

Cruiser's Carrot Hugs

Once upon a time, a three year old girl received a pair of old yellow cowboy boots from her grandfather. That gift was the venue by which he permanently imprinted the horse across the heart and soul of Julia Brady.

"In every pre-school picture I would be in dresses wearing those boots," said Julia who clutched toy horses under her arms instead of dolls. "I just loved those boots!"

Although she never went to her granddad's livestock ranch in Gladewater, TX, Julia recalled seeing the ranch photographs and hung upon every word of his stories; especially those of the horse. She said they were very close.

As a child, Julia enjoyed playing cowboys and Indians with her brothers. She

played *Billy the Kid* and her brother, *Jessie James*.

Somewhere between six and eight, Julia's father helped to start a Christian Camp, Sky Ranch, located then in Denton, TX.

"I begged to ride the horses," Julia said. "Someone would help me catch and bridle them and then I just rode with no saddle."

Julia idolized her camp counselor. When her counselor went off to college and could not take her horse, Julia's Dad bought that horse for her.

"*Cajun* was a tall, thin, brown gelding who lived at the camp," Julia said. "I was in junior high. I remember jumping on his back and staying there all night."



Over the years people asked Julia to take care of their horses. She kept a pasture around White Rock Lake and worked them out bare back since she couldn't carry a saddle. Julia was in college when she had saved enough to buy her first horse, *Amigo*.

"Everything I know about horses I learned from them," said Julia who felt like a lone ranger in a family who seemed to have interests of their own.

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Julia became a Delta Flight Attendant in the 80s. She was single and did not have

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He maketh me to lay down in green pastures ...

In Loving Memory ~

AQHA Skippy Poco Mae

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the time or money for a horse during that time. As the fun of flight settled down, Julia pursued and achieved a Masters in Psychiatric Therapy. Today, she uses that talent in the public school system where she helps test students with potential disabilities; so that the school system can better serve their needs.

With her bills leveled off, 'the horse' colored the thoughts she would see her whole world through for the next decade.

"I leased a horse for six months and took jumping lessons; I really liked it," said Julia who went on to say that it would be another six months until she found her *Cruiser*.

"I've always been drawn to chestnuts," she said. "I was looking for a sweet young horse; one I would keep for a long time. The first horse I found did not pass his vet check and that broke my heart so I stopped looking for a while."

Enter *Cruiser*. A 16+ hand chestnut Holsteiner / Paint cross, eight year old gelding who keeps his left blue eye on his blue eyed angel with her matching personality.

"He arrived from Oklahoma at midnight, was very sick and broken out in hives," Julia said. "I was afraid to send him back that way."

This was the very moment in time that Julia's passion for caretaking and her career background would come to life before her. She could not ride *Cruiser* for two months because of pasture rot (fungus from standing in moist conditions up to his hocks). She would go out to visit, scrape his painful scabs and treat twice a day with recommended salves.

"During this time a bond of trust formed between us," said Julia. "As he lay in his stall, I would sit and talk to him. At yet another barn, he suffered from a bowed tendon and too many mosquitoes caused constant swelling so we moved to White Rock Stables where our whole world turned around."

"*Cruiser* is very social, loves group rides and will lead any pack," Julia says. "It's important for him to trust his human and for me to trust him. He prefers soft spoken, slow moving and seems to know if his handler is present for business or personal."

She read somewhere that it was important for horses to learn to bend and stretch their necks so *Cruiser* can often be seen engulfing Julia in a carrot hug.

Their bond is such that *Cruiser* would fade away from the pain of a horse-sized whole in his life with out the woman who gave him her hand.

Julia said her relationship with *Cruiser* added dimension where her life involvements outside of the realm of horses had always forced her to function within limitations of the desires of others.

Personal note from Julia:

Since the time we came to White Rock Stable, *Cruiser* and I have found the environment that allows us to fully enjoy our time together. He is happier than I have ever seen him. He romps with Chief and the boys in the gelding pen and has adopted Dutch as his big brother. I have found a circle of "barn babes" that I romp with at and away from the barn. It is ironic that what held me back from owning a horse for so many years was being capable of taking care of him by myself. Now due to my health issues I am finding I need more and more help. The women have been so supportive and keep an eye on *Cruiser* when I'm not able to get out and see him. My cousin Eryn is a gifted equestrian and keeps *Cruiser* tuned up when I can't ride him. Tex, Santiago, and Daniel go the extra mile to make sure *Cruiser* stays healthy and gets all his needs meet. I am so grateful that God brought *Cruiser* and I to White Rock and has used all of the special people and horses to meet our needs on so many levels.

Special thanks for Mr. Jack Brady (Dad, and attorney at law) for his photography

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