

KATHRYN MINOR AND ROCK'S FLICKA

I wish to nominate KATHY MINOR and ROCK'S FLICKA of Kars, Ontario for the Century Partners recognition award. Kathy and Flicka rode the trails together for over ten years. Flicka would willingly go where ever Kathy asked her to go, whether that be farmer's fields, wooded trails, or more challenging environments. Recently Kathy has shared the now 26 year old Flicka with a ten year old girl who has developed a great bond with her. The pair ride out with Kathy and her new horse regularly, and the four-some can be seen riding the trails together. Congratulations, Kathy and Flicka, on your successful partnership and ongoing journey!

Sue Gamble



*This is actually Flicka's story, not mine.
I came into her life when she was 15.
I have divided her story into chapters,
and rather than starting
at the beginning for her,
I will start at the beginning for me...*



INTRODUCTION

In the early spring of 2004 I was looking for a trail horse. Since the age of 16 I had owned a limited succession of riding horses, one at a time. I say 'limited' because in most cases I got middle-aged horses and kept them for their lifetime. Years went by and as I got older it was becoming evident that "gentle" and "easygoing" had become the guidelines for this next horse. I had come across an article written by Kim Pringle about the benefits of the TWH as an ideal mount for older riders. I knew nothing about the breed but I was very interested in finding out more so I got in touch with Kim. That summer I made many trips to her family's farm. I learned a great deal about the breed and had numerous riding lessons. The result was that in August of that year I bought Rock's Flicka, Cdn #89, U.S.891547 a 15 year old mare, from Kim. (Above, Flicka with Kathy.)

CHAPTER 1 FLICKA'S EARLY DAYS

Flicka is a western TWH. Her dam, Midnight Star FF #324, was owned by Betty Motherwell in Quesnel BC. Her sire was Rockette's Rocket #446. Rock's Flicka was foaled April 28, 1989.

When Flicka was about 8 or 9 years old she caught the eye of Kim Pringle. Kim comes from Arden, Ontario, a village about one and half hours drive west of my home near Ottawa. She was working in the west at that time and planning to breed Walkers at her family farm in Arden. Kim bought Flicka and brought her to Arden where she was started under saddle, was used for riding lessons and had several foals. Flicka had a good life. She was a sweet and gentle riding horse and a favourite with Kim's students.

As a brood mare she was an excellent mum to her babies. Kim's little band of brood mares had many acres of the farm to range over. Her stallion, Tracker, was turned out with his mares and pasture bred them in the spring. But by the time Flicka was rising 15, Kim was retiring her as a brood mare and was looking for a good home for her.



Above is Heirloom, one of Flicka's foals by Tracker.

CHAPTER 2

On August 17, 2004 Kim and I had Flicka vetted before we closed the sale. It turned out that although Kim had bred her that spring and thought that she hadn't caught, she was found to be in foal! I was delighted and so my first year with her went a little differently than I had planned.

I boarded her with a friend who had many years of experience with horses and brood mares. I got lots of information from my vet about brood mare care, rode her regularly and gently on trails around the property, and learned about all the needed health care and dietary concerns.

The foal was due the 3rd week of March. All went well until the 1st week of March and then sadly, it was born - full term but dead. The vet was present, thank goodness. The reason was not known. It was a beautiful black filly with a single star on her forehead and a small streak of white on each of the heels of all 4 feet. Flicka was distraught for two days while Nature intervened and then, for her, the memory faded. As for me – I will never forget that beautiful little filly and the promise that never came to pass.

CHAPTER 3

My friend was struggling with an onslaught of arthritis so that summer of 2005 I moved Flicka to a boarding stable on the edge of our small village. The next 5 years were full of fun. We are in the midst of farming country and the riders at the stable had permission to ride over about 800 acres of fields and pastures. I rode out with other boarders and also persuaded Flicka that life would not end if she and I went out *alone*. Together we worked on calmness when alone, encountering school buses, large farm tractors, enormous combine harvesters, plastic bags caught up in trees and *cattle*! For a western girl she sure was a sissy when it came to going past a small field along the left side of the road with a few young steers in it. At first we went waaay over on the other side of the road, then gradually worked our way to be able to pass on the left side... but not too close. I will never forget the day I was riding her up the left side when three young and frisky steers galloped up to the fence to say hello. Flicka went airborne sideways and leaped the full width of the road to land on the far side. For some unknown reason I didn't fall off!

As the years went by Flicka and I went on fund raising trail rides, trailered to my friends to ride, participated in Horse Days activities at the farm, went to a gaited horse weekend clinic organized by the Icelandic Horse Club – yes, we were welcome – did

natural horsemanship training and introduced a friend's horse-crazy little girl to the joys of horses.





The joy of horses...

CHAPTER 4

It was about five years later. Things were not so good. I had gained quite a bit of weight and Flicka was having issues with arthritis in her back legs and various other joints. She was reluctant to move on, my extra weight was the last straw, and finally she just refused to go. She was 21 and I could not ride her. Other than sore when ridden she was in good health. I could not afford to board two horses, one of them a pasture horse, and didn't know what to do. I really needed to be able to ride and love a horse, as it was my personal therapy, and especially at this time. I was in my last few years as a teacher of developmentally disabled children. I loved Flicka so much and she was what kept me mentally healthy. I had to find her a good home.

The answer came when a friend told me about a horse retirement farm about 60 miles east on the Ontario/Quebec border called Refugerr. They took in retired and abused horses and all animals and there was no charge as it was a Government charitable organization. They had two large farms and some of



Vet Day at the Refuge

the horses were in a herd of about 30 on 60-70 acres with an old barn which had been opened up as a huge shelter. They were fed with large round bales in winter and had free medical care as a project of the 2nd year veterinary students at St. Hyacinth vet college in Quebec. (If interested in the vet school google University de Montreal faculty of Veterinary Medicine.) At Refugerr, a farrier donated time to do barefoot trims.

I applied to them and Flicka was accepted. I donated \$100 per month towards her keep. I visited her and also volunteered on herd health day in June when the vet students came with their instructor to do health checks and shots. Their website is www.refugerr.org.

CHAPTER 5

I bought another riding horse (a QH), moved to another stable, and while I loved my new horse I kept thinking about Flicka. It was about two or three years later when I got into a conversation with Angie, the young woman who worked in our stable. She lived about two miles from this stable and in conversation I learned that she was a rescue person. They had four elderly rescued horses at her parents' place so we had a lot of conversations about her rescues and my Flicka. That winter one of her very old horses died. Out of the blue she asked me if I'd like to bring Flicka to her place where I could see her all the time. I'd pay for her hay, etc. and Angie would look after her for me.



**Flicka's
1st week
at Angie's**

I was so glad for this opportunity. We brought Flicka there in the spring and I went over frequently to groom and walk and help care for her.

Flicka's first ride on the trails at Angie's



By next spring the mare looked to be in very good shape. She was moving around with no issues and I was wondering if maybe she could be ridden again by a very lightweight rider. Riding exercise would be good to help condition her so I spoke to the girl who teaches western riding at my stable. Barb weighs 100 pounds soaking wet! So we tried it at Angie's and Flicka was fine. The years without work at the rescue farm had allowed her body to heal.

I moved Flicka to my boarding stable and she shared a paddock with Bucky the QH. Barb rode her a bit, very gently, and the mare was in good shape and enjoying the exercise. I was paying for this so now what I needed was a light-weight person to ride Flicka on a volunteer basis.

THE END OF THE STORY...

I talked to a friend of mine who had a 10 year old horse-crazy daughter. Grace belonged to Pony Club and was learning all about the care of horses and also learning to ride. I suggested that Grace could come to ride with me twice a week. I would teach her about conditioning and horse care and she would look after Flicka as if she was her own. This worked so well that after a few weeks of this I drew up a lease.

Grace and Flicka try some obstacles.



It is almost three years later and to all intents and purposes Flicka is now Grace's horse. I have moved my horses for the last time. They are now about three miles from my house. There are 12 horses on a 40 acre farm. Flicka and Buck have another gelding and mare in with them and the four horses have a small old log barn for turnout and about 15 acres of grass. The owner takes care of them as if they were her own and I am there almost every day. Grace is 13 now. She comes two times per week - sometimes just to groom and fuss over her darling horse. Over the summer I gave her transportation to the barn and home again. Flicka loves Grace. She will walk right past me to go to her.

Also one of my daughters has two small children, a boy and a girl. The little boy likes horses, sort of, but his three year old sister is *passionately* in love with them. Flicka loves her too and stands absolutely still when Sydney is around her. We worried at first about Flicka stepping on her but it has become obvious that Flicka's feet are glued to the ground when Sydney is there. Sydney sits up on Flicka bareback and rides her as if she was born to it. I have no doubt that she is!



Sydney on Flicka

Flicka is enjoying life with her bonded buddy Bucky and the other two horses in her turnout. She loves the girls and will be the start of my granddaughter's life with horses as both her mother and I know this is what is going to happen.

Grace and I will be going on gentle trail rides together on the two horses, and Flicka has a home with us for as long as she needs it.

Grace and Flicka - Bareback at the Farm



And the journey continues...