

## Caleyndar

I've met a lot of horses, have ridden the remote Baja region of Old Mexico on burros wearing the legendary mark of Christ's cross on their backs and have ridden the small honest horses of that country, while searching for internal peace.

In the California high Sierras out of Bishop's Pass, my left arm developed an infection due to a spider bite, and I would have lost it, if not for the strength and sure-footedness of a Lipizzan stallion. Out of mercy and horror at the sight of my swollen arm, the owner of this splendid horse asked me, "Can you ride?" then dismounted and passed me the reins. Jumping over logs and narrow rushing creeks that crisscrossed narrow switchbacks, we rode down and rode fast, to get to the road, to get to the hospital, to save my arm.

I have seen the honest trembling pain of a Clyde that was a dear friend. That horse taught me more about the meaning of grace while under the fire of pain from illness than any human ever will.

Knowing more waking hours with horses than with mankind has been to my benefit.

To know Caleyndar is to know all great horses. How do you breed for heart? How does one acknowledge courage from a source that does not talk of exploits, to mark their bravery?

The first time meeting Caleyndar I was pained. Fifteen hands of gray white Arabian Stallion, from poll to croup his body even at rest had movement and perfect symmetry; he was beautiful. Then glancing down to his right front foot and maybe, out of respect, for a

moment I pounded my sight into the ground, as one would do with the barrel of a rifle to avoid shooting a loved one. If only looking away would have made it not be there, but it was there. Caleyndar had a healed broken leg that could not be used without pain. I closed my mind's eye to how he injured it, the story I never want to hear.

I have shod horses since my apprenticeship with a seventh generation horse shoer in 1971 and during that time for seven years taught horseback riding. Out of those 31 years, mostly good, I have met fine horses and honorable people. I do not know how many years Esta has owned Caleyndar, but they have been many. There are horse and rider relationships that appear to be spiritually inspired, and this is one of them; I have stood in awe of the relationship between Esta and Caley. What words can describe a bond that is held together with no use or need for words? It is what we deeply feel that troubles the tongue. When thinking of how to explain their relationship what comes to mind is a small amber light that beats to the same tempo within both of them.

Caley's pastern, with its lack of mobility and pain, had gotten large, and frozen hard with arthritis and the hoof had become narrow and contracted. Knowing what needed to be done to his foot, shoeing wise, for him to be out of pain, the three of us, Esta, Caley, and I worked to shoe him. Caleyndar needed a larger surface area on both front feet, to distribute his weight better and to start the long process of widening his right foot and increase circulation. The pain of holding his foot was at times so great he would not stand still and only let me hammer one nail in at a time, then he would have to put his foot down. Never once did he ever get mad at me, I put myself at times in the most vulnerable of positions, to get the task done. At these moments it would have been so

easy for Caley to kick me off my feet, or to at least bite. Instead, he endured the pain and then nuzzled me after the work was done.

Years had gone by and Caley was out of pain. No longer was there a need for the gentle, strong, horse handling expertise of Esta to shoe him, so Caley and I worked alone.

For a couple of weeks about five years ago, my back was giving me some problems, but not to the point where I felt the need to take a rest from shoeing, or at least I thought. One morning in particular there was a twinge in my back while driving over to shoe Caley. After the work was finished on Caley's feet I stood up then collapsed to my knees with back pain. A man who was cleaning stalls helped get me to the bench that was next to the inside wall of the barn. There I sat as this kind man put my anvil, hammers and other tools back into my truck. When it came time to take Caley to his stall, at the far end of the barn, the man's hesitance and Caley's visible upset over my collapse made it obvious that Caley would be too big a handful for the man. With the man's help I got to my feet. Then once again I started to go down with excruciating pain. In that split second Caley put his head under my arm. He stood as still as a sculpture. When he felt he had me safely supported, Caleyndar continued to hold me up with my feet almost off the ground. Then Caley walked me back to his stall, past geldings, mares, and other stallions that he would have normally whinnied at. He also would have pranced high into the air with his usual animated trot. On that day Caleyndar uttered not a sound among the equine neighborhood clamor, which echoed on both sides of us as we walked through the barn. I was his loving charge, and he walked slowly and deliberately. At his stall, he lowered his head and I found myself on the bench by his stall. Caley walked into his stall, turned around and waited for someone to close his gate.

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