

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

May 2012

HORSE RACING AT ITS UGLIEST

I was out fixing fence one day last week when my neighbor, Mike, noticed me and moseyed over for a little chat. This is nothing unusual; we chat over the fence all the time about one thing or another. Today it was about the fence and how my horses lean over the fence to eat the weeds off his side. Then it was about the weather and how the rain was making everything so green. Then it was about my hay field and how it was growing so well. Then how the owner of Mike's place, Marv, wanted to cut his pasture for hay this year, but to do that he was going to have to move all the horses off it so it could grow. Then the bombshell: Rod, the go-between between Marv the owner and Mike the caretaker had told Mike to "load up all those old mares out there and take them to Sand Hollow and sell them." At this point I was still working away on my fence, trying to put it back together from the horses leaning on it, and was only half way paying attention. Mike just kept prattling on about how he had to take these horses and sell them, and how he'd already taken some to Twin Falls and sold them. I started paying a little more attention now, because I knew this story; Mike had had to take four horses to the Twin Falls sale, and the horses had sold by the pound. Selling horses by the pound means dog food.

The horses Mike was talking about are Thoroughbred brood mares that Marv keeps on the place next to me and breeds them, and for the last several years has raised baby Thoroughbreds for his racing operation. I've seen horses come and go over there when they load them up and take them to Utah to train them, or various tracks to run them. I love watching all the new foals every spring, and the big herd of horses thundering to and fro up and down the pasture. At any one time there might be thirty or forty head of horses over there of all sizes and colors. I watch them all the time and marvel over how pretty they are, and pick out the ones I like best. Last year there was a little black foal with four perfect white socks. He's stunning! There's a little 2-year old, tri-color bay filly that is gorgeous. I didn't have any idea what their breeding was; I just knew there were lots of horses and they were pretty, and they raced them.

Now, I DO know what their breeding is. As Mike kept on talking about taking these 'old' mares to Sand Hollow, I started listening. And asking questions. The sale at Sand Hollow is where somebody buys horses *by the pound* and holds them for shipment to Canada to be slaughtered. Mike said they pay between 5c and 10c per pound, depending on how meaty the horse is, and if a horse is under 800 lbs they won't even take it. My first real response to Mike was "What?? Are you kidding me? You've got to load these mares up and take them to be sold for *dog food??*" And the questions kept coming. And every time I asked something, my voice kept getting higher and squeakier. I was incredulous that someone would do this with horses of any sort, but especially horses of this caliber.

The 'old' mares Mike was talking about are 12, 11, 9, 8, and 3 years old. Are they sick, or lame? NO. They just don't want them anymore. Whether Marv is getting out of the breeding/racing business, or whatever the deal is, they were just dumping a bunch of horses. Mike went on to tell me that these mares are darned good horses; they've all run on the track and won thousands of dollars between them. Most of them have been bred to top-notch stallions that cost thousands of dollars in stud fees. Most of them have had babies that have run on the track or been sold for big money. Mike was pointing to horses out in the field: That bay one there is Annabelle's Song; she was bred to blah-blah and won \$45,000 at the Santa Anita race. That grey roan there is Deputy Tombe; she's the most temperamental of the bunch, but she's one of the top mares. Those two sorrels there are Shimmering Duchess and Visual Metaphor, and that little one there is a 3 yr old out of blah-blah. After a while of me staring at these magnificent creatures grazing contentedly and Mike telling me their stories and histories, and me trying to make head or tails out of who was who, I finally just held up my hand to shush him, and said, "I don't care who they are, or which ones they are. If he's going to sell those horses for ten cents a pound, I'll give him a hundred dollars a horse just to save their lives. Call him up and tell him I'll buy them all right now and he won't have to waste gas taking them to Sand Hollow." Mike said he'd probably want cash. I said, fine, I'm going to the bank right now.

And that is how I became the proud owner of 5 Thoroughbred mares. See, I know this trainer that works with horses and gets them rideable, then sells them over the internet or takes them to the sales. NOT the BY THE POUND sales!! I figured she could work these horses up and make good horses for somebody out of them, because the mares are not damaged goods. I came home and looked them up; the lineage is given back five generations, and they all have top-notch breeding. They're out of Secretariat, Seattle Slew, Northern Dancer, Unbridled's Song...and those are just the names I, a non-horse-racing country hick, recognize! They've all, except two of the mares, had several starts and several wins on the track, and they really have won thousands of dollars. One of the babies of Deputy Tombe sold for \$28,000 as a yearling in 2009! My voice is getting higher and squeakier still! How can somebody just throw these horses away?? I do not understand this mentality.

Come to find out, Marv had turned the horse operation over to Rod, since Marv is out of town a lot. And Rod didn't want to mess with selling them or bother finding decent buyers/owners for them. The horses were eating the pasture down, they needed more hay to feed, and needed money for hay, plus they wanted to get all the horses off the pasture to grow it for hay, so rather than take some effort to offer these brood mares for sale, Rod just decided to waste them. Mike says Marv the owner actually has a heart and cares about the horses, but Rod just sees them as tools to be used and discarded however he needs or doesn't need them.

So I'm now in the process of getting these horse shaped up---they are skinny, wormy, haven't had salt blocks or minerals for years, and their feet are in horrendous shape! There's a chance that they've foundered, since they have just been left out on pasture all year round for years. That is no way to treat horses of any sort.

And I'm in the process of finding someone who wants them, will work with them and give them a job, take care of them and get some use out of them. Why, I've already sold one of my five:

Laurie Bryan was in town for the Horse Expo the weekend I acquired them, and came over to see them. She fell in love with the little 3 year old filly, and I soaked her for a tidy little profit! Then I went to work and was telling the story of all these 26 Thoroughbred horses that were being sold for a little bit of nothing, and one of the Vet Techs came out to look at all the ones still over at Mike's, and ended up buying a beautiful 3 year old filly and a 2 year old little stud colt for next to nothing. The little colt is out of Marino Marini, an up-and-coming horse on the track, and Make A Pass, an excellent mare. I have since purchased two more little stallions; the gorgeous little black with the 4 perfect white socks, and a little sorrel with a blaze face. Mike says they're the top two picks out of all the little stallions over there, both for their temperament and conformation. Those little ponies will either grow up to be my next trail horses, or they may become somebody's Hunter/Jumper/Dressage horses. I had my eye on the little tri-colored bay filly, too, but Marv came yesterday and moved all the mares and fillies to other pastures, so I can't shop anymore. Mike said Marv has decided not to sell anymore horses for awhile. Mike also told Marv he wasn't going to load anymore horses up and take them to the killers, either, and Marv agreed that he didn't want to either. Thank God. Marv asked Mike what happened to Annabelle's Song, who is Marv's favorite. He was happy to know that Annabelle's Song is at my place, safe, and getting sounder. Mike got a big grin on his face when he told me that, then said, "Maybe he'll want to buy her back from you, and you can make a nice little profit selling her." Hmmmmm.....

No wonder I hate horse racing.

See you 'on the far corner, coming into the home stretch, its Annabelle's Song, leading by a nose at the wire!

Janine