

Wild horse advocate and Californian Helen Madeleine has a rich history with horses. "I've been interested in wild horses ever since I knew what they were," Madeleine said. Madeleine got her first horse when she was 23 years old, and has owned several horses since then.

With Madeleine's 37 years of horse owning, she boasts that she only made three trips to the Emergency Room.

Madeleine was involved with endurance riding through the American Endurance Ride Conference, which is essentially riding horses cross country, for a minimum of 25 miles.

"The endurance riding program started out with a bet between two elderly men that the hunt horses today are not as good as they were 100 years ago," Madeleine said. "Then they started doing it for fun every year."

In 1982, when wild horse advocate Helen Madeleine was out training for an endurance ride with her horse Aubra, she noticed a big cloud of smoke in an area that was being burned off a ranch. The cause of the smoke remained a mystery to her.

Four years later, a man who frequently flew his private plane over the area, noticed piles of white objects all around this land, which was the Brushy Mountain Wild Horse Territory in the Lassen National Forest.

As it turns out, the piles of white objects were horse bones. Madeleine was fueled to investigate what was actually going on.

After getting in touch with the Wild Horse Sanctuary, she rode in with a few other people and counted 17 skeletons on either side of the road within the sanctuary.

"I had a friend that saw them lifting dead horses out of the [wild horse territory]. They put them in piles of big bones and lit them on fire," Madeleine said. "As it turns out, those were the same fires I saw in 1982."

In 1987, Madeleine attended a two and a half hour meeting where the United States Forest Service (USFS) never brought up the agreement it had made with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) about horse removal services.

The Wild Horse Sanctuary has backed out of the political end because they see that the BLM holds more weight, according to Madeleine.

Last year, Madeleine attended another meeting with the Forest Service.

"Their whole attitude really upset me," Madeleine said. "I was really frustrated."

The USFS has disappointed Madeleine on several fronts.

"They're just as bad as the BLM when it comes to [preserving the] wild horses," Madeleine said.

The Forest Service went on to lie about the minutes of this meeting, according to Madeleine.

"The next month, when they went to do the round up, they turned around and said the meeting was used to get permission to use choppers [for the round up]. Not once in the whole interview did they say anything about a chopper," Madeleine said. "They also didn't talk about the contract with the BLM to round up horses. They just flat out lied to us."

The USFS then went on to only round up nine wild horses, a very expensive and unnecessary endeavor for taxpayers, according to Madeleine.

Madeleine hopes to see the Bureau and Forest Service lose their powerful grip on the wild horses. In an effort to initiate change, she paints watercolor images of wild horses and frequently sets up a booth with a friend who does wild horse photography. Together they also sell wildlife biologist Craig Downer's book "The Wild Horse Conspiracy" and his instrumental CD Wild Horse Rhapsody, which can also be purchased at andeantapirfund.com.