

Wendi Stewart

Essay – 567 words

No More Ponies

I have just taken down my pony's stall, removed all the boards and gate that I built to make his space, Forewarned's space. I shed a few tears and my stomach complained, but it is life, there is no way around it. Those we love, be they human or animal, will leave us and we will be left with the shadows and smells and sounds that are our memories.

I found bits of Forewarned's tail in between some of the boards, caught on a splinter or a nail head. He was a notorious bum rubber, so I regularly massaged baby oil into his perfect tail to ease his itchiness, but that didn't always stop his habit that led to pails being bent and stall door hinges being tested and hay racks being crumpled. He sometimes swung his head around to look at me with a suspicious eye while I massaged his tail, but mostly he tolerated my helpful intervention.

While dismantling his space, I hung his little black pony nylon halter on the wall, but my other pony paraphernalia, from hoof pick to heated water pail, I itemized to put on kijiji hoping some young girl with a dream will see it. The barn seems too quiet, too empty. There is no sweet face poking over the stall door wondering what I brought him, because surely I brought him something or why bother to come to the barn at all. He used to make that point very clear.

It is the end of ponies for me. "Are you sure," my friends and family ask. I am. We reach a point in life when some things come to an end, sometimes naturally and other times not. This has been a very big thing in my life, since I was four years old and my sister got her first pony. Smokey was a stubborn slightly annoying, okay really annoying, Shetland pony and when Sherry graduated to something bigger, aka my brother's very fast and unruly Quarter Horse, I inherited Smokey. I wasn't thrilled, to be honest. He was the slowest thing on four legs and took great pleasure in trying to buck me off. He had a real fear of crumpling paper and that became the tool to get him to move. Otherwise, he

just planted his four little feet and refused to budge. But he filled the void until I got my own pony when I was eleven. And since then, there were many ponies.

It feels strange to sort through the old bridles and halters and running martingales and draw reins and lunge lines and leg wraps. All the memories from when four little girls rode with me and cleaned stalls with me and fixed fence with me and set up jumps with me and had a great deal of fun. They belonged to Pony Club and 4-H and we spent a lot of weekends “on the road”, but I preferred the time riding together; it was a magical time. The girls had falls and tumbles and stepped-on-toes, but it was all fun, wonderful fun.

Maybe I took that time of my life for granted. Maybe that’s why it passed so quickly, in the blink of an eye really. When I remember those days I have a reaction of real physical pain that they have gone, and sometimes that ache keeps me looking back instead of ahead.

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