



PEPSI MAX's Eulogy

I was looking for a good horse when I happened to meet a friend of a friend who happened to have a horse for sale. He told me all about this horse, how nice he was, what a gentleman he was, and how good looking he was! Then he told me he was a stud, and I immediately replied I wasn't interested. So, I ended up going to look at him – and the rest, as they say, is history. That horse's name was Pepsi Max.

The first time I ever laid eyes on him he was all shined up and sparkling like a new penny. I knew in my heart he would be my horse before it was ever made official. The deal was done in early 1998, and I was the proud new owner of the prettiest black stud horse in southern Alberta. Everywhere Pepsi went he won over

people and made friends, and he and I began to learn about each other. I learned that he was as quietly stubborn as a horse could possibly be – without crossing that line that makes them bad. He was a typical stud – or a typical male some might say – he would learn where that line was he shouldn't cross, and then just lean on it. Sometimes when he was eating from a round bale and you went to get him out, he would bury his head to the bottom of it and not bring it out no matter how hard you wrestled with him!! Other times he would stand in his feeder when you were bringing him feed and paw at the bottom of it to make enough noise to be sure you wouldn't forget him. I used to use him in the feedlots to check pens with sometimes, and I remember after one particularly long day he was in his pen eating his supper and somehow a critter got in there with him. Well that critter was quite determined he was going to share Pepsi's feed, but he had no idea how Pepsi felt about it. I was watching, laughing, and a crowd gathered round – watching Pepsi eat and give all the warning signs in the world to this steer – laying his ears back, switching his tail – all the while the steer coming closer – and finally Pepsi had enough. He whipped around so fast and double barreled that thing in the head and neck twice, and before the steer could turn around Pepsi was facing him and biting his back, ears laid back and looking ferocious. That steer just stood in the farthest corner of the pen until we went and rescued him.

But beyond a few instances where he got real aggressive with one animal or another – he never showed that aggression to people or did anything that ever made us worry about him. He was good to mares and their babies, to visitors that knew about horses, and those that didn't. He had every little kid that ever visited ride on his back, and some bigger ones too – he would just walk around the pen and wonder when he might be able to get something to eat. You see Pepsi was only ever concerned with two things in his life – one was eating, and the other was – well, obvious. Sometimes he would even choose eating over his girls, that's how important it was to him. He carried me over a million miles I'm sure – from camping trips & trail rides, to checkin pens & movin cows, that horse never faltered. I ran coyotes outta the hills, bulls outta the pasture, and fast feedlot steers outta pens whenever I needed to. I could take that horse and jump on him bareback with a halter, ride out into the pasture and gather in the mares and geldings. One time I remember being on him cause the cows were out and it was getting dark – he was my “old faithful” of course, and I put that halter on, jumped on bareback to go and get cows. We were on our way home, pretty much in the full dark and he loped right into the middle of a big ball of smooth

wire. I heard it, asked him to stop – and he did. He started to pull on his feet a little and could have got excited about not being able to move them – but he didn't, cause I told him not to. He just quieted down, stood there and waited for me to pick his feet out one by one. I always said that horse would have carried me into the deepest pits of hell and back out again, if only I had asked him. I truly believe he would have done it too – and some of the places I asked him to go were a lot like it. He always did it – and he always was safe about it – because this was a horse that never lost his head or panicked about anything. He would think first, react second – instead of the opposite which is true of so many horses.

So over the 10 years Pepsi lived with me he drug panels to the coulee, sheep outta the coulee, helped me fix fence and chase down dangerous coyotes, was my "go-getter" for bringing in the "wild bunch" of horses running out on 400 acres, made his keep breeding outside mares, and sired some beautiful babies for me. I still have some of them, of course, and plan to always have some horses around with "Pepsi Max" in their pedigree. Some might say that Pepsi was a generically bred, unproven stallion – and I can't really argue that. What he also was, was the definition of an AQHA foundation horse in his conformation, and his disposition went even beyond that. This horse was one of the few that did everything and anything you could ever ask of him, because he had a great mind and he trusted you when you spoke to him. He trusted me anytime I asked him for something he had never done. Maybe more importantly, I trusted him completely – I could have ridden that horse anywhere, doing anything - because that's how well I knew him. We were a team – him and I – and he taught me more about riding and horses and life than most people would understand. I was with him when the time came to say good-bye, for he left this earth on November 29th, 2006. In some small way I take comfort knowing how much he trusted me and that the last sound in his ears was my voice. I know that he is with my Grandfather Fleetwood and that I will see them both when I get there.

I'll know I'm in heaven when I see Pepsi again.

Rest in peace my friend, you were one of the finest.

Ryan