

Sonny

by Suzy Hopkins

His former owner called him “Trouble” but I didn’t see him that way. He was a horse with the imagination of ten horses. Most horses have little or no imagination so I found him entertaining.

While grooming him he would remove the grooming supplies from the shelf on the wall with his teeth, joyfully throwing the brushes in the air. He would grab the bottom of my jeans pant leg with his teeth and yank upwards throwing me on my butt. I resorted to grooming him in my park ranger knee high boots and breeches. Then he would try intently to lift me up by my breeches belt loop when I bent over to clean his hooves.

During the process of putting on the saddle and bridle he would take all the bridles off the wall with his teeth. I put a towel over his halter’s noseband covering his mouth. This kept him busy.

One time while we were patrolling the beach at Folsom Lake he felt like rolling in the warm sand. His belly hit the sand in a flash. The problem? I was still in the saddle. I threw my feet out of the stirrups and stood over him on the sand. I pulled him up with the reins and sat back in the saddle. In the future I knew to be wary.

I owned another horse that my kids rode. Sonny wanted to play with this horse – ALL THE TIME. This created a dangerous situation for my kids. One day I decided to fix the problem. I tied one of Sonny’s front legs to his belly with a soft rope. I lead him slowly into the sand arena. Most horses finding themselves tied like this panic and fall down. You come over and untie the rope and they behave immensely better because they see you as rescuing them. Not Sonny. He ate the grass at the edge of the arena ON HIS KNEES. When my daughter came in the arena on the other horse, Zaboe, Sonny enthusiastically started chasing them ON THREE LEGS. She rode faster and faster galloping Zaboe around the arena trying to get away from Sonny. Sonny was losing ground so he took a short cut by jumping over one of the three foot high jumps ON THREE LEGS. He landed on his one front leg and only then did he give up the chase. His behavior was only slightly improved by this experience.

On a trail ride he would imagine things in the bushes using that as an excuse to bolt away. He would stop when he got bored with this.

If you looked at Sonny’s behavior as simply a big imagination you could love a horse like this and I did.