

# End On a Good Note

By Ty Evans

**T**eaching clinics all over the country and being blessed to ride for a living has given me a unique opportunity to watch many people work with mules and many discussions have followed where words of advice from others have surfaced that sound something like this, “You have to show the mule who’s boss, don’t let the mule win. If you start something you have to finish it”. Suggestions like this have caused me to ponder some and I think a lot of times these individuals have the right idea in regards to getting their mules to operate for them, however, they’re kind of going about things in a different way than I would. Sometimes they get to forcing the mules to do things, and although they may get it done, the mule isn’t any better off than when they started. For me if my mule is a winner I’m a winner. I never contest the mule; nobody can contest a mule and come out looking good. The mule doesn’t know what win or lose is until the human has taught him. Often times I think people misunderstand what being a leader means. I think people truly want to do the right thing, and I think most people mean well. It’s just that we often go about it in a way that isn’t helpful to the mule. I believe it’s our responsibility to help the mule get through things and build confidence in them. It’s not a competition between my mule and me. We are partners; we should be working together. I want the best for my mule and I want them to feel good about themselves and about me. The better my mule feels, the more confidence he’ll have, the more places I’ll be able to take him and the better he’ll perform. I want my mule to have the utmost respect for me but I don’t want him to fear me. We can build this relationship a little at a time and it can be a good thing. Whether you are on the trail, in the arena, or in the pasture moving cattle, opportunities will arise that will help you and your mule make progress.



Take advantage of these times and see if you can bring out the best in your mule.

Take water crossings for example. Maybe you’ve been out on a trail ride and your mule didn’t want to cross some water. You probably felt the need to address this situation and you understood that you needed to do something about it and not just give up because your mule said NO. You might have been able to force the mule through the water but how did the mule feel about it and how do you think he’ll cross the next time around? You’ve heard the term, “End on a good note”. What does a good note entail exactly? Well to me, ending on a good note involves two critical elements, operating physically correct and being mentally comfortable. Ending on a good note, in my opinion, is crucial in building a good relationship with your mule.

So let’s talk about the situation mentioned above and use this as an example. The first piece of the puzzle is obvious to most, helping your mule to physically go across the water. However, for me, just crossing the water isn’t good enough, it’s all about HOW they go across. Let’s say the stream is rather small. I have had a lot of mules that want to launch like a rocket across these small streams. So if the mule did this, I would make the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult by spending some time crossing back and forth awhile until the mule made the choice to walk nice and easy across. Now, when they finally make the choice I desire, I don’t say, “Haw! I win! You lose!” Rather the reaction might resemble a moment when I am trying to get my children to make a good choice. When the child chooses the right I don’t shove it

in their face and proclaim myself the winner. I prefer to praise the child and tell them I am proud of them for making the right choice. The child chose right and that makes us both winners. It's the same with the mule. When they go across this water physically correct in a way I am pleased with, I acknowledge they did well by ending for a time and letting the mule rest. If I got the mule going across but he was still troubled or worried about the situation, then my work isn't done. I need to hang in there and keep on going through the motions with this mule until his mind is right. I want the mule mentally comfortable after we go through something like this together. The mental aspect, in my opinion, is the most important element. All too often we miss this part. Once they just physically complete the obstacle, we usually quit, thinking that we did something good. Be sure to take note on how your mule is mentally. Are they calm and comfortable? If they seem content and confident then you've probably done a good job. If they seem worried and stressed, then you have more to do. Pretty

soon, what happened last will happen first and they'll be going wherever you point them. This process has worked well for me and has helped me to keep the mule in mind in everything I do. Put the mule first and they will pay it forward ten-fold. End on a

good note, both physically and mentally, and it won't be long until you can accomplish anything with your mule. Always try to bring out the best in them and look for the good in the mule.



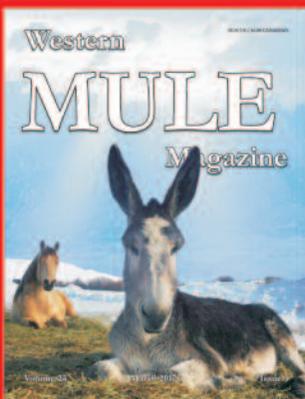
## Mule Thoughts...

### Caution:

**When someone says, get a grip, APPARENTLY around their neck is NOT what they meant.**

Western Mule Magazine

## Looking for a Jack?



Visit our website  
and go to the Mule Sire Page!

Support our Jack Advertisers

[www.westernmulemagazine.com](http://www.westernmulemagazine.com)