

100th Edition —

## Horses Embarrassed By Their Handlers

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Monte Montana, the trick roper on Rex, missed his loop when attempting to rope his bride at their wedding.

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Foolish handlers have made their horses "look like" fools ever since man first started using horsepower. We've embarrassed more than our share of horses.

Most recent episode was when we stood up on a young sorrel gelding at a sale to show how gentle he was. Noise of the auction caused him to move, we jumped to the ground and he ran out of the ring. We scampered to catch him, as Hack squinted at us as if to say: "You fool."

First time we embarrassed our horse was 45 years ago. We tied the lariat tight to the saddle horn, spurred the spotted mare into a dead run around the pasture fence spinning the rope lickity cut and threw a perfect loop that landed around a solid hedge post. Horse was jerked to a

screeching stop when the rope came tight as we hit the saddle tree ... still carrying that rope burn today. Spot grunted at us as if to say: "You fool."

County fair open horse show three decades ago was at night after the 4-H competition. Our black stallion had been prancing at the trailer and talking to other horses in the show. When it was our turn to lead in, he came out at a trot, lunged right to the ringside gelding like it was a mare in cycle. While we were reprimanding him, Dennis glared at us as if to say: "You fool."

It had been 10 years since she'd bucked Dad, saddle, bridle and all off. We saddled and bridled the Pinto mare, strapped breast collar on, tightened saddle bags, secured lariat, slipped filled canteen over the horn, put .410 in the gun scabbard and across the pasture we rode. A quarter mile from home, it was all the mare could take, and she exploded; off we went,

followed by the saddle and all contraptions, finally the bridle. Queen soon stopped, eyeballed at us as if to say: "You fool."

First time she'd seen any of it, the tobiano mare was harnessed, ground driven around the arena and hooked to the pony cart. The initial step, she felt the pressure, heard the noise and literally went every direction imaginable until all the stuff came loose: cart resembled toothpicks and harness was nearly wang leather. It was a long time before Margie finally

slowed down, rolled her eyes at us as if to say: "You fool."

Young black gelding had been a family pet. He was started riding at age two and never gave any trouble; just slow and awkward. "Oh, he's a kid horse, just as well let the eight-year-old daughter show him in walk-trot. He won't do anything." First time around, judge asked for a trot, and gelding, with girl aboard, headed to the open gate at more than a trot for certain. Luckily, a cowboy grabbed one rein as the pair went by. We ran over to help, and Star blinked at us as if to say: "You fool."

Big black and white Apaloosa was set in his ways. We were riding south, turned the corner to the west, on the sloping ground around an electric pole, when he started to buck, and we hit the ground, as gelding headed home. Neighbor grinned as he offered us a car ride to follow. Not just once, not just twice, but three times in

the same spot in one afternoon. Speckles snorted at us as if to say: "You fool."

Beautiful palomino gelding had been worked hard pulling the cart and laying down upon command, in preparation for the sale. Crowd gathered as we hooked him like so often before, got in the cart, clicked our teeth, and he reared up, got crossways in the shafts, bent them, broke a tug and ended that driving demonstration. As the gelding was being shown later in the auction ring, we stepped off, asked him to lay down, with complete refusal; no way today. Twice in one afternoon, Champ smirked at us as if to say: "You fool."

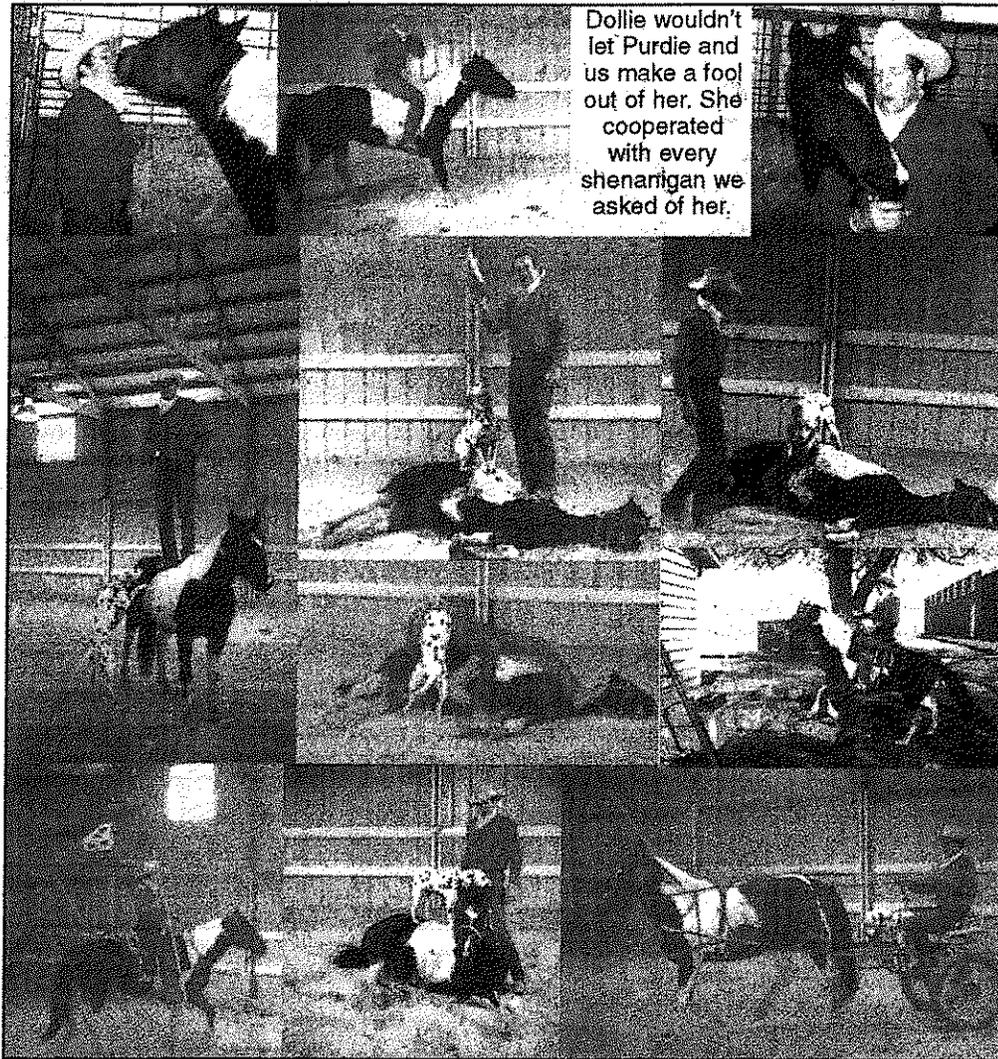
She'd been nervy, but the demonstration on the sorrel mare had gone satisfactorily. Setting by the well curb visiting with the owner, when we attempted one last show-off, raised our right leg up to make a turn in the saddle and caught our spur in her mane. Mare took a leap to

the left, and we went bouncing to the ground. Ardenee turned around, shook her head at us as if to say: "You fool."

Always edgy, the sorrel gelding had never been in any mishaps and, we thought, was ready to go home. We were riding in relaxed attitude, but the demonstration really wasn't going too smoothly. It came to a head when gelding popped a cork, and we landed in a heap as the owner's look matched that of Charlie's as if to say: "You fool."

And then there were the times: Rein broke, black mare ran, bit her tongue off and she expired from renal failure in the hospital. Two-year-old brown gelding wrapped himself around the yard tree to which he'd been tied and choked to death. First-time saddled three-year old bay stud pulled back pressuring his rear leg, causing it to shatter through the skin, such

Continued on page 11



that he had to be euthanized. Oh, what a fool we've been.

Dumbest ever was 30 some years ago when we turned the dun Appaloosa out in the pasture for a week "to calm down," right after he dumped us along the north hedge row. When the owner called, we told the wife to go ride the horse: "He's gentle now." She saddled the gelding, mounted, and he took two steps, came unglued and the realest of all rodeos occurred. More than foolish, we were downright stupid.

There are more. No matter how many we ride or how old we get, we continue to embarrass horses. We know less every day.

It's the 100th edition of

For The Love Of Horses. As we look to our next 100 and beyond, we'll relate advice from leading horsemen to help keep handlers from embarrassing their horses, along with more manage-

ment suggestions, and additional reviews of our horse and handler heroes. Please let us know if there is a special interest or idea. Thanks for the congenial following.

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