

# Trail Legend Barbara Weitz: Gone to Greener Pastures

*"Barbara Weitz was only 12 years old, riding her horse up a trail near Mt. Tamalpais when she saw something, and felt something she had never experienced before while doing her most cherished activity. Her heart sank. She saw a "NO HORSES" sign on one of her favorite trails. Well, I guess something good can come of something bad when you have the heart and determination of Barbara Weitz. An incredible trail advocate was born."*

- Chris Towles, [www.ebtrails.org/news/](http://www.ebtrails.org/news/) May 2006



Top: 14 year old Barbara ,with Firecracker, on the streets of Mill Valley (c. 1948).

Bottom: Barbara with Shahbee at Alpine Lake, Mt. Tamalpais (c.1987)

We are saddened by the tremendous loss of an inspiring leader and friend, Barbara Weitz, who rode off on April 9, 2012.

If you didn't know Barbara, it's likely you have been to a barn, ridden on a trail, or driven by a pasture, that in some way Barbara helped support. Perhaps your horse sipped from a water trough, was tied to a hitch rail, or you used a manure bunker that Barbara assisted in making a reality.

She worked with quiet determination on the issues most dear to her heart – saving barns and trails for continued equestrian use. Always diplomatic and always taking the time to show up, speak up or write letters in support of stables and trails. Barbara never wanted to hear the words, "Once there was a stable here..."

Her devotion to the outdoors started in her youth riding her first horse, Firecracker, on the trails between Mill Valley, Muir Beach and Mt. Tamalpais. Upon retiring, Barbara rekindled her childhood love of horses and bought her faithful steed, Shahbee. Shahbee and Barbara logged many miles on the trails, including a number of NATRC rides (competitive long distance trail rides).

Since its founding in 1988, Barbara served for 20 years as a Board Member and as the Chair of the Marin County Committee for the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council. She steadfastly worked for the success of the 550-mile Bay Area Ridge Trail around San Francisco Bay. In Marin, she played a key role in completing sections of the trail, including Loma Alta, Big Rock, Inkwells Bridge and Whites Hill.

She served as a Director & Officer on the Marin Horse Council Board during the 1980's through the early 1990's, and also served as President of Miwok Valley Association (a non-profit managing Miwok Stables in Mill Valley).

In 1999, Barbara founded Bay Area Barns and Trails (BABTT). Since its inception, BABTT has donated \$157,000 to land managing agencies and equestrian organizations for restoration, construction, education and capacity building. In Marin, some of the projects it has helped support include: Marin Stables; Ocean Riders/GGNRA; Marin Horse Council/Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Horse Hill; VOCAL /Tamalpais State Park; and Mounted Horse Patrol/GGNRA.

Barbara received a **Lifetime Achievement Award** at the California Trails and Greenways Conference in 2006. A 2006 *Ridge Lines Newsletter* notes, "The award recognizes an individual who has volunteered a significant amount of personal time over the past 25 or more years on behalf of trails, and whose leadership has had a



Top: Barbara and "Shahbee" at the event she pioneered – *Ride for the Ridge* (c.1990).

Bottom: Barbara being honored at the 2010 Dias Ridge Trail celebration.

statewide impact on trails.... Her leadership, focus, and perseverance have brought hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists together to resolve trail-user conflicts."

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council also recognized Barbara for her leadership in land preservation and trail advocacy with a special award in 2006. "Barbara has shared her leadership skills, technical expertise, and organizational abilities as a Council volunteer since 1989, helping create more than 60 miles of multi-use trail in Marin County. With dignity, tenacity, and thoughtfulness, she brings trail users together for productive advocacy."

Barbara was honored for her work at the 2010 Dias Ridge Trail Celebration, a project she had worked on for over 20 years! Maureen Pinto recalls, "Barbara received well deserved recognition for her efforts that started in 1989 to get this trail in place."

Maureen emphasizes the importance of Barbara's support of environmental education regarding equestrian land management. "All of us at Ocean Riders are missing the extraordinary Barbara Weitz, who has been so supportive of our mission over these past 14 years, matching funds for progressive manure management ideas and program development. It was a thrill to help host the opening of the 2010 Dias Ridge Trail celebration where Barbara was honored for her work preserving both barns and trails. She continued to the end to be a strong advocate for the Dias Phase II "safety" trail to get all users off of Highway One in Muir Beach. She had a wonderful attitude about life, and I'll forever remember her by the sparkle in her blue eyes. We hope the BABTT mission to preserve trails and all things equestrian can continue in Barbara's honor."

This May, the Ridge Trail honored her legacy by dedicating the 2012 *Ridge to Bridge* to Barbara. Barbara pioneered the precursor event: *Ride for the Ridge* in 1989, and successfully raised thousands of dollars for Marin County trail projects. The April 2012 Ridge Trail e-news notes, "Countless miles of Ridge Trail in Marin and beyond are preserved, thanks to her lifelong passion and dedicated service."

Those of us who knew her hope some day a trail will be dedicated to Barbara Weitz—a most fitting tribute. But the legacy she would wish for is that YOU show up, speak up, and be a good ambassador for horses and trails.

- Karen Johnson, with gratitude to Bay Area Ridge Trail Council for supplied portions.  
For more info about Bay Area Barns and Trails: [www.bayareabarnsandtrails.org](http://www.bayareabarnsandtrails.org)

**Barbara Boericke Weitz** Barbara died peacefully at home in Mill Valley on Monday, April 9, 2012 in beautiful natural surroundings, according to her wishes. She lived a long and productive life. Barbara met Leon Weitz in the early 1960's while skiing at Sugar Bowl, and they were married in 1965. She was a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and a dedicated grade school teacher who helped her husband run his successful optical supply business before its sale in 1985. She then became a horsewoman and effective environmental advocate. She played a significant role in developing the Bay Area Ridge Trail, was founder of the Bay Area Barns and Trails organization, and was involved in many other nature conservation groups. She is survived by her husband of 47 years, Leon, as well as by many close and faithful friends. - *Obit as printed in San Francisco Chronicle*