

I had the most special experience this weekend. The type of weekend I will never forget.

First some background:

As many of you know, I was given a 3 year-old pony a few years ago. His name was "Simba" because his motto was "I just can't wait to be King" ☺. When I picked him up that day I really wondered what his destiny would be, as he was shaggy, potbellied, hadn't been handled much since the owner/breeder (Jessica Ramirez) had moved to Wisconsin a year and a half prior to that. He was naughty, REALLY smart, willful but affectionate. I really liked him personally, but I knew that he could easily be miss-understood. I always felt that my job was to get him rolling, then find him the right home . . . he was never meant to be mine forever. I changed his name to "Swingalittle" (aka "Swing"), since his dam's name was "Swing's Little Girl".

As I worked with him it started to become pretty evident that he was too much horse to be a kids pony (lots of stories there!) so I started to ride him differently at that point- more like I would want him to go for ME. That meant he had to get much more in front of my leg, since he wasn't going to be an up-downer anymore. We began the process of working on that and finally over the past few months that process started to solidify. Swing became a very light, fun ride for me. I had thought at one point that maybe he didn't want to jump, since he could be sticky to fences sometimes and I had had some rough times getting him away from the crowd, etc. so after starting a program of getting him out on the trails and working on moving forward from my leg, etc I decided to put the jumping saddle on him and let him tell me what he wanted to do, be a strictly dressage / trail horse? Or did he want to also jump? I cantered him around to the show jumps and he took me to the fences with enthusiasm! That was it. He was going to also jump. Swing was my second-string horse. I never had the money to take lessons on him, maybe a total of 5 lessons in the 3 years I had him. Same thing with showing- I knew I had to get him out more, but Breezer always came first. Keeping two horses has been hard for me. I tried to GIVE Swing away to a good home at one point and he came back to me because he was too naughty.

Anyway, on to this weekend!

I had entered the Karen O'Connor clinic and derby in Rafter K with Breezer this past weekend and the week prior Breezer sliced his coronet band. It was iffy as to whether I should go and as the time approached I realized that I needed to scratch Breezer. Oh well, I thought. I guess Swing could really use the experience and I figured it would be a good way for me to see if he wanted to event. I wasn't too optimistic because the only time I entered him in a derby he would barely leave the starting box, I had to stuff him over every fence and he had refused the entire far field at OUAH!!!! I kept telling myself "that was then and this is now" and he is more in front of my leg now. Still I knew that if Swing didn't want to do it I was going to have a rough time . . . Once again this was going to be the time he would tell me what he wanted to do.

Swing's introduction to Karen was so typical "Swing". I walked up to her and stopped, and then he squealed and leaped in the air! I was so embarrassed and thought that maybe he would land on Karen and the person that was with her. Certainly she was going to hate him since he was being so naughty. As we all stood around for our first introductions Swing would impatiently paw and carry on and Karen had me "give him a job". I was pleased with the fact that Swing would leave the crowd and get to work once we started moving. He did really well and responded fabulously to the ride Karen was asking me to give him. At one point Karen said "I would take him home with me" and I replied "I wish that you would". The following day I said to her "I mean it" and she said "I don't know how we'll get him back east" and we started talking about it for real. She said to email her and we'd get in to all the details but that she would buy him!! OMG- I couldn't sleep at all that night 'cause I was so excited!

The derby was the next telling test. I was on my own, since Karen had left to fly back east. Would he not want to leave his pals again? Would I have to stuff him over every fence? Swing already figured out his job and he came out of the start box and went for it! I almost had to pinch myself with how well he galloped off, so light and adjustable, with a galloping stride that covered more ground than I had anticipated. He was having FUN!! Although he was green it went great, except for one stop at a coup which was totally my fault. I had not ridden him in exactly the way Karen wanted me to- I got behind his motion a bit (old habits die hard) and he propped like "Are you scared of this fence? Well so am I then". I stuffed him over it, but it was still enough of a lack of forward motion that it was considered a stop. Still and all I was thrilled! He had confirmed to me that this was what he wanted to do. Now he has the best opportunity I could possibly give him and an expert horsewoman who understands that willfulness and exuberance are great things when channeled in the right direction! Will he be the next teddy? Who knows- we'll let Swing tell us that, but whatever it is I know that he will let us know!!

What an incredible dream come true-

I thought I should share it with you . . .

Nancy Roche'