



This year's American Mule Museum Silent Auction will feature this amazing vintage 1942 Farmall "War Tractor" - Generously donated by Sylvia Durando, famous Hollywood stunt-woman and mule enthusiast. The silent auction will be held in the Douglas Robinson 4-H Building during Mule Days 2018. Come and place your bid and be the lucky winner of this beautiful fully restored Farmall Tractor. All proceeds will benefit the American Mule Museum! --- Bid often and high!!

Rosie the Belgian Molly Mule

Hello, I'm Rosie, a 14 year-old Belgian molly mule living a few miles south of Bishop, California. I'm originally from Ohio where I was raised in an Amish family for use as a buggy mule. When I was eight I loaded onto a Reese Brothers trailer and ended up here in Owens Valley on a cold March night. My new home became a pleasant barn and corral in the Eastern Sierra's high desert - a rugged world different from the gentle, green hill country of my earlier life.



New family members have included stock dogs, and Appaloosa and mustang geldings. I tolerate them OK but, after all, I'm a single driving mule. My new partner was (and remains) Uncle Buck. During my first few months we drove mile upon mile over dirt roads throughout the valley - the deepest in the U.S. Uncle Buck tells me I have the best long trot there is and I especially love

extending myself before my light lines, loose bit, and light buckboard beside the small Owens River, beneath peaks of the Sierra to the west & Whites to the east. I don't miss highways!

A few months passed and I found myself in an enormous equine parade down Main Street in Bishop. It was Mule Days! Uncle Buck had assembled a small school wagon. He explained we were privileged to carry Miss Bishop Paiute and her princesses on the parade route. Indeed, it was an honor - these beautiful, smart, happy young women in sparkly, jingly Native regalia, so excited as thousands of folks on the sidewalks called to them and clapped. I proudly wore the first of several blue ribbons on my halter that were awarded over the years for Best Single Mule Drawn Vehicle. We drove in arena classes too.

Subsequently, Uncle Buck & I did lots of parades - Bodie Days, Indian Days, Lone Pine's Western Film Festival, Bishop's Christmas Parade (this in the dark - I was the sole four-legged!) and more. We even delivered brides to their intended at weddings.

Semi-retired now, we do few parades these days - go ten feet then stop and repeat. Our best times together are when Uncle Buck loads groceries and blankets on our buckboard and we drive remote country. Uncle Buck fishes and sits singing beside a campfire while I graze. This is only time I wish my ears weren't so large - his voice is terrible!

The Mule That Won the Great American Horse Race in 1976

The year was 1976. The country was torn apart by the Vietnam War, Watergate had just ended, and Nixon was out of office. America would be celebrating its 200th birthday, and everyone was looking for a reason to celebrate and put some of the past events behind them.

The Great American Horse Race was set up as part of the year-long celebration to help bring America together. The race would cover 3,500 miles over a 100 day period. There was a patriotic frenzy at the time, and the race organizers wanted the race to offer an authentic nationalistic experience - emulating the experience of the European settlers who crossed the frontier in search of a better life. The race started in New York and later incorporated parts of the Oregon Trail, finally ending at Sutter Creek on the Pony Express trail into California. About 100 riders signed up (teams were 1 rider and 2 horses) - most with financial backing and large support crews - and most believing Arabian horses were the horse to ride in order to win.



But then there was Virl Norton, who entered the race with two mules, Lord Fauntleroy (Leroy for short) and his second mount Lady Eloise. Virl didn't have a big bank account and only his 16-year old son Pierce as his support crew. "He always had a hankering for mules, I think maybe from his childhood," Pierce said.

The race was structured like the Tour de France, with

Check out our website at www.mulemuseum.org or find us on Facebook by searching American Mule Museum!



AMM presents the Laws Railroad Museum with a \$20,000 donation towards the display barn for the 20 Mule Team Death Valley Borax wagons. Pictured (from left) are Pam Vaughan, Jay Smart, Ted Williams, Pete Watercott, Jim Morrow, Lou Roeser, Marye Roeser, Jennifer Roeser, Bob Felkel, Lee Roeser, Ginny, Sarah Sheehan, Ruby Allen, Linda Arcularius, Howard Arcularius, Robin Stater & Bruce Klein.

a set course for each day. It was usually about 35 miles and the riders were clocked and their time was accumulated. Many riders started out with explosive speed. If the horses showed any signs of lameness or over-exertion, they would get penalty time and would have to ride in a trailer until recovered.

About a quarter way through the race, the horses with stellar pedigrees were slowing down and the mules took the lead. At that point, Leroy and Lady Eloise would challenge history and pre-conceived expectations. Virl did not expect to take the lead so early, but the endurance of the mule proved to be an advantage in the race. By the latter part of the race it became clear that the mules were going to win the Great American Race. In 1976, Virl and Pierce Norton and their mules, Leroy and Lady Eloise, proved to America that they were not just ordinary folks - like the pioneers had demonstrated in the 19th century - they were heroes in the American spirit who helped to "Pull America Together" in difficult times.

It should be noted that Lady Eloise lived out her final years in the Eastern Sierra under the care of Lee and Jen Roeser at McGee Creek Pack Station.

- Story by Sandy Powell

Introducing New Board Member: Anna Baglione

Representing the Future of Packing

Ranch-raised, I began packing when I was 16 years old on the Sierra Nevada's west slope and found myself instantly in love with packing's way of life. I'd camped, hiked, and ridden the high country and packing combined all of that. I found a home among the packers, people of the mule a lot like me - a different breed that tends to go against the grain. We have deep respect for tradition but are fearless when it comes to care of our stock and getting the job done. We choose to regularly engage and work with unique animals that often outsmart us.

The summer I turned 18, I attempted to hire on with an outfit close to home but they weren't looking for new hires of my age or gender. The following year I was hired by a bigger outfit - spring 2012 my story at Rock Creek began. Rock Creek Inc. was founded by the London family in 1947, although strings had been run out of their original site since 1919. Dr. Craig London, DVM continues to own and operate the pack station today. I was trained by packers who had worked for the outfit for any number of seasons: 10 years, 35 years, or 5 - it didn't matter. The rules remain the same, mule packing traditions are long-lived.

I was taught to pack correctly and safely - this strong sense of hard work and tradition, with huge emphasis upon stock well-being, is Rock Creek's way. We hold our mules in high regard and take pride in what we do. There is a sense of excellence expected of your string when your mules wear mantles with the large red Rock Creek letters. We teach these high standards to new recruits each year. It's of the utmost importance to me to pass on this way of life.

The perseverance required to be a packer is reflected in the rest of my life. When I'm not packing I've attended UC Davis and will complete my B.S. in Geology in June, 2018. I've been heavily involved with Backcountry Horsemen of California's Mid-Valley Unit. In 2017 our parade group was selected to represent national recognition of packing at the Rose Parade in Pasadena on New Year's Day. I rode my own horse with the group and helped assemble pack strings for the parade. It was quite an experience that I hope someday to repeat.

I have also participated in the Bishop Mule Days Celebration. In 2014 I put together a collegiate women's pack team from Modesto Junior College. We were the first sponsored collegiate team (BCHC Mid Valley always has our backs) and there is still a team from MJC competing at Mule Days. Our initial team received 3rd overall the first year, but we came back in 2015 and swept the entire competition - first in all 4 events over the course of the weekend, a feat not yet repeated by any collegiate team.

With Mid Valley's assistance each year, we teach new team members to pack and some have gone on to work for pack stations following team participation. This had been my dream when we began competition and it's made me quite proud. I hope to continue to pass on the way of life that is packing - a hard-working, humbling and rewarding lifestyle. The values that packing teaches are timeless and enriching.



American Mule Museum and Heritage Center

Bishop, California

Spring 2018 Newsletter

Mission Statement

The American Mule Museum and Heritage Center is dedicated to telling the story of the contributions of that unsung hero, the American Mule, and of the people who worked with mules throughout the history of the United States in the areas of transportation, agriculture, and recreation, with emphasis on the West, California, and the Sierra Nevada. The goal of the museum is to educate, inform, & entertain the public with information on the versatility and value of the American Mule.

President's Message - The past year has been an exciting and productive year for the American Mule Museum. Thank you to its dedicated Board of Directors and the over 400 members whose generosity, loyalty, and unwavering support of telling the story of the American Mule keep us motivated and thankful.

First and foremost, our highest priority is to build a state of the art Mule Museum and Heritage Center. Work continues on securing the identified site on Highway 395 west of the Fairgrounds. There is an existing building on the site and if it is available for remodeling, then it could serve as an interim site until the permanent Museum can be built. As negotiations with the City of Los Angeles and the Department of Water and Power continue, the American Mule Museum will be building kiosks at key locations throughout the Eastern Sierra to highlight the important role that the mule has played in the history of this area. The panels in these kiosks are interchangeable and can be revised as needed.

The American Mule Museum was proud to donate \$20,000 to the Laws Museum towards the completion of the Exhibit Barn that will be the permanent home of the Death Valley 20 Mule Team wagons. This partnership with Laws Museum and the Death Valley Conservancy will provide valuable and unique opportunities to tell the story of the great American Mules who pulled these magnificent wagons. Interpretive displays will be developed depicting the role of the mule in transportation, mining, agriculture, and everyday life in the Eastern Sierra and the West. We are excited and enthusiastic about this new collaboration and look forward to keeping you informed of its progress.

The development of a capital campaign and a donor pool is a high priority for the American Mule Museum. Realizing the dream of building this one of a kind Museum is an expensive venture. In order to pursue as many opportunities as possible to do important fund raising, we participated in the Giving Tuesday Campaign in 2017. Giving Tuesday was started in 2012 in New York and has expanded worldwide. It is held every year on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. It is a celebration of America's greatest traditions: generosity, volunteerism, and community - and these traditions are a perfect match for the American Mule Museum. Thank you to the over 50 loyal mule enthusiasts who donated to our Giving Tuesday Campaign which totaled over \$13,000 including a match by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation of \$1,000. We are extremely appreciative of this support and look forward to future campaigns that will contribute to the development of an essential and vital capital campaign.

The Great American Mule can be described as strong and persistent, nimble and loyal, intelligent and reliable, willing, tireless and spirited. This description also represents the same attributes of the American Mule Museum Board of Directors and its awesome members and supporters. We shall persevere and we continue to appreciate everyone who has helped us along this adventurous trail, sometimes filled with obstacles and challenges, but always filled with appreciation for the ride!!

With sincere gratitude,

Robert Felkel
Robert Felkel - President

Membership

American Mule Museum and Heritage Center



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Individual.....	\$25
Family (2 Adults, 2 children).....	\$50
Contributing.....	\$100
Business/Organization.....	\$150
Supporting.....	\$250
Sustaining.....	\$500
Benefactor.....	\$1000+

When the Museum is completed, each level will include annual benefits. For more information on becoming a member, visit our website at www.mulemuseum.org

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