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Rider nearing completion of cross country trek

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GRAFTON — In 1950, tropical rainforests covered 14 percent of the earth's land mass. Today, that number has been cut in half by destruction from logging.

This destruction has prompted Lucian Spataro to start a trek from Los Angeles to Washington D.C. His travels included a stop in Grafton last week. Spataro is riding Arabian horses across the United States to help raise public awareness of the plight of the rainforests.

"I started the ride a couple of months back as a vehicle to make people aware of the rainforest," he explained. Spataro has a goal of getting the public to understand they can have an impact on saving the rainforests. He believes they will understand this once they realize the rainforests have an impact on them.

Spataro, who is a businessman in Tuscon, Ariz. and an equestrian

trainer, took a year off from his work to go on the venture. "Our biggest goal is to create an awareness that the rainforests are being destroyed in the name of development," he said.

A number of experiences from the journey will always be remembered by Spataro. "While we were in Indiana, we were riding on a two-lane," he told V.P. Cappiello Jr. of the Athens Messenger. "A semi came by and forced us off the road. We went off the side and down an embankment. I fell off the horse and as we tumbled, he fell on top of me and I fell on top of him. But we just got up and kept on going."

Brad Braden has been with Spataro throughout the trip. He serves as the two horses' trainer. Braden is a semi-retired horse trainer who is well known in Arabian horse circles. "I guess I came along because Bazy Tankersly asked me to make the journey," said Braden. Tankersly owns the Arabian horses that are being used for the trip.

She is part owner of the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Cubs baseball organization. Braden explained that he and his wife have been friends with Tankersly for nearly 30 years.

The horses have traveled approximately 2,500 miles to date and Braden commented on their performance. "They're doing fine, they're averaging 22 to 23 miles a day," he said. Braden's wife, Joyce, is also enthusiastic about the journey across the country. "The people we meet are just beautiful," she said. "Ever since we started, all of the people have treated us handsomely. The people we meet are real grass-roots people. That's America."

As the group was making its way across New Mexico, they picked up another couple from Connecticut that were touring the states. Bob and Bea Shepard joined the Ride Across America in Gallop, New Mexico in July and have been part of the group ever since. "We were originally traveling the states when we met up with them and we liked what they were doing," explained Shepard. He added, "When we saw their cause, we saw how we could be helpful to them."

The Shepards address civic organizations in the towns where the group stops. They explain the group's cause and also handle all of the other public relations activities involved in promoting this cause. This includes sending tapes to Spataro's hometown and sending material to CNN, the Cable Network News organization.

Shepard is temporarily retired, having sold a department store which he had owned and operated in southern Connecticut. He said the decision to sell his business was based on the desire he and his wife had to tour the country. He said, "What we do isn't work, instead it's a lot of fun and it

gives us a chance to see our country." Shepard listed as "lifetime experiences" from this journey, his work for four months at a radio station and work to assist salmon in making one of their annual journey up stream. "That's not work, those are lifetime experiences," noted Shepard.

Spataro thinks the trip thus far has been a total success. "We've reached about 14,000 to 15,000 people by talking to them and I estimate another four to five million through the media," he said. "We want people to

become aware of the problems from destruction of the rainforests before it is too late."

Spataro said the group seeks donations to aid their cause but he also noted the public can assist the goal of saving the rainforests by simply being aware of what products they consume which come from the rainforests. "Look for alternatives and also talk to your congressman and senator," urged Spataro.

Spataro said Jeff Chappell of the Athens NEWS truly captured the

goal of his trip across America and the impact he hopes the journey will have, when Campbell wrote: "Furthermore, most people who hear about Lucian Spataro will probably forget him and the plight of the rainforests by next month. They'll talk about it for a day or two at work or at dinner and then just forget about it, apathy takes over; it's just another problem the media blows out of proportion. But perhaps a few people across the nation will have their eyes opened. Even if it is one person, that would be worth it."

Filing deadline near

CHARLESTON — "Final post-election financial reports for the September 9 Special election must be filed between October 4 and 9 by political committees and individuals who have made independent expenditures," Secretary of State Hechler announced.

All transactions through the close of business October 3 must be included.

"Although the election is over, financial activity must still be reported," Secretary of State Ken Hechler said. "The law is very clear that late filings of failure to file are misdemeanors subject to a fine of not less than \$500."

Since this is a state-wide election,

all reports are filed with the Secretary of State. Because October 9 is a legal holiday, reports must be post-marked by Saturday, October 7, or delivered personally by 4 p.m. on Friday, October 6.

"We are getting tough on excuses about forgetting to file or filing late," Hechler said. According to law, committees who fail to meet the October 9 deadline will be referred to the county prosecutor on October 9 deadline will be referred to the county prosecutor on October 19. Even if there have been no contributions or expenditures since the pre-election report, all candidates and committees must still file by October 9.



SAVING THE RAINFORESTS is what brought this group to Grafton during the last week. Lucian Spataro, center, has been riding an Arabian horse across the United States for the past several months to help raise public awareness about rainforests and how the destruction of the forests affects people in the United States. Spataro is planning on finishing his journey in the next couple of weeks with the final stop being in Washington D.C. where he will meet with government officials. Those joining him on his journey are from left to right, Bea Shepard, Sea Ruler, Bob Shepard, Brad Braden, March along and Joyce Shepard.