

It's A Gift

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He was much too big to wrap, but I knew from the moment I laid eyes on him that he was a special gift. At eighteen months old there was already great wisdom in those clear blue eyes and an undeniable connection occurred over the wooden fence that separated the two of us. I certainly was not in the market for a young stallion, but after returning home, I kept finding myself going over the pictures taken of this wondrous colt and each time the feeling grew stronger. He belonged with me.

It was not a feeling that he should belong to me, but a feeling he belonged with me. I knew the difference and was quite sure he felt the difference also. What developed over the next eight years is the sort of relationship that occurs so seldom it moves the soul. Of course our means of communication had to be learned, sometimes at first we had trouble deciding how much silliness should be allowed and still know that boundaries were being set for this young stallion. But as the months passed he made it clear that he needed only a slight indication that I was displeased with him and he would stop whatever activity he was engaged in. That would be followed by a very apologetic and concerned look on his handsome face. A look that I admit, melts me to this day.

So it began, Prince Moon Beam learned how to function as my equine best friend. He was my first stallion and because of his generous and forgiving nature, has taught me the meaning of true patience and trust. We learned together how to drive and after only a quick introduction to the Easy Entry training cart (I like to refer to it as an Easy Exit cart...) off we went exploring the coastal fields, Moon with his small ears perked with serious interest in his surroundings and me with a huge smile on my face. It is with this same joy of life that we take on all activities, from simple relaxing rides to

the serious task of maintaining Moon's several businesses.

The Work Begins

Christmas was almost upon us and I thought attaching a silly red nose and a small set of whitetail antlers to Moon's face might make a cute photo. Moon was a two year old at the time and he was so totally unimpressed with his simple costume, and obviously very willing to embarrass himself so completely, I felt compelled to try something much more daring. Moon's career as a greeting card model was conceived that day. He thought wearing the truck inner tube, swim fins, snorkel and diving mask were child's play, although as that photo circulated around the world on the Internet, I could see Moon was gathering up a fan club of folks with the same unusual sense of humor that he and I shared. He started receiving letters from humans and horses both, telling him what a handsome stallion he was and talented to boot! I always marvel at how hard Moon tries to get the pose just right. Of course treats are part of the interest, but when you consider that the two humans involved are not either professional trainers or photographers, it becomes obvious that the horse is a huge part of the success with these photos. I have explained to Moon many times how women do love a man with a sense of humor and it may be that this information encourages him to go the extra mile when wearing his costumes and holding the props. It is no secret that this wonderful temperament has helped his other business as a breeding stallion.

When it was time to work on our first Christmas cards, it was August and we were experiencing 100 degree weather. My idea was to make a smoking jacket and pipe for Moon and have him stand with his foot on the hearth of the fireplace. In the house. I worked for several days practicing placing his foot up on a small platform and telling him to keep it there. Easy. Finding a smoking jacket to fit a horse. Not so easy. As I mentioned I am not a professional trainer or photographer and I am also not a

seamstress. But sew I did, and after many fittings where Moon stood napping while I pulled, squeezed, cut and pinned, I came up with a suitable smoking jacket. After all the props were in place I led Moon to the front door of the house and in he strolled as if he had entered this house every day of his life. It took several tries to get the shot just right with yard breaks in between. When we were through with this idea we worked on his Christmas tree decorating card, so Moon spent more time inside the house. Finally I was satisfied we had captured Moon celebrating the holidays dressed in his finest so it was no longer necessary for him to enter the house. For weeks afterwards when we passed the house, he would attempt to turn and enter the door that led to what must have seemed to him, the most comfortably cool barn he had ever experienced in August.

When a horse has a job as important as keeping his humans amused, I feel it is important that the favor be returned. Moon has a great fondness for a warm beer (I can hear the groans about the temperature already) which he consumes right from the can. He does need some help dispensing it at a regular rate, something hooves are definitely not designed to do, so I keep a twelve pack in the barn just for him to enjoy and pop one for him to celebrate a job well done. Since one of his jobs is entertaining visiting mares, it has come to my attention that there are occasions when the beer seems to be as, if not more important than, breeding the mare. I have never

