

Alberta Donkey and Mule Club NEWS, September 2008

THREE CHEERS FOR TEAM MULE! Competing at Spruce Meadows at the Telus Battle of the Breeds September 3 -7, will be Deloit Wolfe and Horse from Missoula, Montana, Mogens Nielsen and Maizie from Falkland, B.C. Katherine Cook and Mastco Jane from Camrose, AB. and Jessica Bishop and L.S. Hot Buckaroo[Patrick] from Scio, Oregon. Captain Jadene Mah heads up the Team. Many of us will be there to support this wonderful group of amb''ass'' adors for the longears including the many volunteers and animals that will be in the ADMC's Booth at Equi Fair. Make sure you see us at Spruce Meadows!

Watch for reports on TEAM MULE and the recent JERRY TINDELL Clinics next month!

This month I get to take it easy, as club members have submitted news and reports and later on a wonderful true adventure written by one of our own TEAM MULE members Jessica Bishop about her trip up to compete in the TELUS BATTLE of the BREEDS last year. But before that just a few reminders of what coming up.

September 13-14. Rust Family Campout, ride or drive or just plan to come and camp and join in the family fun. Lots of music, food and good fellowship. Call 403 783-5197 for more information.

October 19, SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING, Reynolds-Alberta Museum, Wetaskiwin, 12.30 lunch, 1:30 meeting. Everyone Welcome! We need your input!

See you next month, Marlene Quiring

Long-time club members will be sorry to learn that Norm Pederson passed away on June 17. Norm, a former auctioneer, was one of the founding members of the ADMC. For many years he showed his good mules Sage and then Twyla in both riding and driving classes and took part in club trail rides. Norm even traveled as far as Winnemucca, Nev., where he successfully showed Sage in a large mule show.

Throughout the years, Norm helped many people locate and buy mules and donkeys. In later years, after he developed health problems, Norm often conducted driving clinics for miniature donkey owners. He also produced his own saddle training video. In 2001, Norm and his wife Bette received an Outstanding Service Award from the CDMA, where he served several terms as a director and Mule Liaison.

The last line of Norm's obituary stated that he wanted to assure everyone that "it's been one hell of a ride." [submitted by Donna Quick]

The annual ADMC trail ride was held July 24 to 26. Some members came a few days early and stayed longer. A wedding party of 150 caused some camping problems but

members found a suitable area away from the sound of generators and wedding celebrations.

Blayne and Twyla Johnson and their three friends George, Al, and Carol rode the Onion, Hummingbird, Burn, and other trails. Rob and Joyce Muller, and Fred and Janice Godberson rode the Canary, Onion and Hummingbird trails. Keith Kendrew with his donkey Skeeter rode until they came to water. Keith was very patient but was only able to get Skeeter's front feet into water. Ken and Donna Quick came for one night to see how Skeeter was making out. No water crossing for Keith this year.

Equipped with a book about mountain flowers, Janice, Twyla, and Joyce enjoyed finding and trying to identify the many beautiful flowers.

Another activity involved members doing some mountain climbing. The view from the top of the mountain east of camp shows the Ram, Onion, Canary and Hummingbird watersheds with the corresponding trails. Keith and Fred did not take cameras, GPS, or binoculars so they plan on doing the climb again next year.

Keith and his violin, and Richard Brewer supplied campfire music with his guitar, banjo, and interesting songs.

Make plans to come and take in this event next year. [submitted by Fred Godberson]

Homeward Bound, Mule Style

For the last two years I have had the privilege of being invited to ride with the Alberta Donkey and Mule Club as part of Team Mule in the Battle of the Breeds held during the Master's Competition at Spruce Meadows, Calgary Canada.

Being from Oregon, this was a great journey for me. But my daughter and I set off with our two mules, Patrick and Scooter, for the 2000 mile (round trip) adventure.

The first year was great. I had managed to break the trip up into two 12 hour days, with a great little empty fairgrounds to stay at right over the Canadian Border. The excitement of seeing glorious Canada for the first time made the two 12 hour days fly by.

The second year was still filled with excitement, but to see my Canadian friends, and compete with Patrick, not to make the dreaded two 12 hour day drive. Again, Shelby and I headed out with Patrick and Scooter.

It took forever to get across Washington. When we got to the border we were ready to crash. We put the mules in the same pen as last year. The gates weren't as sturdy as the previous year, but I was sure that the mules wanting off the road as much as I did would

surely stay attached to their hay piles and water buckets until the early morning hours of the next day.

I fell asleep to the sound of content mules happily chewing their hay. I woke up to silence. I took me a minute, but I quickly realized too much silence. I bolted out of the trailer, and sure enough, no mules. This particular part of Canada is sand, sage brush, cactus, and more sand. Since we were the only equines this grounds has seen in years, it was easy to track the mules to the gate that had fallen over in the middle of the night.

These grounds were completely enclosed, with various paddocks and holding pens, all well fenced. However, every pen had one gate open, and like following a path in a maze, I followed my mules' tracks through every open gate, until I ended up standing at entrance to a vast circuit of sandy trails. Beyond the trails were miles of thick apple orchards bursting with ripe apples, and even further from view was the mighty Columbia River. From here the tracks also mingled with the tracks of many horses that are brought up here for trail riding.

I didn't know where to begin. My first thought was if they were in the middle of a dense apple orchard, that they had no reason to ever come back out. They had all they needed to live a long fulfilled life right there. Then I saw a boarding barn at the bottom of the hill I was standing on. My next hope was, being that they were mules, they were drawn to the horses in the paddocks and someone had penned them up for me.

I ran back to the trailer, unhitched the truck, hollered at Shelby to get up, the mules are gone, and we headed to the ranch. I was there as the farm hand was doing morning chores. I asked him if he has seen two mules. What color, brown with tan faces. From where, the old fairgrounds, I was pointing up the hill that from this vantage point was more obvious that it was actually foothill's to some mountain range. He said no, and then offered me the words of encouragement that are burned on my brain forever. "Why from there they could get all the way to Vancouver before anyone ever saw them again!" Thank you sir, I will keep looking.

The next stop was to the police station. They were not open for a few more minutes, so I sat in the truck and cried for a bit. When they opened, I had to wait for the office lady to finish her morning gossip to get helped. I told her the situation, and she says, "What do you want us to do? We are not going to look for them." I gave her my phone number in case anyone reported a mule sighting.

I retreated back to the trailer to cry some more. I had been driving around the neighborhood and trail system all morning, where many people who walk their dogs here had been seeing me. Finally some ladies asked what's wrong, and I tell them, this time not able to tell the story one more time without balling like a baby. They for the first time offer help. One of them says she is going to immediately call the local radio station, and even alert the news chopper. The other gets the other dog walkers involved, and for the hours to come, I see them driving around the orchards looking between the trees as best they can. In my weakened state, I start to think that Canadians are the nicest people ever!

By now it was 10 am, and I was feeling positive that we would find them, but would it be in time for me to make it to the competition. I still had 12 hours of driving to do, and was supposed to be on the road by 5am. This was Tuesday, and my event was on Thursday.

I went back to the trailer with an excruciating head ache, and lay down for a bit. The hours of hiking the Canadian countryside had exhausted me. After a bit of sleep, I woke up with the border on my mind. I could see the vast gates of the border crossing from where I was, and there were parts of the orchards that I had walked that were only separated by a fence from the U.S. I took a shower, put clean cloths on, my pj's had had a long morning, got in the truck and went to the border.

I was met at the crossing station by Wagoner, a US border official. I asked him if anyone had seen two mules. He said no, but it was a very unique situation and took my info, if he did hear anything. The border crossing is on a one way road, and I was told that to get back into Canada I would have to cross over to the US and come back through the border station to Canada. I asked if I could just back up, and he said only if I wanted to be met by policemen with guns. No problem.

As I was back in Washington on Highway 97 waiting to get back into Canada, I saw Wagoner coming to the truck with a yellow paper in his hand. He had just received a phone call; the two mules were penned up a few miles south on Boundary Point Road. I did an immediate U turn, almost hitting the side of a truck in the other lane, and sped south.

Sure enough there they were, in a beautiful green grass enclosure with piles of hay and a bucket of water. I pulled into the driveway and looked at the shoulder of the highway. Sure enough there was mule tracks headed south bound down the side of highway 97.

I still had to go back to Canada and get the horse trailer. I went back to the border crossing, and was met by another grumpy Canadian. He asked how long I was staying in Canada. When I said just long enough to get my horse trailer, get my mules that had escaped back to the US and then back to Canada, I was asked to go in and see customs. I had more time inside to explain the situation and was sent on my way.

When I had hitched up and was back at the border to the US, I was asked the same series of questions. This fellow's response was how did they get through? The only way over the border is right through the gates, and surely someone would have seen them. I easily passed through, picked up the mules, and once again headed back to Canada. I was met by yet another border guard and when asked the usual series of questions, I simply said, "To Calgary." This guy didn't know me, and I was not going to waste another minute in this place!

We made it to Calgary and had a wonderful competition. Team Mule was honored by the title sponsor with stuffed mule toys handed out to all spectators as souvenirs. My events were jumping and barrel racing, and along with my team member Team Mule placed for

the first time ever in the jumping with 5th place, and Team Mule earned its highest ranked overall position ever of 3rd place.

Shelby and Scooter were wonderful ambassadors for the mule breed by hosting in the breed booth, and performing beautifully in breed demos.

For anyone who knows these two mules personally, Scooter was defiantly the brains behind Operation Escape. Patrick on his own would never have wandered without the help of his sister.

All I am left with is if Patrick and Scooter were able to sneak through the border, homeland security is not what it should be!

Jessica Bishop
Scio, Oregon

P.S. On a sad note, Scooter later had to be put down after serious complications suffered when kicked by a horse.



L.S. Buckaroo a.k.a. Patrick and Jessica Bishop (left)
Jessica's daughter Shelby and Scooter (right)