

# ROXY

By Jacquelynn Holly

We arrived at the Western Idaho Fair around 3:30, for the Ladies Idaho Sidesaddle Association's scheduled 30-minute evening demonstration. It was 95 degrees with absolutely no breeze.

Roxy stood quietly at the trailer (which is a big deal right now because we admittedly are still practicing patience). We could hear the announcers, crowds, music, whinnies, and brays in the distance. She tacked up great and was patient while I reluctantly got dressed in over 20 pounds of upholstery fabric.

Around 4:15 p.m., two other members and I began the half-mile trek to the barn on the other side of the race-track.

We walked briskly past show attendants and contestants thanking them briefly for their compliments until we reached the shade of the barn. "Are we going to stand in the breezeway?" I asked. That was a dumb question; where else were we going to go? There was no sign of shade anywhere else on the grounds. Here I was with a green equine, with limited mobility in a historic costume, and yet, we both exuded calmness and comfort in our awkward placement in the breezeway. To one side of us, the horses were clearly fed up with their weeklong stay at the fair and were obnoxiously trying to bite Roxy's rump and lip my top hat. To the other side, countless strollers and wagons cruised on by at an alarmingly close distance. Roxy stood perfectly, visiting with children and adults alike. She had half a dozen individuals come directly behind her and start petting her rump. Similarly, several individuals came up and immediately reached for her ears without ever asking permission to pet (A year ago, today, she would have whiplashed them with her head if



*Jacquelynn and Roxy*

*Photo credit Western Idaho Fair: Kathi Arbiter*

they'd tried that.) This little mule soaked in all the attention like everyone was there specifically to love on her.

Things got more exciting when we were called to the arena (after an hour of waiting). I failed to gather my whole skirt and Roxy accidentally stepped on it. Rip! "Oh no!" I heard the ladies be-

hind me gasp. Let's just say I'm glad I had an entire period correct wardrobe on under the dress, including pantaloons! The ladies quickly fastened the skirt back on, and we walked as quickly as my garb would allow.

In the arena, Roxy was once again in her element and a little rock star. She

stood perfectly square and still modeled my 1904 Mayhew sidesaddle.

After our demo was abruptly and unexpectedly cut short by the show officials (unfortunately the fair's scheduling and organization proved to be less than ideal for our entire experience), we headed out of the arena at which point I realized my boot was filling with sand. Ha! The sole had nearly completely come off!! Wardrobe malfunction #2 was underway.

At this point, drafts and wagons and jingling, jangling harnesses were headed straight for us, and I was walking like a chicken with my sole folded in half, kicking up sand everywhere, wondering what was culminating in Roxy's little brain. Were we going to be the unplanned fair entertainment? Were we going to have a mule on the loose at the fairgrounds in 3, 2, 1? Were my feet going to fall out of my boots entirely? The possibilities of what could go wrong were endless. Who knew my

imagination could formulate so many scenarios in two seconds? The drafts were *right* behind us.

Roxy's ears flipped back and she raised her head. We turned around and the driver shouted, "Sorry! I don't know anything about mules!" and shrugged as he rolled by us. Roxy watched alert and intrigued, but stayed calm. After the drafts had cleared the pathway, we dodged a few feet down the road and joined up with friends before several new draft teams were headed towards us. Out of the blue, a horse next to Roxy decided he'd rather fly out of the situation as the teams drove by. He went straight backwards into Roxy's right side. She took a quick step out of the way but hung in there with me.

We timed our exit out of the chaos and walked through the costume class lineup. Had the situation been different, I may have just lined up with them!

We made it back to the truck before my sole completely detached from my

boot, untacked, changed, and loaded up to come home.

Roxy's debut at a public event was an absolute success! We have been a team for 21 months now – a stark contrast with my other mule who I have ridden for over 21 years. It is incredible what we take for granted with our "bombproof" forever mules. It isn't until we start all over that we can truly appreciate all the stimulation and desensitization that goes into years and years of work, trust and bonding.

For everyone who is starting over, or starting for the first time ever, remember patience is a virtue for both you and your mule. Earlier this year, I had anticipated entering Roxy in numerous other events, but my gut didn't tell me it was go-time until the Western Idaho Fair. We all have to start somewhere, but don't let that starting point ever pressure you. You and your mule will feel it when the time is right.



*Jacquelynn riding aside in the arena - Photo credit Sharon Vanderlip*

