

The B.O.K. Briefing

Winter 2003

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Zeke showing his flexibility before Western Day, 2003.

*Happy Holidays
from everyone at
B.O.K. Ranch!!*

I'M OK...BOK

By Molly Hale

It's Tuesday morning and time for me to prepare for my therapeutic riding class, an activity that has had profound impact in my recovering quadriplegic body. As I dress myself, making sure the seam of my pants is centered, I recall a time when I was told I would never move any body part, voluntarily, below my shoulders. Hmmmmm! It's a good thing I learned to question authority early in my childhood.

Arriving at the new home of BOK, I am welcomed by the staff and volunteers as they continue their preparation of Sugar, Zeke and PJ, the wonderful horses that will carry the early morning riders. Jerry is tied to the new railing by himself and is fidgeting and restless, wanting to be with the other horses, his buddies. I like everything about this place: the people, the horses, the smells, the

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chill in the air and anticipate with delight my next hour of riding.

First thing I do when I arrive is drive my power chair past the equipment shed and sing out my helmet size. "B please," I say. I then head toward the three trusty, rusty 55 gallon, saddle-blanket covered stationary steeds I have named Stretch and Pelvis to do some ground work: mounting, stretching, twisting, turning and laying over. (The third barrel horse has yet to be named.) Often times I meet my morning therapy mates and we stretch together, reminding



each other of any moves we may have forgotten. It's time for the real horse now and I dismount my barrel with the support of a volunteer, coming to a standing position before I sit in my chair (standing? Imagine that). I head to the mounting ramp and am met by my sidewalkers, lovely women this morning who have taken the responsibility to protect me were I to fall. Sugar is waiting patiently in position with her horse handler, and Carol Studer, the teacher/trainer, supports my safe mounting and reminds me of all the appropriate moves I need to make.

I remember when I first began to ride three years after I was injured. I needed to be hoisted in the air and lowered over the horse that was brought underneath me. Wow! Being able to stand with support and mount a horse is a significant accomplishment, one that has happened because of horseback riding along with other therapies.

Each lesson I have at BOK focuses my attention and intention on different ideas: keeping my eyes on the

horizon; relaxing my shoulders; letting my elbows be soft and close into my body; breathing-breathing-breathing; using a visual "skyhook" connected to the top of my head to draw my posture upright; having an image of the earth so my horse and I are connected to the ground through each other (the horses **really** like this). Collectively, each lesson sets the groundwork for the next lesson and I find my ability to ride expanding. What joy!! This expanding ability has enabled me to ride in other locations like in Switzerland where I rode this Dutch Friesian Stallion. Yes! Think "Knights of the Round

Table".

The physical delights and positive functional changes in my body because of the therapeutic riding are obvious outcomes. What isn't seen is the health it brings to my emotional body. I appreciate the gracious way everyone at BOK teaches me. Their calm, patient manner allows me to learn, to practice skills I may feel clumsy doing. Their morning, welcoming smiles creates an environment of ease and acceptance. I feel valued as a client and trust my well-being to their expertise, focus and attention. Their ability to place me with the "right" mount for my progress insures a powerful bonding and oneness with the horse. I feel tremendously fortunate, blessed really, to have access to this wonderful program and I leave each session eager to return the next week.

And I'm still looking for a name for that third barrel horse. Any ideas?

Lovely day to you, Molly Hale r

THANK-YOUS

Mary H. Aldringer * Timothy Allari * Gladys Anderson * Tori Bakotich * Sotos Barkas * Joan Barnes
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A LETTER TO NARHA

I am writing this letter on behalf of Angela Sherman, a NARHA-certified instructor who teaches at BOK Ranch in Woodside. She and I have worked together for two years with the program, in which time she has demonstrated her talent and patience creating a safe and enjoyable atmosphere for students, horses, and volunteers.

Each Saturday morning when I arrive to volunteer, Angela is already there setting up the arena and planning the day's schedule. Her strong leadership and planning abilities allow the day of lessons to run smoothly. Before the students arrive, she makes sure each volunteer knows his or her responsibilities and is comfortable performing them.

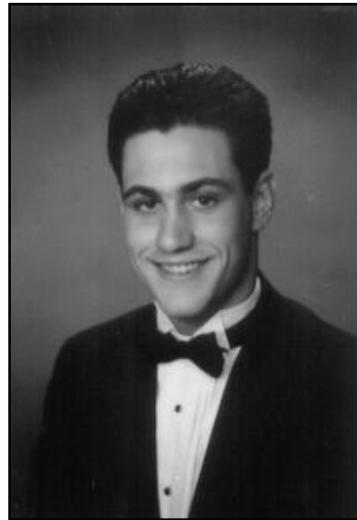
During lessons, Angela demonstrates some of her best qualities. She utilizes her creativity by tailoring each warm-up stretch and lesson activity to the needs of the students in her lesson. Angela encourages the students to do their best and fosters independent riding when possible. She gives the students a carefree feeling that allows them to open up and enjoy their time riding. Angela's smile and amiable personality are the reason for the smiles on the faces of our students.

In her spare time Angela dedicates herself to training our newest horse, Jerry, to make him available for students riding in our next session. She is the model for training and handling horses. She is always available to help others, and demonstrates a contagious positive attitude. Angela is very gracious and makes certain that the volunteers know how grateful she is for their help. Truly, though, the volunteers are the most grateful to have Angela as an Instructor. Angela Sherman's genuine commitment to and remarkable success on behalf of BOK Ranch inspires each of us to return week after week for Saturday morning lessons.

Sincerely,
Danielle O'Neill
Volunteer at BOK Ranch r

GET READY FOR
WESTERN DAY
EARLY JUNE, 2004

STUDENT FILES



My parents and I feel that there are not enough words to express our appreciation for the loving support that I have received from the wonderful people at B.O. K. Ranch. I was a student at B.O. K. Ranch from 1986 to 1992 where I had one of the best experiences ever. When I was about eight years old, in 1986, I began my lessons, in Redwood City, where the Kulchin family

opened their home and their hearts to me and my family.

I had several instructors during the seven or eight years that I took lessons. Leslie was my first teacher who was VERY patient as she taught me the skills for English Riding. Eventually, I learned how to jump, which was very exciting for me! (My mom says that Ann would hold her breath and probably say a few Hail Mary's as Shale and I jumped.) We always made it without a scratch. Neesa used her expertise to teach me vaulting where I improved my balance as I stood on P.J. and Zeke as they trotted around the ring. Many of us went to Southern California to compete with other students in therapeutic riding programs. This was a great experience. As I recall, B.O.K. Ranch came away with lots of ribbons. Those ribbons are still prized possessions for me. Heidi, who has about as much energy as me (which is quite a bit), paired me up with Shale, who I referred to as MY horse, to fine-tune my jumping skills. (More Hail Mary's for Ann!) Carol taught me that in order to become a more successful rider, that I needed to be in control of my body movements. All the caring volunteers deserve my gratitude because without them we would not have had a program.

Through every step (or trot) of the way Ann and Larry were there to give me encouragement not only with riding, but with life. They are like family to me.

Now I am 25 years of age and I have been working for the Port of San Francisco for the past three years as a laborer. I enjoy working out at the gym, hunting, and hanging out with my friends. I really miss my riding, and hope to be able to ride again someday.

I believe that my experience at B.O.K. Ranch helped to build my self-confidence which has helped me reach some of my goals. Thanks, again to P.J., Zeke and Shale and all the people at B.O.K. Ranch for this wonderful program that made a difference in my life.

Dominic Mangini r

I AM INTERESTED IN BOK RANCH!!

I would like to:

- Volunteer
- Participate in the Program
- Contribute

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please make checks payable to B.O.K. Ranch, Inc.
Contributions are tax deductible for federal tax purposes.

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WISH LIST

Truck

Able to pull a 2-horse trailer.

Equine Senior

Label Maker

Biotin

Rainbow Reins

Glucosamine-Chondroitin

Select NuFlex Brand

Sponsorship for Jerry

\$2,500 Per Year

Sponsorship for a Student

\$250 Per Session

\$1,250 Per Year



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