

The Pursuit of Freedom

By Linda Tucker

One recent, uncharacteristically mild December day I was enjoying a lazy morning at home. Russ had fed the horses their grain early and gone off to a dentist appointment and the only thing I had to do was turn out our little herd of 5 horses. Since we live in the middle of nowhere, I did not bother to don “day clothes” to complete this task. Why interrupt the morning of leisure in which I was indulging unnecessarily? It’s not like I was expecting company. I headed to the barn clad in my lime-green-flannel pajamas and bright yellow rubber boots to complete what is usually about a 10-minute job.

Generally we put our 14-year-old geriatric pair Jerry (aka High Country Dancer), who is deaf, and Denver, the pony we foster for an equine rescue organization, into one pasture, and Honey (BR Miss Macho), Teddie (Our Silent Sensation) and Andy (Te Lightful Sensation) into the other. As usual, I put out hay before putting out Jerry and Denver. I left them munching happily while I went to put hay in the other pasture. I did not bother to latch the gate, which leads into the barn and the great beyond, thinking that Jerry and Denver would just stay where their hay was. I was surprised, then, when I turned around just in time to see Denver and Jerry prancing through the open gate and out the other side of the barn to FREEDOM! As I said earlier, Russ wasn't home so I knew that I was going to have to manage this round-up mission solo.

Shouting “Whoa!” (which is somewhat of an exercise in futility when one of the horses one is calling is deaf) I set off in hot pursuit of the remarkably speedy old-timers who were galloping madly through the yard. Meanwhile, Teddie, Andy, and Honey were

whinnying like mad from their stalls, no doubt cheering on the escapees in their pursuit of freedom.

It looked like Denver and Jerry were heading into the 300 acres of woods that surround us. If they went into the woods I was sure I'd never find them. Fortunately, one of the horses had a better idea and they veered left and headed down the driveway, still at a flat-out gallop. I ran the opposite way as fast as my 37-year-old legs could carry me (are you still picturing the yellow boots and lime green flannel pajamas?) prepared to head them off at the pass. Our dogs were in the fenced yard beside the driveway. Denver got interested and stopped to look at them. After she confirmed that, yes, they were indeed dogs, she and Jerry veered round and galloped back the way they had come. Much to my relief, they ran into the barn and did sliding stops worthy of reining horses down the barn aisle and back into the pasture from whence they had come. After I slammed the gate shut behind them, I stood panting wondering how it was that I had once run a 26.2-mile marathon! After turning out the others, I trudged back up to the house thinking, "Note to self: if you open a gate, close it."