

A Magic Experience at Tempel Farms

By Elaine Hutchison

Part I

To many horse fans in the US, the pastures of Tempel Farms are considered a sacred place. Why? Because Tempel Farms is one of the few places in America where everyday folks can meet living legends, the amazing Lipizzan horses.

Tempel Farms has a longstanding reputation as a home of the Lipizzan breed. With a heritage that is closely tied to Piber and their almost 60-year American tradition of promoting classical dressage and the Lipizzan horse, Tempel Farms is considered a founder in establishing the Lipizzan breed in the US.

Whether visitors make the pilgrimage to Tempel Farms to attend a performance or take a behind-the-scenes tour, they are thrilled to visit this famous place. And the farm itself is lovely. With its lush, green pastures and heated barns, it is the perfect home for the lovely Tempel Lipizzans. It hardly looks like a place for a rescue horse.

But earlier this year, the farm was home to a very special rescue horse, a horse named *Magic*. Esther Buonanno, from the Tempel Farms ownership family, was busy overseeing the training, breeding, and performance programs when she received a phone call in early February. The call was from the Lipizzan Rescue Foundation (LRF) president, Lyn Schaeffer, asking for Esther's help with a horse.

"I hesitated for a moment," says Esther. "Tempel Lipizzans does give a safe home to its own rescues from retired brood mares to horses that for one reason or another are unable to fit in our breeding or training program. However, Lyn assured me that with time, she would be able to find a good forever home for Magic, but that he needed placement right away."

As the farm staff prepared for their new guest, they learned there was a bit of mystery about Magic. Born in 2002, he had been dearly loved for most of his 15 years by a nice woman who treated him as a much-loved pet. Although he had received some training in his early life, his last eight years had been spent in a pasture.

There were large blank areas in Magic's education. No one was certain about his training and if he could be ridden.

Consequently, no one knew quite what to expect when he



A photo of Magic just before he arrived at Tempel Farms

arrived at Tempel Farms two weeks after that first phone call.

He surprised them. Trainer Eliza Ardizzone recalled that she was startled by his size.

"He was so big," she said.

Magic was almost 200 pounds overweight when he arrived. His adorable Teddy bear shape would have to change to a slimmer silhouette.

The other shocking surprise was just how little he knew about normal horse-human interactions. From the moment he emerged from the trailer, it was apparent that Magic did not know how to be led by a human. Magic did the leading. Instead of waiting for instruction from the person holding the lead rope, Magic would just walk off in whatever direction he chose, and he expected the person to follow. Although he didn't exactly drag people around, he certainly didn't pay much attention to them. And he wasn't being evasive or naughty. This was simply the way Magic was in his world. He was in charge.

It was not an auspicious beginning.

(Stay tuned for Part 2 of Magic's story in the spring, 2018, NEWS to see Magic's transformation)