

MULE CROSSING: *Pre Bishop Mule Days*

By Meredith Hodges

As the last signs of winter fade, giving way to the fresh breath of spring, the little town of Bishop — centrally located in the eastern High Sierra Recreation Area of California—begins preparation for its 16th Annual Mule Days Celebration. With a population of over 1000 mules in the area, Bishop has been designated the Mule Capital of the World.



Townsppeople, volunteers, participants, and spectators join together in a mutual effort to help Bishop host the largest mule show anywhere; the fever of spring runs doubly hot for mule enthusiasts everywhere as they dream of the marvelous long weekend to come. And this year, as every year, promises to bring the very best show ever!

Bishop Mule Days has something for everyone: mule lovers, their friends, and family can enjoy fine Western cuisine, games, dancing, and good conversation in addition to the show itself. The celebration is kicked off by three mule shows on Friday—there are over 90 different classes and events for competitors. They include pleasure classes, reining classes, trail, musical tires, barrel racing, and pole bending. Also, jumping, cattle penning, steer stopping, team roping, and a balloon bust. For the packers: pack train classes, packing contests, box hitch and diamond hitch packing contests (pro and non-pro), team packing, and the team packing scramble, which you must see to believe! There are halter classes, pulling driving classes, and for you race fans—chariot races, flat track races, and yes, even a backwards race! There are braying contests for those who prefer to rabble than ride, and a shoeing contest for our renowned farriers! Several new events have been added this year to increase the desirability of the show: an individual packing scramble for those wild and wooly mountain men or women who prefer to “go it light,” Western saddle races for those who wouldn’t be caught dead sitting on a postage stamp; and forging and hot shoeing for our more artistic farriers. All these events and more will be narrated by the “Man with the Magic Voice,” Bob Tallman from Reno, Nevada. He is one of many extra-special people and longears who will participate in this year’s Mule Days Celebration.

Mule Days 1985 will also be graced with the royal presence of Sonnette, a beautiful nine-month-old Poitou donkey recently imported from France, and her equally rare companion Savane, a Mulassier Draft Horse filly. The Poitou donkey is the most unusual and famous donkey ever bred, and traces back to the French archives as early as 1121. The breed has

been protected by the French government and has remained pure for 300 years. Sonnette is one of only 60 Poitou donkeys in existence today, and the only one of her kind in the United States. Her companion Savane is one of an estimated 150 Mulassiers in existence today, and the only one of her kind in the United States. Mulassiers are a powerful draft horse used exclusively to breed with the Poitou ass to produce the Poitou mule, extensively used in agriculture in France for hundreds of years. Seeing these two extremely rare animals will be a special treat indeed!

Following the mule shows on Friday and Saturday, mule enthusiasts will be able to warm up their “Mule Days Spirit” and dance the night away to the sounds of Monte Mills and his Horseshoe Band. On Saturday morning, we are hoping this year’s Mule Days Parade will be honored with the presence of California Governor George Deukmejian as Grand Marshall.

So as we approach the bicentennial of the first jacks to set foot on American soil, let’s not wait until October to make this year a special one for our Longeared friends, and begin by kicking up our heels at the largest mule show in the world, in the Mule Capital of the World, Bishop, California, Memorial Day weekend, May 24-27, 1985! Hope to see you there!

For more information about Meredith Hodges and her comprehensive correspondence training program, *Training Mules and Donkeys*, please visit **www.LuckyThreeRanch.com** or call **1-800-816-7566**. Also, find Meredith Hodges and Lucky Three Ranch on Facebook and Twitter. And don’t forget to check out her children’s website at **JasperTheMule.com**.

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