**Layne Lewis**

(PNER member #2868)

**Always keeping the sunny side up!**

We asked Layne to answer some questions about her life with horses and Endurance Riding

Enjoy getting to know more about our fellow
Idaho Endurance Rider!

**Question:** How/where did you first get involved in horses? What riding discipline?

**Layne:** I was always an animal lover from a very young age, and when I was in college and met my first husband, his family raised Arabian show horses! I went to visit and fell in love with a young colt that they had and we “bought” him and that was my first horse! Not long after that the family gave me two more, a mare Beauty and a young gelding Steppin Star, otherwise known as Newt, who some of you might remember as my very first endurance horse! He taught me everything about endurance riding!!

**Question:** Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school?

**Layne:** I grew up in Tuscon AZ and I got an Aerospace Engineering degree from the University of Arizona. I got an MBA from the University of Washington

**Question:** What breed(s) of equine do you currently own?

**Layne:** We currently have Arabians and one Warm Springs Mustang who we are training to pull a cart!

**Question:**How/where did your involvement in horses turn into riding endurance?

**Layne**: I was given these horses, and had no formal training of any kind, but just loved to be with them and ride, ride, ride. As a child, I had been a completive athlete in both swimming and running. When I was in my 20s I happened to read an article about endurance riding and I thought “no way! A sport just for me!” . We were living in Texas at the time, just south of Houston, so I found an endurance ride near me and signed up to do the limited distance on a mustang I had adopted. Midnight riding on the beach sounded so fun! But it ended up being not as much fun as I had imagined with the onslaught of mosquitos on the beach! Even so I knew that I had found my sport!

**Question:**What attracted you to endurance riding and what do you enjoy most about the sport?

**Layne:** For me, it is the relationship that I have with my animals. I spend SO much time with them, I have to understand them completely – when they feel good, when they don’t, and especially those who may lie to me. You know the ones who keep on running even though they shouldn’t? I probably spend twice as much time on the ground with them than I do riding them - schooling them but also just BEING with them. With the younger ones I walk them miles and miles on hikes. Prior to my back surgeries I would run with them….but now I hike. It’s all great training for both of us!

I also had the honor of partnering with Ben Volk and Dick Root to do ride and ties which were really up my alley (back when I could still run!). SUPER fun sport as well and I encourage all to try one!

**Question**: What challenges have you face as an endurance rider and how have you overcome them?

**Layne**: Whew, so many challenges! I have had a number of horses who were just not suited for the sport. That takes time to figure out but some just do not like it and I will never ask an animal to do something that hard if they don’t want to. I rehome those horses, find a better environment for them to flourish.

In the past few years my biggest challenge has been my health – darned arthritis eating me up from the inside.

Two Spinal fusions in less than 18 months!! But I was fit and strong going into the surgeries and was able to do horse chores and ride sooner than I thought I would. My latest challenge is with my leg being crushed by Atlas on our first 50 at Eagle Canyon ride this year. This will have me out most of the year, but I have already found people to ride my fit horses, and I will do all that I can to heal well and be ready to ride when the time is right!

**Question:** Tell us about some of your endurance training methods?

**Layne:** I hike and run hundreds, make that thousands of miles on with my horses. Prior to my health issues with my spine, I was a marathon, triathlete and trail runner and if I was going running, I would ALWAYS have a horse with me. Once I had my accident off of Mickey that resulted in finding major issues with my lower back and had the L3/4/5/S1 fusion that meant I could never run again and I was devastated....for a minute. Then I shook it off, told myself to get back out there and do all that you can. My new normal I call it!

**Question:** Tell us about your endurance ride history and accomplishments.

**Layne:** That first endurance ride was in 1991 in Texas. Soon after that event I found out I was pregnant with my first son and had to take a break for a few years. In the meantime we moved to Idaho and I found the Southwest Idaho Trail & Distance Riders club and started again in 1995! I have almost 9000 AERC miles, have three decade horses, and have come in first and last. I love all distances and these days am just happy to be out on the trail with my horses!

**Question:** Who is your current mount or who was a favorite beloved mount? Or both?

**Layne:** Remember those horses given to me so long ago? One was Beauty, who I bred and she foaled Harley who I have ridden for the past 15 years! He turned 20 this spring, and is going to be ridden by Jennifer Leach for me while I recoup. I also have a few more up and coming that I have bred, Atlas who is 8 who I rode in two 100s last year, who will be doing a bit more this year and will be ridden by Tamara Baysinger as I heal. These two, Newt (who passed away at 30 yo a few years ago) and my good ole boy Mickey who I love dearly but was not well suited for endurance due to his nervous disposition, so he lives now with Bobbie Knapp and does wine rides. The trick is to find the best combination of horse, rider and activity to have everyone do their best!

**Question:** Favorite memory riding endurance or participating in any form at an endurance ride?

**Layne:** Oh my goodness I have too many! SO many antics of Harley untying himself at ride camp but not leaving our camp site, to Harley busting him and Atlas out at Ft Howes last year FLYING down the trail so proud of himself!!

The friends I have made throughout my years in this sport are just so amazing!! I have far too many memories to list.

**Question:** Best lesson learned (from your personal experience or from others)?

**Layne:** I was an endurance athlete myself for decades, running marathons and doing triathlons, and the lessons I learned myself were so helpful when I moved to the longer distances. Be as fit as you can be at the start. Make sure you know your capabilities AND limitations and don’t be afraid to ask for help. Be kind, even under stress, and always keep your mind open to new ideas – you never know where the next best idea is going to come from!

Also, after my most recent accident where Atlas fell down on me as I was riding him…ALWAYS wear your protective gear – in my case this is helmet, vest, long sleeves, gloves, half chaps.

**Question:** Any humorous or poignant experiences that you would like to share?

**Layne:** Most of my funny experiences start with Harley….he ate my banana and PB&J at a vet hold, he ate all of my grapes, he tripped fell down and then came over to me like “why are you on the ground mom?” – he is still such a character!

**Question:** What advice would you offer to someone who is new to the endurance world?

**Layne:** Volunteer at a ride to see what it’s all about. Reach out to find a mentor, someone who you connect with. If you have a horse already, find a group to train with. If you don’t have a horse, ask around the community there are often folks who need their horses exercised and you can learn a lot!

**Question:** What prompted you to become a PNER member? When did you first become a member? From your perspective, what has been the greatest value of your membership?

**Layne:** I actually can’t remember when I joined but it was in the late 90s I believe. I was on the “Bad Girls” team and WHOA were they intense! SUPER riders, SUPER racers, SUPER fun times. I have been a member ever since and served as VP for a number of years as well. I love being a member because I want to support our community, and provide a forum for learning, helping with trail maintenance, and provide fun awards to those who choose to ride. I love convention, where we can get together outside of ride season and learn new things, catch up with one another and just laugh. A LOT!!!