

From the Vice President's Corral

It's my favorite time of the season—a time of infinite possibilities. The horses are meandering idly in their paddocks, and I'm sitting inside thinking I really am going to have a heck of a good endurance season. I'm going to take that time off work, I'm going to ride 4 times a week, I'm going to lose 10 pounds, and I'm gonna finally be ready to start the season with a 75 mile ride. At this time, just after a great PNER convention, anything is possible. *Anything.*

Except this. I never thought I'd be writing a column as a member of the PNER board, and as your new vice-president. But here I am. So having been, shall we say, "persuaded" to join my dear friend Julie in this endeavor, I think it's time to introduce myself.

I have been around horses all my adult life. I started endurance riding in 1978, I believe it was. My AERC number informs me that I was the 710th member of that fine



*Sandy Cheek (L), and Julie Barnfather (R)
(twins separated at birth??)*

organization. On my first endurance ride, I managed to commit most of the really embarrassing mistakes—I rode too hard, too fast, and won the 50 mile ride and really thought that was what it was all about. Thankfully I had an amazing horse—who, by the way, is still out meandering around in my pasture at the ripe old age of 38—and I didn't manage to injure him in any way. But luck and angels have played a big part along the way.

Since that race, I've done most kinds of endurance riding we all do—limited distance, 25's 50's, 75's, and 100's. I was even on the very first Pan Am team for Canada in 1987. I've been fiercely competitive, but

I now just ride to finish strong and healthy. I got into endurance from the hunter jumper world because it seemed like a generous place to be—one that would accommodate most folks and most horses, as long as they abided by a few rules of the game to keep things safe and sane.

So if I had to state my goals for this organization and my part in it, it would be to keep this kind of generosity as a feature of our sport. Let's be generous to each other. Extend a hand to newcomers, and share your wisdom. Be humble enough to share your mistakes too; that's how you learned, and you may save someone else a painful lesson. And I would ask that if you have a concern or complaint or suggestion, do the right thing and send it somewhere productive. Julie and I both want very much to do a good job for y'all. We will, I guarantee it, make some mistakes. But I welcome any ideas you may have on how to do things better, and as is the case with most little organizations like this, we are only as good as our members' participation and involvement. Thanks and see you on the trail!-----Sandy Cheek