

Summer 2004 Newsletter

In Remembrance ... Ronald Charles Davis, 1946-2004

by Bob and Therine Gudknecht

Rokida Fjords has done so much to promote the Norwegian Fjord Horse. They have been a familiar site at horse shows, parades and celebrations all around the Midwest.

Ron and Kit have been giving carriage rides at the Minnesota Horse Expo for several years and we've had people tell us they come back to the Expo every year just to see them and their Fjord Horses. Ron and Kit have successfully shown and evaluated their horses for many years. They have an excellent breeding program and have introduced the Fjord horse to many people.

Ron loved telling stories about the cute things his grandchildren said and the things they did together. He enjoyed his family so much. He also loved talking about his horses. We had many wonderful conversations that went into the wee hours of the morning. He had a big heart and enjoyed life to the fullest.

We'll miss Ron's big booming laugh and positive outlook on life. He took things in stride. One year when his truck broke down on the way to the Expo, he just stopped on the side of the road and fixed it. When he realized that he left the tools in the ditch on the side of the road, he just laughed and said he would check to see if they were still there on the way home.

Ron was looking forward to putting together a four-horse hitch this summer and had plans to spend a lot of time with his grandchildren.

We will miss him so much.

Ron's Obituary

From the Duluth News Tribune, June 3, 2004

Ronald Charles Davis, 57, beloved husband, father, grandfather and brother, died very unexpectedly on May 31, 2004. Ron was born Aug. 25, 1946 in Watertown S.D. At age 17, he joined the United States Navy and served for four years of the Vietnam War, as a communications officer on the USNS Valdez in Middle Eastern/Asian waters. Ron was a St. Louis County employee for 33 years, starting in the former Cook Home and later joined the road and bridge crew. He retired from the Meadowlands Tool House one year ago.

Ron was well known for raising and showing Norwegian Fjord horses, a pleasure that he shared with his wife, Kit in the Rokida Fjord Farm business. Ron loved gardening, particularly flower gardening; bird feeding and watching; hunting; and his passion – ice fishing.

Ron's primary source of happiness was his family, especially his grandchildren upon whom he doted, and whom he delighted in spoiling as much as possible.

Ron is survived by the love of his life, his wife of 29 years, Kit (Katherine Wedel); his children, Tess (David) Settergren, Kelly (Ed) Lermon, Kevin (Dawn) Holte, Eric (Amy) Holte, Stephanie (Troy) Graves, Sean (Mary) Holte, Elyse (Sue VanRiper) Holte, and Jason (Amy) Davis; and his beloved grandchildren, Shayne and Kaelin Graves, Brooke, Kiana, and Angelique Davis, Juliette and Danielle Homme, Josh and

Quinn Holte, Jeremy and Justin Holte, Autumn Lermon, Jessica (David) Titterington, Nicole and Kate Settergren, and Eddy Waddell.

Ron's quiet strength and loving nature will be deeply missed. Military honors accorded by the Duluth Combined Honor Guard.

Circus Horse Tragedy, May 11, 2004

From circusnews.com

At approximately 9 p.m., the crew of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey was in the process of unloading the animals at the Fairborn Train Yard in Fairborn, Ohio when an oncoming freight train unexpectedly came through the area.

Tragically, two Norwegian Fjord horses were struck by the oncoming train. One horse was killed instantly. The second horse sustained critical injuries and was humanely euthanized at the scene after immediate consultation between Ringling Bros. veterinarians and the local on-call veterinarian. No other animals or people were injured in the incident.

Tragedy Update

Patti Jo Walter, message to Fjord Horse email list, May 26, 2004:

"Just got a message from Dr. Lindsay, head vet for the Ringling Brothers Circus. Unfortunately it was just a message, and I was not able to speak with him. The two Fjords that were killed by the train in Ohio were Ivor and Bjorge previously owned by Ken Raspotnik in Wisconsin. They were half brothers.

Dr. Lindsay said it really shook everyone up, it was just devastating to the group. They were VERY fond of the Fjords and they were doing WONDERFUL in their act. He did not say if they would be looking for 2 more or not.

He said he would try and email me later, he has been very busy and things have been hectic around there lately. So, that is the update I have on the circus horses, very sad indeed."

Fjords Sparkle and Shine at 25th Midwest Horse Fair

Submitted by Patti Jo Walter

The Midwest Horse Fair celebrated its 25th anniversary this year in Madison, Wisconsin, April 16-18.

Eight Fjord horses celebrated right along. Nancy Hotovy drove single, Mike Sadlon was our single log skidder, Carlene Schwartz, western rider, Joni Griffin along with the raffle Fjord, Arianna, ridden by Megan Lutze and Megan Pritzl were our huntseat riders. Pat Holland had our in-hand/halter Fjord. Keelie Finnel was our bareback trick rider and Patti Jo Walter was our jumper.

Not only was the fair celebrating its 25th anniversary, it was also celebrating famous horses of movies/films. In sticking with that theme, Patti Jo Walter was dressed as the Lone Ranger. The riders and drivers were in silver/black vests, while the horses had silver hoof polish and silver glitter sprinkled on them.

Patti Jo Walter began the group demonstration with an opening jump, going over a

banner in silver and black with the writing, "25 years" while the theme to the Lone Ranger played. AND, if you were present on Saturday, you got to watch those guns go a flying! Literally, we had a costume malfunction – guns and holsters came flying out as she went over the jump.

Nancy Hotovy drove her single horse in the middle and showed how awesome Fjords look under harness. Mike Sadlon had the log skid going beautifully around the cones. The crowd just loves it when Mike gets a running and jumping over that log.

Joni Griffin and Carlene Schwartz showed how nice Fjords look in Western or English. Keelie Finnel along with Megan P. or Megan L. (depending on which day it was) showed how kids and Fjords match well together. The girls did tricks with their horses and showed off their talent as well. Arianna does a "mean" bow and Keelie likes to mount from the front and the back and then, as if that is not enough, she stood on her Fjord and rode him Roman Style in the ring to finish her debut.

I'm not sure if anyone really knows how hard it is to show at Madison. Our group comes from three different states. We get 20 minutes of practice the day before the fair opening. Usually that time is spent just getting your horse used to the Coliseum.

I find it a miracle that we do as well as we do. There is NO indoor warm up ring, if the weather is decent they do have an outdoor ring, but it seems like it rains every year and that ring turns into muck. We had fantastic weather this year, except for the downpour during the evenings, which made that warm up ring almost unusable.

So what do you do? Thank God you have a Fjord! We are fortunate enough to have sane enough horses to take out and ride around the grounds.

Well another year has come and gone for the Midwest Horse Fair. Sources have it that next year's theme is a Circus theme. Hmmmmm, wonder what Joni Griffin is thinking of making us wear for that fair?????

Blue Earth Basics

submitted by Pat Holland

All of the show packets have been sent out. If you have not received one, PLEASE let me know. I will send it out immediately. Call me at (815) 591-3658 or email pat@internetni.com. I am not often in the house during daylight hours, but I return calls as quickly as I can.

I still need volunteers. If anyone is just coming to watch, even for a day, or showing in a limited number of classes, please contact me.

If you have ANY questions regarding the show, please contact me as well, that is what I'm here for. If you have any complaints or concerns, let's talk about it. Remember as the famous Red Green says: "We're all in this together." See you in Blue Earth.

What Does it Take to Get Ready for Blue Earth?

Submitted by Susie Sadlon

This article's title is a good question and I want to start off by saying I'm not a trainer or expert but have been to Blue Earth several years. I'd like to tell you what we do to get ready.

In the spring, we start thinking about which horses we are going to take to Blue Earth, what experience they need or have, and what we need to do to make them ready. Other decisions include who to take for the halter classes, what horses need the experience of being away from home for the first time and who will be entered into specific classes.

We have older horses that have been there and showing doesn't bother them too much, but then there are the young ones who have never been to any show and it's good for them to just go and be in a halter class. If we're going to take a younger horse for the first time, we need to start working with them to lead, walk, trot and stand up looking pretty.

One thing I've experienced is no matter how much training they have, it's always different when they are away from home for the first time. Unless you can take them to a local show to get used to it, you have to be prepared for them to be different around a lot of horses and all the commotion around them.

But because they are Fjords they soon learn and seem to like all the attention and fit in. So, take the young horse, he might not be the best but it's a learning experience for him and we all have to start somewhere.

If you are going to drive in a class, I know people who drive everyday for weeks before Blue Earth, just to have their horse used to everything. Some people are members of local clubs and give rides and some have their kids in 4-H who work with the horses. The most important thing is working with your horse. If you're going in the driving classes, it's a good idea to study the patterns and practice them at home. Get the horse used to the things that they have to do in the classes.

Another thing you need to do is try to get your horse familiar to horses coming up behind him. Some horses have never had a horse go past them. Also, make sure you and your horse are accustomed to the wagon or cart you will be driving. Check over your harness and cart or wagon to be certain it's in good shape, as safety is the main thing.

For those of you who are riders, go on trail rides, go to smaller shows or just ride and practice the patterns for the classes. Work with your horse, enjoy your horse and he will enjoy being with you.

Now you need to decide what to wear, what to take and what costume you'll wear for the famous costume class! It doesn't have to be fancy, just neat and safe, boots and helmets for the kids. If you're going to show western then look western, don't wear a baseball cap and sneakers. English: same thing, neat and English. For the costume class, be creative! It's fun and everyone will enjoy it!

Help is another important thing to consider. Take a friend along or husband or wife, who likes horses and likes to help you. There's nothing worse than being in a lot of classes and getting flustered because of all of the prep time. Your horse will sense your stress, so have a partner to share the work.

Also get your kids or grandkids involved but don't make it a chore for them. Make them a part of things, even if it's in the lead line or costume class. They will love

being with the other kids and the pool at the motel!

Getting your horse used to a bath is a good idea, they will enjoy being clean and cooled off when it is hot.

Packing up to go: it helps if you have a check list so you don't leave your show clothes home! Extra parts for harness and bridle and saddle sometimes come in handy. Don't forget friends, kids, husbands, or wives, cart or wagon, harness, saddle, bridles clothes, boots, hats, and most of all the horse!

Finally, check your trailer over. Tires going bad on a long trip can be a real problem. Safety first.

This is a fun show, so have fun. Blue Earth is a great place to go meet people, learn things and get to know the fun a show can be. There is always a first time for everyone, so go ask questions and ask for help if you need it.

This may sound like a lot of work but the show – and the friends – are worth it. Most of all, the Fjord horse is worth our time and love.

More Preparations for Blue Earth

Submitted by Pat Holland

Susie Sadlon's article on preparing for the Blue Earth show covered most of the important things you can do at home to prepare for showing. I'm adding a few things that, once your there, you need to consider.

One of the biggest mistakes I see beginner show people do is poor navigation in traffic while showing. No matter how big that ring looks, it becomes intimidating and small when your class is full.

You need to develop some thinking strategies when presenting yourself and your horse in performance events. The basic idea is to try to stay by yourself and away from the clusters.

Safety is the obvious reason, but to be seen by the judge, unobstructed, is next the objective. Your horse will not perform well with another horse on his tail and if you're tailing a horse, the overall impression, no matter how slow you're going, is that you're going faster – or are in a near run-away mode.

Learn to use your corners to go deep, or cut them to change the distance between those around you. Watch your judge and ring steward (some judges use the ring steward as their extra eyes.) When you're not being observed, you can move your horse to a clear spot, make a circle or even change your speed to accommodate where you need to be.

Try to be courteous to your fellow exhibitors. The cut-throat days of cutting people off or hiding a good competitor from the judge's view went out with disco. No ring is too small or entries too large to not be considerate of you fellow classmates. If you see someone having trouble, avoid increasing their anxiety by giving them clear space to get their act together.

Another "trick", so to speak, is to watch your class as you're riding or driving it. If your horse doesn't have that slow trot in driving or that pitter-patter jog, don't ride next to someone who does. It will make your horse appear faster than he is. When asked for an extended trot, don't place yourself next to the horse that won the trotting test in Norway. THIS is called showmanship. It is your right to place your

horse in the position that shows your horse to the best of his advantage.

Most important though is attitude. You need to adapt the thought process that your horse, on that day, in the ring, in that class, is the best the judge has ever seen. You don't need to look like a prom queen with a fake smile – you need to look confident and composed.

Personally, there absolutely is no better place in the world than in a ring, showing. I'm not necessarily an ego person, but I love the ability to show what I believe a horse I've trained can do, for the horse and for the owner I'm representing.

I sincerely believe 99% of winning a class is attitude alone. You may not be on the best horse in the class, you maybe 30 years older than the best rider, but how you feel inside will come through clearer and shine stronger than the expensive tack, the flavor-of-the-year color horse, the custom cart or the "proper" attire. When you enter the ring you need to convey to the judge this horse is the best he's ever seen and that you are proud to be aboard.

Try to focus on the moment, look at your surroundings, forget you might have left the iron on or neglected to feed the dog and try, no matter how nervous you are, to enjoy the inside of a ring.

Lastly, I have a few suggestions away from the ring that I would like to add to make your showing experience at Blue Earth more enjoyable:

BRING A FAN for your horse – one of those lightweight box fans you can tie to the stall or hang above. It gets humid and heavy there and the comfort of your horse is vital.

BRING A GOOD EXTENSION CORD. Not to take anything away from show management (me), but I think there is one outlet at the entire show grounds, and it's connected to someone's house in downtown Blue Earth.

GET THERE EARLY and LEAVE LATE. We all have other lives, family and jobs, but this show is special and the best of the times to talk and laugh are often hard to find when rushing to classes and preparing for them.

USE US, the veterans who've been there before. Honestly I know of **NO ONE** who would not be willing to lend a hand, before, during or after the show.

VOLUNTEER. If you're going to just watch or show in a limited number of classes, please contact me. Those of us running the show will be showing as well. We can't be two places at once and gratefully need help.

HAVE FUN. We hear this all the time, but it's the most important part. Bring what you do well and show us your talents, do not be afraid to do something you've never done before. One of the best examples of the wonder within us is the turnout Phil Odden presented to us last year in the costume class. He and his family proved our imaginations are limitless and awe inspiring. And of course Patti Walter who showed up as the Wicked Witch of the West after being mistakenly announced as that the year before by a wonderful off-the-cuff announcer (not mentioning any names)!

Have a good time getting ready, see you at Blue Earth and remember to unplug the iron and feed the dog.

NFHR Evaluations 2004

Submitted by Sophie Fiedler

The following Evaluations are planned for 2004:

July 28 & 29, 2004, Lexington, VA

Curtis Pierce (703)330-2498 curt42l@mindspring.com

Mary Harvey (540) 947-2068 jimaryjmh@aol.com

August 28 & 29, 2004. La Crosse, WI

Phillip Odden (715) 468-2780 nww@norskwoodworks.com

Linda Syverson-Kerr (608) 526-6878 Kerr@doc.state.wi.us

September 8 & 9, 2004, Libby, MT

Sherrie Dayton (208)623-3600 sunwood@gte.net

The Evaluation Handbook can be downloaded from the NFHR Website. It is now divided into four sections for easier downloading. A few clarifications have been added to the permitted bit section and the advanced draft test.

In addition to the Technical Delegate, each evaluation will have several assistant technical delegates who will: verify micro-chip numbers; measure horse's height and cannon bone circumference; act as gate and ring master; verify bits prior to performances; assist rider or driver by visually checking the harness, vehicle, and tack; set up performance test course; and assist with paperwork.

If you are interested in helping, please contact the sponsor or a member of the Evaluation Committee.

NFHR Board Positions Available

Submitted by Alan Merrill

The NFHR will have three Board of Director positions open this Fall. If you are interested in serving in a very rewarding position, get your resume up-to-date and submit to the NFHR before Sep. 15, 2004.

For information or questions contact any of these Midwest Club members who currently serve as Board members:

Alan Merrill (608)935-9261

Mark McGinley (715)373-2906

Karen Hanson (608)873-0907

Sharon Falck (319)283-3164