

Gracie

December 30, 2002

The Amish man handed the lead rope to the dealer, walked out of the barn, Gracie was officially retired from her years of work. The horse dealer shook his head, he'd seen some rough looking horses, but this was one that really bothered him. The flesh gouged out of the corners of her mouth from some kind of cruel bit, the still fresh wounds oozing on her neck and shoulders from the collar she had worn, her overly long feet that had obviously not seen a farrier for 4 months or better. Add to that she was a walking skeleton with a fungus infection on her back, and manure caked on her hips and belly. She must have spent a lot of time lying down after her days in the fields, starved and exhausted. There was an abscess in her right hind foot draining infection, and her heels were raw from working on the frozen ground we've had lately, yes, Gracie was retired. Unfortunately, even the Canadians would be hard pressed to find a decent meal on her bones. Would she even survive the 8 hour trip to the slaughter house?

The horse dealer sighed, went to the phone and called Kelly Young of Lost and Found Rescue in Jacobus, PA. This kind lady had bought several of his "meat pen" horses and had rehabilitated them to useful animals again, then adopted them out to people that would care for them properly the rest of their lives.

Yes, she would take Gracie. They would be up quickly to take her home -- to a good home.....could she make a five-hour trip? Yes, the dealer thought she could, she had a spark in her eye that said she still wanted to live.

Kelly's vet wormed her, gave her shots, put her on a feed program, said that she was definitely arthritic, but, it was possible she would still come around, she was in starvation mode, but she still had an interest in eating, and that was a good sign.

Two weeks later, after Kelly had put her on their web site, looking for someone to foster care Gracie, Diana Krug with Rainbow Riders Riding for the Handicapped called, Gracie was the right height, Rainbow had found that the draft crosses were exceptional program animals, could they try her in their program?

Kelly had reservations about moving Gracie again, it was a four hour trip to Troy, PA., and she explained that Gracie was somewhat lame, possibly just from her overuse on frozen ground, or possibly from the abscess, but she couldn't be sure. She said she would call back the next day and let her know what she decided; she also wanted to check out Diana's and Rainbow's references.

God Bless Gracie, Kelly told Diana to come get her, Gracie walked in the trailer like she was ready for an adventure, and every time Diana and her co-pilot Nancy Palmer stopped for gas, or coffee, they opened the trailer door, and Gracie drew a crowd. She got hugs, and pets, and well wishes from all sorts of people, she was a real good ambassador, leaving horse kisses on many shoulders that had hands petting her cheeks and neck.

She is doing well in her new foster home, eating like a....well.... a horse! Rainbow Rider's vet gave her a "thumbs up" sign, and said she thought most of the problems would resolve themselves when she healed and gained about 400lbs. She thought maybe Gracie was a "young" 20-year-old.

Andy Fredericks, Rainbow's farrier trimmed what he could off her neglected feet, but, it hurt her so bad to stand on three feet he couldn't do too much, Doc and Andy resolved to give her a few weeks of groceries, then they would both be back to mildly sedate her and trim her feet properly.

Poor Gracie, initially she was afraid of being petted in her stall, she would grunt, and swallow hard when you tried to pet her, now you can hug and love all you want, she kind of sighs and leans into you. Now she bangs on the door at feeding time, she gets fed first, and stops chewing when you scratch her neck and ears, then gulps and go back to eating. Gracie could set eating records!!!!

God Bless Amazing Gracie, she is semi-retired now, come Spring when she is healthy and slick, she will be used to squire the therapeutic students around in their classes, she will start a new career in her retirement. If for some reason, she can't, she will just be a horse in a pasture, getting the retirement she needs after all those years of overwork, and abuse, after all, she isn't a machine, she has a heart, a big one!

No animal should ever look like Gracie, work animal, or pet, none of them should ever be subjected to starvation, misuse, or abuse. They are also God's creatures, they bleed, they feel, and to those of you who don't want to believe it, they love. They should be treated with respect because they have the same thing you do, the breathe of life, and it should not be taken lightly.

Lost and Found Rescue saves and rehabs over 100 horses a year, Rainbow Riders gives Riding lessons to over 50 disabled students a year, both organizations can use donations to keep doing what they are doing, if you would like to donate to Lost and Found, mail your checks to Lost and Found Rescue, 852 Valley Road, York, PA 17403 or call Kelly at 717 428 9701.. To donate to Rainbow Riders send checks to P.O. Box 122, Troy, PA 16947, to volunteer or sign up a student call Diana 570 673 8417 or Melody at 570 596 3425.

The Lost & Found Horse Rescue Foundation, Inc. has been featured in The Thoroughbred Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Practical Horseman Magazine, Young Rider Magazine, The New York Times, Eye on America with Dan Rather.