

ALICE, THE FANCY MULE

My name is Glenda Irwin. Some say I was born and bred to be with animals. Horses were my first love. We grew up in the country with no bikes, no quads. After chores, the horses were used in 4-H as well as for entertainment.

Whatever the season, we managed to find some game to play with our horses, from pulling sleighs and toboggans to crazy carpets. You name it; we tied it to the saddle horn for fun, and our horses just went along with it.

As I grew up learning more about horses, I found my main love to be in training – the first 30 to 60 days with the animal, being able to bond with the untrained animal and gain its trust. This job kept some shillings in my pocket for 10-plus years. From colts to problem horses, I took them all in stride. I soon began to realize how they thought and how I could help them get to where their owners wanted them in training.



Alice at her very first Show, Tees Longears Days 20112

During this time, I was asked by Ethel and Merv Hollihan to ride some mules for them. It was at this time that Amos came into my care, a mule owned by Les Dunbar, who had raised him. Amos was the progeny of Dennis Debruyne's Mammoth jack. Amos was a great mule.

Later, Les moved to Alaska and sold Amos to Don Henderson. Don asked if I was willing to put some more time into Amos, and I did so for another 30 days. After that, Don invited me to go on a mule and donkey ride with Amos, and it was there that I truly had my heart jolted by their calm, surefooted abilities.

The search was on for my own mule. I contacted Dennis Debruyne at Westeros, Alberta, and went to see his current stock. He mentioned that he had raised a very nice mule and had offered it to the Mules and Music Festival for a raffle. Joyce and Rod Muller (neighbours of ours as children) purchased a ticket and subsequently won their choice of the mules in the raffle. Joyce chose Agnus, which she then renamed Fancy Ass because of the white spot on her rump and tail.

As Agnus grew, Joyce realized that she was going to be a lot taller than Joyce had expected or wanted. I heard about Agnus and, knowing she would have been well taken care of by Joyce, decided she would be worth looking at. My daughter Martia and I did some horse trading, and she bought Agnus from Joyce. I then changed her name to Alice. I had my first mule!

I soon realized that Alice was not your average animal; she loves people and follows us around like a dog, often with her chin resting on our shoulder. Soon the pressure was on to get her to Long Ears Days at Tees, Alberta.



Alice the mule showing her 'coon jumping' skills at Tees Longears Days,

In 2010, I had just completed an equine dentistry course up in Valleyview, and time was running out for warmer days to put some time into Alice. I had a bunch of horses waiting to get their teeth floated, so I included Alice in the bunch to have her teeth checked and maintenance done.

Alice was not crazy about round-pen training and just wanted to get out for a ride, being only a three year old, but she took all that was asked of her in stride. After

approximately eight rides, we decided, “What the heck – let’s get her to Tees Longears Days.”

Martia bathed her and put on a fancy slinky and blanket for the night and off we set. I will admit I was nervous for Alice and figured I would not push her; giving her the exposure was my first priority. Alice was very calm and stood in the trailer as if she was privileged.

Alice surprised us all by bringing home five ribbons – three 2^{nds}, one 4th, and one 6th. Not bad for eight rides and fun was had by all.

I wish to use Alice as a pleasure mule as well as take her to the mountains in the near future. I believe Alice is a mule that will play a big part in showing people that mules are great animals. Alice makes me proud to be a mule owner.

Tees Longears Days is annually celebrated the third weekend in August [this year August 18 -19] at the Rodeo Grounds in Tees, AB. It’s a free, fun-filled, family event, guaranteed to entertain and enlighten. Contact Show Chair, Russ Shandro for more information at 780 603-7510.