



*Sundance (Sonny) 35-year-old Arab/Quarter Horse gelding.*

All too often, the patient and steadfast horses are forgotten when they get too old for the show ring or other glamorous pursuits. Here is a heartwarming account of one who shall be remembered with great affection by proud owners and grateful students.

"Sundance", more commonly known as Sonny, stands munching happily in his stall at Catherine McCullagh's Quarry Ridge Farms. Estimated to be 35 years-old, this handsome old bay Arab/Quarter Horse gelding has found love for the first time in the form

of a new boarder, a mare named Lou. Due to the fact that Sonny is having a little trouble maintaining his weight this year, he has to stay indoors a while longer, and Lou has to keep him company. Soon he will be turned out onto the grass, free to bask in the summer sun, and revel in the adoration of his many fans. He will be honored in June, during a Pony Club Mock Rally at Quarry Ridge Farms.

His history is a little sketchy, but it is assumed that he is Manitoba born as he was purchased by the

## Celebrating SONNY, School Horse Extraordinaire.

by Ishbel Moore.

Ingrid and Gerhard Martin family from people living in the Libau area. Cornelia Marten, who was 10-years-old at the time, wanted him so badly, she rode him home from Libau to near Birds Hill. She and brother Gerd achieved their C-level in pony club with Sonny, and did training level Eventing as well. Even as a fairly young horse, he proved himself reliable and willing.

The Martens sold him to Trent Howatt in the Brandon area, and the next time we hear of Sonny is when Julie Rowles bought him from Meadowgreen Stables nine years ago for her granddaughter, Gemma. They believed Sonny to be

about 19 years-old at the time. He was part-boarded at Quarry Ridge where Gemma learned to ride. As a team, they entered into events at the Red River Exhibition Grounds and in Teulon at the Interlake Riding Club shows. However, one day while Gemma was participating in an MHJA show in Birds Hill Park, Eric Martin (brother of Cornelia and Gerd) recognized Sonny, and it was confirmed the horse was closer to 29 years-old once the chronology was all worked out.

Currently, Sonny finds himself under saddle teaching students 3-4 times a week. "He's very patient,



*Kelsey Dilts - one of Sonny's students. She has been riding him since she was 7-years-old - she is now 15.*



Sonny 8 years ago with Emma Dealey, 7-years-old at the time. Emma is now 15, and competes on a warmblood in the Junior Jumper ring.



Holly Cox and Julie Rowles (Sonny's owner prior to his moving to Quarry Ridge) leading 20 Interlake Riding Club horses in the 2006 Inwood Summer Parade.



Brad Cox in 2004, at 11-years-old, in an obstacle class opening a creaky scary mailbox and taking newspaper out of it - this obstacle was very hard on MOST horses, but not good old Sonny!

but is also an independent soul," says Catherine. "He likes to do his job without interference. It's almost as if he's saying to the rider, 'Don't give me any aids. I know what I'm doing' and then he takes that rider nicely over the jumps, or whatever is required. He is completely bombproof, and has helped many new riders gain confidence."

As with any older horse, his health is given great consideration. Catherine smiles as she says, "Our vet,

Cyndi Kasper, considers Sonny her oldest client. He's enjoyed very good health, has good feet, and we've had no problems with him. There was only one time we thought maybe the end was near, but he pulled himself out of it."

He has no molars left and so is fed a mash of beet pulp, sweet feed and oil. Catherine adds, "We also give him glucosamine because we think he should have it, not because he asked for it or needs it. He can still

get over the jumps without any problems during or after. We've had guest trainers who've seen him in action and can't believe how old he is."

Sonny also gets first chance at any fresh grass available. It is hoped he will enjoy a few more summers, and bring joy and confidence to all who have the opportunity to ride him.

Holly Cox recalls riding with Sonny many times, and actually borrowed him

a number of times too for her "city slicker" friends to ride! Sonny was also used for a few parades in his time (see centre photo above), with never a blink of an eye at anything!

There are many older horses out there who have given years of service to humans.

Perhaps, if you've got one such elder equine, you will whisper a heartfelt thank-you next time he or she comes over to offer you a ride. 🐾

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