

Those Were the Days...

by Amy Satterly

As I reached into the backseat of my car the other day to retrieve supplies for a day at the office, I caught a glimpse of one of my daughter's toys: a brightly-colored plastic pony. Its greenish body and bright pink mane and tail prompted me to reminisce about the days of being a little girl crazy about horses.

Do you remember those days, ladies, when your primary concern was getting a horse or pony you thought was pretty? In a way, things were easier then. Only having that one criterion for horse ownership meant no pedigree research, no concerns about the horse's trainability, athletic ability, temperament, or conformation. No questions about soundness issues or finding just the right animal to place you exactly where you wanted to be in the show circuit. No wasted hours spent going through ads on the internet, in the newspapers or magazines, or reading every flyer you passed by. And let's face it: until we grew old enough to understand the value of a dollar, the price tag wasn't an issue for us either.

But is this preference for prettiness a natural tendency, or have we allowed stories such as Black Beauty to brainwash us? When I look back at the ponies and horses I have ridden over the years, I have to admit, I think of the prettier ones first, then remember the better ones (which, of course, were not necessarily one and the same). In fact, I find that sometimes, a horse with more eye appeal can seemingly get away with having a few faults in other areas; like when a child with an adorable smile and big eyes can make you temporarily forget that you had told him/her ten times NOT to eat or drink in the living room before he/she spilled grape juice on the couch (not that I know from personal experience). But then maybe that is the real reason: as women (or perhaps just mothers) we tend to be more willing to overlook some of the faults in our children and see the beauty within them, especially if they know how to work us.

Horses are much the same. They are so similar to children in their nature. Some are more mature, some never seem to move beyond the mentality of an 8-yr-old human, but they all know how to push our buttons.



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My own horse fits this scenario to a tee. Nugget, also known around my house as "the big yellow chicken", is a very pretty palomino gelding that seems to be afraid of everything in and around the barn. His signature move of dropping his body and spreading all four feet out like Scooby Doo when he sees a ghost, is both slightly comical and extremely annoying at the same time. Also, overcoming his reluctance to be caught in the pasture has become an exercise in reverse psychology. Luckily, he is at the developmental stage of an elementary school child, so it works very well. But when he hits the trail, he is a different animal. He walks down every horse in front of him and practically runs up hills, in sharp contrast to his otherwise lethargic demeanor. So, even though he can't run a pole bending pattern or even lope a good circle, after a trip down the trail, I find it a little easier to forgive his other faults, and when I stand in the yard and see him in the pasture I think, "Well, at least he's pretty." I guess there is a bit of that little girl still in me after all.

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