

American Longrider tackles 48 U.S. capitals

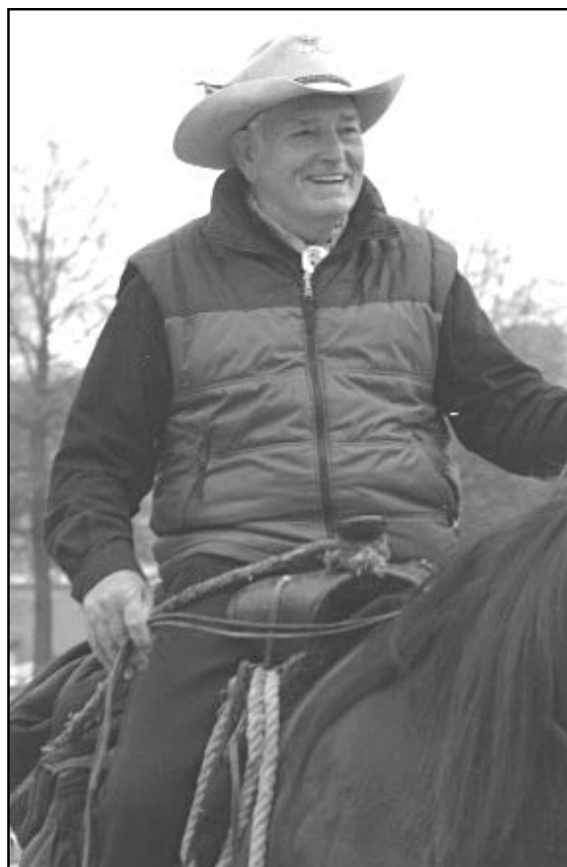
By Garry Stauber

Do you remember those heroes Gene Autry and Roy Rogers? Hardly a household name, Gene Glasscock happens to be my hero. Just like Gene and Roy, Gene Glasscock wears a cowboy hat and rides a beautiful horse. Well, actually, he rides four horses. However, Gene Glasscock has spent more time in the saddle than Gene Autry and Roy Rogers combined.

In 1984, Gene Glasscock rode from the Arctic Circle to the Equator, an equestrian trek of over 30,000 miles. That historic ride earned him a place in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not." Gene is currently riding on a three-year journey to all the state capitals of the adjoining lower 48 states. Gene has been meeting with governors from each state. He has currently ridden over 10,000 miles of his 20,000-mile journey, and will be heading towards Sacramento, California in late October or early November.

Gene Glasscock will not be the first equestrian to ride horseback to all the state capitals. That honor goes to George Beck and the Overland Riders (whom one of Gene's horses is named after). George and his horse, Pinto, made their historic ride in 1912. George and Pinto ended their ride in San Francisco, expecting a hero's welcome. Instead, they were hardly noticed. They both died tragic deaths without fame or fortune.

But it is not just his ride that makes Gene my hero. It is his substance. He is a good man with a heart of gold and has nothing but good to say about others. Once a colonel in the military, a high-rise construction worker, and then a missionary in Para-



guay (teaching who he calls "my kids"), Gene has lived a full life. He says, "My life has been a life of miracles and I have been truly blessed."

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to speak with this genuinely nice man. Talking with Gene is like talking with my grandfather, who I loved very much. He is funny with a warm, simple humor. Like when he told me his age. Gene said on October 11th he will be 35 (and whispered "twice"). "But now I am only 23 (times 3)." Gene of course will be 70, and I hope you enjoy his wit and honesty as much as I did.

Gene, you are repeating the accomplishment of George Beck and the Overland Riders, of riding to all the state capitols, which they completed in 1912. What is different about your trip compared to theirs?

The route is different, of course, and they had dirt roads. Back then every home had grain, which probably really helped. I have highways filled with cars and trucks and finding grain isn't always easy.

What are you feeding your horses?

Purina Omelene 200 when I can find it.

Why doesn't Purina sponsor your trip?

I don't know, Garry. I wish you would ask them for me. (Authors note: I will!)

You started the trip with two Tennessee Walking Horses, Frank and George. I understand that the BLM donated two mustangs to you, which you are also using. What are their names and how are they doing?

Tossi and Buddy are the mustangs, and they are doing great. Tossi has stolen my heart. I still have Frank and George, who I started the trip with, but I am having trouble finding farriers who are consistent with their feet.

Will all four horses finish the trip with you?

I sure hope so, but I may give Frank a rest and let him stay in California for awhile at your house. (Authors Note: Wahoo!)

Gene, you were one of the founding members of the Long Riders Guild, of which I am also a member, and where you and I first met. What is the importance of an organization like this?

The Long Riders Guild is an international organization, with members from many countries and cultures. It unites us and gives us an association to share our interest with others. It offers help to those who wish to do something similar and is a great organization worthy of our support.

What question are you asked most by those you meet on the road?

Where do I get the money to do this? I

usually reply with a joke that I rob banks along the way. But the real answer is I draw a retirement and social security pension, which pays my way. That way I haven't had to draw against the charity fund which I am riding for.

Where is the finish line for your journey and when do you think you will arrive there?

Ohio will probably be my last state. I hope to put a date on the finish, but it will probably be in about 20 months.

When will you arrive in California?

Probably the end of October. I am worried about snow as I



head west in the winter. After reaching Sacramento I plan to go towards the coast of California, then north along Highway 1 to Oregon.

What is the hardest part of this kind of journey?

Haven't found it yet. Like Christmas Eve year before last. I was in Missouri at the Ozark College, with snow on the ground. That might be perceived as bad, but it was such a blessing. The school had a fabulous barn with every grain known to a horse. I was in beautiful room with good food. It was just beautiful.

Gene, I get the feeling that you are the kind of person who sees the glass is always half-full, instead of half-empty.

Wrong. It is always totally full.

Gene, you were a schoolteacher and missionary in Paraguay, and spent a lot of time teaching others. What have you learned out on the road?

Geography and history mostly (he laughed). What I really learned is that the media needs to print the good news about the good people I have met. Bad hasn't happened to me out here. I have only experienced the goodness of people. Someone could have robbed me, though they wouldn't get much. But people have only reached out their hands in kindness to me. That's what I have learned.

You have been on the road so long this has become a way of life for you. You must enjoy it or you would stop. What do you enjoy most about it?

My enjoyment is not why I do it. It is for the kids of Paraguay, that's why I do this. It is a way of raising money for their education.

Do you miss anything from home?

I miss the kids from Paraguay. My own kids are all comfortable and have a good, full life. I talk to them often, but they are taken care of already. But the *GENE, continued on page 20*