



Moose

Chapter 10

By Ken Emerson

Reprinted with permission from *Mountain Canaries Mules I Have Known*

Impressive!

Moose was a “big” john mule, standing an impressive 17 hands and weighing 1,400 pounds. Moose was a dark bay with black mane and tail. He had a huge head, as one old timer described it, “He could be drinking from the bottom of a 55-gallon barrel and still be looking at you”. His age was never determined.

As mentioned in the last chapter, Moose was purchased at the same time as Jack and Jill. Moose had a great disposition. He was just like a big Saint Bernard, right down to the big brown sad eyes. I don’t know what his breeding was, but am pretty sure it was a mammoth jack and a very large mare. I don’t think the mare was a draft horse because he didn’t show the characteristics of a draft breed.

I bought Moose in a package deal. I really didn’t need him, but the young couple needed the money and I knew I could sell him to someone. I kept Moose on the place all summer. He was quite an attraction. People would drive out to the Wildlife Area just to take a look at him. When family and friends would come to visit, someone always wanted to have their picture taken on him.

Moose wasn’t the most enjoyable mule to ride, for several reasons. You had to throw your saddle over your head to saddle him and then have a stepladder to get on. He had no power steering. This mule had a mouth as tough as rawhide and it took lots of muscle power to turn his huge head. Stopping him was no problem because he never got to going very fast. Getting off was an adventure; you could use the stepladder, slide down his leg, or free fall.

After he shed out and had been on pasture for a while, everyone started guessing what

his weight was, 1,500 to 2,000 pounds. One Sunday afternoon I rode him a mile and a half to the neighbor’s corrals where they had a cattle scale. To be fair to everyone who had guessed Moose’s weight I took off all of the tack. I led him onto the scales and shut the gate, the scale was set for 900-pound steers so I started bumping it up a notch at a time, 1,000, 1,100, 1,200, 1,300, and finally at 1,400 the scale balanced. I know some of you who have large horses and mules will say, “You haven’t seen anything yet,” but when you have been around mules weighing 700 to 1,000 pounds, another 400 pounds is quite a bit.

Hunting season was fast approaching, so I figured that was the best time to get Moose a new home. I sure didn’t want to feed that big mule all winter. Someone is always in need of a pack mule during hunting season.

Speaking of packing, it is said that the recommended load for a mule is one-third of its body weight and a horse is only one

quarter of its body weight. When you use this equation, Moose could have packed 466 pounds, if you could have lifted it up that high! Of course, the true load packed would take in consideration the trail, type of load, distance to travel, and condition of the animal.

I told a few people he was for sale and had several lookers, but they were intimidated with the size of Moose. One of the fellows I had hunted with in Idaho had a friend who was looking for a large pack animal, mule or horse. This fellow lived in the Willamette Valley, south of Portland, Oregon. He didn’t want to drive over to look at Moose so left the decision, as to whether or not to buy the mule, up to my friend. After they exchanged several phone calls that week the decision was made to buy Moose. I told my friend to bring an open topped truck to haul Moose because I didn’t think he would appreciate having his ears smashed against the top of a trailer.

LANDMARK STUDIO

(931) 670-6482
Artist Joe Vick

WWW.
Muleprints.com

