
Subject: Questions on your Long Rider history and Sikunder's Law

From: Kent Madin (rett139@yahoo.com)

To: worldriders@theworldride.org;

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Dear Ms. O'Reilly,

I'm doing some background research for an investigative journalism article on modern day, self-made explorers. I wonder if you can clarify some things about your own history as a Long Rider as well as addressing some questions about Sikunder's Law.

In two locations on the web you are described as the Russian translator for a scientific expedition to Mongolia in 1994.

Why then, in a podcast interview in 2008 did you state that in 1995, at the beginning of your ride from Volgograd to London, that you "couldn't speak Russian"? In another interview you state: "I've never forgotten at the very beginning of my ride from Russia, some of the Cossacks joined me for the first few days. One of them turned to me and said in astonishment, "I'm a Communist and you're a Capitalist – but we're just people and we both speak 'horse'." If you didn't speak Russian, how did you know what he was saying? (Or were you both fluent in Astonishment?... joke)

Regarding that scientific expedition to Mongolia in 1994 there seems to be some chronological confusion. On your own website it states:

"In 1995 Basha travelled to Mongolia on a scientific expedition led by Colonel John Blashford-Snell. During this journey she discovered a taste for adventure. The following year the life-long horsewoman bought a Cossack stallion, Count Pompeii, and rode him 2500 miles from Russian back to England, becoming the only person to complete an equestrian expedition out of the former Soviet Union."

Can you clarify that discrepancy?

Regarding your participation in the Mongolian scientific expedition, you make these comments about the horses and foreign riders: "There is a saying in the Long Riders' Guild: it is not the kilometres that kill a horse but the kilograms. I learned how accurate that was when I riding through the High Altai mountains. At 110 pounds my weight taxed my small Mongolian horse. Other horses were not so lucky. Being burdened by heavy foreign male riders, it caused me great distress to see these little native horses get so desperate they would lie down under the saddle. So my heart goes out to any horse which is expected to carry a heavy (and probably inexperienced) rider for 40 kilometres across that barren land - at speed!"

Given the LRG's very public stand against horse abuse in Mongolia, I am wondering if the LRG has insisted to Colonel Blashford-Snell that he cease use of Mongol horses on future expeditions because of the concerns you raise. It seems clear from the Colonel's website that he still takes inexperienced foreigners out on local horses.

Regarding the scientific expedition, is there a report of the findings of that expedition available?

I'd also like some clarification, if you will, of the standard for becoming a Long Rider. On your website you state that Long Riders are people who: "have ridden more than 1,000 continuous miles on a single equestrian journey." How is "single equestrian journey" defined? If someone, for instance, embarked on a journey to understand the Mongolian nomadic culture and rode 250 miles, then went home for a couple of months, returned and rode another 250 miles etc. until they achieved 1000 miles, would that qualify? Would they need to have pack animals and be self-sufficient? Could they travel from ger to ger, living off the hospitality of locals? If one professed to traveling for "science" rather than adventure would that make a difference? If one rode the entire width of Mongolia (far more than

1000 miles) but employed a sag wagon to carry gear, would that qualify?

Regarding The World Ride, can you tell me what the status of that event is? The most recent information I can find has you planning to leave Paris in the Spring of 2011, given that the horse Sikunder was ready to go. Are you on the road? If not, what has happened in the last 3 years? Is The World Ride still going forward?

Regarding your video, [Toxic Trainers](#), I am hard pressed to understand your point. You cover a lot of historical and geographic ground, while touching on everything from military training to training for circus acts. What exactly do you mean by a "horse whisperer" for instance? Is that someone who uses that specific term for their training methods? Is it anyone who uses a round pen, or a lunge whip with a plastic bag on the end or practices "Natural Horsemanship"? Exactly who is going to set the standards to be enforced by Sikunder's Law? If the trainer in France was so heinous, why have you not declared her name and address to save other unsuspecting horse owners? It just seems that your indictment of these "Toxic Trainers" (as attractively alliterative that title is) is long on infusion with indignation and sorely short on specifics. You finish with a plea for donations. How much have you raised and are those donations tax-exempt?

The videos raise a number of questions. It seems strange to buy a horse that you plan to ride for several years without riding it first. Can you expand on that logic? I've been dragged over the steppe (on my back, albeit briefly) and seen it happen to others. How does the clip of your husband failing to mount his horse qualify as "nearly dragged to death"? What does the trusted French Long Rider have to say about his recommendation of the trainer? The trainer was entrusted with horses bound to ride around the world by two of the equestrian world's most visible, judgmental and loquacious advocates of long distance riding. Cuchullaine's speculation on the trainer's motives aside, surely there is more to the story.

Would you be willing to provide the name and contact information for the trainer? If not, I understand and will find it with my own contacts.

I recognize that these questions will not be warmly received. It is not my purpose to offend, but rather to clarify questions that occur to me and many others. You have both purposely and actively chosen to be public figures, in the public eye, influencing public perception, making a living from your public prominence and taking very strong, public positions on matters controversial. I'm sure you've had tough questions before and I hope you will take some time and respond. I look forward to hearing from you.

You know already I think, about one of the other subjects of the article, Ripley Davenport. The third subject is Earl de Blonville, who also wrote a fictional account of an expedition from the 80's that is the foundation of his career.

Sincerely,

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