



The Horse That Healed a Heart

By Kathy Peacock

Last August my daughter Hannah turned 13. It was supposed to be a happy birthday, but it wasn't meant to be. As we were having her party on Sunday at our house, we noticed that her Red Roan Appaloosa pony Autumn was not eating (very unlike her). As the day went on, she started to roll and act uncomfortable. Around 1:00 p.m., we called the vet out and had him treat her. She seemed to be holding her own but by 10:00 p.m.

we knew it was more serious and made an emergency trip to the clinic. The vet worked on her most of the night but by the next morning, he called and said there was not much more he could do.

My husband Ron and I went to pick up Hannah and her sister Meghan from school (the 1st day of school), so that we could spend some time with Autumn before we had her euthanized. We stayed at least an hour after she was gone. It was the hardest thing our girls have had to do. Hannah wanted her cremated and now all she has is Autumn's ashes and a bedroom full of pictures. Autumn had given Hannah 8 years of trail rides and high point pony in 4-H. Autumn was her best friend and she was gone. We could see the big hole in Hannah's heart!

Hannah kept saying she didn't want any other horse or pony, that none would ever take Autumn's place. But, as time passed she started to look in the newspaper and she would search the internet from time to time. We even had a few dear friends offer to sell us some of their horses, but none seemed right to Hannah.

One Sunday in October, we decided to go see the Iowa Rare Horse Breed Show with friends to pass the day. We saw a lot of beautiful horses, but as we watched the Spanish Mustangs do their stuff, I realized I recognized one of the riders and one of the horses. After the show, we went back to the stables and I was right, it was Brett Peckosh and his horse Rattlesnake. Brett talked to Hannah for a while and told her that the horse was for sale. She was interested and we went to Brett's place. He took her out in the fields and over the creek and as they came back over the hill, we noticed Hannah had her smile back and she looked confident and content. She decided she wanted to buy Snake but Brett told her to go out and ride some other horses and not to make a quick decision. She did go out and ride about 8 or 10 other horses, but all she could do was talk about Snake and doodle about him on her schoolbooks. Brett let us take him on a 3-day ride and of course, he came home with us and not back to Brett's. Hannah said she knew he was the right horse because he had a similar scar on the same leg as Autumn, and we knew it was a good sign.

They have had a few rough days between them and he has even put her on the ground a few times, but I think he gave her the challenge she needed. He has proven to be a great trail horse, and did well at the 4-H fair and even won the Western horsemanship pattern. He whinnies to us almost every time we step outside the door and he has given us as much love as we give him. I just want to thank the little mustang with the huge heart for helping to heal my daughter's broken heart!