

My Beautiful Bella

By Leta Worthington

My mustang story is a fairy tale with a happy ending. I truly believe that if you choose carefully when selecting a horse companion, especially a mustang, you can make your dreams come true. These animals that come from the wild are exceptional in so many ways. If you find one that is a good match for you all your equine expectations can be realized.

Bella, also affectionately known as Bellarina, Isabella, and Bellissima, was adopted as a yearling after having been gathered from the public rangelands at about eight months of age. Fortunately, her original adoptive mom was an experienced and caring horsewoman. Although she had never had a mustang before, she was more than eager and willing to make the best of this new association.

Bella's first adopter, Stephanie, did not know at the time how lucky she was to have gotten Bella. Bella was truly special in many ways. In spite of crashing through or jumping over the fence a few times after first being brought home, Bella was very tractable and easy to train. She was mellow by nature and interested in pleasing her new owner. Bella learned everything willingly and as well as she could.



"Bella" shortly after adoption.

Bella came from a mustang herd in Wyoming where long ago Percherons were released to interbreed with the local wild herds to strengthen their bloodlines. As a result, many of the mustangs from this herd management area (HMA) strongly manifest their draft horse heritage and are quite large and gentle by nature. Bella is a supreme example, being about 15.2 hands, but weighing in at about 1,400 lbs; add to that her pure black coloration and her looks and behavior she appears to be almost a purebred Percheron.

What a dream of a Mustang colt to start with! Bella's adopter worked with her for 3 years putting hundreds of miles on her and riding her bareback with just a neck rope in parades down Main Street in the nearby small town. Bella was exposed to virtually every riding discipline and all kinds of distracting stimuli. Aside from uprooting a small tree she was tied to once during a camp-out and dragging it through the entire camp, no doubt after some justifiable alarm, Bella consistently kept her cool and did her best at everything asked of her.

As Bella turned four, Stephanie realized she would never be a cow horse that required great agility and speed.

A 1,400 lb. draft horse simply is NOT a cutting horse! By then, Stephanie had adopted her second mustang colt. She was also a large filly but had a very different temperament than Bella. Stephanie's second mustang bit, kicked and bucked early on, much more than what you might expect from a wild horse, but one that was more a likely candidate for the nitty-gritty work of a cow horse. That's where I came in.

Headed toward my 60th birthday, and a long-time horse owner but no longer a rider, I was contemplating taking another riding horse that I could be comfortable with into my "yesteryears."

Stephanie was a good friend, and knew of my "death-wish," so to speak, and called to see if I would like Bella. I was flabbergasted. I knew all about Bella and how wonderful she was, and that at least a dozen people would be standing in line for her for any number of reasons.

After weeks of mulling, crying, and gnashing my teeth, I decided that if I wanted to ride again I needed a horse I could totally put my trust in. Bella was perfect. It was now or never! I would indeed not only welcome Bella into my life, but joyously so. And so it was. I flew up to Stephanie's to help haul Bella back to my Texas ranch.

After three years together, I can't imagine a more perfect soul mate horse companion. Bella and I are a perfect match. She is large, gentle, and slow. So am I. We both enjoy taking at least half an hour to groom and tack up, and then going where we will on our rides together.



"Bella".

She enjoys it when I sing to her while we're out hacking, but she willingly comes through and tries her best when we do actual schooling, collection exercises, or paced work. She loves trail riding and exploring and really shows her power by blasting up the steep, rugged terrain we now live in. Although she will always let me know when she has a strong opinion about something, especially if it is an instinctive, self-preservation reaction, she tries her best to please me at every turn. She has a huge and powerful countenance that stops people in their tracks when they first meet her, and will paw and actually "growl" when she feels her herd (me) is threatened.

But, she is as gentle as a kitten with me and possessive to the point of pushing others out of the way for my attention and affection.

I know not all mustangs are like Bella; likely few are. All mustangs and other breeds are simply varied by nature. But, if you take great care in selecting your wild horse companion, you will truly have the horse of your dreams. Mustangs have an underlying character made of steel and instinct and you will have a partnership with an unbelievable being that is unmatched with domestic breeds.



Leta Worthington's "Beautiful Bella".



"Bella" enjoying the woods.

If you have a mustang, and your mustang understands you and you understand her, the two of you are well matched in your energy, skills, and goals. You won't believe the heights of satisfaction you will achieve together. It's like falling in love.