

# Horse Trail Riding Banned on Wabash Trace Trail

by Denise Schieffer, ITRA

In early April, the Wabash Trace Trail in southwestern Iowa was permanently closed to horseback riders because of extensive damage done to the trail. Thousands of divots, four to six inches deep, were left in the most popular stretch of the crushed limestone trail, three to four miles south of Council Bluffs, Iowa, during a spring thaw. The holes made the trail unsafe for bicyclists, joggers and walkers, said Bill Danforth, president of the all-volunteer Southwest Iowa Nature Trails that oversees the trail.

From a recent article that appeared in the [Omaha] *World-Herald*, not one horseback rider came to help get the trail back in shape after some uncaring horseback riders rode the trail while it was wet and made extensive damage. The dirt bridle path was originally created in the early 1990s by caring and responsible equestrians, who have since moved from the area. Later, the trail suffered years of neglect, at which time, a small group of mountain bike riders decided to re-adopt the trail. They contacted local equestrians, who gave a commitment to the attempt. However, not one dollar from a horse person or organization went into funding the trail upgrade. What would have



cost less than \$1000 to upgrade to bicycling standards, instead ended up costing more than \$5000; the additional cost being attributed to the construction of three bridges along the bridle path that would be strong enough for horses. The mountain bikers spent money out of pocket for this project. Yet, according to the *World-Herald* article, not one horseback rider volunteered money or time to this project.

The Wabash Trace Trail destruction has been called the worst case of vandalism to ever be inflicted on the trail. And now, trail users are urged to report horse riders using the trail, to the county sheriff. Signs barring horses from any of the trail are being posted.

This should prove as a warning to all people with horses. Unless equestrians begin to band together and offer their help, multi-purpose trails will be prohibited to horses.

"Help" includes not just funding of trail development and improvements, but also working on trail improvements, staying on the trail, not riding on wet trails, cleaning manure from parking lots and staging areas, and more.

Contact your local park ranger, forester or conservation commission to inquire about ways in which you can be of assistance.

## FROM the POLO FIELD

By Howard Powers, longtime Marion, Iowa, horseman

Spring is here and with it the rain, sun, fresh breezes and MUUUD. Horses start to shed, and grass turns the lawns and pastures to green carpets. And in the breasts of horse lovers, there springs the long-dormant urge to clean the saddles, oil the bridles and get ready to ride.

At Jeff Boeh's farm and polo field, little can be done with the horses other than conditioning them and building up their legs with long trotting and lots of miles since it is not possible to get on the fields.

Jeff reports that four new riders are planning to compete and three new horses that have not been exposed to polo will be tested to see if they have the stuff to make the team. Not every horse can be a polo mount.

Hopes are to have three practices per week and the schedules are being shaped up for the season. The main event to date is a charity match on July 7<sup>th</sup> for the Children's Therapy Center of the Quad Cities.

According to Jeff, there will be plenty of food and drink. And in fact, PepsiCo, Inc.,

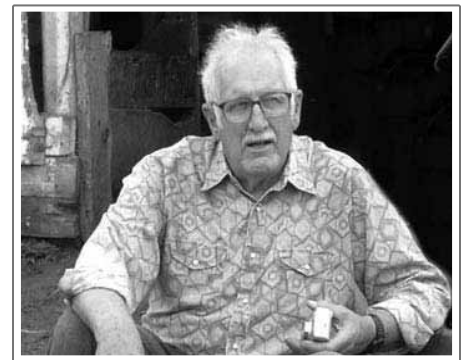
has come on board as a corporate sponsor, and is the official soft drink supplier for the event. Happy Joe's Pizza, also a corporate sponsor, will provide food and entertainment. Clowns, magic acts, and costumed characters will entertain children in Happy Joe's family area tent.

Other corporate sponsors include The Lodge, Bettendorf's official hotel for the event, USBank, Wells Fargo, and Farm Bureau.

The gates open at 1pm, with a polo exhibition at 4pm. The actual match begins at 5pm. Other exhibitions will be featured, including a hunter/jumper demonstration, a demo by the Scott County Agility Kennel Club, a dressage demonstration and others. It promises to be a fun-filled day, and for a very good cause.

On Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, the day after the match, there will be a polo lesson for those interested. Details are still being finalized for that event. Anyone interested in participating can contact Jeff at 563-340-3845 or [mjboeh@fbx.com](mailto:mjboeh@fbx.com).

July 14<sup>th</sup> will see a polo training professional from California conducting a three day clinic. Details still pending. August



Howard Powers, author

11<sup>th</sup> may see the Twin Cities Polo Club junior team heading this way for a match. There is also hope for another charity match later in the season.

The goal for the next three to four years is to build the club into a full operating unit and to initiate a student program for interested people. The possibility of renting equipment, rather than going all out, is something in the planning stage. Possible leasing of a horse is another consideration because trained polo horses are not your backyard pets and have gone through extensive training.

Here's hoping that Jeff's hard work and vision will result in something good.

