



"From the back of a horse, the world looks wider."

– Joyce Gibson Roach

I Ride

author anonymous

I Ride. That seems like such a simple statement. However as many women who ride know it is really a complicated matter. It has to do with power and empowerment. Being able to do things you might have once considered out of reach or ability.

I consider this as I shovel manure, fill water barrels in the cold rain, wait for the vet/farrier/electrician/hay delivery, change a tire on a horse trailer by the side of the freeway, or cool a gelding out before getting down to the business of drinking a cold beer after a long ride.

The time, the money, the effort it takes to ride calls for dedication. At least I call it dedication. Both my ex-husbands call it 'the sickness'. It's a sickness I've had since I was a small girl bouncing my model horses and dreaming of the day I could ride a real horse. Most of the women I ride with understand the meaning of 'the sickness'. It's not a sport. It's not a hobby. It's what we do and, in some ways, it's who we are as women and human beings.

I Ride. I hook up my trailer and load my gelding. I haul to some trail head somewhere, unload, saddle, whistle up my dog and *I Ride.* I breathe in the air, watch the sunlight filter through the trees and savor the movement of my horse. My shoulders relax. A smile rides my sunscreen smeared face. I let the real world fade into the tracks my horse leaves in the dust.

Time slows. Flying insects buzz loudly, looking like fairies. My gelding flicks his ears and moves down the trail. I can smell his sweat and it is perfume to my senses. Time slows. The rhythm of the walk and the movement of the leaves become my focus. My saddle creaks and the leather rein in my hand softens with the warmth.

I consider the simple statement; *I Ride.* I think of all I do because I ride.

Climb granite slabs, wade into a freezing lake, race a friend through the meadow all the while laughing and feeling my heart in my chest. Other days just the act of mounting and dismounting can be a real accomplishment. Still *I Ride*, no matter how tired I am, or how much my seat bones hurt, or how any of the numerous horse related injuries pain me.

I Ride. And I feel better for doing so. The beauty I've seen because I ride amazes me. I've ridden out to find lakes that remain for the most part, unseen. Caves, dark and cold beside rivers full and rolling are the scenes I see in my dreams. The Granite Stairway at Echo Summit, bald eagles on the wing, and bobcats on the prowl add to the empowerment and joy in my heart.

I think of the people, mostly women, I've met. I consider how competent they all are. Not a weenie amongst the bunch. We haul 40ft rigs, we back into tight spaces without clipping a tree. We set up camp, tend the horses. We cook and keep safe. We understand and love our companions, the horse. We respect each other and those we encounter on the trail. We know that if you are out there riding, you also shovel, fill, wait and doctor. Your hands are a little rough and you travel with out makeup or hair gel. You do without to afford the 'sickness' and probably, when you were a small girl, you bounced a model horse while you dreamed of riding a real one.

I Ride. "My treasures do not chink or glitter. They gleam in the sun and neigh in the night"

I Ride. "The path to your horse's heart lies through your own."