

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

By Deb Kidwell



“Solomon Proclaimed King – Riding On The Mule. Rembrandt Van Rijn c. 1637

I like to collect mule and donkey quotes, proverbs and phrases. You just never know when one will come in handy and you can amaze, and impress all your longeared friends with a zinger, like, “She was so ugly, she could make a mule back away from the oat bin.” You’ve got to do this real casual like, as if you use these little gems of wisdom all the time. Your friends will think you are really wise. They don’t have to know the difference. By the way, if you use that one in the future, you can thank Mr. Will Rogers, who *was* actually wise.

One quote that I have heard for years and kind of wince at when it’s used is, “The mule has neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity.” Kind of catchy the first time you hear it, but as you get to know mules and their parents, it kind of grates at your nerves, just like an Ancestry dot com commercial. I mean, just because you discover that you are 8%

Lithuanian, does that mean you all of a sudden get a hankerin’ for Lithuanian flute music? “26% Native American” and it “had a profound impact” on your life? What, you hated coral and turquoise jewelry in the past, but now cannot get enough? See, rather insulting to one’s intelligence, like the quote about mules. I was adopted. I know nothing about my biological parents. I do know that my adopted parents, my Mom and Dad, were kind people who taught me a lot about breeding quality animals; Dad bred horses and Mom bred dogs. They knew that animal bloodlines mattered. Were they concerned about my ethnicity, or what percentage of my blood came from where? Of course not. Gee, kind of makes me like our friend the mule.

See, there is a difference between *legacy* and *ancestry*. Genealogists are trying to learn about their ancestor’s legacy. Something else about wanting to

know what ethnic blood flows through your veins is that God only knows how many hundreds (thousands?) of people donated their genes to you, a human being. Domesticated animals are a bit shorter in the historical scheme of things, and while man has the ability to control husbandry in animals, we have no say in who our Aunt Beulah was.

Who came up with that quote about mules was something I wanted to find out, but alas, dear readers, it is attributed to so many people that it is impossible to find out. I went back over one hundred and seventy years looking in books and magazines and still cannot unequivocally tell you who the first to utter those words was. It is attributed to quite a few people, but the standouts are: Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899); Ignatius Donnelly (1831-1901); Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) – who was the PM of England, and we know they did not know much about mules; and even

Mark Twain (1835-1910). In Donnelly's defense, he did say the following while speaking before the Minnesota State Legislature, "The democratic party is like a mule without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity", but did he make it up? Probably not. It does not really matter; I just wondered why whoever had said it felt so poorly about the mule. Other than Twain, I do not know if any of the aforementioned men knew much about mules at all, to be honest.

As mule and Jackstock breeders and owners, we know that it *does* make a difference in who a mule's ancestors are. Why else would much smarter people than me: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay have invested so much time, research and money on obtaining the finest animals to make mules? Think about how much pride Solomon felt when he received David's mule and rode in Jerusalem. I know, the mule did not have pride, but he was a mule. Then again, maybe Solomon's

mule did have pride. Rembrandt's 1637 drawing of the event sure shows a fine mule who appears to be pretty full of pride! Now that I think about it, did sons of Secretariat or Man O War know that they were sons of the greats? Of course not. No more than the mule would know that his Mama is a blooded mare and his Papa has outstanding bloodlines as well. He can just take those genetics that we thought long and hard about, and excel at all we ask him to do.

So, let's continue the legacies of Washington and others who understood

that quality begets quality, and use the finest animals we can to make those outstanding mules and jacks. Selective breeding shines it's brightest when it comes to the mule. When you are making the original designer animal, why would you not use the best?

Oh, that part about posterity, that is true, but that is just another thing that makes the mule unique...at least to me. I wish all of you another stellar year of breeding the best mules (and jacks) America can make!



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