FEATHER SOUND NEWS

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Amik

Called upon to manage a training stable, I was instantly drawn to the most homely, emaciated, terrified horse on the farm. Obviously quite sickly, I knew he would require veterinary assistance – if he were to survive.

I fell in love immediately; called the vet and told him I was purchasing the damaged animal. The vet came. He diagnosed double pneumonia (among other challenges), suggested euthanasia, and refused further treatment. When I insisted, he handed me a bottle of Penicillin and a fistful of needles and syringes stating I could dose him myself 30cc twice a day, but that he would die anyway.

He did die; over 28 years later…

Amik became a mega Champion Show Jumper in several states over two decades of competition. He cleared a 5'4" Puissance wall in a Junior Olympics in 1970, won numerous year-end awards and quietly crossed the Rainbow Bridge in his 30s.

Before all the blue ribbons, before the accolades, this wonder horse spent months struggling with respiratory issues, weight challenges and finding his way past a deep fear of humans.

In my quest with him, I found a different vet, monitored his diet using cautious subtle changes to prevent worse metabolic illnesses, and spent hour after hour sitting in his stall, holding his feed tub watching him tremble in the corner, too afraid to even eat.

Day by day – he trusted me. It was many, many more months before our vet, farrier and my friends could be anywhere near him.

Before he was healthy enough to relocate to a better facility, I met the man who had shipped him from Iowa to New York. Mr. Block was well aware of his history, heartsick and appalled at the condition he found the horse in. As a foal he had been cared for and loved. Upon his arrival in New York, abuse began. Starved, threatened, hit, and dodging items catapulted his way became a daily fare.

As fall turned towards winter, the pneumonia set in. Unable to breathe comfortably led to even more stress and weight loss. The emotional challenges in such a young, previously happy animal led to liver toxicity and intense skin disorders. Instead of a luxurious winter coat, his fur was matted with sores, and bald patches took over his back and hindquarters.

The vet who wanted me to give up, was not a quack. He saw a seriously debilitated being with copious mucus hindering the smallest of breaths. He recognized the terror inspired by even the most minor handling and did not feel an effort was warranted, nor that it could possibly be successful.

Regardless of physical grief, the look in this gelding's eyes changed my life. As afraid as he was, he would stare at me with a mild hope showing through. His faith became mine as I ignored the illnesses and did what little I could to change the outcome. Vics in his nose and on his chest, daily injections of antibiotics, gentle caresses

(when he could tolerate my touch at all) took us day-by-day on a path of healing. The happier he became, the healthier his body responded.

By the time Mr. Block returned to see the improvements and amazing recovery, Amik had jumped out of his stall, the pasture and training ring – on his own. It was blatantly obvious the horse had found his calling!

Once fully recovered, we spent over two decades sharing our lives while Amik jumped, and jumped, and jumped. Never again plagued by any lung disorder he became an 'easy keeper' who grew a mink-like coat in winter (even upon moving to Florida), loved the coldest of weather, went to college with me in Ohio, vacationed in Canada and lived on a breeding farm for racehorses in Maryland. Riding 7 days a week was his ideal, although he disliked the rain, snow was a favorite.

The year we met was a turning point for me as well. My illness was in my emotional fears and hesitancy that life was worth living. This amazing spirit saved my life while I was busy saving his; neither of us ever looking back.

I owe my dedication as a rescue manager and trainer to the horse who did not die. From that day on, with every tale of abuse, starvation, injury and fear, I remain focused on the biggest miracle – of life returning to the horse who began it all.

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