

CH Take A Guess

Leaving A Hole In Two Hearts

by Bob Funkhouser



The final show ring performance for CH Take A Guess was one of his best, topping a 16-horse field and a four-horse workout for his third blanket of roses.



Morgan Brison was the first girl to fall in love with the gaited horse who gave his all, in addition to being her best friend.

Some horses just have that effect on you. You know what I'm talking about before you ever read this next sentence. It goes beyond the normal admiration for a horse with personality and heart. It's the horse you're in sync with without ever uttering a word. It can be a look, or a touch, but the communication is there, many times with that horse doing what you want even before you think it.

CH Take A Guess had that profound effect on two young ladies in particular and his passing this fall has left a void in their hearts but the memories of this special relationship will stay with them forever.

Bred by Franklin Groves, CH Take A Guess, or Picasso as he was affectionately nicknamed by the Brisons, was sired by the late number one rated CF First Night Out and he was out of the Talent Town daughter, Most Fair, who was also the dam of World's Champion CH Just Special. As a two-year-old he was sold to Bobbie Rassieur with Virgil Helm as the receiving trainer.

Helm brought the bay stud colt with the distinctive face marking along, first showing him in harness, placing second at the World's Championship Horse Show in the two-year-old stallion/gelding class. He won the two-year-old class at St. Louis that fall, but like most horses that come through the Helm school of horsemanship, he was destined to rack. They debuted the next year with a win at Chapter 5, placing fifth at Louisville and seventh out of 17 in the UPHA Classic Grand Championship at Kansas City.

Helm's assistant Megan Nicole Harrison showed him with success as a junior horse but then for his five-year-old season they invited Megan Brison to show him to help sell him. Little did they know, that sale would take place in the not to distant future and Picasso wouldn't be moving very far.

"He was five and Morgan was 12," said Bob Brison of the purchase of Take A Guess. "I just loved him at Virgil's then we got the opportunity to buy him. I didn't ride him much. He was just okay for me but he loved Morgan, he knew the difference."

"Of all the horses that I saw at Virgil's he was the one I wanted," recalled Morgan Brison. "He was a stud but we got along well. Bobbie Rassieur let me show him to get him sold and the more I showed him the more I knew he was perfect for me. I couldn't believe I finally got him. He was so cool to be around, you could go in his stall at any time."

"As far as riding, he knew his job and you didn't get in his way. One of my favorite memories was when we showed at Rock Creek. I had never shown there and he had never been shown outdoors but when we hit that ring he was lovin' it. We won the class and when we came out he stopped and blew his nose."

"Selling him was the hardest thing. It was hard to let him go. Three years later and I still tear up talking about it."



The bay gelding loved to show and teamed with Michelle Krentz they challenged the very best throughout their stellar career.

The one thing that did ease Brison's pain was knowing Picasso was going to another girl who loved him just as much as she did. Michelle Krentz said she not only got a new horse, but there was a family that came with him, referring to the Brisons.

"We had sold Break On Through in the fall of 2009 and went on this massive horse search. I told Bret and Susi [Day] that my only criteria was it had to be a really fun horse," explained Michelle Krentz. "I had had a few high pressure horses and I wanted something I could relax with and really have fun.

"We had been everywhere and looked at all kinds of horses and then we finally got to Missouri. We went to Brison's and I looked at several really nice horses like Born To Ride. I still didn't find just the right fit and as we were leaving Bob says, 'I've got one more horse I'd like to show you. He's just come in from the field and he's fat and furry but I'd like for you to see him.'

"Sure enough he was fat, furry and had very short feet. Bob got on him and then I tried him. He was the only horse we looked at that Bret didn't ride before I did. He said he knew the horse and for me to go ahead. I got on not really expecting a lot and when I said 'whup, trot' I found myself shortening my reins as fast as I could. He took off at the trot and it was a great feeling. I got done and I'm thinking, 'of the 40 really nice horses we've looked at and I want the fat, furry one with short feet. How am I going to sell this to Bret and Susi?'

"But when I was getting off they both gave me the look like, 'this is the one.' We were all on the same page. So Bret and Susi go off with Bob to talk business and here comes Morgan who just got off the school bus. She immediately runs into his stall and he wraps his head around her. While I'm waiting I call my mom and say, 'I found the perfect horse but he belongs to Morgan and she really loves him. How can I do this to this little girl?' Mom says, 'she's a horse trainer's daughter and they're going to sell the horse.' That made it easier and when we did buy him I have always felt he was still her horse too. Whenever I showed him they were always on the rail. Morgan always came to see him at the stalls."



Beyond his world's titles, Picasso was the epitome of a pleasure horse.

Under the direction of Bret and Susi Day at Grey Ridge Farm the new team clicked. River Ridge, Asheville, Midwest Charity, Blue Ridge Classic, they mixed it up with the best of the best time and time again and time and time again they came out on top. Three times they were the World's Champion of Champions Adult Five-Gaited Pleasure winners. Twice Picasso was named the UPHA Five-Gaited Pleasure Horse of the Year, once the Overall Pleasure Horse of the Year.

Their final performance will go down in Freedom Hall history. From a 16-horse championship there was a hardfought four-horse workout and it had the crowd screaming for more. It was his third and final World's Champion of Champions title.

"Going into the line up I was already in tears," continued Krentz. "I knew this was his last Louisville. I had only told a few people but I thought he had already done everything he could do. He was amazing in the class and had given me everything he had. Then I look behind me and see the judges talking and think 'does he have to do this again?' He had already given me so much. There were so many emotions going through my mind. I thought, 'this poor horse.'

"Then we went back to the rail and I said, 'whup trot' and he gave me that same feeling like the first time I tried him. I think he knew I was having reservations and he said, 'I can do this.' It was the best he's ever been.

"The coolest thing about him is other than the canter he is the easiest horse in the world to ride. He is the true epitome of a pleasure horse as you can rack him a million miles and hour and then come back to a flat walk on a loose rein."

Picasso got to go out on top, wearing the roses for the third time in his career. That meant a lot to his trainers and owners, both past and present, however, it was what he gave them away from the show ring that they will remember forever, both the good and the bad.

"My mom told me Picasso was put into my life to teach me a lot of lessons," shared Krentz. "His last lesson was how to be strong."