



**January  
2014**

**Volume 21  
Issue 1**

## RICK'S 'RAMBLINS'

**Goodbye to a great 2013! ... and Hellooo 2014**



Happy New Year Saddleback Canyon Riders! I hope you all had a wonderful Holiday Season filled with warmth and cheer! As I write this, I am truly amazed at how

much fun and good times we managed to pack into 2013. We enjoyed fantastic Member's Meetings with great speakers. We had wonderfully productive Board Meetings (and we welcome any member to attend these meetings). There were great trail rides, super fun and well attended Play Days and cool movie nights. We had fantastic turn outs and won awards at the Swallows Day, Trabuco Canyon 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Laguna Niguel Christmas Parades.

O'Neill Park blesses our community and club with great equestrian facilities and some of the most beautiful riding trails in Southern California. Our club has worked hard to build and nurture a strong relationship with the park and its terrific Rangers. In 2013 we helped accomplish worthy park endeavors like ongoing trail maintenance and terrific support of O'Neill's acorn Day.

Saddleback Canyon Riders also raised significant funds for our club at RSM's Great Campout Pancake Breakfast and helped raise money for our unofficial sister organization Hanaeleh Horse Rescue.

2013 culminated with our fantastic Christmas Party (special thanks to our gracious hosts the laconos), with yummy food, friends and folly ... music, mistletoe and merriment! Our AMAZING Board Members were duly recognized for their selfless hard work and unwavering commitment to our club. There's a LOT of planning required to keep a club like ours running smoothly 'on all cylinders', and our Board Members are second to none!

Our contest winners were revealed and rewarded, Spike Wilks for the PAW (Participate and Win!) contest and Jeff Kelly for POP (Patronize Our Park!).

And, the prestigious President's Award went to Mr. Rich Gomez for his hard work and many contributions to ETI 357 in 2013 as well as all of his hard work outside of ETI to help preserve open space in south Orange County.

To top off the evening, the always fun and crazy cowboy Christmas gift exchange was the perfect ending to the perfect wrap up of 2013!

I do think 2014 will be a banner year for our club. We have a bunch of wonderful new members that joined Saddleback Canyon riders in 2013, and believe me, we sure are happy to have ya'! As our club continues to grow and thrive in 2014, I just want to let you ALL know that this is YOUR club, and that YOUR participation, ideas and suggestions will help make this the best Corral in ETI! And, you can always keep up with our club's entire goings on' at [www.saddlebackcanyonriders.com](http://www.saddlebackcanyonriders.com) – there's a handy calendar of events and a wealth of other valuable info on the site.

And hey, my 'office' is always open! Feel free to call, email or text me if there's anything you'd like to discuss.

I'd like to wrap this up with one of my favorite quotes:

***"The horse you get off is not the same as the horse you got on. It is your job as a rider to ensure that as often as possible; the change is for the better."***

Looking forward to sharing great times with you all in 2014!

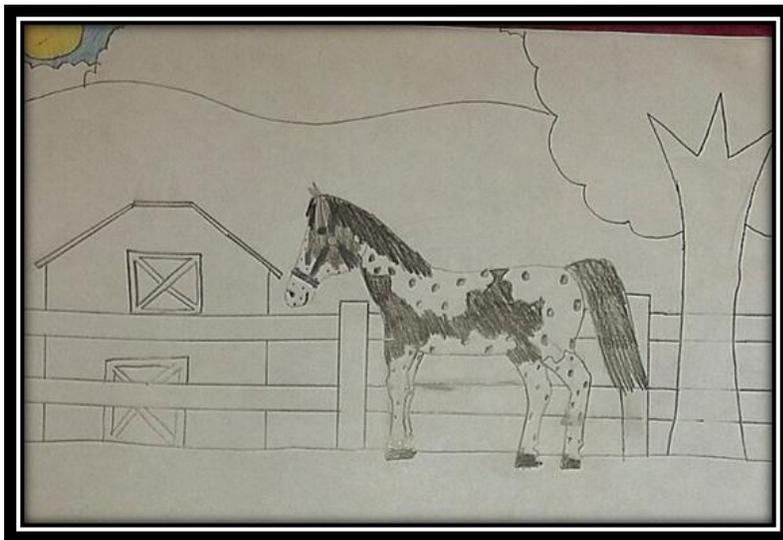


***New Feature! "Kids Corner" by Carrie and Amanda Tuttle***

Meet *Princess Miamora Credenza* and *Prince Canterlot* with their cutie marks on their hip to protect them from harm. Drawn by Carrie Tuttle



Can you guess who this drawing might be? Of course, it is *Patti Gretzler's horse Oreo*. Submitted and drawn by *Amanda Tuttle*





## “AS A CHILD, ALL MY EYES WANT TO SEE IS A PONY UNDER THE TREE!”

*By James M. Iacono*

The Saddleback Canyon Riders headed south for a winter Saturday this past December 14<sup>th</sup>. The occasion was the Laguna Niguel Holiday Parade, and the Club was represented well by 9 selfless members who were willing to sacrifice a Saturday morning to bring festive Holiday Cheer to our neighbors to the Southwest who are not as fortunate as we in experiencing the equine animal in all of his splendor. The theme this year was “Through a Child’s Eyes” and ETI 357 filled those eyes with what every child would want to see on Christmas morning.... A brand new pony wrapped as a gift! Thanks to Tracey Tuttle for

allowing us to use her gifted pony Sammi to present a lasting image to all in attendance. Riding in on “Santa’s helpers” were Jim Schicht, Evelyn Ortega, Pam Ragland, Jeff Kelly, and Jimmy I. Thanks to our ground crew helpers Rick and Karen Balthaser and Sydney and Sawyer Ragland. All of Santa’s “reindeers”- outfitted with antlers and red bows- behaved like professionals. This was the third consecutive year our Club has participated in the parade, and the organizers are already saving a spot for us next year! Thanks to all who participated and helped get our community in a festive holiday spirit!





## In the Saddle with Bob Wilks

### Our “PAL” Bob

By Rick Balthaser

I interviewed Bob Wilks a couple of months ago, and I thought writing about him would be really easy. It wasn't. As I clumsily searched for words to describe the man that is a beloved founding member of our club, a dear friend to many, and a mentor (although I've never told him) to me, I stumbled upon a quote from a pretty astute guy, Albert Schweitzer, that I believe sums up Bob pretty well:

*“Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.”*

So, with that said (thanks Al!) let me tell you about Bob. Robert Wilks was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A couple of years later, his family moved to the San Fernando Valley and then moved back to Tulsa when Bob was 13. Bob later attended the University of Tulsa, and while a sophomore, he and a fraternity brother enlisted in the Marine Corp Reserve. This is what probably explains the sudden outburst of “Oorahhhh!” when the Corps is mentioned in Bob's presence.

Bob married his first wife while in college, and her family owned a farm, where he was first introduced to horses. They rode regularly and according to Bob, *“pretty much figured out the whole riding thing as they went.”* Bob and his new bride moved to Southern California where he earned his real estate license. He worked as a real estate agent

and then manager at an insurance firm while attending law school at night to earn his law degree.

Now, fast forward to 1983 ... Bob has his own law practice in Tustin, CA and though his first marriage ends, there is a pot of gold at the end of Bob's rainbow ... well ... actually more like a beautiful and amazing golden Spike. Bob courts Spike (how could she possibly deny those rugged good looks and undeniable charm?) and they marry. Spike's brother Tom and his wife Susie move to Trabuco Canyon to keep horses, so Bob and Spike purchase a couple of

Quarter mares to keep there as well. Spike subsequently owns a Polish Arab named Cassina, and Bob an Appendix Quarter and former race horse named Black Jack that he fondly recalls as *“the horse that taught me the most about riding.”*



In 1991, Tom and a small group of family and friends form ETI Corral 357 – Saddleback Canyon Riders. Our club was born! The small but passionate group of founding members had ambitious objectives and goals, as well as a guiding mission to ensure that the Foothill Trabuco Plan that was being finalized include provisions for keeping horses. The early years of Corral 357 included identifying trails, asking for trailhead connections and making sure that Trabuco Canyon equestrian's voices were heard in our county government. These early objectives continue to be an important part of 357's DNA today.

**Editor's Note:** In an effort to renew interest in the “In the Saddle” series and say farewell to Mr. Bob Wilks, who is retiring from the ETI/357 Board of Directors, I have reprinted this article from an earlier newsletter. Bob has served ETI and the community for over twenty years and is the first Board member I met at an official ETI event; the 1994 ETI Christmas Party when he introduced himself to me as “Bartender Bob”. Since then he has been not only my bartender, he has been a neighbor, attorney, vet, hauler, partner in crime for the Pancake Breakfast fundraiser, Inn keeper, and so much more. Thanks Bob and Spike for all you have done to touch so many people in our little community. You can run but you can't hide.

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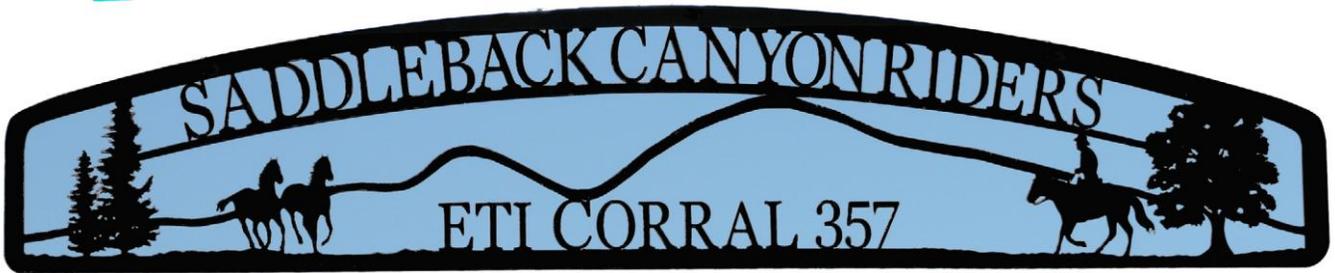
**Thanks for the Memories-  
By James M Iacono**

*No, I'm not going anywhere, but as I reflect on the year gone by I realize what volunteering has done for my soul. It really has helped make me whole. The past five years I have volunteered to be the Activities Coordinator for the Saddleback Canyon Riders, ETI 357. I have helped organize our club for 15 Playdays, 13 Parades, our first ever Buckle Playday, a wildly successful Charity Auction, a couple of campouts, and an apparel ordering campaign.... as well as showing up for a number of trail maintenance days. When I say "yes" to a Club Event, it might seem like I am doing it for the "club" but as I reminisce, I realize I truly do all of these things for ME..... for the memories carved out of being somewhere with like-minded people on well-minded horses! I thank everyone who has ever said "yes" back to me as all of the aforementioned events could not have happened without volunteers, the backbone of the club. But I also believe that volunteering creates a backbone in all of us.... a purpose to our beings in the communion of others for a lifestyle we so love.*

*People have thanked us for opening our home for the annual Holiday Party. But you have no idea how blessed I feel to have everyone come to my house to share a joyous night of holiday spirit! These are the nights that mark my mind with indelible laughs, hugs, stories, and cheer.... All with people who I enjoy sharing my LIFE with! (so why would I not share a home?). We had another great holiday gathering. Thanks to all who showed up- to lift my spirit for another season- in a year filled with monstrous challenges. And for those who didn't, I pray that next year you will answer the call to be a part of my mind's holiday retrospective...and begin a new tradition in your own life.*

*In 2014. iust sav "ves." Life is too short not to.*





**What is ETI?**

Equestrian Trails, Incorporated is a family oriented riding club established as a nonprofit corporation in 1944 with the Charter to be "Dedicated to the Acquisition and Preservation of Trails, Good Horsemanship, and Equine Legislation",

With its combined membership, ETI has successfully worked to keep our trails open and add more equestrian facilities. The more members we have backing equine legislation and trail preservation, the more likely the State, County and City Officials will be to comply with our needs.

**Who are the Saddleback Canyon Riders?**

The Saddleback Canyon Riders are ETI Corral 357. Established in 1991, we are one of the largest ETI corrals in California with members from South Orange County and points beyond. We are a family-friendly equestrian group based in Trabuco Canyon at the foot of the majestic Saddleback Mountains. Our Corral is committed to supporting and helping maintain O'Neill Regional Park and other local riding trails.

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