



Spring Creek Horse Rescue
2888 County Road 234
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Spring Newsletter, 2016

~FROM THE MANURE PILE~

Spring!

Yesterday it was 70 degrees; today it's snowing and blowing and typical Colorado spring weather. On the nice days, the property is coming along - still a lot of work to do, but we're getting more trees cleared, rocks moved, and the water lines are finally in! (No more playing connect-the-hose all over the property!) The babies



Ruby, Sedona, and Greta napping



Brandon thinning trees

have doubled in size, are very happy and healthy (and often found in a napping pile). If you'd like to see them, you can attend our Open House/Garage Sale on June 10th and 11th. We are also accepting donations of items for the Garage Sale (please call to make an appointment to drop off items, since we will probably be out taking care of horses, irrigating, etc.). Check out the rest of our upcoming events in the sidebar below!

Tambra is a now 22-year-old Arabian/Appaloosa

mare. She came to us fairly skinny - her owners had run out of money and were feeding her corn, but they recognized that she was losing weight and unhappy without other horses around, so they brought her to us. She's turned out to be a real firecracker - she still has a lot of spark and energy for an older mare - but she's also had lots of experience with children, so we're hoping as



Sassy Tambra having fun!

she settles in to be able to use her in our kids' program (look a bit later in the newsletter for a photo of her being ridden by one of our young volunteers).

Apparently, it's the Spring of the Arabians, because we will very shortly have another elderly Arabian joining us. Keester is a 32-year-old Russian Arabian gelding whose lifetime owner could no longer pay board to care for him. He has no teeth due to some previous poor dental work, and can only eat mush, so he will have to be on a special diet. We hope that Keester will turn out to be the new love of Tambra's life, as she needs an elderly companion. She is currently very enamored with the younger geldings, but cannot live with them as their play is too rowdy.

- *Diane*



Harley and Baby, guarding the gate

Four Corners Backcountry Horsemen Tack Sale -

Saturday, April 2nd, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Come see us at our booth at the La Plata County Fairgrounds!

Annual Open House/Garage Sale/Adoption Days -

Friday and Saturday, June 10th-11th, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Come see the new place and new horses, and shop!

Four Corners Pet Expo -

Saturday and Sunday, June 18th-19th, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Come check out the booths and watch Dock Dogs!



In Memory of Chico

A treasured childhood memory is a book. The cover was gray, it was hardcover and had gold stripes along its spine. I remember on the front was an oval encircled with another gold stripe. In the oval was a painted picture of a black horse, the book - "Black Beauty," by Anna Sewell, written in 1877.

As I work with the horses at SCHR, I wonder about the journey each horse has been through, like the journey of Black Beauty in the treasured book.



Chico and Bailey riding

If you remember, (If you haven't read it, do; it's a classic) the book tells the story of a young horse and his many owners in turn of the century London. Black Beauty had kind, generous owners but also had owners who mistreated him.

I think of Chico, who like Black Beauty, was black. Chico was a thoroughbred who came to the Rescue.

He was older, in his twenties when we got him. All we knew was the last owner had bought him for their grandchildren. I can imagine how handsome he must have been in his youth; although he was still a good looking horse and a gentle horse, and calm. We could let him out to nibble grass - no fence needed. When he was ridden, he loved to go - loved to explore with a rider on his back and looked very proud as he was doing it.

Like Black Beauty in the novel though, I wonder what life was like for him through the years. A clue that he may have had some rough times were the patches of white hair around his withers. Diane told me it was from an ill-fitting saddle. So, I thought, at some time Chico's life may have paralleled that of Black Beauty in more than just his looks.

Chico left us recently, due to liver failure from poor care in his younger years. Although we will all miss him, it is nice to know that he got to live out his final years with good care and good friends. Everybody at the Rescue loved him very much.

Whatever the experiences Chico had throughout his life, I know that after he arrived at the Rescue two years ago he was embraced with love, care and attention and with security and peace. Again, I think of a quote from Black Beauty in the book: "We don't get to choose the people in our lives, for us, it's all chance."

- *Becca*



Paying Attention

I didn't realize it at the time, but I was incredibly fortunate to start my horse education at the barn where I did. Not just because they had great, tolerant school horses (they did), or patient instructors (that too), or even additional horse curriculum (we learned about first aid, feeds and nutrition, herd behavior, dental care, Ferrier work, saddle fit, and more).



Betty has a spa day with Beth and Jenni

The core reason I now feel so fortunate to have started my horse education at that barn was a grizzled 70+-year-old horse trainer from Montana who we'll call Mr. B. To a then-13-year-old, Mr. B. cut a fairly terrifying figure - the limp, the giant black cowboy hat, the tendency to bark at anybody who was a.) too slow, or b.) incompetent (which was nearly everyone in his book).

I had already been learning to *ride* for six years by the time I met Mr. B. In that time, I'd become (in typical teenage self-congratulatory form) pretty good. I was jumping, and riding many of our horses who were on the "advanced" list.

(Seven years later, Mr. B. would tell me, mid-training session, when I was struggling to ride one difficult horse while ponying another, “The six-year-olds in Montana would think you couldn’t ride!” And he’d be right.)

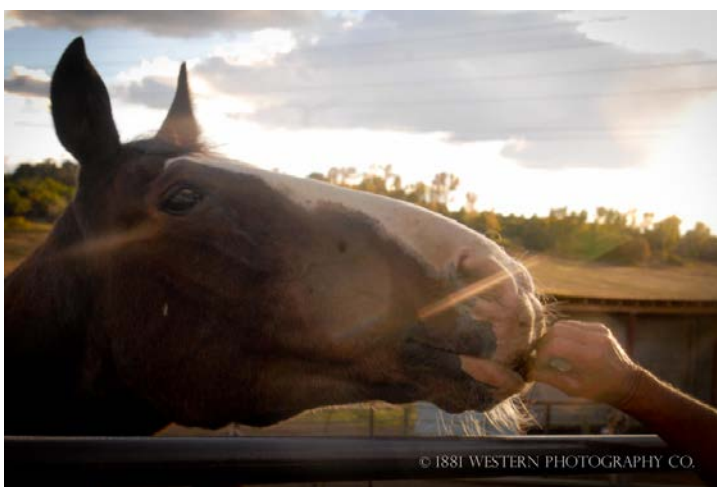
So I’d been learning to *ride* for six years. But at 13, watching over the half-wall of our indoor arena, I began my education in learning to *read* horses.

I now realize that I caught Mr. B. (at 70 years old!) in the middle of a vast transition: His entire life, he had used what I’ll call “rough and ready” horsemanship - the “tie-’em-up and throw-’em-down” style of forcing a horse to submit to whatever you wanted it to do. He’d learned it from his father, and it was the only way he knew.

And then, sometime around my 13th year and right around the time I started watching him train, Mr. B. met a man named Ray Hunt. Those of you who are already familiar with the horsemanship world will recognize the name. For those of you who aren’t, just know that Hunt was one of the forerunners of what we now call “natural horsemanship” and was on a journey to find more effective, kinder ways of communicating with a horse.

At 70 years old, Mr. B. joined him on that journey, and I had the privilege of watching Mr. B.’s transformation - sometimes rocky, but always forward - into one of the best horsemen I have seen before or since. As a young person, it was particularly inspiring to see someone who had lived most of their life doing things one way, and yet, as soon as a better way presented itself, he was willing to question *everything he’d ever learned* and follow that new way forward.

Over the next nine years, I absorbed innumerable training techniques, strategies, and insights from Mr. B., but the most important thing I learned is that none of that matters if you’re not paying attention to the horse.



Kylie (student), Jenni, and Tandra

You can know all the tricks and techniques in the book, but if you don’t know *when* and *why* to apply them - if you can’t read the individual horse in the individual moment - you won’t get very far. The best horsemanship, like the best parenting, isn’t reliant on one particular style, tool, gimmick, or technique - it’s just about *paying attention*. As children, we have great instinct. As adults, we learn many great techniques. But as *horsemen (and -women!)*, we must rediscover our instinct and use what it tells us to apply our technique. For me, the difference

between *riding* and *reading* a horse is a couple letters and about 19 years of education, trial, and error.

I’ve been privileged over the last ten years to meet (and sometimes ride with) other great horsemen and -women. A few of them have been “professional trainers” whose names you would recognize. The

vast majority have been people who are, simply, really good at paying attention to their horses. One thing that drew me here to Spring Creek is that everyone here is taught that practice - the practice of *paying attention*. One of the primary goals of the Rescue is "horsemanship education" - teaching people how to *read* horses as well as *ride* them and what to do with the information they've "read."

A community of people who reads horses well will train them well and care for them well. That means more happy horses (and happy horse people!) in the world and fewer abused or neglected horses. I'm excited and honored to be joining the horsemanship education training program here at Spring Creek, and I hope that some of you (or another horseperson you know) will join me for lessons! Whether you're 7 or 70 (ask Mr. B!), it's never too late to learn to read, (and therefore ride) your horse better.

Spring Creek will again be offering Horsemanship Lessons starting in May. Questions about horsemanship lessons? Contact Spring Creek Horse Rescue at springcreekhorsescue@yahoo.com.



The Life They Deserve

Samuel has been here at Spring Creek Horse Rescue for seven years. He is a big sweetie who loves lots of attention from people. In his past, Samuel was part of the competitive horse world (he'll still take any opportunity to sneak into an open stall and look at you like "where's my blanket and grain?"). Though his past as an athlete was hard on his body, at the amazing age of 40, you'll still see him buck and kick up his heels on his way out to the pasture! He's a great



Handsome Samuel enjoying lunch



Samuel says, "Pbbttt!"

example of a horse that, though he could no longer compete, still had a lot of life left in him. It's horses like Samuel, who have been allowed to enjoy their retirement years because of Spring Creek Horse Rescue, that make me proud to volunteer here. That's all that horses really need - for the people who are passionate about them to come together to help them when they can't help themselves. As a volunteer at Spring Creek, I enjoy doing anything helpful for these horses. We are all here for one purpose - to give them the life they deserve.

- Rachel



Excited about what Spring Creek is doing? Want to support our programs, our individual horses, and help us outfit our new property? We are always accepting both in-kind donations (fencing, stall mats, a good Canon digital camera so we can take better pictures of our horses, a pasture drag, Equine Senior feed, alfalfa pellets for Keester, etc.) and financial donations. You can donate via **PayPal** on our website (springcreekhorsescue.org) or by check (mailed to 2888 CR 234, Durango, CO 81301). Thank you!!! 