

Life Changing Friends

by Kaelyn Penick

Life wasn't easy for me when I was growing up. My parents divorced when I was a young child, so I never really knew what it was like having a family. I went back and forth from my mother's house to my father's house and I felt so divided and at times, very lost and alone.

One weekend, I stayed with my grandfather, who raised horses and I found my best friend. His name was Magic and he was a chestnut with a wide blaze and left hind sock. He made me smile and laugh without reason, and I could tell him all of my problems and he never judged me. So began my love of horses.

Years later, Magic passed away and I began my search for a new best friend. I found him in a horse named Stormy, formerly known as Auctioneer on the racetrack. He started my obsession with off the track Thoroughbreds.

As I neared high school graduation, I knew I needed to find something to do with my free time. I contacted Barbara Luna, founder of War Horses at Rose Bower, to ask if she needed any help with the horses, and thankfully, she did!

I've been assisting in the care of these War Horses for about a year now, and I couldn't be more pleased with my experience, as even mucking stalls is fun! All of the horses are so friendly and well cared for. They thrive on human interaction – and carrots! Each horse has his own distinct personality. A barn favorite of mine is Hermosillo, a New

Jersey-bred Champion. When I bring him inside to groom him, he is always so happy for the attention. He is the type of horse that has you laughing during your grooming sessions because you never know when he is going to turn his head to try and steal a cookie from your pocket.

Another barn favorite of mine is Night Officer, a multiple stakes winner on the turf. Night has put up with all of my shenanigans. In one of his first rides off the track, I dressed him in some of the fanciest Western tack with bling and fringe galore, and he didn't bat an eye. He was so happy to have me on his back, which made my heart happy as well. I would say that this War Horse has definitely affected me the most with his willingness to do anything I ask, even if it is scary. He trusts me, and I trust him.

I will continue assisting with these champions over the years. The horses always keep me smiling and remembering about why I am so passionate about Thoroughbreds. It has been a life hanging adventure to interact with all eleven of the retirees. I strongly encourage you to visit War Horses at Rose Bower and see for yourself. You can't help but be happy when you are out there.

You will smile from ear to ear when you meet them, but don't forget to bring them cookies! I know I have made lifelong best friends at War Horses at Rose Bower.

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