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EXPOSURE |

# An Equestrian Ultramarathon

SCENES FROM AMERICA'S OLDEST ENDURANCE HORSE RACE, WHERE FRONTIER CULTURE IS STILL GOING STRONG

By Miyo McGinn



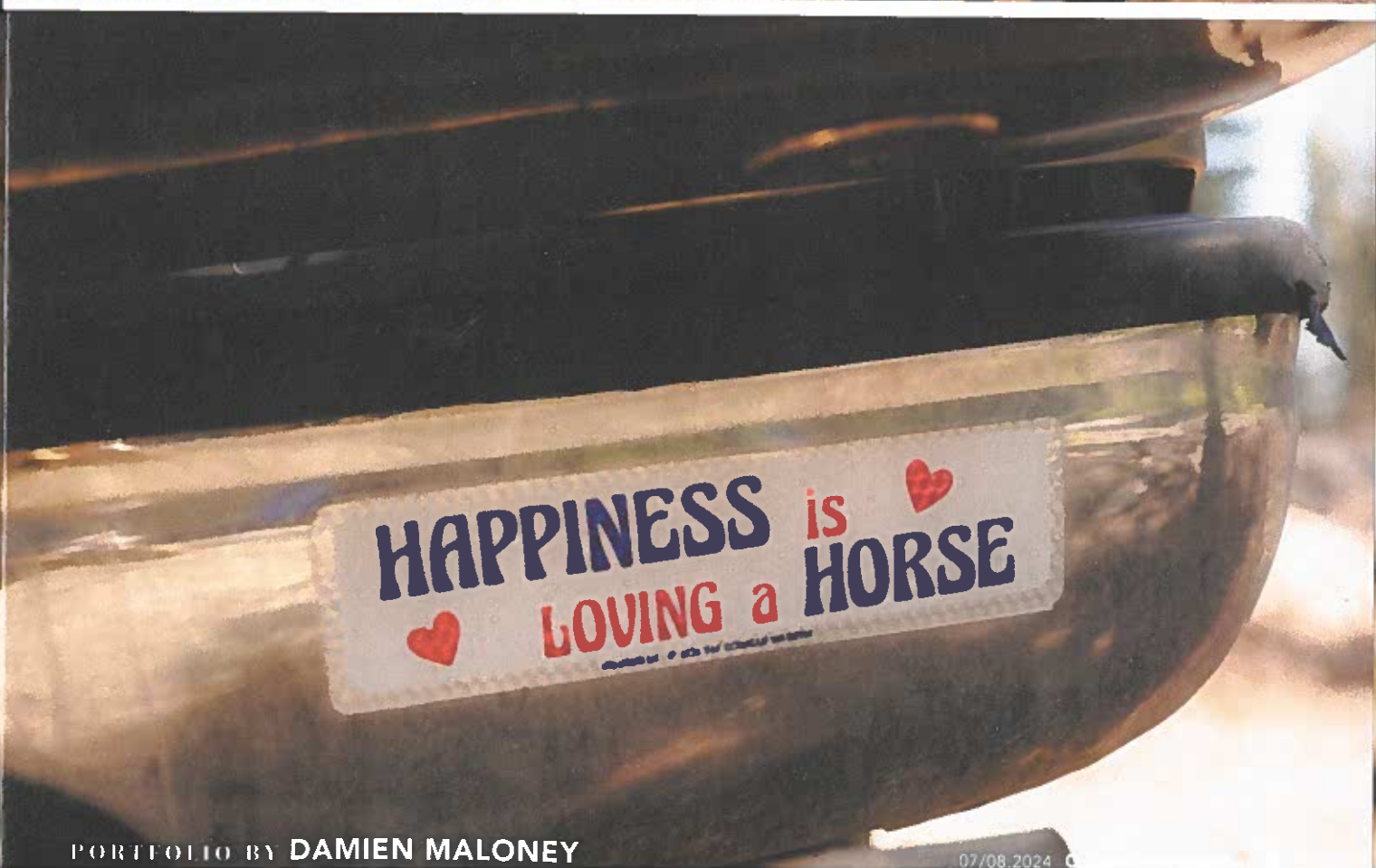
Wojciech Heliasz, from Poland, with his Arabian horse Chuck Norris at one of several vet checks along the course

**THE WESTERN STATES TRAIL RIDE**, also known as the Tevis Cup, was born in 1955 out of a simple question: Could modern-day riding horses travel 100 miles in 24 hours? Several riders set out from Lake Tahoe, California, and journeyed southwest through the Sierra Nevada to the town of Auburn, proving the answer to be a strong yes. In the years and decades that followed, equestrians would retrace the trip as an annual race, testing themselves on a grueling route with more than 35,000 feet of elevation change along rugged mountain trails.

Damien Maloney, a Los Angeles-based photographer, learned about the event from a neighbor and was drawn to the competition's Old West ethos, so different from the strict equestrian tradition he knew growing up in Waco, Texas. "It was interesting to see a horse culture that isn't fussy or fancy," says Maloney. "It's humans and horses, and everyone's having fun, but it's still really hard. There isn't any pageantry." In the summer of 2023, he set out to document that unpretentious spirit, capturing horses and people as they navigated the dusty trails.



Riders undergo an initial assessment and are given numbers in Soda Springs, California, the day before the race.



PORTFOLIO BY DAMIEN MALONEY

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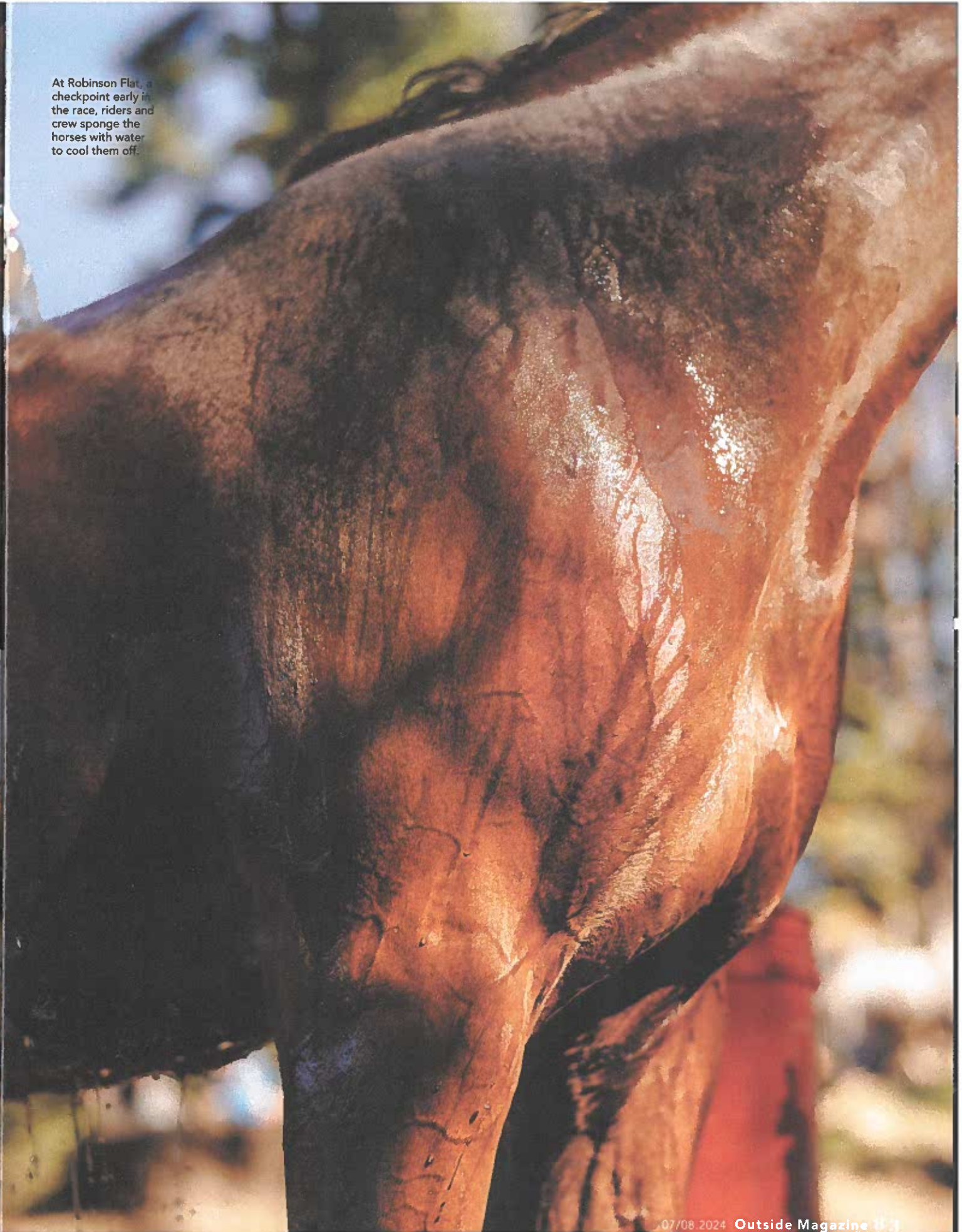




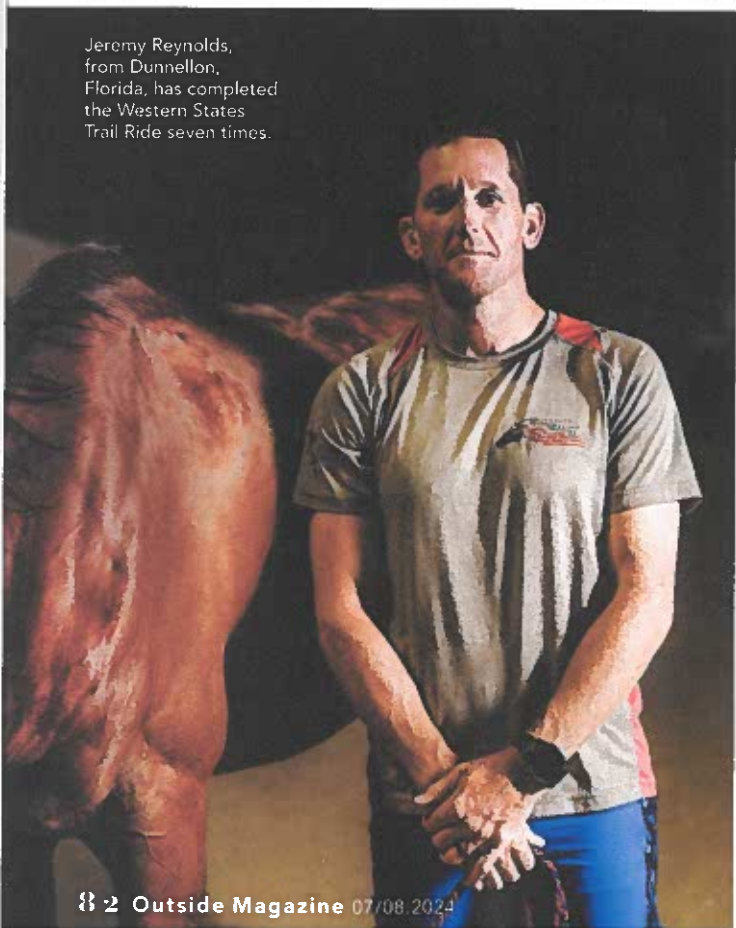
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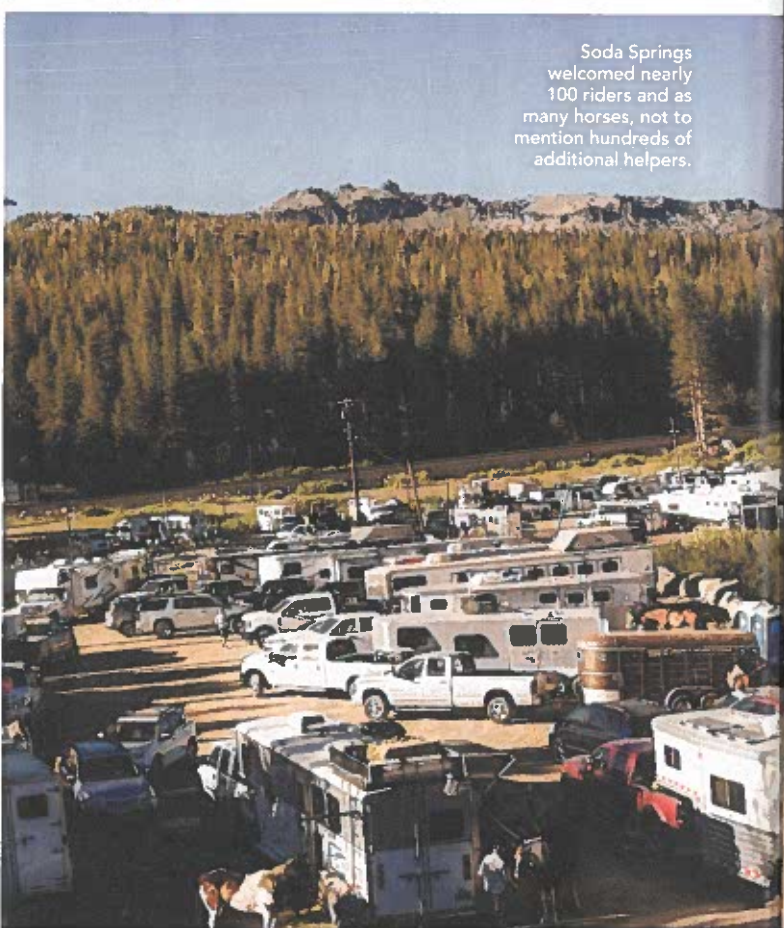
Haley and Kim Moquin, from Spring, Texas, after the finish



At Robinson Flat, a checkpoint early in the race, riders and crew sponge the horses with water to cool them off.

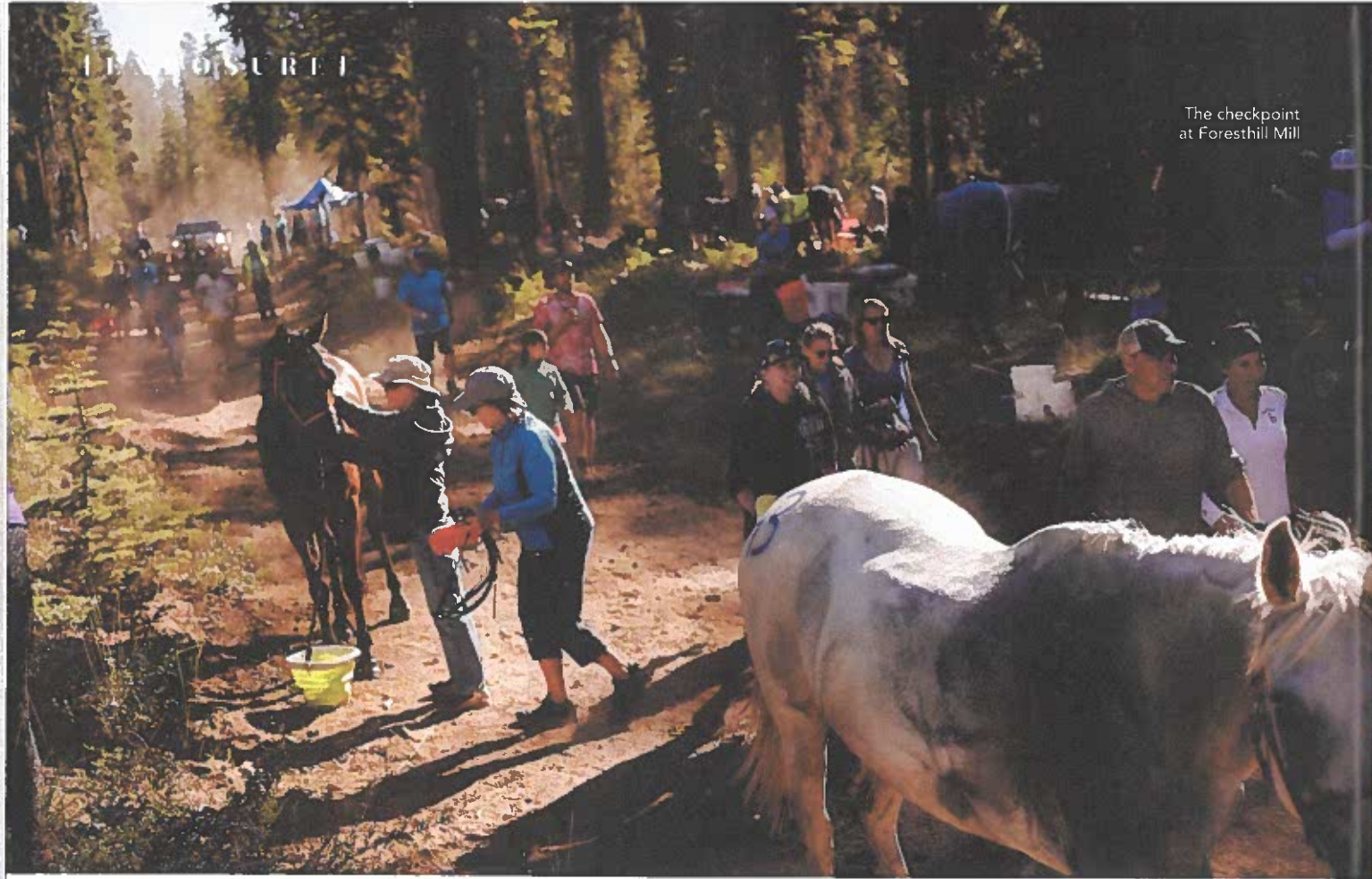


Jeremy Reynolds, from Dunnellon, Florida, has completed the Western States Trail Ride seven times.



Soda Springs welcomed nearly 100 riders and as many horses, not to mention hundreds of additional helpers.





The checkpoint at Foresthill Mill



Alexandra Lewis, from Bend, Oregon, encourages her charges into Robinson Flat.



An animal assessment at Robinson Flat



Reynolds and his Arabian horse Treasured Moments cross the finish line at 8:29 P.M. for the win.