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Fall 2010

National Wild Horse and Burro Newsletter  
United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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If you would like to submit articles for the National Wild Horse and Burro Newsletter, please e-mail all articles and photos to [Janet\\_Neal@blm.gov](mailto:Janet_Neal@blm.gov) . Occasionally my e-mail "in box" will get overloaded. Please do not give up. It simply takes time to get articles and pictures filed off. Please do not send your submissions to someone else. It creates an additional workload for everyone.

Look at Sophie go. Beautiful conformation, beautiful face, and a great, well-trained hunter-jumper. Do you get that beauty and grace from a domestic horse? **NO! That's a mustang!**

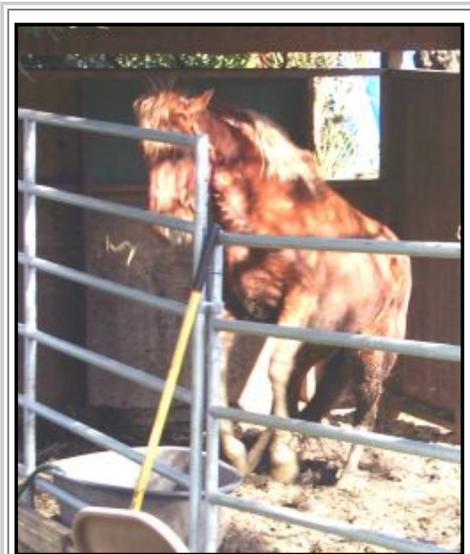
All stories must be about freemarked mustangs and/or wild burros. Please ensure pictures are sent at the same time the story is (or immediately thereafter). Photos should include the name of each animal(s) and person(s) in the photo.

I would also appreciate it if all stories submitted are about Mustangs and Burros that have not passed away. If the photo(s) are copyrighted or require credit be given, please indicate so at the time of submission.

**Adventures of a Volunteer Halter-Trainer  
by Nancy Kerson, Proud BLM Volunteer**

In California and many other States, approved BLM volunteers may take wild horses and burros home to halter-train them to increase their adoptability.

A few years ago, my husband, Mike, and I took in our first halter project, "Red Colt". He was a long yearling that had been adopted but was returned due to the adopter becoming ill. Red Colt was a perfect training candidate. He responded quickly and within three weeks, he found an adopter.



"Red Filly" flying off the trailer at our house.

About a year later, Jason Williams, California's BLM Compliance Specialist, brought us another long yearling colt. He had been returned to the BLM from his first adopter. We wanted to increase his adoptability so went about trying to halter-train him. "Bay Colt" was a little more challenging, but, responded in almost "textbook" fashion. Mike and I were just beginning to handle him. A friend, Julie Steel, came to visit, fell in love, and adopted Bay Colt. Julie renamed him Chinook. Chinook and Julie rode with us this year in our town's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. It was gratifying for us and Julie as well.

When Jason came back to write up Julie's adoption agreement he brought us a third horse and scheduled us to bring her to the Turlock, CA adoption in 6 weeks. He also said, "I've only come across one or two horses like this in all my years with Mustangs. This is definitely one angry mare!"

"Red Filly" was indeed mad as a hornet. Red Filly ran or paced constantly, head high in the air, whinnying at anything and nothing. All night long, all day long. I don't know when she



Mike Kerson working with a Red Colt to increase his adoptability.

slept and she didn't let us sleep much either. For several days she was so agitated it was scary just to go into her pen to clean it each morning. If anyone came too close to her she would double-barrel kick at the poor pen cleaner. She was not at all adverse to charging at you with teeth bared. Challenging indeed.

Red Filly came to us in January and the next several weeks were very, very wet. We live in Napa, California. Our soil is pure clay, almost potter's quality clay. It does not drain. Red Filly's pen became a sticky, slippery mess. In the midst of it all, Mike sustained a knee injury (not horse-related) and had to wear a brace. We started to worry. Time was ticking away and we were getting nowhere. Frankly, I was too afraid of Red Filly to want to do much with her myself and Mike was injured. Plus, the weather was not letting up.

Finally, Mike could take it no longer. He put on his high boots and went out into the pen with his rope and bamboo pole ready to take on the Red Filly; come Hell or High Water. It turned out to be a little of both.



Red Filly trained and ready to go home with his new family.

Red Filly quickly gave Mike her best double-barrel kicks and charges. Mike remained calm but resolute. "I'm just asking you to move in a circle" he would say, over and over to himself. Red Filly would charge into the pen's corners and kick back at him. Mike pressured her out of the corner, staying just out of kicking-range. Then, Red Filly would take off, jumping, kicking, bucking, and whinnying.

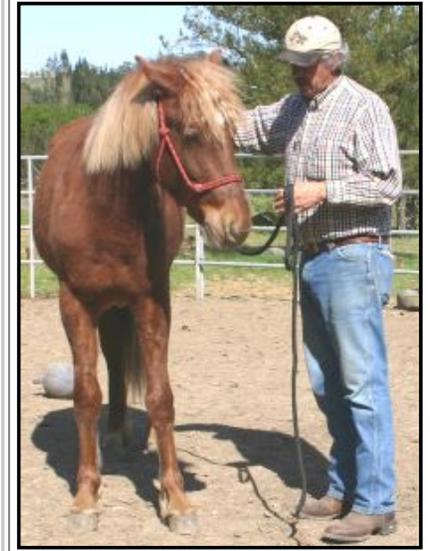
Then it began to happen. Red Filly started moving in a circle, stopped hanging up in the corners, stopped kicking, stopped charging, stopped fighting, just moving in a circle around Mike. She lowered her head and began licking and chewing. Her pounding hooves softened into a light easy trot. When Mike asked her to stop, she stopped calmly, sweat still dripping from her. Soon she started to look toward him when he asked her to stop, and then . . . she came into him, softly, with head relaxed, feet relaxed, ready to follow him. The transformation was so complete, so incredible it still brings tears sometimes to think about it. Red Filly was, in just the time of one evening, a completely different horse.

Once she realized she didn't have to fight, she didn't have to be afraid, she became the sweetest, most willing little horse ever. She never reverted to her old angry self. With only two weeks to go until Turlock, Red Filly quickly learned to lead, load into a trailer, accept hoof care, stand and be groomed. She loved it; even taking a bath. She learned all her ground skills like back up, stand still, and step forward. She walked over tarps, accepted being blanketed at night. She stood quietly while tied to the trailer. By the time we took her to Turlock she was a model citizen.



Of course, next came the really hard part, parting with her. At this point, Mike was so bonded to her and her to him, that it felt really weird to be giving her away. But we clearly didn't need another horse. We already had 4 horses. Three of them BLM Mustangs that were young and still needed regular riding and training, two wild Burros, a mule and a mammoth donkey. More than enough to keep us busy!

Luckily, she attracted a fair amount of adopter interest. We felt that any of the three parties in the "mini-bidding war" of the silent adoption seemed like they would provide a good home for her. I got myself a bidder number for "just in case" but in the end, I couldn't watch the adoption. I didn't know who to root for! Mike said he was at peace with letting her go to any one of the potential adopters. She was adopted by a man in a nearby city. He had been actively studying up on wild horse gentling and training and seemed well prepared for the task. He sends us occasional updates, and last we heard, Red Filly, now named Lucy, was started under saddle and doing well.



Red Filly after training. Looking pretty wild now!

"Piney" is from a herd management area in Nevada. Pine Nut Mustangs are typically known for their small size because of their unique terrain.

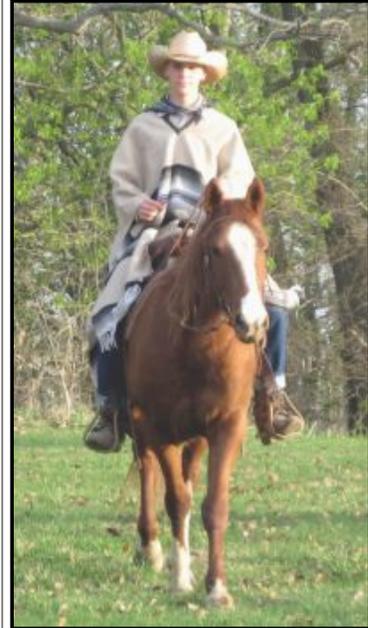
That little pony was immediately adopted by me. Piney wasn't going anywhere!

It was hard to part with her. But, it felt great to know we gave her a start in life she may not have had otherwise. For Mike, the Red Filly experience was a great confidence-builder for him as a horseman, and for me, it was wonderful to see that even the supposedly "worst" horses can come around and turn out great.

After the Turlock adoption and through the summer and fall we took another halter project and helped start several Mustangs for new adopters.

And then? I heard about a little Pine Nut pony from Nevada. He had already been to two adoptions and no one adopted him. So, I said if anyone in the BLM volunteer network went to the Litchfield corrals and had room in their trailer, I would take him as another halter project. Edona Miller, a great volunteer, went to Litchfield and did have extra room in her trailer coming back . . . and so the halter training continues for us. Mike and I love it.

**"Dakota"**  
**By Timothy Witek**



"Dakota" and Timothy Witek.

On September 20, 2008, I adopted Dakota. At the time, he was a three-year-old sorrel gelding. I was 18 years old.

I was first inspired by mustangs after watching the show "*Hidalgo*". Mustangs have great conformation due to their bodies adjusting to the wild. I've heard some people don't like mustangs because they are not a "pure bred". Personally, that is one of my favorite things about them. History proves they came from the horses Spanish explorers brought to America. They have every breed in them. That allows a Mustang to excel in so many different disciplines. They have not been bred to excel in what we want as people.

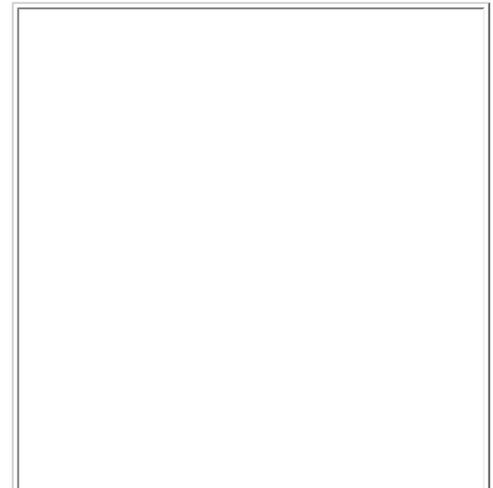
When I found out about BLM mustangs, I immediately wanted to adopt one. I built the corral with the run-in shed

according to the adoption requirements. When I was finally ready, I went to an adoption. I bid on several different mustangs just to make sure I would get one. When the bidding was over, I adopted my "Dakota". I still have him.

I have trained him by myself since September. It's been a journey of a lifetime. Sometimes the training gets so frustrating that you just want to quit. Other times Dakota follows me wherever I go. We have two other horses, appaloosa mares. Dakota is definitely the friendliest. He loves attention.

When I first brought him home, he really didn't seem wild, just scared. It took me four weeks just to touch the tip of his nose. It took a couple more weeks to touch him all over his body. Though it may take a little longer to train a mustang over a domestic horse, the results are so different and so satisfying.

When I first got Dakota, I realized that I was building a trusting relationship and not just trying to break him. I also realized the first month was the most critical because 75% of the training in the beginning is just spending time with him in the corral and earning that trust between both of us.



Training is going a little slow right now. Dakota threw me twice in January. The second time he put me on crutches. I wasn't able to work with him for about a month. I was very frustrated after that month was over. He decided he was in charge after not being worked with. He wouldn't let me do anything with him. Again, I started working on getting back to where we were, building the trust and relationship. I've learned several things. The most important seems to be when training a Mustang you've got one shot and if you mess up it's going to take twice as long to gentle him.

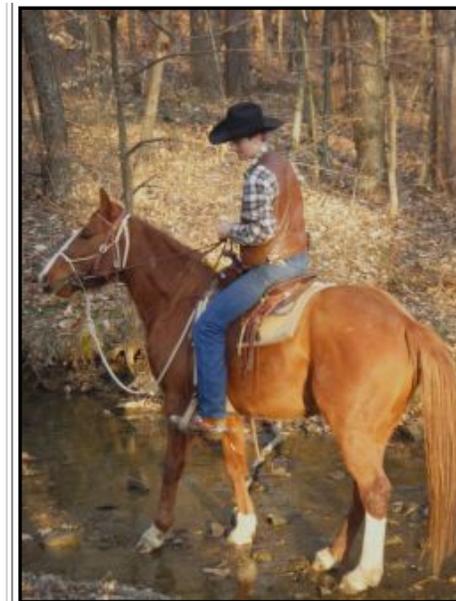


Just smiling for the camera and loving it. Dakota has a little smile on his face, too.

Before he threw me we were trotting around the arena with saddle on and doing just fine. All it took was him to find out he was a lot stronger than I was. We're back to working on walking again with me in the saddle.

Another thing I've learned about mustangs is once you've taught them something, they know it, but, sometimes will still try to test you. They have to realize to submit their will through your teaching. Sometimes you have to push them so they understand the concept of sacrificing their will and trusting you.

My ultimate goal with Dakota is to cross the country in about 4-5 months. April 2012, is the set date to leave. But who knows what might happen between now and then. I adopted Dakota with this goal of crossing the country in mind. Mustangs are known for their endurance and stockiness for carrying weight.



Takin' a splash!

**I love Dakota and wouldn't hesitate to get another mustang.**

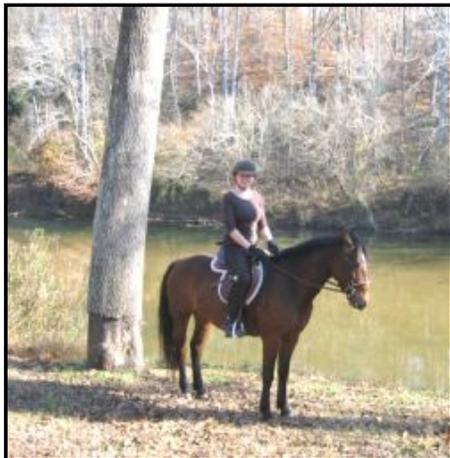
**"There never was a horse that couldn't be rode;  
Never was a cowboy that couldn't be throwed", Author Unknown.**

**"Sophie"  
By Brittany Hertzog**



Sophie chose me in October 2006, really she chose my entire family. I started riding horses when I turned 18 and invited my parents out to the BLM mustang adoption at Meadowood in Lorton, Virginia. My intent was to warm them up to the idea that I would someday be getting a horse of my own. Surprisingly, they warmed up much sooner than I anticipated.





Sophie in the wild?

From what I recall, Sophie was one of three remaining mustangs that had not found a home yet. Sophie captured our attention. Before long, she had my dad (the future "Apple Man") wrapped around her finger – er, hoof – when she grabbed the few pieces of dried grass he snuck through the fence. My mom loved her mahogany coat and I was captivated by her intelligence, confidence, and sass.

People said I was crazy to adopt a mustang as my first horse. But, I knew the challenge I was stepping into and began doing research immediately. I studied *Clinton Anderson* and *Pat Parelli*. Read books on horse psychology and training and began talking to and working with friends that had done it before. I was determined to train her correctly. You can't build a house without a solid foundation and I knew training a horse required just that.

Sophie, named specifically for her intelligence, learned quickly. I sat near the hay and began throwing food pellets and carrots into the hay. Soon, we were desensitizing her to the lead rope and de-tangling a dread locked mane. We spent a year and a half on our foundation building: groundwork, yielding to pressure, lunging, and de-sensitizing exercises before we backed her. We went through obstacle courses that included tarps, buckets, netting, and poles.

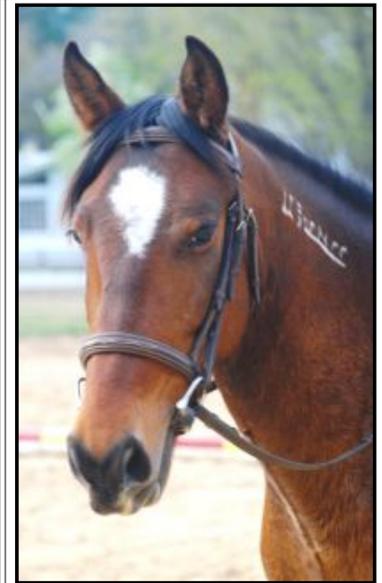
By the time she turned three, Sophie had such a solid understanding of walk, trot, canter, halt/stand, back-up 55, yielding to pressure,

and desensitization that backing her was simple. I immediately started laying the foundation for our bridle-less work by asking for changes without initially using the reins. I gave a verbal request to ask her to stand. She knew this cue from our groundwork, and locked my hips, leaning back behind the vertical. Soon, she was doing downward transitions without any pressure on the reins. Before long, we were riding in a halter, then a neck rope, and finally without any artificial aids!

Sophie began hunter/jumper training with trainer, Elizabeth Collier, in December 2007. In the summer of 2009, Sophie was competing at local schooling shows. She is currently developing a promising partnership with a talented young rider near her adoption site at Meadowood.

Sophie is from the Onaqui herd management area near Toole, Utah. She turned five in April 2010. She has remained intelligent, confident, and a little sassy throughout her filly years, testing every human she can. Sophie misses the "Apple Man" and knows he is watching over his "Little Girls" in our bridleless riding as we move forward into hunter/jumper training.

**Thank you BLM for giving us the opportunity to work with such beautiful and intelligent beings!**



The intelligent and soft-eyed Sophie.



Brittany and Sophie practicing at home.

**"Thunder" - The Indian Wedding Horse**  
**By Darcy J. Potter**

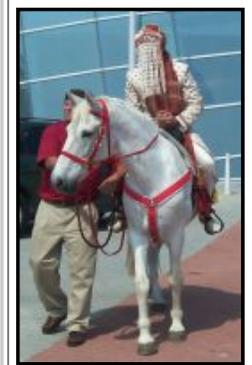
I adopted my mustang from the BLM in October of 1993 when the BLM held an adoption in Virginia Beach at Holly Ridge Farms.



Thunder at one of his many Indian Ceremonies presenting the groom to his bride's family.

My daughters were 8 and 6 years old when we adopted him. They picked a "grey" gelding.

He was 5 months old at the time. We were thrilled and took him home. I had never trained a horse in my life. I decided, after talking to some people, that training him using the *John Lyons* method would be the best for us. I got some books and rented some videos and the rest is history. Thunder became a wonder pleasure trail horse, loves people, and can be ridden by anyone.



Thunder at another Indian wedding ceremony.

I am the Events and Wedding Coordinator at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. I met with a couple from India that wanted to have their wedding and reception at the Convention Center. They requested I find a white horse to do the "Barat", part of the Indian Ceremony. The Barat requires the groom to ride a white horse to meet his bride's family and be accepted by them to be her husband.

I told them I had a white horse. We used "Thunder" for the Barat and he did great! He walked with the groom down the front of the Convention Center drive and stood at the door while the groom touched his sword on the top of the door signaling the bride's family to come out and meet their daughter's upcoming husband. While riding down the drive, the groom's family danced and sang around the groom on the horse. The guests loved Thunder's performance. Needless to say, he now has the job of being the "white horse" used to carry all my Indian grooms to their ceremony. Thunder has performed seven events for the Indian Weddings. Thunder is now 16 years old, is white, and a wonderful trail horse as well as an Indian Wedding Horse.

**I would encourage any horse lover to adopt one of these magnificent animals!**

### **My BLM Mustangs By Jessi Huston**

My mom got me my first mustang when I was 5 years old. We decided to name her Valentine because we got her on Valentines Day. Her training was taking off when we noticed her stumbling alot. The vet came and diagnosed her with neurological problems. He said she was too unstable to ride. That tore me apart!

Seeing how much I wanted another mustang, my parents bought me one. We named her Kahlua. She was found at an auction house by a



Cyclone's Rim Valentine getting de-sensitized.

preacher that bought her to prevent her from possibly being bought by a killer buyer. He gentled her and gave her to a mustang rescue organization. My parent's bought her for me on my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday from the rescue. We have done many things together including; trick riding, trail riding, fun shows, demonstrations, and the drill team! I did all this to represent the Mustangs; their versatility, intelligence, and stamina.

Kahlua is what inspired me to join the 2010 Nebraska Extreme Mustang Makeover Yearling Edition! I picked up a little sorrel gelding June 11, 2010 and began my new adventure!

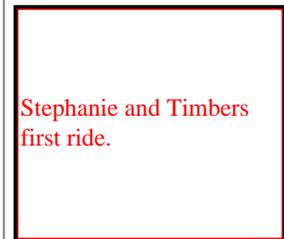
We decided to name him Steen's Valero. As of right now, I have taught him to lead, lunge, trailer load, start to side pass, wear a saddle and blanket. He has been de-sensitized to a plastic bag, tarp, and hula hoops. Just about anything you can think of! Lero is a love bug and is so curious! There is no doubt in my mind that when we get to the competition he is going home with me! You can follow our progress on my blog at: <http://mustangcrazy.weebly.com/blog.html>



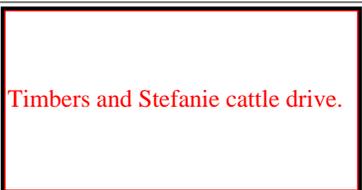
Valero's first time with a saddle on.

### Timbers

By Stefanie Coeler



Stephanie and Timbers first ride.

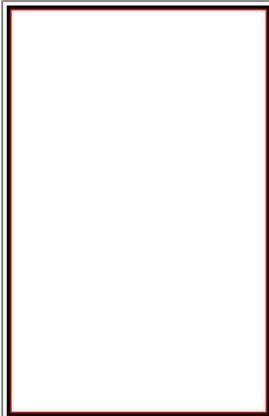


Timbers and Stefanie's cattle drive.

In April 2000, after moving to the United States from Germany, I decided I would like to have a horse again. I had grown up sharing a horse with my sister but had not really ridden regularly since I was 17. I picked up a copy of the "Horsetrader" and started to make phone calls. My husband was very supportive of the idea and saw an ad by the BLM for a wild horse adoption in Burbank, CA.

My ever so curious husband convinced me to see what a mustang adoption was all about. After talking to several people that had adopted mustangs and loved them dearly, we headed off to Burbank.

We watched *Phil West* gentling a mustang in the round pen and bought a training video about how to work with one. I was certain this was something I really wanted to do. We didn't have the required corral set up, so, we couldn't adopt at that time. About 3 weeks later and 2 trips to the Ridgecrest Corrals, we adopted a 2-year-old gelding. "Timbers" came from the Centennial Herd Management Area in California.



Stefanie and Timbers at a Play Day.

Timbers was a beautiful strawberry roan with 4 white socks and a white blaze. He had long legs to grow into and seemed very calm and curious about the goings-on at Ridgecrest. A few days later, Timbers arrived in our back yard. Our friend, Chris, transported our brand-new gorgeous mustang expertly up to our gate and new corral. He also warned us that the horse would probably explode out off the trailer as soon as he opened the door. We got ready for the bolt and nothing happened. He stood there calmly in the trailer munching away at his hay turning his head looking at us. It took a broom stick to poke him out of there. When he finally decided to leave the trailer, he stepped out and looked around. He found the pile of hay we had put there for him and continued his meal.

After a few days of settling in, I started sitting with Timbers and talking to him. In the morning, I took my coffee and newspaper out to his corral and read it to him. It only took a few days until I could touch him and slip his halter on and off. Soon after that, I could lead him around the property.

With the help from a friend, we started round pen work, trailer loading, saddling him AND the first ride. By August, we were going on little trail rides in the nearby river bottom.

Timbers is 12 years old now and we've come a long way since those first days together. He is grey now and has turned into a solid trail horse. We both enjoy penning and sorting the cows. We've shown at the California Wild Horse and Burro Show in Bishop for seven years in a row. Timbers and I have won lots of ribbons and a buckle to show for it. We have even trailered all the way to Idaho to work on a cattle ranch.

**When the time comes for Timbers to retire, I am certain that my next horse will be an American mustang, too.**

Last updated: 08-26-2010