

That Horse

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I was never a horse person...before "that horse".

I began to date Andrea Delgado in May of 2003 and sometime in June or July we went to Marshall, TX for a trail ride. Karma Farms was different, but it was good. Vickie Ives and her daughter Tomlyn Speir were great people and soon became fast friends. I rode Fernando and Andrea rode Liona. I was not sure at first, but when it was done, I really enjoyed myself. We made several trips back, and one of those times, Andrea rode Doctor Wu. I was asked to come out to the farm once a week to condition Ferdie for an endurance race and got the horses in my blood. In September, Andrea and I camped at Karma on Fireplace Hill and again I was asked to help with the horses, by showing Proud Mary at the AIHR National Show in Corsicana TX. Shortly after the show, Andrea purchased Doc. I continued to ride, and at some point we all decided to ride the Jefferson Mardi Gras Parade.

Vickie began to talk about costumes for the parade, and I instantly had a great idea.

"I have a great costume, but it has six foot gargoye wings with it," I said. "Is there a horse I can ride with them?"

"You want Thunder," Vickie said.

Thunder, or Thunderheart, his registered name, turned out to be a 13 year old grulla gelding, out of Mora's Spring Dance and by Rowdy Yates, with a sleepy disposition and one blue eye. Thunder likes to eat; we hit it off immediately. After one day of getting him used to the wings on the ground, then one day of me wearing the wings on the ground, I mounted him with the wings over one shoulder. No problems. Finally, full dress rehearsal and Thunder had no problem with the wings at a walk, trot or lope. Every other horse that could see us, especially the yearlings, did not know what to think of this giant winged creature running amuck in the pasture.

"He'll ride," I said.

I took pictures of the practice and had them on my desktop at work. My employer, a horseman of some years, and one of our superintendents, also a horseman of many years, assured me I would never ride "that horse" in a crowd with "that getup on". We'll see I told them with confidence in "that horse".

Parade day dawned hectic, with every horse in the back pasture and a frantic rush to get seven riders and mounts ready before the parade. In the rush I was unable to get the wings on and I could hear the fellas saying I told you so. We survived Saturday and enjoyed a steak dinner. Sunday's parade was later in the day and we were better prepared. We went full bore and rode winged and looking crazier than any other act that day. Thunder had no problem with crowds of children, fire engine sirens or the wings. I am going to buy "that horse" and that was all there was to it.

Some surprised looks greeted me Monday as well as exclamations of "You survived." It took photos and video to prove I had done it and they just shook their heads. "I could not walk near my horses with that on, let alone ride them," my boss said.

I sincerely believe I stole Thunder from Vickie at \$3200. I have since ridden him in Ren Faire Garb and swung swords, spears and axes over his head without a problem. Currently we are training for endurance and competitive trail.

Thunder seems capable, but Vik and I had our doubts about his "go". In single runs Thunder seemed lethargic at best, until we headed home and he then seemed to believe the faster we went, the sooner he could eat. Thunder's natural inclination to drink at every chance is a plus. Our first time out in conditioning with Vik on Magneto and Paul Gable on My Sunshine showed Thunder's true grit. He proved to have the Esperanza fire while retaining the Choctaw Sun Dance level-headedness. We may not win, but Thunder and I are going to give 'em hell when we run!

Where will we wind up? How will this end? Only time and the good Lord can tell, and until then I plan on being on "that horse" and in the wind as often as I can.

