

JOURNEY TO THE “ROCKY” MOUNTAINS

Tovie Van Nes, Foothills, Alberta, Canada
JOURNEY TO THE “ROCKY” MOUNTAINS

I was introduced to TTouch in the early 90s when I acquired my first horse. Being new to horses, the exercises and touches helped me foster a trusting relationship with Apache – a retired therapeutic riding horse. It also gave us something to do when our Canadian winters prevented us from riding; and was a wonderful tool to help him throughout his aging years.

In 1993, a friend and I participated in a 5 day clinic with Robyn in Vernon to learn more and improve our skills. A couple years later this same friend’s husband (aka my boss), attended a local spring horse auction while she was home very ill with pneumonia. In his ignorance, he bought Rocky – a beautiful, well bred, spirited, young horse who was definitely not the most suitable horse for middle aged beginners.

Rocky looked so beautiful because he had been completely shaved for the auction. My boss dropped him off, during a freak early spring snow storm, in a pasture with a large mixed herd. Within 3 days, Rocky had caused so much turmoil; they had to move him, along with their older mare, to their acreage. A vet check revealed Rocky was a crypt orchid stallion and surgery was scheduled. There was so much scar tissue in his abdomen, the vet only had time to check one side for the aberrant testicle and remove the scar tissue. After the surgery Rocky’s behavior became dangerous to him and folks handling him. One day my friend’s dog scooted under their rail fence and Rocky pulled back. With the rail attached to the end of his lead line, he proceeded to buck around the pasture, only stopping when he got tangled so badly that he could no longer move; and all that without popping the stitches still in his abdomen. My friend asked if she could bring Rocky to me so we could try helping him using TTouch; and so our journey with Rocky began. Using the skills we had learned with Robyn; and Linda’s books and videos, my friend and I went to work that summer. We had no facilities on our farm yet so we worked in the pasture, making a labyrinth with deadfall trees. With both of us being extremely inexperienced

JOURNEY TO THE "ROCKY" MOUNTAINS

with horses in general, we erred on the side of caution which made our progress slow.

Nevertheless, we saw wonderful changes with Rocky's behaviour very quickly. The best part of using TTouch training methods was that all three of us were having fun and we never felt unsafe or out of control. That fall, we proudly and safely took Rocky trail riding in the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

Over the winter, my boss decided to take Rocky to a local trainer for "traditional" training and to take some riding lessons. Several human broken bones later, the trainer told my boss that Rocky was dangerous and unpredictable and should be euthanized.

When spring arrived, my friend brought Rocky back to our place for a TTouch refresher because we had had more success with him than the traditional trainer. Shortly after he arrived, we came home one day to find him missing; only to discover him in our neighbour's pasture mounting their competitive driving mare. After a second jump over three barb wire fences to rejoin their mare, the vet advised he would require surgery to the other side of his abdomen. Although the second surgery was a success and Rocky was finally testosterone free, he suffered a severe bout of laminitis that led to coffin bone rotation. Rocky never became riding sound again but my friend kept Rocky for the rest of his life. I was invited to come spend time with Rocky before he was humanely euthanized several years later - coincidentally during another freak spring snow storm. Gloria and I reminisced about our TTouch journey with Rocky. She also said that because of TTouch, Rocky was a friendly, easy to handle companion horse all those years.