

1989 - 2010

Kerrymor's True Colors



True Colors at a horse show in 1998.

Kerrymor's True Colors, 21, was put down after a long night of colic on Sept. 4, 2010, at Kerrymor Farm in New Melle, Mo.

The halfbred mare had spent the last 11 years of her life battling severe laminitis but overcame several recurrences and was sound most of the time, galloping around the farm with her siblings.

By far the most popular horse in the herd, she was the North Star for her brothers and sister, and they have been lost since she died.

Born in 1989 out of Canteloupe Island, a Kentucky-bred thoroughbred, True Colors faced many early challenges. She came into the world not breathing following a disastrous delivery, then had to go with her dam to a hospital three times for surgery to repair the damage from the delivery only to have her dam die when she was 3 months. True Colors was put in with another young horse for companionship and attacked by the colt, suffering major injuries to her right front foot and knee, requiring sutures and a cast.

She was nicknamed Stitches from that point on.

Her sire was Lynfields Kiltuck, and while Stitches often was told she looked like him, in truth, she was a dead ringer for her grandmother, Round Robin's Easter Bonnet, though 8 inches taller at 15-2.

Stitches competed successfully in USDF-rated dressage shows in 1998, with a high score of 70, despite never practicing in anything other than an unmarked field, and would have had enough points to earn her ACPS silver medallion in dressage if the current points system had been in place at the time.

She did three hunter shows that year, as well, including an under saddle class at an open schooling show, where she was up against 19 other horses, many of them nice prospects with well-known trainers. She was having a good ride, but, as she cantered down the long side of the ring, she was cut off by two young girls. Stitches was forced into a jump and had to plant her feet to avoid missing it. Annoyed but unfazed, she walked around the jump and picked up her canter again.

Kerrymor's True Colors: 1989-2010

from a walk. Still, the damage was done. A glance at the judge showed she had seen the whole thing. Stitches and her rider lined up with no hope for a ribbon, sad that an otherwise good effort would go unrewarded. To their surprise, Stitches' number was called as the winner. That's one of Kerrymor Farm's most prized ribbons.

But some of Stitches' greatest performances took place before she returned to St. Louis and out of the public eye. Her previous farm was located in the Sonoran desert of northern Scottsdale, Ariz., where her neighborhood was a crisscross of dirt roads, often too hard for work. What she did have was sand washes running around a small mountain to the north, which she started using for trotting, then cantering. She really just wanted to run, and, eventually, she was turned loose, going speeds far greater than her rider's skill set. If Stitches could see through all the flying sand, she was the only one. There were no competitors to race, no spectators to impress, no prizes to be won. Just a little horse showing off to herself, stretching her immensely powerful legs to their limit.

Over the years, despite the severity of her bouts of laminitis, Stitches' feet did not deteriorate as one might expect, and she recovered well each time. Perhaps that was due to her being smart enough to stay off her feet when they hurt, preventing gravity from destroying her fragile hoof walls. She almost was put down during one of her early bouts, after lying outside one morning covered in snow like a statue during a winter storm because she wanted to rest on her favorite pile of sand outside, rather than on the bedding in her shed. A few days later, she was on that pile of sand again, unwilling to move, as an ice storm approached. It looked hopeless. While a call was being placed to the vet, she struggled to her feet, made her way to her shed and was found repeatedly screaming to Kiltuck, as if to say, "Dad, make them stop." Another call to the vet put an end to any notion of letting laminitis take her life early.

Her death in September was not at all expected. She looked more beautiful than ever this year, with her weight under control and her coat as shiny as ever.

The farm continues to search for what may have triggered the metabolic syndrome that led to the



Stitches with her owner, Joan McKenna Sr., in 1989 in Arizona.



Stitches (center) with brothers Robin Hood (left) and Darby O'Gill.

laminitis, but the answer may never be known. She participated in three laminitis studies, with all the blood testing and strict requirements that went with them, but the initial cause remains a mystery.

Stitches actually belonged to Joan McKenna Sr., who died when Stitches was a yearling. Joan wanted a smart, beautiful, kind, pet-like mare who could compete in all disciplines. Pet was an understatement. When the horse flies hit their peak each summer, the farm always had to worry that Stitches would dash through the open front door of the house to seek relief in the living room.

She was everything Joan ever wanted and more. Perhaps now Joan, a jumper rider herself, finally is getting to spend time with her special horse.

— Kerrymor Farm