



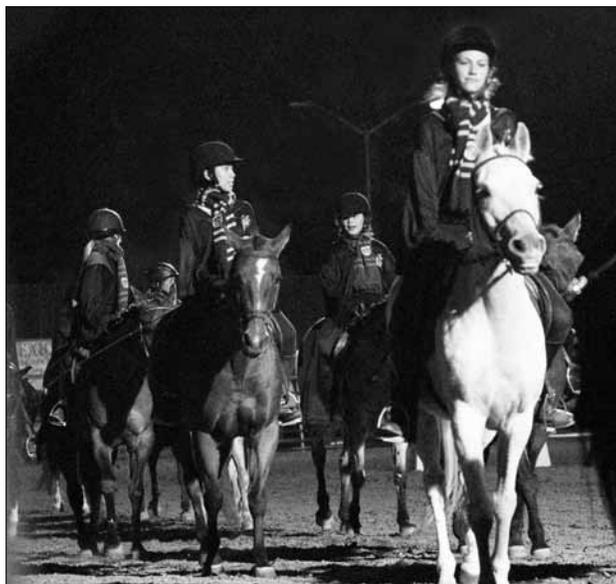
The West Coast Cow Girls performing the American Flag Drill

Truly thrilling was A Thriller of a *Pas de Deux*, staged to a Michael Jackson medley complete with videos playing on the screen in the background and riders Chelsey Sibley and Creeky Routson wearing some of Michael's trademark attire. The horses did Michael Jackson's dancing ability proud, complete with moonwalk.

During the intermission, the Ursula Liakos award was presented to Susan Hall for her dedicated work as a fundraiser for CHANGE, an organization providing support services to the Sonoma County Animal Control department in cases of horse neglect, abandonment, and abuse. In addition to her work for CHANGE, Susan organizes the trade fair for Dressage in the Wine Country and owns a Friesian, which she later rode in the Equine Variety Show. The Ursula Liakos Award recognizes individuals or groups that have demonstrated equestrian philanthropy.

The equestrian program resumed with Clay Maier & The Friesian Spectacular. Riding one Friesian while driving another with long reins, Maier navigated a set of obstacles, including jumps, at high speed.

The Equine Variety Show was a parade of breeds and riding styles featuring authentic tack and costumes, and highlighted the usefulness of all breeds. Appaloosa Sport Horses dazzled the audience with their Native American attire, American Saddlebreds racked on, and the usefulness of the compact Gypsy Vanners was demonstrated. The Arabian Native Costume Team was spectacular in garb that had a touch of Hollywood added to traditional attire. Percherons, Friesians, and Andalusians rounded out the segment, ending with a demonstration Polo match between two riders.



The European Pony School performing Harry Potter



The Rider, The Horse, & The Dancer (Pamela Martinez and Erika Jansson)

The West Coast Cowgirls performed Thrill to Drill, an eight-horse precision drill team performing intricate maneuvers at high speed while carrying flags, and making it all look easy! And wrapping up the evening was John Michael Durr riding His Student in a freestyle jumping exhibition.

Funds raised from this event help a wide variety of local non-profit organizations. The army of volunteers who coordinated this event, led by event managers Sue Reinecke and Tracy Underwood, made it an exciting, entertaining, and informative afternoon and evening showcasing Sonoma County horses and equestrians here in the Wine Country. If you missed this spectacular performance this year, don't worry! The show will come again! Watch for the next dates on websites for the Santa Rosa

Equestrian Center ([www.santarosaequestrian.com](http://www.santarosaequestrian.com)), the Sonoma County Chapter of California Dressage Society ([www.winecountrydressage.org](http://www.winecountrydressage.org)), and the Sonoma County Horse Council ([www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)). See you next year!

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten. In her twenties, she showed both English and Western, but has abandoned competition in favor of trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. She enjoys Parelli Natural Horsemanship and is working on achieving Level 4. Joan supports her horse habit by running a bookkeeping and tax service (In Balance Bookkeeping Service, [www.inbalancebk.com](http://www.inbalancebk.com)). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at [cowdex.blogspot.com](http://cowdex.blogspot.com). To reach Joan, email her at [joanras@att.net](mailto:joanras@att.net).



Readers Write

# Henry Trione and Polo in Sonoma County

Written by Julia Graves



Polo at the Wild Oak Saddle Club

Polo, referred to as the “game of kings,” is an ancient sport. It’s most likely origins are in Asia, although scholars debate whether the first games were played in Skardu (Baltistan) and northern India, or in Iran. The word *polo* means ball in the Balti language. The earliest evidence of Polo is found in a 4000-4500 year-old Balti story entitled *Hilafoo Kaisaar*. In northern Pakistan, where Polo is still played in its original form (freestyle), a local variant is called *Chogan*. Persian literature and art give us the richest accounts of Polo in antiquity. Whatever its true origins, Polo spread rapidly through Asia, and is still played today.

Polo was popularized in the western world by the British who brought the sport home from India. The first Polo match in the United States has been largely credited to James Gordon Bennett, Jr who arranged a match in May of 1876 at Dickel’s Riding Academy in New York City. The historical record states that James Gordon Bennett subsequently established the Westchester Polo Club.

Local community leader and equestrian Henry Trione has been largely credited with bringing Polo to Sonoma County. For more than fifty years Henry Trione, a banker turned vintner and Polo player, has promoted Polo on the West Coast, especially northern California, and as far south as Santa Barbara. Even before Mr Trione’s involvement, and perhaps pre-WWI, Polo was played in the San Francisco Park where a Polo field and all its staging facilities were available. Big names like Billy Leafoot, RC Smith, Mark Jason, and Bud Dardi, were a few of the active participants who raced along the weedy grass keeping the early, and comparatively primitive facility open for decades, and entertaining locals. Mr Trione’s interest began during World War II, when after returning from the Pacific, he was assigned to the Naval Air Station Alameda. On his free Sundays he always enjoyed Polo. Little did Mr Trione realize how Polo would subsequently consume so much of his life.

Robert Walter, an active Polo player in Milwaukee and Florida, moved to Santa Rosa and purchased what is now the Fountain-grove district. He brought his string of Polo ponies. One day, as he

and Mr Trione were trail riding, he used a mallet to demonstrate the techniques of Polo. Mr Trione tried it, and was hooked; Polo forever became a part of his life. Mr Trione loves to quote one author and fan, “One must never allow pleasure or business interfere with one’s Polo.”

In 1969 Mr Trione founded the Wine Country Polo Club in Santa Rosa and he is also a founding member of the Eldorado Polo Club in Palm Springs. Mr Trione is credited with development of the Wild Oak Saddle Club and its accompanying Polo field, one of the finest fields on the west coast. He served from 1972 to 1976 as governor of the United States Polo Association (USPA) Pacific Coast Circuit, and in 2008 he was inducted into Florida’s National Polo Hall of Fame.

Polo has been described as captivating, heart-stopping, thrilling, and enthralling. The basics are elegantly simple. The game is played between two teams of four mounted men and women on a field measuring 300 by 160

yards (as big as nine football fields). Goalposts stand at either end. The object is to move a ball downfield using a specialized mallet and through the goal. Each game consists of six or four periods of play known as “chukkers.” Each chukker is seven minutes long. There are no time-outs except for injuries, penalties, or unsafe situations. No replacement of players is allowed except for injuries, but horses are swapped out regularly due to the high intensity gallops that accompany the exciting play. In Polo, spectating is not free; you have a responsibility! During the intermission (halftime) that comes between the third and fourth chukkers, the match attendees must engage in *divot stomping*! Fans surrounding the polo field are asked to walk onto the field to search out the clumps of grass that have been unearthed by the quick stops and starts of the mounts, and then toe these clumps (the *divots*) back into the ground (grass side up, of course). Besides the game, perhaps a larger group attend polo events because of the frequent charity events, to mingle with the elegant-looking people in their fashionable attire (in particular, the ladies’ hats), and to enjoy the beautifully manicured field surrounded by the spectacular Sonoma County wine country. The Wine Country Polo Club has hosted many events supporting several different causes over the years including Junior Achievement, the Kidney Foundation, Sonoma Hospice, the Wounded Warrior Project, and the Brady Therapeutic Riding Program.



Richard Mansfield (2 goals) controlling the ball during the 2010 Oyster Cup Polo Tournament, Cerro Pampa Polo Club, Petaluma, Ca

If Polo sounds exciting to you, and you’d like to get involved, either as a player or a spectator, check out the Wine Country Polo Club at [www.winecountrypoloclub.com](http://www.winecountrypoloclub.com), or call 707-538-7656 (POLO).