

# Kids Komer

## Sea Feather — The Miracle Colt

SHANNON SZYMANSKI  
(with Lois Szymanski)

WESTMINSTER, Md. — "Can we have a colt?" This is a question that my sister Ashely and I ask each year and every year on our way to vacation at Chincoteague Island in Virginia. We go to see the wild pony swim and round-up and to see the foals as they are auctioned off on the carnival grounds. Every year we ask, and every year my parents say "no." But this year we had a back-up plan!

"We have \$500 saved," I said before they could even answer. It must have surprised them because Mom and Dad were quiet for a moment, exchanging looks. I thought about how hard we had worked all summer to save the money we had.

Finally, Mom answered with a noncommittal, "Maybe."

"But we worked so hard at the carnivals this year," I said. "We've saved almost all of our money, and we haven't spent it!"

Then, Dad offered a compromise. "If you can go from today (which was Monday), until Thursday when the wild pony auction is held, without spending any of your money... and you can actually get one for \$500, then we'll agree," he said.

I heard Dad tell Mom that it would be a good lesson if we didn't get one and we had to save an extra year. But Ash and me were so happy nothing could wipe the smiles off of our faces!

What we didn't realize is that every kid this side of the country would be at that auction with twice the money we had to spend.

We went from Monday to Thursday without buying as much as a stick of gum! I even talked

Ashley out of a 20¢ postcard she wanted to buy to send to her friend.

On the day of the auction we got out of bed early, by 5 a.m. Mom pulled us aside and explained that we might not get a pony because they had sold for more than \$500 the year before. But we still didn't believe that. We just knew this would be our year to finally get a piece of the legend, a real Chincoteague pony!

When we got to the carnival grounds we were lucky enough to get the last seat in the front row. The firemen who run the auction were having trouble with their public address equipment. Since my sister sings country music and had sung the night before at the Misty Museum, we had a cordless microphone, amplifier and speakers in our van, so my mom went to offer them to the firemen to use. This gave my sister the opportunity to talk to a fireman. She's never been shy. In fact, she'll strike up a conversation with anyone! So, while Dad helped one fireman set up our cordless microphone and amplifier, Ashley was telling another fireman, David Savage, how much we wanted a pony, and how we had been coming every year since 1988. Mr. Savage told us we might be able to get one, "but they do go high," he told us. "Hey, I'll kick in \$25, if you get that close," he added with a smile.

Soon the auction began. Ashley stood up and yelled \$500 for every colt that came out. We had decided we wanted a colt, (a boy foal) because geldings made nicer mounts. We already had an ornery mare at home. The auctioneer, Bernie Pleasants started making jokes about Ashley. "That little girl over there has \$500 to spend



Shannon and Ashley give Sea Feather a hug. Feather's new friends can be seen in the background. (Crista is the white 13.2 hand mare and Rockerfrtiz is the 10 hand black and white pinto)

and she really wants a foal," he'd say. "Now, who wants to start this one at \$1,000."

It was terrible! All of the ponies were going for a lot more than we had. The average price was around \$900 to \$1,000. After 45 foals, we started to get real discouraged.

Then, the fireman, David Savage came over with a man and a lady. "I want you to meet Carrollyn and Ed," he said. "They want to talk to you folks."

"We want to help your kids get a pony," Ms. Carrollyn said, and my heart caught in my throat. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing!

"That is so nice," my mom said with surprise, "but, no. They have to learn to only buy what they can afford."

"Oh, please," the lady said. "We came to the island to buy a foal to donate back, but they have already sold the ones to be donated back."

Now Dad was shaking his head. "I don't think so," he said. "It just wouldn't be right."

Now Ms. Carrollyn started to get tears in her eyes. "You don't understand," she told them. "I almost died this year. I had a massive brain tumor. The doctors told me the surgery could kill me, or I could be paralyzed, but I lived, and now I feel like I have to give something back."

I saw my mom get tears in her eyes and I felt like I was going to cry, too. People around us were dabbing at their eyes with tissues. Then, my mom hugged Ms. Carrollyn. "I am so glad you are okay," she said. "But there are so many other places to give something back."

Now Ms. Carrollyn was really crying "You'll think this is strange, but I have to tell you why I think I am supposed to help you buy a foal," she said. "The whole time I was sick I kept reading this psalm in the Bible that says, 'The Lord will cover you with his feathers and protect you,' and I believe he did. Now feathers have a special meaning to me. They are like a sign."



Ashley (In white), Sea Feather and Shannon (In black) are racing off to find new adventures together!

I noticed she was wearing a pin with feathers on it.

"When the firemen pointed you out," she continued, "I noticed that your daughter had a shirt on it with feathers."

I looked down, remembering that I had on my Indian shirt with feathers on it on.

"Then," she said, "a big white feather drifted down by my feet. I think it was a sign that we are supposed to help buy your girls a foal."

I felt tears spilling down my cheeks. I saw that my mom was crying, too. Then I noticed the fire-

men patting my dad's arm. "Come on, man," he said. "Let them do it!" and tears were running down his face, too.

"Okay," Dad said, and I felt my whole body explode with happiness.

Several foals later, a tall bay colt came strutting out with two firemen holding onto him tight. He had white stockings and a white star on his forehead. He was perfect. We started bidding and got him for \$1,000.

As we walked over to pay for the foal, Ms. Carrollyn said, "It would

(Turn to Page B11)



Sea Feather's jagged feather marking is visible on his neck.