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Issue #5. 2018

## On the cover:

Our cover models for this issue are a mother and daughter duo from Washington state. Rider Susan Durr, age 71, isn't slowing down and neither is her 24-year-old stallion, Apaladin (AA Apollo Bey x Amada Of Aerie, by El Magato).



Susan and her daughter, Rebecca Durr, live near Seattle and drive to Whidbey Island every Saturday (two hours each way) to spend the day with Apaladin.

Both Susan and Apaladin have had to overcome major obstacles during their shared journey; she is a two-time cancer survivor, and he broke his navicular bone as a five-year-old. Apaladin was able to heal from the break and go on to win multiple titles, including a 2006 U.S. and Canadian National Top Ten Stallion and 2002 U.S. National Top Ten Open English Pleasure, in addition to Scottsdale Champion Liberty. Together, they epitomize the axiom that it's never too late to pursue a dream.

Photography by Stuart Vesty, stu@vesty.com



## GET INVOLVED

### Determined Women "of an Age" Stay in the Saddle

Women discuss how they keep riding and working with horses as they get older.

By Janet de Acevedo Macdonald

### Second Acts: Enter the Horses

Meet several individuals who have given Arabian horses a starring role in their middle-aged lives.

By L.A. Sokolowski

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# DETERMINED WOMEN “of an age” STAY IN THE SADDLE

By Janet de Acevedo Macdonald

It should come as no surprise that as we get older, we want to keep doing the things we’ve always done or return to doing activities we did in our youth. Who wants to realize we’re old?! In this age of social media, we have venues to share our ideas and to ask women like ourselves how they’re continuing to successfully ride.

Two groups for women of a certain age, say 50+, most recommended by Facebook algorithms are “Aging Horsewomen International,” created by Sharon Roberts, with a 44,000+ membership, and the 7,000+ member, “Gals Over 50 and In The Saddle,” started by Marty Phillips as a group for “fun, encouragement, support, and ideas for horsey gals, almost, and way beyond 50.” As an active member of both groups, I reached out for volunteers to share their aging experiences, determination, and confessions as horsewomen.

This thread of determination that binds us takes many forms, and its inspiration comes from myriad sources. One such inspiration is the 2018 book, “Confessions of a Timid Rider,” authored by Certified Equine Sports Massage Therapist, Heather Wallace, who encourages her readers to “Let your passion be greater than your fear.”

“Confessions” is an easy, inspirational read with very good messages. If you’re inclined to social media, Facebook groups abound discussing all things horse that can give you a daily, online avenue for confessions — your own and others.

## Stress Relief

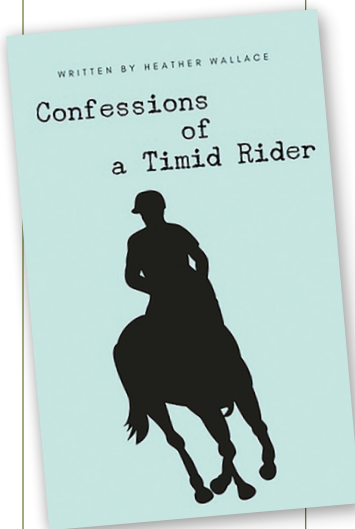
After years of life on one acre in San Diego, Calif., Therese “Teri” Bensch, and her retired USMC F-18 fighter pilot husband, Bill, graduated to 36 acres in North Texas,

15 minutes from the 20,000 acres of the LBJ National Grassland. Rocking Bensch Ranch has seven mules, one Thoroughbred, and a 15.2hh chestnut, 2010 model, Purebred Arabian gelding, Maxemillion RA, aka “Milo.”

Raised on a Santa Cruz ranch, Teri’s early introduction to Arabian horses ignited a life-long enjoyment that glowed during her three-year tour of duty in Sicily when she owned two Anglo-Arabians and guided trail rides on Mount Etna. In 2014, with a Scottsdale twist familiar to many, Teri went to purchase and pick up the 2009 Half-Arabian chestnut mare, MC Princess Leia. Once there, she was wooed by the trainer to “just have a look” at her now beloved Milo. Driving home with two purchases versus the expected one, she admits to using the eight hours of travel time to compose her explanation to Bill.

Serving her country for 23 years as a U.S. Navy Meteorologist and Oceanographer, Teri retired in 2010. “After years of physical readiness tests every six months, I was happy to get fat,” admits Teri. “Doing my doctorate at age 50, I was sitting all the time. I was feeling old, and I really felt my hip and back problems,” says Teri. Diagnosed with scoliosis as a kid, she has always found horseback riding to be what she calls her “flow activity” where she can really let the stress go.

Today, at 53, Teri limps because her knees aren’t good. Yet, when she’s home in Decatur, she rides five days a week. An active member in The Aging Horsewoman International Facebook group, to stay comfy and feeling safe aboard Milo, Teri wears ankle braces for stabilization, uses cushioned trail stirrups, and rides with long stirrups. She advocates using an abdominal board to build core strength and notes as she and her husband lose weight,



## Resources

### Facebook Groups

[www.facebook.com/groups/AgingHorsewomen/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/AgingHorsewomen/)

**Gals Over 50 and In The Saddle:**  
[www.facebook.com/groups/1304086869637792/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1304086869637792/)

[www.facebook.com/groups/RidingFearFree/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/RidingFearFree/)

[www.facebook.com/WomenofAgeRidingHorses/](http://www.facebook.com/WomenofAgeRidingHorses/)

[www.facebook.com/groups/AgelessInTheSaddle/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/AgelessInTheSaddle/)



*“Nothing is impossible to a determined woman,”*

*~ Louisa May Alcott*



they understand how being overweight can really mess with a rider’s balance.

### Overcoming Fear

Another native Californian, self-described as “63-years-young, not five-foot-tall,” Robin Whiteman also retired to Texas. Her two Arabians and grade, rescue Palomino live on Robin’s 10-acre dream in the quiet burg of Hallettsville, smack dab in the middle between San Antonio and Houston.

Tonibyah, “Tony,” Robin’s 15-year-old Straight Egyptian chestnut gelding, is helping her conquer serious fear issues. An Endurance rider who competed in AERC 25-milers, two years ago she was jettisoned and broke her hand. In a June 2018 post to the Facebook Riding Fear Free group hosted by Laura Daley and Jennifer Becton, she shared, “I do not ride that horse any more. He is not a good fit for

**Upper left —** Therese Bensch and Maxemillion RA aka Milo

**Upper right —** Cathy Clark and CL Bey Beret aka Button

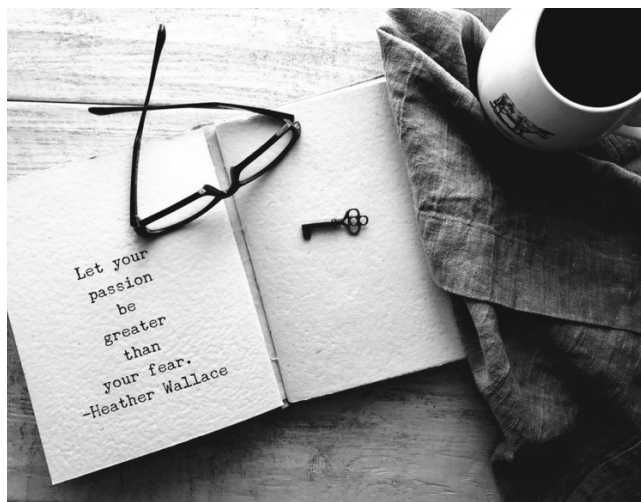
**Lower left —** Kellie Callaway and Anda Beat Goz On aka Sonny

**Lower right —** Robin Whiteman and Tonibyah aka Tony

me.” Robin suffered stitches, a concussion, and other physical reactions to the fall. This was followed by too much self-imposed isolation and letting in the cycle of fear.

“It took a long time to get back on. I had to begin mentally from square one; to learn to block out what happened and work out my fear little by little,” shares Robin. Once she did get on, she spent many, many months riding in her arena and pasture. At the beginning of July, her husband Gary, who walks beside Tony and Robin as they ride, mowed a mile-long stretch along the road so horse and rider didn’t have to walk on the gravel as they expanded their riding away from home. Sharing the triumph together, the trio traveled two, incident-free miles.

To be more physically confident in the saddle, Robin opts for the comfort of an Endurance seat. She works out at the gym to



build strength and does light running with her husband. She's been recently diagnosed with the beginnings of osteoporosis, so bone health is a priority. Rather than mounting from the ground, Robin bought a three-legged, 10-inch stepping stool she can pull up once mounted and slip into a saddle bag.

### Equine Motivation

Not far from the Daniel Boone National Forest sits Russell Springs, Ky., the home of newly-retired forklift driver, Kellie Callaway. A member of the Society for the Arabian Horse in the Bluegrass Area (SAHIBA), and Aging Horsewomen group, Kellie and her Half-Arabian palomino gelding, Anda Beat Goz On ("Sonny") that she's raised from three months of age, have come through a lot together. They've competed in Reining, Western Pleasure, Western Dressage and in more recent show seasons, Ranch Riding and Western Trail.

After the loss of her husband three years ago, plus a car accident and a knee replacement two years ago that she freely admits she fought having for two years, Kellie says Sonny keeps her going. "I got the surgery done in October and was back riding Sonny walk/trot by the following Valentine's Day," she says.

"I love Ranch Riding. It's all I want to do," laughs Kellie. She and Sonny took third in HA/AA Ranch Horse Riding at the 2018 Region 14, as well as two Reserve Champions in HA/AA Western Trail Open and plenty of other accolades.

### Heart Horse

Lima, like the bean, Ohio, is the home of the Varian-bred 2001, bay mare, CL Bey Beret ("Button") and her owner, Cathy Clark. A 66-year-old retired English Pleasure trainer who road Saddle Seat all her life, she now enjoys the comfort and security of a Western saddle and conducts Western Dressage clinics.

Cathy was born with an irregular heartbeat, but rather than see his daughter live a limited life, her dad bought her a pony to keep her happy and active. Unbeknownst

to most in 1960, Cathy's childhood riding was the best medicine.

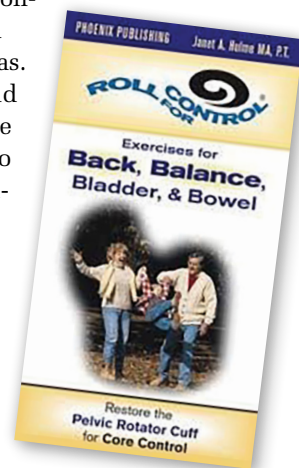
Four years ago, Cathy had a Transient Ischemic Attack, also called a TIA or mini-stroke. Immediately, her protective, loving sister said the horses had to go. However, Cathy's family physician of 10 years, Gregory Parranto, MD, had a different view. He'd observed Cathy in times of high emotional pressure and said Cathy being in the barn with Button was a good outlet for her stress. "When Button's good, Cathy's good." The horses stayed. A week later Cathy was riding Button in 15-minute sessions to start, and the time built from there. Now she rides Button for an hour, four to five times a week. She cleans three stalls a day, does isometric exercise, and goes to her local Curves gym three times a week. She uses a mounting block and finds her grooming time with Button to be meditative and believes the two are even more in sync.

### A Delicate Matter

"I leak" was the confession to physical therapist, Janet A. Hulme, M.A., P.T., by an elite female equestrian training four to six hours daily for an upcoming Olympic competition. What to do about urinary incontinence and staying dry in the saddle is still a recurring topic today — one that is revisited time and again in Facebook riding groups. Women riders are very forthcoming about their conditions and remedies. Surgery. No surgery. Botox injections. Pads. Pee-proof undies. Adult pull-on panties. Plus discussing the merits of water-based versus silicon-based lubes to prevent chaffing from said pad on delicate in-the-saddle areas.

"The muscles used to balance and control your horse can imbalance the muscles in the pelvic area, leading to leaking," shares Janet. "The hip mid-range rotation exercises I developed in 'Roll For Control' can reduce frequency and urgency." Janet's work has had a major impact in the fields of incontinence and women's health. She encourages trying her "Roll For Control" set of 10 reps of exercises done twice daily with a ball and a stretch band. This simple regime aides a healthy back, steady standing without falls, plus optimal bladder and bowel function. No surgery, no pads, no adult diapers. "We're stronger through our core, which helps us as riders, and we can laugh without worry too."

Heather Wallace asks her rider fans, "What will you confess?" From these determined women, we learn their inspirations to stay in the saddle. 🐾



*Janet de Acevedo Macdonald blogs about horse show city destinations at [arabianhorsetravel.com](http://arabianhorsetravel.com).*