

From the Secretary

Michael Yodice

My relationship with the wild horses of the American west began in 1997 when I met Robin Rivello. At the time, she was competing regularly in competitive trail and endurance riding. Her mount of choice was a buckskin mare. She was from Nevada. And she was a Mustang. Everything I know about horses I learned from Robin. Everything I know about mustangs I learned from Reno. Robin adopted Reno when she was 5 years old. That was 20 years ago and you can still hear her say “sit down, shut up, and hold on!” when it’s time to hit the trails. Throughout my entire life I never once gave a thought to owning a horse. I grew up in the suburbs. Horses were nice to see as we traveled the back roads to visit relatives when I was young. Up until the time I met Robin, I could count on both hands the number of times I had ridden horses. That changed quickly.

As with most people, my first horses were domestic breeds. Horse number one was an Appaloosa mare. My second horse was a Palomino Quarter Horse gelding. Oh yeah...and lessons. Being married to a mustang trainer does not make you a rider. Osmosis does not apply. Riding lessons were mandatory. Seat first, legs second, hands last. HALF HALT!!! 20 meter circle. Change diagonal, Shoulders back, Sit up straight. Can you say dressage? I can. As much as I liked the top hat and tails...I always rode in jeans and boots. Call it western dressage...sort of. I did this every Wednesday night for an hour for 3 years. It was AWESOME. Thank you to our instructor Lisa Post, her husband Chris, and the staff at Chestnut Ridge Equestrian Center.

In 2002 Robin and I decided that I was ready for my first Mustang. We made arrangements to go to an adoption in southern New Jersey. Reno came with us as a mascot. This was my first adoption experience. I had no idea what to expect. I adopted a 2 year old bay California filly. I named her “Gabriele’s August Sunrise”. Gabriele for Gabriele Thompson from the BLM Eastern States Milwaukee Field Office. August for the month I adopted her, and Sunrise for the name of the farm where the adoption was held. Nervous excitement is the only way to describe how I felt. Sunny is a kind horse. She was very easy to work with. Her second day home we had her groomed and we were able to remove the dreadlocks from her mane.

Three days after that she was leading. Within about ten days of being with us, Sunny was walking all around the farm with us, in and out of the barn, standing in cross ties, and was introduced to her stall. Two weeks after coming home she was turned out with our herd. Amazing. Sunny is big by Mustang standards. She is over 16 hands. Her physical make up is that of a thorobred which explains her size and her beautiful trot. Sunny is a Dressage queen. At age 4 she took second place in her first A rated show.

My newest Mustang is “Indigo’s Little Flame” She is also a bay filly from California. We call her Indigo. That was the name her first adopters gave her. Indigo is a repossession Mustang. She is one of four Mustangs we repossessed in February 2008. We were fortunate enough to find homes for the other 3 horses but Indigo had some issues with her hooves and a vision problem with her right eye and we thought it best if we kept her. I officially adopted her in August 2008. Her feet are fine now and she is quite a gentle horse. Her vision does not seem to have an effect on the way she runs and plays with our other Mustangs.

Since 1997 I have been privileged to be part of the wonderful world of wild horses. In one way or another, large or small, I have assisted my wife Robin with the training and care of the many Mustangs that have come through our barn either for ourselves, adopters, or through the BLM Foster Program. It has been life changing. When you see a wild and fearful animal transform into a kind and gentle one, you can’t help being affected by it. I would like more people to be able to have that experience. That is one of the reasons why we started the US Wild Horse and Burro Association. To let the horse world know that wild horses and burros are not the dangerous outcasts that they are portrayed to be. That with the proper gentling and training, and the support of our organization, more people might be willing to adopt Mustangs and Burros. Educating the horse world about how wonderful and willing the wild ones are is not always easy. But I gladly take on that challenge. Will you join us? It will change your life.

Sincerely,

Michael Yodice

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