

Kids Korner

ED BANNING
Horse Owner

BRIDGEVILLE, Del.

Woodland Linn (Woody) is a registered Clydesdale, who was foaled on June 20, 1987 to his master, Parke Brown of Tangier, Indiana. Woody had white socks to his knees a bald face (white blaze from the top of his forehead to the tip of his nose), his body color was dark bay during the height of the summer, yet black the rest of the year.

At two years of age he was sold to Phil Farrell, then to Farrellawn Farms of St. Louis, Mo. and John Weber of Ocala, Florida.

In 1990 Tony and Cindy Morisco bought him for their farm in Copper Hill, Va. The Morisco's spent a lot of time training and showing Woody in Stallion Halter Classes throughout Virginia, taking Grand Champion over All Breeds several times.

When Woody was six, Daryl and Lorraine Cobbs, of Huntington, Indiana bought this beautiful stallion. After gelding Woody, they broke him to pull in harness, on the wheel team of an eight-horse hitch and was shown at the Washington National, the Ohio and Indiana State Fairs, The Clydesdale National in Wisconsin and the Keystone Eastern Regional Clydesdale Show in Harrisburg, where he won many ribbons.

Woody was seven years old 18½ hands tall and weighing in at more than 2,000 pounds, when we purchased him on March 11, 1994. Meeting Mr. and Mrs. Cobbs in Wheeling, W.Va., we loaded him in our trailer and brought him to our farm. His life of leisure in the show ring came to an end. Instead of working for ribbons, he would be working commercially for money.

It didn't take long to find out. Woody had been given much love and attention in his formative years, that being groomed was his favorite pastime he was particularly fond of women and was not keen about pulling much weight. Yes, he was a spoiled people-horse.

We used him to do anniversaries, weddings, funerals, hay rides, private parties, picnics, fundraisers, business promotions, driving clinics, parades, trolley rides, tours, nursing homes, school programs, and work in the fields for the next three years, mostly in a two-horse hitch and rarely over four hours a week. There was one exception, where we drove him in a wagon train for 105 miles, from Cheriton, Va. to Salisbury, Md., hoping to get the kinks out of him. This trip took five days and was



Woody, April, and Princess pulling the trolley.

Gentle Giant Named Woody

fun for us but hard work and discipline for Woody.

Everywhere we went, Woody was the center of attention. Spectators were in awe at his size, markings and disposition. One day at a picnic in the Pocomoke, Md. State Forrest, a lady walked up to him and began talking. As she spoke she would shake her head all around and the next thing we knew, Woody began to shake his head all around. Between each trolley ride, Woody and this lady would communicate for five or 10 minutes. The crowd enjoyed this exhibition as well as they did the rides that day.

On occasion, this gentle giant, would let us know something was wrong. He would lunge and throw his head or legs in protest. Sometimes we could adjust his harness or bridle and he would straighten up and other times, we could not put our finger on the problem. He was not mean; it was his way of telling us something was not right.

Last summer (June 17, 1996) we were hired by the Caroline Nursing Home of Denton, Md. to give their patients rides on our handicapped-accessible, horse-drawn trolley. When we arrived and were unloading the horses and trolley, the activities director, Mary Lou Schoonover, asked us to bring the horses on the nursing home grounds, to their main entrance. The patients were waiting anxiously in wheelchairs and rolling beds, some using walkers and canes to see the "gentle giants," Woody, April and April's foal, Princess.

The memories that were shared with us of how they used to drive and work horses on the farm, brought much joy. About an hour went by when Mrs. Schoonover asked if Woody could be brought into the nursing home lobby so more of their guests could get a closer look. I told her I wasn't sure how he would respond, but we would try.

Woody walked through the lobby door, cautiously looking around as he entered. Twenty or so patients were in a circle around him as he turned completely around, checking them out. One lady was so excited, she wanted to cling to him, holding onto his legs. A nurse had to keep her back as Woody cautiously walked around.



"No, he's not running a temperature. Woody is cool!"

We were then asked if we would take Woody down the hallway throughout the home, that others might come to their bedroom doors to see him. Walking from door to door, with his ears almost touching the ceiling, Woody lowered his head and nostrils to look and smell each guest as they reached out to pet him. There was an immediate bonding between man and beast! His eyes brightened with each patient he met.

As we came to a door that was empty, Mrs. Schoonover asked, "Would you please just take Woody inside this patient's room . . . she can't get out of bed and would love to pet him?" How could we refuse?

Woody lowered his head, as we led him through the seven-foot tall, narrow door (narrow for his size), and went straight to the bedside. He loved these people as much as they loved him. Again he smelled them, as his eyes brightened, and placed his nose in their hand. At his touch, tears trickled from room to room and throughout the hallway.

There was no way to turn him around in the patient's room, but that was no problem. On command Woody would cautiously back into the hallway and then enter and back out, from room to room, as directed.

It was time to exit the main building, harness the horses and give rides on the trolley. One young lady was in a wheelchair, an I.V. running to her arm and seemed so intent on petting Woody. I was told she was 24 years old and had been in a horse-riding accident when she was 14. If you could only have seen the gleam in her eyes as she struggled to raise her hand to pet him! Her face glowed as if she were an angel.

We made several trips around the premises with the trolley until all had ridden who were able to ride, then unharnessed the horses, loaded up the trailer, bid farewell and headed for home.

As I was driving the dually, I thought about the two nurses that said "We have never seen some of our patients respond as much as they did with Woody." Reflecting on the past three hours, with the tears, the gleam in their eyes, the memories shared and the sounds

of joy, I felt tears trickling down my cheeks . . . it was I who received the blessing that day and still do when these memories come to mind. I am sure I will carry the memory of those three hours with me into eternity!

I had to down-size my herd in February 1997. Woody was sold to Deborah and Kurtis Burkholder

of Reinholds, where he has a good home and I am sure, he will bond to the many special people he will meet in his future.

During the three years we were privileged to share with Woody, he made thousands of special friends, many special memories and will be missed by all of us.



Each patient enjoyed the "physical therapy."



After ducking his head to get in the doorway, Woody gave his undivided attention to the patients and he loved all the attention he received.



"Wow! What a big horse!"