

Hey Neighbor



For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Sunny Was One For All Of The Family

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family horse.

"Sunny was such an important part of our lives, that I don't know what we will do without him," Litke continued. "He was each of our three girls' favorite horse; they would fight tooth-and-nail over who would get to ride him when they were little. I rode him some, too, but not all that much. Most recently, our grandchildren have been

riding him."

Purchased as an eight-year-old from Charlie Koenig of Alma, the sorrel Quarter Horse gelding had originally been used in a feedlot and as a rope horse

by Kathy Long of Belleville.

"Charlie said we could try Sunny, and if we didn't like him, we could bring him back. Of course, we never once considered taking him back," Litke recalled. "My husband, Byron, always told people tongue-in-cheek that Sunny was the most expensive \$800 horse he ever bought."

Although they didn't realize it upon purchase, the family found out shortly that Sunny had cataracts, and his peripheral vision was distorted.

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we did have to unbuckle the headstall and go around behind his line of vision when we were bridling him."

Remembering Sunny's age was always easy, because he was the same age as the Litkes' daughter, Shilo. For that reason, she tried to lay the most claim to the horse, but that didn't work too well. Dad Byron doesn't ride as much as other family members, but when a horse was needed, he had first privilege to use Sunny.

Besides family dispute, there was another problem with this. Who was going to catch him?

"Sunny was always hard to catch, and if Byron needed him for day work, I had to

catch him and shut him up the night before. Byron never could catch him," Litke admitted. "Sunny got loose numerous times at shows and events, and would run like a streak of lightning. After deciding to stop, he'd snort and wait for me to walk right up to him."

The horse's abilities were most diverse. Due to his initial background, the family insisted Sunny was cowy. "You could pretty much turn him towards a cow, and he would do it himself," Litke evaluated.

Trail riding and parades were an important part of his diverse resume. Sunny was ridden every year in the WahShunGah Days parade, including this past June.

"He had been on the Santa Fe Trail Ride each year since it started, until three years ago. Shilo rode him first on the ride when she was eight, and then later Lacie and Desiree," Litke related. "Shilo's son, Treyser, was the last one who rode him on the trail ride three years ago."

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tainly Sunny's main forte. "He was really hot in the roping box, but that seemed to help make him such a good barrel racing and pole bending horse," Litke described. "Yet, he always rated for the rider's ability and seemed to know how fast you wanted to go."

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very young grandchildren, but still win in the same day for mother, aunts and occasionally grandma.

"Shilo qualified to compete at the state fair for eight straight years," Like recollected. "It was extremely rare for him to ever hit a barrel or pole. That would put him in the money a lot of times just because he'd make a clean run."

At age 25, when another horse became injured, Sunny was called into use, and Desiree qualified him for the state fair in barrels, poles and flags. "It seemed like he ran faster that year than he ever had," Litke credited.

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Brodey and Delayna all competed on Sunny in Eastern Kansas Horseman's Association shows, just like their mom, Shilo, and aunts Lacie and Desiree and Grandma Sheila had.

"They each started riding him when they were two or three," Litke commented. "Two years ago when he was 28, we hauled Sunny to all of the shows. Last year, we took him to a few, and this year he still looked pretty good for his age, so the kids rode him at the show in Council Grove."

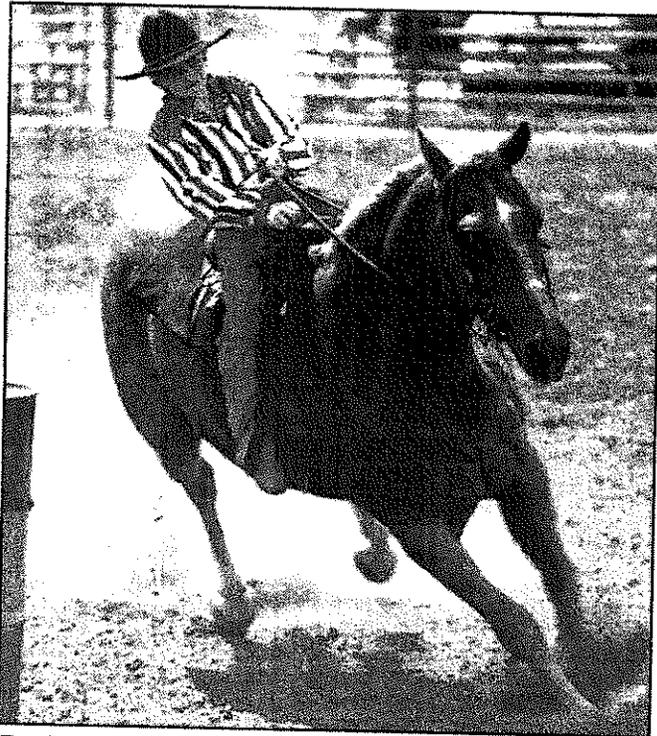
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Litke's father, Dean Spittles, buried Sunny near the creek at a small park on the ranch. "We will construct a marker sometime this fall to commemorate the life of one of the greatest horses that ever lived, and enriched everybody around him."



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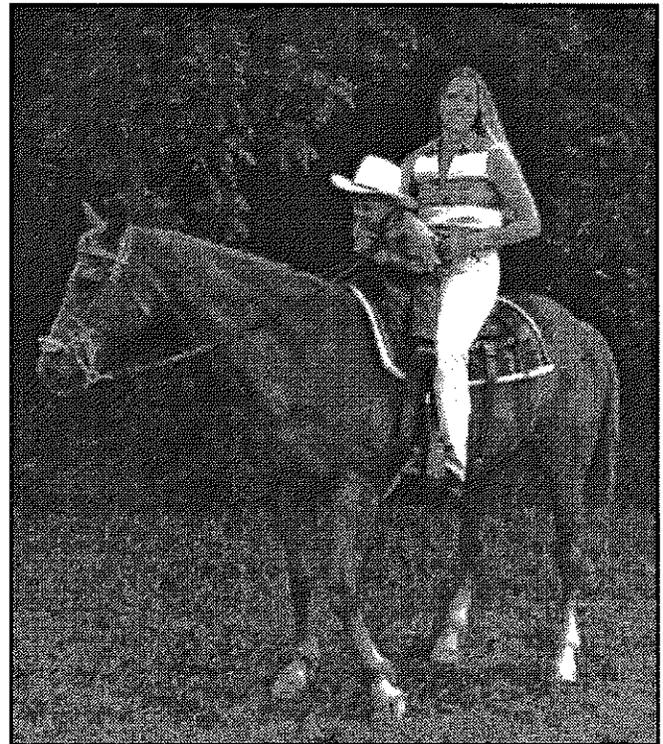
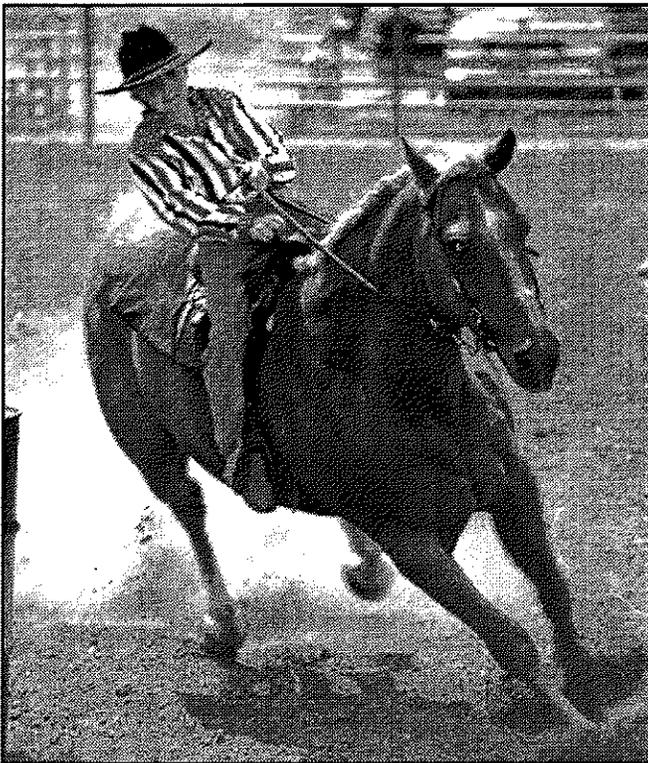
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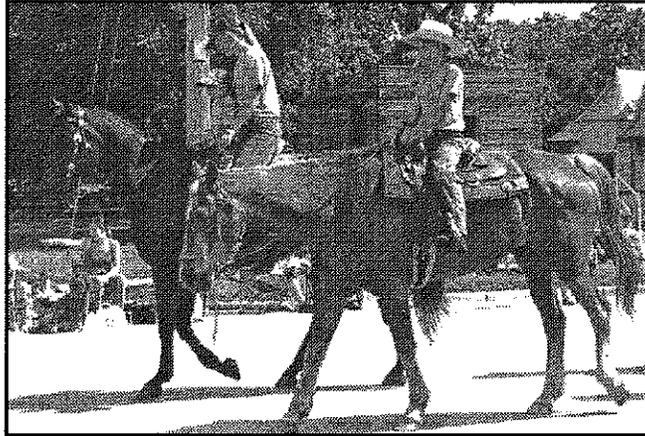
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"Sunny was a horse that would do anything you asked him to without any hesitation, no matter what. He is sadly missed by all of us," Litke concluded.

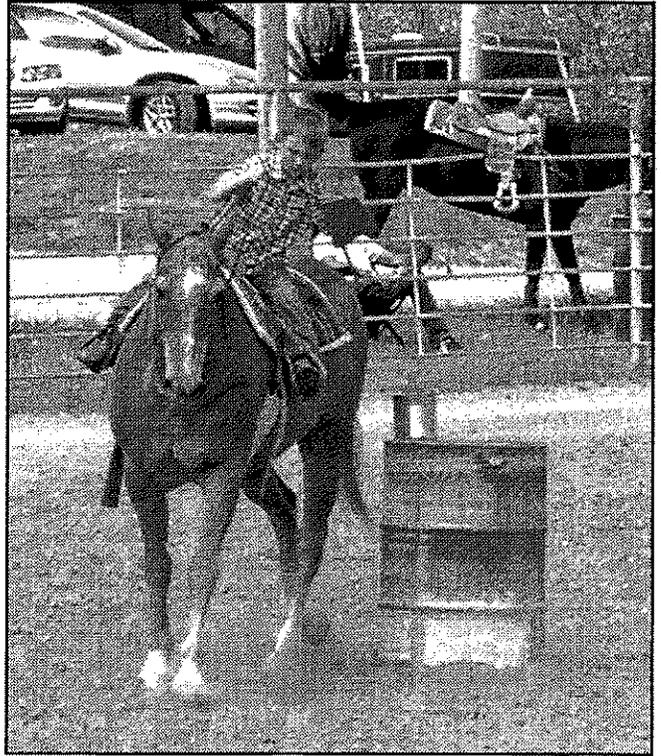
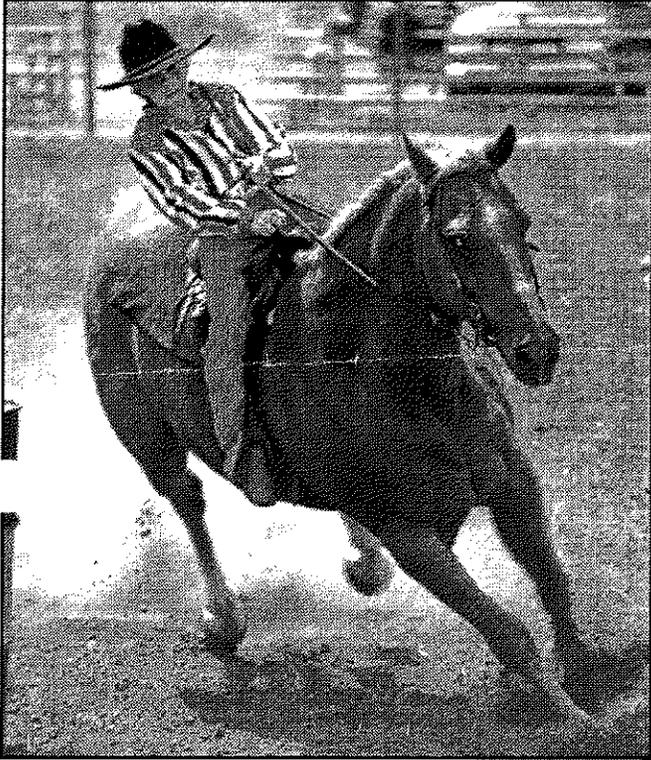
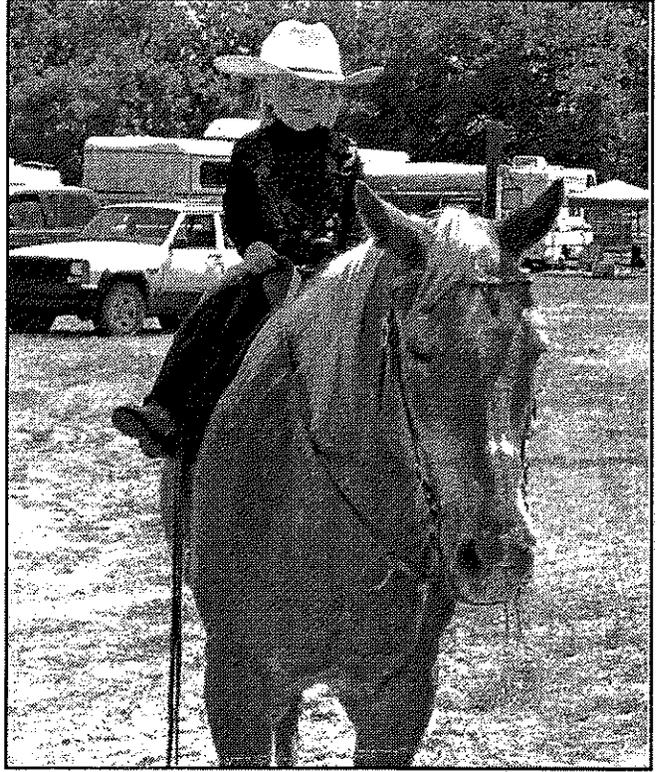
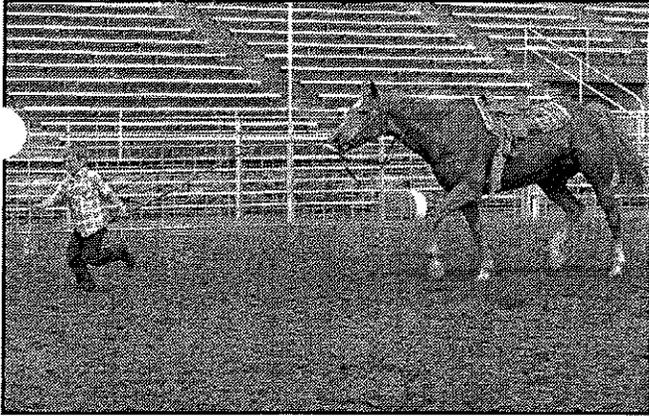


Desiree Litke rode the family horse, Sunny, in speed competitions throughout the Midwest qualifying for competition at the Kansas State Fair many years. Not only was the gelding a winner in running events, he was many times champion with different handlers in showmanship and collected several conformation titles.

Horses that all ages of a family can ride safely are difficult to find. Three generations rode Sunny in his long, diverse career. Shilo King first rode him when she was eight years old, and then her children rode the talented sorrel at horse shows in recent years. King is on the gelding with her son, Treyser.



Last hurrah for the famed all-around family horse, Sunny, was this summer in the WahShun-Gah Days parade at Council Grove, where third generation rider Treyser King rode the longtime friend. At age 30, the gelding was also competed on by King and his siblings at a horse show this year.



One of M.M top 5
choices with Desiree'
riding in barrel racing →