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“December 14th is Officially Day of the Horse”

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December 14 is officially

Day of the Horse

by Bob Welch

Clinician and horseman Dennis Reis of Penngrove, Calif., had been calling his two-day horsemanship seminars Day of the Horse for about four years.

Then, a year ago, during his annual Day of the Horse demonstration at the Excalibur Hotel in Las Vegas, inspiration struck Reis. During a moment of excitement in the arena he proclaimed in front of a crowd 1,000 strong that he would establish an official, nationally recognized Day of the Horse. Suddenly a private goal had been publicized.

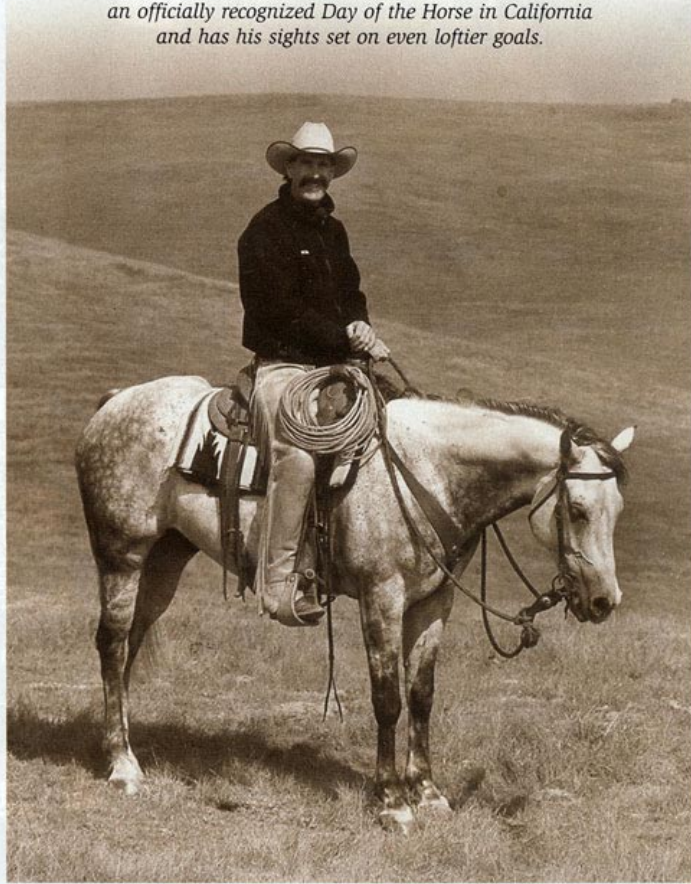
"I think the horse just needs to be recognized for what he means to me. I would be nowhere without the horse," said Reis. "We should just take a special day to honor them."

Behind the scenes Reis' staff members were as gung-ho as their leader, though they realized the proclamation meant work. After the initial euphoria subsided, the crew looked at one another and realized that if Secretary's Day

already existed then surely a Day of the Horse is probably on the books as well.

Sixteen hours of internet research later, Deborah Fish, office manager at the Reis Ranch, realized that neither the state of California nor the United States government observe a day devoted to honoring the horse. Though many independent organizations have chosen a day to recognize horses.

In an effort to honor the horse, clinician Dennis Reis established an officially recognized Day of the Horse in California and has his sights set on even loftier goals.



REIS RANCH PHOTO

So in January of 2002 Reis Ranch teamed up with California State Assemblyman Joseph Nation (D-6th District) and began the process. The first step was to write the resolution, which then went through the hands of the lawyers. Next, the resolution had to go through the Assembly Rules Committee. Since there was no financial aspect, it passed quickly and unanimously and was forwarded on to the assembly floor.

In the meantime, the bill began to garner public support. In California, all bills on the assembly calendar are posted on the Internet for the public to review. The public may e-mail letters of support or disapproval for any bill or resolution on the calendar. Day of the Horse generated over 2,000 e-mails, all of which were in support of the measure.

"You should have seen some of the political guys jumping on the bandwagon," said Reis. "It's nice to see people wanting to honor the horse at that level."

Finally the resolution reached the California State Senate floor where, on June 21, it was passed unanimously. The California Secretary of State then signed the

resolution, making the second Saturday (Dec. 14, 2002) of each December California Day of the Horse.

"Now," according to Reis, "we're trying to get it done nationally."

Reis contacted the White House.

After being transferred throughout the building Reis was finally put in touch with a public liaison to the president. The majority of calls a public liaison takes forces them to deal with a disgruntled constituent.

However, Reis' unique call was enough to get the White House staffer's attention, and he promised to work on the project, generating guarded hope at the Reis Ranch.

"There's hope that President Bush could make

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it into a national holiday with the stroke of a pen," said Fish.

"Otherwise, it could be a two-to three-year process."

But the dream is far from being realized. The Reis folks are not political lobbyists. They are horsemen and -women trying to impart their message to the general public.

"It's been a lot of dreams and a lot of hope, but frankly, we've probably taken it as far as we're going to," said Reis. "The goal isn't Dennis Reis Day of the Horse. This is solely to set

aside a day to honor the horse on a national level and whoever can get that done and be the most effective at it: great."

So what will Reis be doing on Dec. 14 to honor the horse? "I would like to invite all the people of California and the nation to celebrate with me in Las Vegas on Dec. 14, the first officially recognized Day of the Horse, at my free demonstration of horsemanship techniques at the Excalibur Hotel and Casino," said Reis.

"There are horse groups putting on special rides all over the country on that day," adds Reis. "You should just get together and just really honor your horse. It's so easy to get stuck in the political aspect of the horse as far as wanting more trails to ride or getting pushed out of your area by development, but all that aside, your relationship with your horse should be fulfilling and just a lot of fun."

To find out more about the Day of the Horse resolution or the celebration, go to www.reisranch.com or call 1-800-732-8220.

