

Friends

Remembering Spear

I recently lost my horse, a companion who meant more to me than I can ever express. He was my best friend, my longtime competition partner, and something of a celebrity. Most people knew him as Spear. A true representative of what a Saddlebred horse could do, Spear was a great competitor with the disposition of a loving 1,200-pound dog.

He earned the nickname the "Wal-Mart greeter" because wherever there was some activity, Spear would appear. I could count on him to meet me at the gate, to be there as I repaired the fence, or to greet me when I walked into the barn on those very early mornings.

The things that made him the happiest were running fast and jumping a big fence and having his people around to meet his every need. His career took him through a preliminary one-star (the equivalent to an international triathlon), which caught the attention of many people due to his unusual breed for the discipline.

Throughout his life he suffered from Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis or EPM (an infection of the central nervous system). He underwent colic surgery, had two bladder stones, experienced soft tissue injuries that required stall confinement for a year, and suffered a broken splint bone that required surgery. It always amazed me that he maintained a great attitude throughout these trials. He seemed to understand we were trying to help him. An unusual ligament injury finally ended his career.

Many of us have pets we consider valued family members and this is how I regarded Spear. There are some people, such as Dr. Chris Uhlinger, an Apex

(NC) veterinarian and good friend, who went above and beyond when it came to caring for Spear. She answered all my calls and always came when Spear needed her. Once she even arrived in a wheelchair to care for Spear's broken splint bone after her own ankle had been broken. I cannot, of course, begin to thank all the equine faculty and residents at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital's Large Animal Clinic. Like Dr. Uhlinger, the VTH clinicians always came to the rescue when Spear was in need, knowing that nothing was ever simple with him. I think that through the years and Spear's many health issues just about everyone in the Equine Health Program played a role in his care.

The other group I would like to thank is Horses Forever, a nonprofit organization founded by Shirley Hoffman to educate the public and help rescue

and adopt horses throughout the U.S. The group is a big advocate of the American Saddlebred. When Spear shattered the head of his splint bone and required surgery, Shirley anonymously paid for the operation. The generous donation was made by her and other wonderful Saddlebred promoters. When I asked why, the reply was that Spear is their Saddlebred poster child. For more information about Horses Forever, go to www.horsesforever.org/hfaboutus.html.

Susan Lankford, a very good friend of mine and also a Spear fan, wrote a poem for me after his death. I would like to share it since it is a good description of my horse.

—Joy Beaston



Christine & Ted Tchir

Joy Beaston and Spear take a jump in competition.

"Spear"

Mar. 3, 1984 – Oct. 25, 2006

Because I've known Spear I know:

That Saddlebreds can fly

That God weaves threads of pure copper
And gold into some horse's coats

That you can see a horse's soul through
Soft dark liquid eyes

That God really does choose his keepers

That horses can whisper

That having a big heart will overcome
Most obstacles

That horses can bob for apples

That attitude is everything

That we should all try to enjoy life's
Comforts more often

That the world has not known a kinder,
Gentler soul