

The Heart and Soul of Horses

by Daryl Smoliak



When Warpaint was under a year old his front left leg became tangled in barbed wire fencing. He pulled and pulled and as a result injured his tendons. Two veterinarians were firm in their belief that he should

be put down. My friend, Sherry Van Wagoner, heard about this and bought Warpaint. After a very costly operation and six months of rehab Warpaint was healthy and ride able. In 2009 Sherry passed away. In the spring of 2010 I moved Warpaint and his longtime pal Dakota to Minnesota. That first summer in Minnesota Warpaint, then 10 years old, re-injured the leg. Visits to the University of Minnesota and four months of stall rest and rehab Warpaint re-joined the herd, healthy and happy.

Six weeks ago he reinjured the leg. Stall rest and rehab began. After eight days I brought Dakota up to visit him and to graze together in the grassy area by Warpaint's paddock. When they saw each other their eyes widened and whinnies filled the still air. Warpaint bobbed his head in obvious excitement and Dakota continued to whinny. When we got to the gate both Warpaint and Dakota lowered their heads and ever so gently touched. They stayed like this for two minutes. Tender sounds came from both their mouths.

When they separated I opened the gate. Warpaint walked over to Dakota and

together they walked to an area that featured tall, green, lush grass. For the next two hours, they grazed, side by side!

I often think of these moments. I was witness to loyalty and love. I remember thinking how I wish there was more of this display in the human species. We share this planet with wonderful creatures yet we showcase the worst of what exists inside of us. Race horses subjected to cruel conditions and drugs, the mustangs and burros mishandled by the BLM, Tennessee Walkers being sored and on and on!

We can learn so much from our four-legged friends! We better wake up before it's too late. There is a time limit! And we are on the clock!

Their inner strength shines and dominates through the most difficult of circumstances!

