

Fairytales Do Come True

By Sarah E. Avery

As far as I can remember I was fascinated by the beauty of horses. My love for horses reached a different level when my mother gave me an 8th grade graduation gift to horse camp that upcoming summer followed by weekly riding lessons. As a teenager I continued to ride and exercise other people's horses and enjoyed every moment on the ground or in the saddle. I remember wondering when I would ever have the chance to own a horse of my own. I'd ask myself "How old would I be?", "Which breed of horse would I own?", "Where would I be living?", "Will there ever be a day when I would have my own horse?" Working with other's horses was enjoyable and I benefitted from the experience of working with various horse personalities and breeds. My family did not have the financial means or the space to have my own horse and honestly I was envious at times at friends and family who had their own horses; Nevertheless, I welcomed each opportunity to be with horses and promised myself "someday it'll happen and I'll appreciate every moment...it'll be a dream come true".

I graduated from college, began my teaching career, and my participation slowly decreased from the HORSE WORLD. As a young teacher, my time was filled with preparing first-time lessons, grading papers, and ultimately moving from my home state of Connecticut to Massachusetts in search of a job. Although my work with horses came to a halt at the time, my love for them was ever-present. Alas, it was a dream...a nice dream at the time...but working with horses didn't seem to part of this new life in an unfamiliar Massachusetts HORSE WORLD. Ten years passed without interaction in the HORSE WORLD and I longed for the opportunity to visit, talk, groom, and even hug the horses again. In the meantime, I gained weight and was out of shape and when thoughts of re-entering the HORSE WORLD would surface, I lost hope because of my body. Apparently, FATE had a different opinion.

A series of events and people introduced me to the Central New England Equine Rescue (CNEER) in the winter of 2009. One of the two Rescue barns was located about a mile from my house. I wanted to volunteer my time and re-enter the HORSE WORLD again. Over February vacation, I attempted to place the call twice, but I didn't have the courage to finish dialing the number. On the third attempt, I dialed the number and heard a welcoming voicemail message and I left my information with a "Vicky" to return to my call. We soon connected and arranged to meet on Tuesday, February 16th at 2:00pm. It was a day that changed my life.

When I arrived at the farm, I walked toward the barn and was immediately greeted by a beautiful, very large, dappled-grey draft horse in the side field. He came trotting to the fence, perhaps his eyes locked in on the two bags of carrots I brought, but I was happy to be on the receiving end of such a lovely greeting. My smile extended from ear to ear. I met with Vicky and we talked for most of the afternoon about my interest in volunteering with CNEER. I'd start volunteering that Friday and in the meantime all I could think about was the large grey horse, "Teddy", who first greeted me at the farm. Days, weeks, and months passed and I continued to volunteer at the Rescue, looking forward to each moment. I noticed how attached I became to the horses, one in particular—Teddy.

My heart fell in love with this giant, beautiful creature. I spent time grooming Teddy and talking to him, telling him about my day, problems, and worries. I could tell Teddy anything. He didn't judge me or interrupt. He was willing to listen to me and he didn't seem to mind the tears that would soak his coat from when I would lean against him and cry from the stress in my life. The more time I spent with Teddy the more my soul filled with happiness. My soul was near empty that winter of 2009: The two hour commute to work, the job, and working on my Masters Degree was taking a toll on me. I was feeling very low. I needed to have an outlet.

Teddy knows all too well about a hard life and sad times. From his own experiences as a carriage horse, he worked very hard and his owner abused him. Teddy's past experiences cause him to worry during new experiences and he'd form these crinkled worried lines above his eyes during training lessons. I learned to talk softly to Teddy and reassured him that "he is okay..." and "no one will hurt him again..." Talking Teddy through his training has helped eased some of his worry crinkles. Many people care about Teddy at CNEER and he is realizing how gentle the human hand can be and time will help reinforce human kindness and comfort him. I felt a bond growing with Teddy through the summer of 2009.

After months of serious consideration, I decided to adopt Teddy and submitted the paperwork on October 3, 2009. I am still nervous and scared at times at the thought of owning a horse but I can't imagine my life without Teddy. Teddy has changed. I have changed. I think he knows that now he has a "mama" who will love him, care for him, and treat him with respect. When I go to the field to say hello (and give hugs/kisses) he comes to me and seems glad to see me and vice versa. Teddy even gets a little jealous when I say hello to the other horses. He is protective over me and will put himself in between me and the other horses, especially if something is brewing among the herd.

I continue to enjoy our "talks" while grooming and he'll bend his neck to look at me, as if to confirm the ideas I mentioned and to reassure me that "I'll be okay..." I sing Teddy the *Teddy Tune*, a song I made up and he doesn't seem to mind it. Teddy and I are learning from each other like patience, trust, respect, love, and encouragement. We both have issues that bother us and we are both "worriers", but we are learning little by little that we can help each other. Our bond grows each week. I think about Teddy every day and look forward to my next visit with him.

Dreams do come true! CNEER reached out and rescued Teddy. In return, Teddy has reached out and rescued me from an emptiness I felt for quite some time. Most fairy tales end by a knight on his white majestic horse saving the princess. My fairy tale has a happy ending as well. I already have my knight and Teddy is the white majestic horse saving me, the princess, (SARAH means "princess") from a time when I needed more to life than the daily mundane routine. Horses have a healing power for humans.

I am grateful to CNEER, Vicky, and Teddy for inviting me back into the HORSE WORLD.

