



by Elaine Hutchison

One of my most cherished photographs is one taken on my farm. It is of a horse from the Lipizzan Rescue Foundation (LRF), who came to live with me. This photograph of that LRF gelding and my mare grazing peacefully together in the golden light of an autumn pasture always reminds me of the beautiful Bedouin saying, *“My treasures do not chink or glitter. They gleam in the sun and neigh in the night.”*

And it's true. Like many smitten horse owners, my horses are my treasures; my family. But the LRF pasture mate was an unexpected treasure. This horse brought with him a richness that an ancient writer once described as “far above rubies.”

In an equine adoption program, pasture mates are some of the most difficult horses to place. They are horses that cannot be ridden and many of them cannot be bred. Their inability to perform the activities that humans usually value in horses has earned them a name that suggests a lesser value - pasture mates. However, they do more than that name implies. They bring a hidden wealth to a herd.

When I contacted Lyn Schaeffer at LRF about adopting a pasture mate, she told me about an older gelding in Wisconsin that was available. He had arthritic hocks and could not be ridden, but he might be a great companion for my mare, Quianna. I eagerly applied and was approved as his new human.

This 23-year-old pasture mate arrived one crisp October morning, full of passion, promise, and magic. Regardless of his bad hocks, he literally leapt off the transport van, landed neatly at my side, and calmly surveyed the new surroundings. On that

first morning, I realized very quickly that a very special horse had come into my life. He was totally self-possessed and curious without being fearful. He was a small horse, but he had so much presence that he filled the air around with him with his being. Within hours, he had trained me, and I shamelessly plied him with treats to win his favor.

Known as “Bud” in his previous home, I wanted him to have a new name for this new beginning. So I called him “Bona.” Named after his grandsire, Pluto Bona II, Bona showed his goodness from the very start. For instance, when it was time to trailer Bona and Quianna, he played the part of an experienced older horse. Quianna, being a bit claustrophobic, can get nervous in a trailer. Bona's calm stance after loading helped steady her, and she was much less apprehensive than she had been on previous trips.

On the farm, Bona also acts as a “watch” horse. I get alerts from him a couple of times a week, when things aren't as they should be in his pasture. If a deer crosses the pasture, he gallops down to the gate, giving a shrill whinny to let me know that something is amiss. He's also alerted me to coyotes, a bear, neighbors burning trash, and the Fed Ex truck. Nothing gets by him and he is emphatic with his whinnies. Once he knows you've received the message, he stops. He always wants to make his feelings known and he wants to make sure you understand him.

This amazing little horse has brought so much to my farm family, and I am so grateful for him - so much so that I hope I am giving him enough in return.

In his past life as Bud, he had lived the dream of many horses, that of being loved by a young girl. His young girl was named

Gina. She was a very special young gal who made him the center of her world and she became the center of his. There was such a great bond between them that when Gina passed away from kidney disease, his world became irrevocably empty.

This was my concern. How could I give him that kind of love, that dedicated, sweet love of a young girl? At 62 years of age, I was obviously no longer young, and I had other responsibilities to tend to. I was worried that I couldn't give him what he needed.

One day as I was brushing him, I wondered once again how I could give him the love that I thought he was missing. But as soon as those thoughts of my lack passed through my mind, he

looked directly at me with his deep, dark eyes as if to say, "... I cannot carry you across these green pastures, so let's just grow older together."

That is the treasure of a pasture mate. They not only enrich your herd; they enrich your life. Although I cannot ride him, Bona brings a great love to me and our animal family, a love that is generous, wise, deep, and brilliant.

And that is more than enough.

If you would like to adopt a Lipizzan pasture mate from the LRF, please visit the Pasture Mate Program page on the LRF website: <https://lipizzanrescuefoundation.org/sponsor-or-foster>.

LRF is one of 11 finalists in the running for Rescue of the Year! Please vote!!!

We're in the running for Rescue of the Year!



www.lipizzanrescuefoundation.org

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