



Reno was a damn fine horse.

We keep ten horses at Snake River Farm. Our horses are all trained to ride and most are trained to drive. I prefer mustangs. Mustangs make excellent dual-purpose horses.

Gail prefers smooth gaited horses for riding.

Reno was neither mustang nor gaited.

He was some misfit combination that gave him huge strong hindquarters, an enormous boney skull, a luxurious black tail, full sweeping mane, and a magnificent silky coat.

He came to be here in an unusual way.

One day fifteen years ago our good neighbor Paula, asked us to look at a black gelding that they were thinking of buying. The horse was cheap but it had bitten Cory in the chest.

The horse was at a farm near Santiago.

Gail and I drove over. Reno was in a small pasture.

As we approached the fence, he struck me as too eager and too friendly. Horses are not dogs. They need to keep a decent space or they can easily hurt a handler.

He immediately tried to take a piece out of me. I slugged him in the soft of his nose. That came as a bit of a shock to him.

This horse was good natured but incredibly aggressive. Horses are terrifically strong creatures. A horse that bites, playful or not, is dangerous.

It turned out that a boarder who rented the farmhouse had teased the horse by hiding treats in his pockets. The horse had learned to search for treats by grabbing front and side pockets with his teeth.

Reno was owned by a young girl who could not do anything with him.

He was both untrained and spoiled.

Our neighbors had a little girl at the time. I told them they should not buy this horse. He was dangerous.

But, I kind of like challenges, so I told Gail we should buy him.
Gail claims that she offered the girl \$100 now and another \$100 if I did not shoot the horse in a week.
It worked out better than I hoped.
I was able to break him of biting in a day. He never did that again.
I never really cured him of getting too close. He was better, but not right.
O! And he was not a gelding. He was a full stallion. Castration helped his disposition too.
The photo is of granddaughters Ella and Hazel riding Reno.
Years ago.
The horse always had a great respect for Ella.
When Ella was less than a year old, Gail took her near to Reno at the hitching rail.
Reno, as was his way, stuck his nose too close to Ella. She straightened her little are out and stuck her fist right up his nostril. All the way to her elbow.
Reno never messed with Ella again.
Reno turned out to be a good riding horse and an excellent driving horse.
When our horses get old to work, we keep them in retirement until life gets hard for them.
Normally, the indication for that is when they have difficulty getting through winter.
Reno has been retired from work for several years. For a while he was good for little kid rides but eventually that got hard for him too.
Last winter was especially tough for all creatures but Reno was wobbling skin and bones by spring.
Rather than let a horse die a bad death in the coming winter, I put them to rest on a beautiful October day.
Today was Reno's day.
He was fat and sleek from a long, easy summer.
I led him to fresh grass and let him fill his belly.
I prepared a grave for him under an oak tree across the river. That piece of savanna faces the prairie to the south.
I use an ancient 45 caliber Colt revolver for horses. Maybe the horses don't care but it seems fitting to me.
Reno has a lot of good company on that hill. My childhood horse, Nevada is buried there as are many good horses that have passed on. Nevada died in 1980, when we were both 34.
I fed the mellow old horse a handful of grain and sent him on his way.
It was a good day to die.
He is where ever the spirits of fine horses go.
Tom



