

Lydia and Mandela

Mandela is a 15 year old curly mustang, currently residing in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Bold, spirited, loyal, strong and with a wicked sense of humor 'Mandela' displays classic mustang traits. He can make me laugh and cry within the drop of a hat, he is my best friend and I'm going to miss him.

Gathered from the Salt Wells Creek herd in Wyoming in '97, in 15 years Mandela has lived in three American states, two countries and one Canadian province. His carbon footprint is bigger than the average horse and is just about to get bigger as he is heading to London for the 2012 Olympics!! Ok we are not competing, just spectating, but nevertheless Mandela will be flying to the UK with me in July to retire with my parents in England's green and pleasant land.

It seems fitting that my horse should enjoy such a blissful retirement as his life has certainly been tumultuous yet he has always managed to maintain a 'kind eye' and a philosophical outlook on life. One of his mantras, if he could talk, would be 'here today, gone tomorrow' as he loves to take a quick bite of hay from the cart as it goes by even though his stall is full of the stuff. He can't resist a quick 'freebie'!!

His original adopter was a lady from Nebraska and he was quickly adopted due to his size, he stands at 16hh - big for a mustang, and his rare curly coat. I recently had him DNA tested and his curls can be traced back to the famous Damele mustangs of Nevada as well as a bit of Irish Sport Horse and European Warmblood thrown in for good measure. It seems the original adopter only had him for a year before selling him to some people in Oregon. This was an unhappy time for him as he was not well treated and was taken to the brink of starvation. Luckily someone spotted him alone in a muddy pen, malnourished and miserable and organized a rescue mission for him. By this time he was 10 years old with very little formal training but he retained his good nature and keen intelligence. He lived on the rescue farm in Oregon for a couple of years, being used on and off as a trail horse, before a Canadian lady spotted him and imported him British Columbia to be a full time trail horse. He is a fantastic trail horse and will always look out for you. Recently he stopped dead on the trail and wouldn't move and I realized there was a pack of coyotes in the area. He was trying to warn me!! Unfortunately things didn't work out for him and he ended up in Dawson Creek, with his previous owner, training to be a dressage horse!!!

I bought him to do lower level dressage, trail riding and to have fun!! Although he had some basic training, he was pretty much green broke when I bought him in 2010. I knew nothing of mustangs as I'm originally from the UK although I live in Canada. It was not the mustang that attracted me to Mandela but the curls! When people ask me about his breeding I'm tempted to say 'Rastafarian'!

Mandela was originally called 'Ulysses' aka Curly but when I bought him he was known as 'Manny'. I lengthened Manny to Mandela as a reference to Nelson Mandela as I purchased my horse during the 2010 soccer world cup, held in South Africa. Mandela seemed an appropriate alter ego for my horse, as despite enduring adversity and challenges, both my horse and the great statesman managed to retain both dignity and humility.

Having spent two years training Mandela we recently entered our first dressage show doing walk trot where we gained a very respectable 64.5 and 67. At the end of this month we are entering another show at 'Training level'. We have also ridden the trails all over the North Shore in Vancouver, including a trip to the drive-thru McDonalds, schooled cross-country, tried our hand at barrel racing (we came third), attend a 'natural horsemanship' clinic with Jonathan Field and done a bit of show jumping. All this is a testimony to the versatility and scope of the mustang horse.

Unfortunately you can't turn the clock back and at 15, with so little consistency, life has been hard on Mandela and arthritis is causing stiffness in his hocks. My mother is looking for a safe, reliable trail horse with personality and Mandela will be a good fit. He will be able to roam around 90 acres of English countryside as though he is back in the sagebrush range in Wyoming. I know he is going to be happy and well looked after. My only concern is that the other horses may not understand his broad American accent!!

See Photos Below.

