told me this story, and I wrote it down for him. You doubt it?? Never doubt anything about the bond I share with this incredible animal. We are not merely mule and rider, not are we mule and master. If either one of us was the "master", surely it wouldn't be me. Only because I have the evolutionary marvel of opposable thumbs, and the advantage of a driver's license, do I even show a semblance of "being in charge".

What my mare, Wallowa, told her little mule son that April afternoon in 1982, has come to pass. Shaman (which is a "wiseman" or "medicine man" in most primitive cultures), has become a distance racer - and he is good at it. He started competing as at 4, and at 5 he placed Top Ten. Every year there after, he has placed Top Ten, regardless of the division in which he ran, Endurance or Competitive. In 1992, he was Light Weight Comp Reserve Champion, and in 1993, he was Champion - a position he has held ever since except for 1998 when he was once again Reserve. He has placed Top Ten Miles every year since 1987; most of the time he has been Miles Champion. He has crossed the state of Michigan twice in Shore to Shore, has completed the Wildcat 100 eleven times and Wildcat 60 once, has raced in the Mountains of Wyoming, the deserts of Arizona, hail storms in Wisconsin, snow storms in Minnesota, humidity disasters in Southern Illinois, and mud slides everywhere. In his early years, he rarely placed in individual rides, but as the years have rolled on and he has "learned the ropes", he is rarely out of the ribbons. At one time or another, he has outscored every awesome Arabian that UMECRA boasts. To date, he has completed well over 11,000 UMECRA miles and has no intention of retiring.

All this said, one more remark must be made, for it is that strength of which Wallowa spoke that has made all these records possible. In his 11,450 miles, Shaman has only been pulled twice. Once was rider's choice, and it was a decision made out of greed. My two junior riders and I were winning the Cascade 50 many years ago. Just shy of the two mile marker, Shaman decided he had gone fast long enough. No amount of kicking, swearing or pleading could make him climb that last long hill. The kids, Brandi Read and Chris Huffstodt, were furious. In order for them to get their "First Across The Line", I disqualified myself and gave them to the next rider who came along. The second noncompletion was at a White River 100. Brandi's horse, Alpo, had been pulled at mile 75. Shaman continued another fifteen miles, came in for the last vet check, blew passed the vets, ran to the trailer, and laid down beside Alpo. There was nothing wrong - he just wasn't going to do that last ten miles. If there is anything more symbolic of Shaman's career and our relationship, I don't know what it would be. We race because Shaman wants to. It's as simple as that.



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1988 received 1000 mile award

1999 received 11000 mile award

Lori and Shamon 1000 miles a year !!!!!!!

