

Joy Ride

by Suzy Hopkins

Sir Jerry was a gorgeous 1,200 pound palomino mountain of a horse. He had been trained to be totally obedient which was fortunate for me since stallions have a lot of their own ideas.

Unquestionably the best trail riding at Folsom Lake State Park was on the beaches where you could gallop with a slim chance of the horses getting out of control. (It is difficult to run fast in the sand.) One warm summer evening my 11-year-old son on his little Arabian horse Zaboe and I on Sir Jerry were approaching a spacious section of beach, riding away from the glaring setting sun. Zaboe and Sir Jerry were friends because Zaboe *always* yielded to the stallion which is the natural way in a herd. Sir Jerry and I were in front as we started cantering on the beach. Slowly but surely Zaboe was inching forward until he was cantering *beside* Sir Jerry. When Zaboe was nose to nose with the stallion, Sir Jerry flattened out his body like a thoroughbred does at the end of a race, to be more aerodynamic. He galloped determinedly down the endless beach. The immense power I felt beneath me was thrilling and terrifying. What if I couldn't stop him? I gently lifted, a few inches, my hand holding the reins which engaged the shanks of the bit. Sir Jerry came back to the canter and my control instantly. What a fabulous feeling of power and pleasure to be able to easily control this massive animal.

We rode until the enormous full moon rose past the horizon and the coyotes howled. Serenely and silently we headed back on this lovely ride I shared with my son.