



A Christmas story:

My donkey
Anna Belle

By Jennifer Bar
PART IV

All the exercise derived from stable games was still not the same as fresh air and sunshine, so we added Walking the Donkey to our already overcrowded schedule. Needless to say, the donkey did not like to be walked. Leading was a useless occupation to Anna Belle.

Any forward tug on the halter produced the classic donkey pose of four legs braced and head outstretched. So Anna Belle had to be pushed — in reluctant sections.

All this took considerable energy, especially when she

added lying down to her protests, and has to be rolled over and over with wee legs curled up, until she would agree to rise. She could be completely lifted off the ground in a lying position and her legs would stay tucked up under her body, unlike a horse, which would shoot its legs out.

We did work out a reasonably co-operative pattern. With a rope placed around Belle's rump she could be pulled and led as one would train a new foal. This was how our outward journeys were accomplished. Me with breaking arm and set expression, Belle with ears back and stiff legs, collecting neighborhood children like flies.

The homeward journey was quite different. Children would scramble up snowbanks as Belle skipped and hopped toward her barn. She usually managed to get faster and faster until she was trying to look as if I planned it all along. Once near the barn she would become very reluctant again and have to be rolled down the two steps into the barn, a most undignified entrance.

Moans from barn

Anna Belle's voice is of immediate interest to visitors. Does she bray, yet? I'm not sure what her bray should sound like but it doesn't want from lack of trying. Most of her attempts at communication consisted of long drawn out moans with a sobbing intake of breath at the end. This was done with the tiny mouth open and tongue extended much in the manner of a strangling cow.

The noise was used in greeting: greeting me, greeting the other horses, greeting the dogs, greeting the cats, greeting the walls, get the picture? It was also used at feeding time when she was absolutely at death's door from malnutrition. Later she developed a variety of moans, snorts, grunts and sobs but never once a classic "hee haw".

Anyone who heard Belle talking, doubled up with laughter and slapped their knees with delight. I, too, smiled, but somewhat sadly. She tried so hard to sing and yet by some quirk of birth, the joy in her heart was transformed into the ridiculous. The donkey is a great figure for fun and yet he has so much more dignity and independence than the horse.

So many said to me, "Just what are you going to DO with her?" To which I'd reply, "I plan to love her a lot."

(to be continued)

Silent Night,

Holy Night

In the awesome stillness of that Holy Night, the Christ Child was born. May the true meaning of Christmas fill your heart and home!

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peace

Best wishes from jungle

Felice Navidad, writes nurse Barbara Kirkby from Peru in her newly learned Spanish. She sends her Christmas regards to friends she made here when she was with the V.O.N. in this area.

She is now a nurse at Casilla, Pucallpa, Peru, in the Amazonian jungle where, she says, every day is a fascinating adventure. She does vaccinations in Indian villages travelling up and down the river by boat, as well as supervising the Out Patients department in the hospital.

The nurses residence she describes as very modern and comfortable — except for the frogs in the showers! Although it is hot there is usually a cool breeze. She has had a ten-week course in Spanish and she's "managing" in the new tongue. There is another nurse there who speaks English. Miss Kirkby left the Victorian Order of Nurses here before joining CUSO as an overseas volunteer.

"Peace on Earth, Good Will to All" is our hope at Christmas. May you have a joyous celebration.
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