

A "BUGS" TALE

by Kevin Woodford



"Cluability," aka "Bugs," came to us in 1998 as an overly afraid of EVERYTHING two-year-old. His owners at the time, Dave and Dee Dee Robeson, who had bred and raised Bugs, had high expectations for him. He was bred to be an all around Champion horse - his sire was a Reserve World Champion Halter Horse, and his Dam a World Champion Youth Reining mare. Problem was, he would get spooked at almost anything, including his own shadow. I thought Dave was nuts!! But after months of riding and desensitizing Bugs, we showed him at a big futurity, and did quite well.

The next year, Dave brought Bugs back for more training and showing. Bugs began to prove himself as a tough competitor in Western Pleasure and Trail, finishing out the year with a couple of state awards.

In 2000, the Robesons weren't quite sure what their next step would be. I had grown extremely fond of Bugs and his quirky personality. I thought it would be a great idea to lease him and put my 13-year-old daughter Ashton on him to show. Some people thought I was completely crazy!! Even though now a "seasoned" four-year-old, Bugs would still spook at foolish things. You couldn't even ride him in the warm-up pen at a show, because he couldn't handle the stress of other horses coming toward him, but I just had that gut feeling this was going to work out. And it did!! By the end of the show season, Ashton and Bugs finished Reserve Hi Point 14 - 18 All Around in the Iowa Paint Horse Club, and Hi Point Open English Pleasure Horse. They also competed at the Paint World Show in Fort Worth that year. Quite an exciting summer for such a young team!

We thought we had finished our year with a bang, when tragedy struck. Bugs and a stablemate, "Zippy," decided early one morning that they would perhaps go on a little stroll, outside of their pen. They were both struck by a car, with Bugs receiving horrific injuries. He literally went over the top of the car. The damage to the passenger side of the car was so severe, that had there been someone in the seat, they too would have been in the hospital, if alive at all. Bugs spent several weeks at Iowa State Vet Hospital, where it was touch and go. At one point, when it seemed that an infection had settled in his shoulder wounds, it was strongly suggested we just put him down. It was the general consensus at the Vet School, that if he survived, he would be nothing more than a pasture pet. But after many tears, we decided to give him a few more days. Thank the Lord, he bounced back, and started to improve. We spent many weeks changing bandages and many months hand walking, slowly getting his strength back. One year to the date of the accident, I decided it was time to see if he could handle the weight of a rider. Bugs, having the heart of a Champion, rode off as if nothing had ever happened to him!!

We spent the next couple of years just slowly rehabilitating him, with lots of trail riding and giving riding lessons to little kids. Bugs was kind of liking this easy going life. In 2006, Ashton decided that it was time to hit the show ring again, so off to Pinto World Show they went. Ashton and Bugs were a competitive team again, and loving it!!

Ashton now lives in Northwest Iowa, and makes it down to ride Bugs once in awhile, while Dad gets to take care of what we refer to as "the Old Man."

Ashton and Bugs still like to compete, and so they recently teamed up again in January and February for the Abraham's Equine Clinic Winter Challenge held at Kirkwood and hosted by Nellie and the students in the Kirkwood Horse Program. Charles Abraham generously donated a saddle to the Hi Point Horse of the three-show series, and guess who won it?! Bugs! So here we are...this Horse who was almost put to sleep, and thought to only ever be a pasture pet...has won yet another award. Bugs truly has the heart of a Champion!!

All of us at Woodford Performance Horses would like to extend a Huge Thank You to Charles Abraham for his kindness, guidance and generosity. Also, Thank You to Nellie Wilson and her gang of students for always putting on a Great show with lots of Fun!!

The Woodfords...

Kevin, Christine, Alex, Ashton and Austin