

## Home Stretch

*By Suzy Hopkins*

As I turn in to the dark pine forest I can smell that lovely scent. My horse Stormy's hooves crunch the pine needles as we slowly pass under some low branches. The leather saddle squeaks as I shift my weight so that Stormy doesn't bear all the weight on his front legs as we carefully pick our way down to the lake. All along the trail are mammoth gray and black speckled granite bedrock slabs silently monitoring the passage of time. We lightly trot across the dam that has rushing water cascading into the valley. Galloping along the beach I come to realize this is my comfort zone – being part of a horse. On the way home it is a perfect 74 degrees with the California sun low in the sky.

I could happily die at this moment.