

Magic Moments – Have A Laugh On Us

Thanks to all our contributors to our last competition. Here are all the 'magic moments' that made you laugh, cry or howl. Enjoy them all!

■ Another sunny day spent reading horse books and waiting for the magical moment to connect to my horse. The moment that probably wouldn't come. I had been working this horse for months and he really didn't like me. He wasn't just scared of me, he wanted NO part of me. That feeling was heartbreaking. 'Course I knew that those magical moments when a person walks up to a fence and a strange horse floats over and bam!, they're connected was only in the books I read so I couldn't help but feel a sense of failure. I looked out to where the beautiful Palomino/Dun gelding stood grazing next to a chestnut two year old. My horse Tito and the chestnut Charlie were inseparable. In fact I hadn't seen Tito leave his side since he had jumped the fence and decided to run with the neighborhood 'gangsters'. I walked down the long driveway, my hands shoved deep into my pockets my eyes cast downwards. I couldn't even bring myself to look at the gelding. Suddenly I heard a rustle and looked up. Tito's beautiful golden head was stuck over the fence. His head was up and his ears perked in my direction. Impossible I thought. Thirty seconds ago he had been across the pasture. Charlie marked the spot where he had been. I moved closer. Tito bobbed his head and nickered. I ran my hand down his head and neck. He pushed his nose against my shoulder and nuzzled me. What in the world had happened? Yesterday this horse had been wild, spooky, and ill mannered. Now he acted like he actually wanted to be friends with me. From that day forward Tito and I have been a team. I can't count how many people have stopped to say how amazing we look together and how they just know that we are the best of friends, people I don't even really know. So that is my magical moment. It was the moment when I finally realised there was hope for him and that the last thing on this earth I was going to do was send him back to his cruel and what we call 'evil' previous owner.

Sara

■ Well I don't know if I would call this really a magic moment, but after about 20 years of not being in the saddle we decided to get back into horses. We must be mad. Anyway a girlfriend invited me to go for a ride on her dairy farm; this meant we went through a lot of gates. I forgot how difficult it was to open and close gates even on a horse that knew what it was doing; when I was a kid it seemed easy. So we decided to leave a few gate open that didn't have any cattle in the paddocks. We mainly walked and had a few trots. It was very enjoyable. So on returning home my girlfriend closed one of the open gate and I "silly me" volunteered to close the other. Very full of confidence and thinking I know how to horse ride, I took off and asked my horse to trot and then canter. Well, I was anticipating for him to go into a canter when I wanted to and not at his leisure (he can be a little stubborn) so he kept trotting. I hit the saddle at the wrong time and was propelled forward and nearly fell off. What made it worse was I couldn't help but laugh and the more I laughed the harder it was to regain my balance. And whilst all this was happening my girlfriend missed my whole show! Since this ride I have been out a few more times and have had a little more practice cantering.

Jodie

■ This is the story of 'Cobber' the very best horse ever.

We purchased Cobber in 2003 from a dealer who said he was 15 years old and for the huge sum of \$1000! I thought, an ideal age for a 13 year old girl who had not ridden before. I liked the way he moved, so we purchased him.

After all, my daughter Zoe had been pleading with me for seven years to buy her a horse. I went through Pony Club myself so I knew exactly the work involved with horses. Hence I finally relented, although 7 years later.

We arrived home with 'Cobber' - he was about 15.2hh, mid dirty brown colour, thin as a rake with coat hanger hips, covered in flies, dull coat and "oh...I thought, we may have done the wrong thing here".

Cob eventually put on weight and started looking more like a healthy black shiny horse. Zoe started at Pony Club in February 2004, and loved every bit of it. Mid year Zoe started competing on Cobber and both never looked back.

Over the ensuing three years Zoe and Cobber competed in Gymkhanas, Interschool Gymkhanas, Dressage, Show jumping, Show jumping Equitation, Horsemanship, Mounted Games, Sporting and One Day Events. Cobber was just adorable and wonderful to have around. Cob and Zoe won Champion in every single Discipline that he competed in. One of the highlights was Zoe winning first place in her riding class at the Royal Easter Show in 2006, and again being named Champion at the State Pony Club Show riding Championships - quite an achievement. Zoe and Cob were also selected to attend the Annual State Pony Club camp at SIEC. Both competed at State Championships in Dressage and Show jumping Equitation.

Everybody noticed and adored 'the old gentleman', and all were astonished at how he competed. Zoe and Cob even won an Open One Day Event at Oberon, winning a beautiful sash and a lovely rug. Old Cob would do anything for Zoe, anything, and always to the very best of his ability. He was in fact, the perfect horse.

Cobber indeed taught Zoe everything she knows.

We had a phone call late May, 2007 to say that Cob was not well - we had lent him to a young girl for a few months, to let him go back to basics with a young rider, as his age was catching up with him.

We arrived at where Cob was stabled. Zoe and myself walked across the arena...Zoe called out to Cob - and the grand old gentleman whinnied back at us.

When we got to Cob he was not very well at all, sweating, wobbly on his legs and he looked a very sick horse. Then, within 10 minutes, he stumbled, fell to the ground. Zoe and I were both devastated. All Zoe could do was stroke him and talk to him constantly. Old Cob virtually died in her arms. We were inconsolable.

Cob was buried under a cherry tree.

We finally found a new horse to have a look at and were travelling down the highway. Zoe was listening to her iPod whilst travelling along - upset she said, "I don't believe it, I have never heard this song before - the song was "Big black horse under a cherry tree". We howled again.

A few months later we were visiting Parklea markets and we decided to go and have a chat with a clairvoyant. After her telling us the normal everyday things, right at the end of the session, the clairvoyant looked at us and said, "I can see a dark brown horse looking over your shoulder!" Well, we both dissolved into tears again. She said this horse roams your paddocks. You may call another with his name, but he says he will always be No. 1 and he will always look over you and your new horse.

Indeed, he was, will and always will be the No.1 gorgeous boy. He gave us both amazing qualities, which will never leave us...we will always remember you dear Cob. Cob was a 'magic moment' in both our lives...Thanks Cob.

From Lynne (Zoe's mum)

■ There are so many magic moments, but one I remember fondly is when my 9yr old Purebred Arab gelding was a foal through to 3 yrs, we would play a game in his paddock. I would stand at the gate to his stable and he would have to try and bluff me to get through the gate. He would wander around slowly and graze whilst still carefully watching me. When I moved away

from the gate he would charge up and try to pass me. If I was quick and got back to the gate he would stop in his tracks and quickly run off. This game we played most weekends and it has built a bond between us that is for life. We still sometimes play it, but a bit differently now as his paddock is separate from the stable, but he still loves the thrill of the chase. It has had no negative impact on trying to catch him and I think he finds it a challenge, which he being an Arab he loves nothing more than a good game to try and outwit you.

Nerida

■ My magic moment would be when I first bought my horse, 7 years ago. He was malnourished, had a dull coat and just looked like an old nag. He was unhandled and un-named, so I named him after the initials of my 4 boys. Jala. I started reading all the natural horsemanship material, and then started the training of Jala. The first thing I taught him was to come to his name. Day after day I arrived in his paddock at the same time and called him to the fence, then one day, only a few weeks later, he saw my car arrive, looked up and came running over to greet me as I called his name. From that day on he has always come to me and I have never had trouble catching him, but that was one of many magic moments in training my beautiful horse. By the way I now get compliments on how lovely he looks.

Wendy

■ Fanny's Pirouette

This story takes place in the early 90's. Piney's Little Fanny was her name. A well bred, 4 foundation line Quarter horse that I picked up at the local auction when she was 2 1/2 years old. She went from gun metal grey to gorgeous black dapple grey for some years, then yearly she went a little whiter.

Fanny ended up teaching me more about "horse" than any other horse previously encountered. In the beginning few years she was quite spicy, quick on her feet and I had to be aware at all times. Through time she settled down and we developed a partnership that was very connected. When Fanny was about 8, my Dad was visiting and we went out into the field. I carried a cotton neck rope and caught Fanny. I walked her to a log and hopped on. I had been doing quite a bit of dressage, drill team, fox hunting and jumping and also had been working tackless. That's right no bridle, no saddle, just a cotton clothesline rope around the neck. I could ride courses of jumps and the onlookers always thoroughly enjoyed our fun.

Back to the story with my father, but you need a bit of lead up for a better understanding. I am riding around and doing some fun things with Fanny tackless that we would do in our "dressage" training. We would weave in and out of the groove of trees. We would trot over the logs between the trees and in the field. Because of the dressage work, Fanny and I were getting more connected and collected. Dad is watching, as he has done so many times since I started riding in childhood. Fanny and I were having a really good time and I was practicing canter transition to walk, halt and keeping the energy up. I was also just playing and in the canter work we got so connected that when I asked her we got this wonderfully elegant pirouette. I cantered forward, changed lead and tried again. This lovely little gray mare just rocked back on her hocks and proceeded to canter in place as her front end danced the circle around. I had never done one before and here I did several, a day to be remembered in the cool of early winter.

Winter set in and riding slowed down and then the next spring I got into show jumping. I continued to ride tackless. Hey, it was an easier way to get Fanny in from the far field. I no longer worked the dressage collection to that degree because it was more important for us to jump and enjoy cross country. Fanny certainly liked my decision, especially since her build was more suited to work that didn't need such collection.

Fanny and I had many memorable experiences but doing the pirouette in front of my Dad, who has always supported my love for horses from the very beginning, was absolutely fabulous in the sharing of that perfect moment. It was my Magic Moment.

Leslie

■ My magic moment is every day with my horse, Macca. He is a 21 year old Quarter Horse Gelding and is the best horse I have ever had. He is 16hh tall and is a gentle giant, and is so gentle with every rider that sits on his back, with ages ranging from 2yo - 80yo, and experience ranging from Beginner to Advanced. He puts up with so much from each different rider and never acts naughty. The funniest thing about Macca is through summer, he will stand over the water trough, place his whole head and half his neck inside the trough and splash water over himself to keep him cool!

He is the BEST horse I have ever owned and I will not be able to cope when he passes, hopefully that won't be for a while yet as he is very healthy and happy. Every day is a magic moment with Macca as I know he will always be there for me and never let me down. He'll always try his best for me.

Jen

■ I have had countless magic moments with all my horses, from winning Supreme at the shows to going for a swim in the lake. But the most magic moment I can think of is just spending time with them, giving them lots of hugs, and thinking that I am just so lucky to be able to do so.

Rhonda

■ Well it's a bit of a sad story that to me will be very memorable. It started out a normal day, Ride and feed in the morning and return to feed up in the afternoon. When I arrived at my stables my RP/Tb who I have had since he was 4 (now 8) was on the ground in severe pain. I rang my vet immediately and shortly after he arrived he told me I have about three hours to get him to The Scone Vet hospital as he will need emergency surgery.

Well I nearly had a heart attack. He then rang Scone and told them I was coming. They informed my vet of the big cost and wanted to make sure I was prepared to pay. Money was no problem, Regge has been a top horse, excelling in dressage, qualifying for NSW State champs last year (thanks E1), and always brings home good results in whatever we do. (except for the odd occasion when he has had a temper tantrum). He is a one woman horse and loves me to bits.

We arrived at Scone and after rectal examination we headed straight for the operating table, well sort of. Completely tranquilised and hardly able to walk the vet nurse had him on the lead and was heading through the surgery doors. He stopped and looked around and decided he was not going into a blue padded room with 6 strangers. I had to take the lead and tell him he has to go in or he wouldn't survive. He looked me in the eyes and walked straight in.

It was then and there I realised how close our bond had become.....

After 4 hours of surgery I got the phone call he had pulled through. I was so relieved. I made the journey to the Surgery to see him and was devastated when I saw him. He was thin, and not himself but when he saw me pull up in the car park through his stable window, he still had the same excited whinny.

He was in ICU for 14 days and while he was still in hospital I received a parcel and a letter in the mail. He had won the ANSA High Point Dressage Horse for 2007. The package contained his first Trophy Rug. I was thrilled and I couldn't wait for him to come home so I could try it on him.

Regge returned home 16 days after his operation. He had to have five months off and for one month he had to be confined to a stable. I began riding him just recently and after a month in complete lock up and four more months in the paddock he trotted off down to the arena like he had no time off at all.

He is so appreciative and eager, I couldn't ask for a better best friend.....

Yasmin

■ From an early age I just rode around, did the pony club thing, but never really competed on a serious level. About 18 months ago I bought a terrific horse, got myself a trainer & started competing in Western Pleasure shows at a novice level, this past season despite the E1 interruption. I got my first blue ribbon the first time I competed in a trail class competition and WOW, I was completely blown away by the ability of this horse. He really just rode me through it. I'd never done a gate before but he just sided up to it & let me open it. He then walked through the opening, spun his back end around and side passed so I could close the gate. He was just fantastic. Since then I have gone on to win 4 High Point trophies, and I have won the club High Point Novice trophy for the year. It has truly been an amazing year for me and really all because of this quiet, kind, willing, very forgiving animal who I have learned to trust.
Merrey

■ I was doing a round of Grade 4 Show jumping at a ODE and was coming around a right corner looking at the next jump at a good canter speed, when I suddenly realised that my horse wasn't as responsive. I looked down to realise that my right rein had broken. I thought "damn", and I also thought that I would have to stop and so without even realising what I was doing I came back to walk and rode over to the judge to let him know that I could not continue as my rein was broken. I suddenly realised that I had stopped my horse calmly and without fuss from a strong canter to a stop with only one rein connected. It suddenly dawned on me that I had a pretty special partnership and that we were very in tune with each other. I bought this horse off the track many years ago and it made me proud to think we had come this far together. I owned that horse from a 3 year old until he passed away. He was very special!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Kathy

■ I always rode English and then thought that I would give Western riding a try. I put the saddle pad and saddle on my horse without any problem. However, when I went to do up the cinch it did not have a buckle but a piece of latigo. I finally figured out how to do up the cinch, walked my horse around a bit, and then proceeded to tighten the cinch a bit more. Thinking that all was good, I put my left foot in the stirrup and swung my right leg over the cantle of the saddle and placed my foot in the stirrup. I sat there for a moment and then was moving around a bit trying to get a feel for the saddle. I must have placed a bit more weight on the right stirrup because all of a sudden the saddle turned and I fell off! No physical injuries, just my pride. Obviously I had not had the cinch tight enough. So for quite sometime after, my friends would ask me to let them know when I was going to ride Western again.
Diana

■ This wasn't actually WITH the horse but they were watching! Well I was emptying the water trough to clean it, (an old bath tub shared by two paddocks that ran under the fence). I had a lovely muddy mess next to the trough but I wasn't too worried....until I went to climb through the electric fence to scrape the last of the water from the other end of the trough. I slipped in the mud, landed flat on my back in the middle of it which was bad enough on its own, but I had my leg caught in the electric fence tape. It really hurt, over and over again, until I managed to get up. I was really embarrassed and being a road paddock, I expected that someone must have seen so I felt really stupid. I agist so I had to walk back up to the stables covered in mud!!! I had to strip off as much as I could (while still being decent), with fits of laughter from my fellow agistees, AND I had to ride in the car all the way home sitting on a chaff bag so that I didn't ruin the upholstery in the car!!! Mud was literally EVERYWHERE. Wasn't a day I'll forget and I now open the gate to walk through rather than try to climb through, especially if it's wet!
Jen

■ It happened only 2 weeks ago and mortification is the only word I can use to describe the incident that everyone else has been rolling around laughing at!

I have a very large, 4yo gelding. He hadn't had any work for 2 weeks and so I decided to lunge him. Not thinking clearly, I harnessed him up with the roller and thought I would double rein lunge him. We started working and I asked for trot, he immediately went into horsey hysterics and started bucking and tried to break into canter. So here I am trying to control my young 'neddy' and stop myself from going grass skiing with him, when I feel something touch my ankles..... OH DEAR GOD NO!! My jeans have fallen down around my ankles, at a very busy equestrian center on a public holiday when every body was around! I had to just leave them a moment while wrangling my horse to a stop. HOW EMBARRASSING! (Note to self, invest in new belt!).

Rachel

■ I have a purebred Arab gelding with a bit of a water phobia. Every time I would ride him I'd spend about 5 minutes at the dam trying to convince him that it wouldn't hurt him to get his feet wet. Alas, all to no avail as he'd run backwards, or leg yield away from the water no matter what I tried.

Then one day, we tried again and he decided he'd walk straight into the water with no 'carry on' at all. This would have been fabulous, but like an idiot I'd gone to the other side of the dam, which unbeknown to me (or the horse) was not shallow!

He walked straight into a 80cm deep water, lost his footing and went down throwing me off into the water. He floundered for a minute then got up and out of the dam, shook himself off and galloped up the paddock, whinnying his head off whilst I trudged up the paddock after him with my boots full of water, laughing my head off!

Needless to say that didn't help his water phobia one little bit!

Lisa

■ Many years ago I was shoeing a pacing stallion called Rum Robert, when my next customer pulled up in his float with two mares on board. I was bent over the near side front foot of the stallion which was between my knees, when suddenly my hat was knocked off and as I looked up I received a face full of offending organ. Instinctively I gave it a tap with the shoeing hammer, at which action Bob took offence and reared up throwing me over the hitching rail into a patch of mud. My language at this point was unprintable and my friends were no help whatsoever. I'll leave it to the imagination as to what I said when they offered to unload the mares. Oh I just love stallions.

Kevin

■ Well, just the other day my little sister and I were trying to take some nice photos of our two horses Magic and Bucky who are three year old Quarter Horse crosses. All was going well at first, horses were clean, standing still, square, sun was out.... ahh, got a few nice photos. Then Mum's bull terrier puppy decided she wanted to play tug of war and take the horses for a walk! She ran up and grabbed the lead rope then tried to run off with Magic! He was quite happy to follow! They thought it was a great idea! It was so funny to see and it was all caught on video. Ahhhhhh, happy days!

Jessica

■ My horse Mojo bucked me off one day and as I was lying in the dirt moaning he spun around and came flying back to hide behind a nearby tree staring at me with the most tragic guilty expression! Every time I think of it I get a good laugh. Luckily I was not seriously injured.

Kerri

■ My funniest horse moment was when my horse took my cap off my head with his mouth...I later found out that a previous owner had taught him the trick!

Natalie

■ My family free lease our beautiful old paint horse (Cobber 28) to a delightful little girl Jazzy. Her parents have become absolutely 'full on' horsey people in a little over a year. Jazz did an assignment at school about horses, and the teacher was thrilled with her efforts. Jazz was so thrilled that she offered to bring Cobber to school and volunteered her father to help (as 9 year olds do). Now schools being schools, there were many, many rules. The horse can't venture onto the school property and the children can't leave the school grounds, etc, etc. This was resolved by parking on an area by the fence, then the children were ushered to the fence by the teacher and Cobber was unloaded. All went well and Jazzy set about showing how to saddle up. Now Dad knew that Cobber sometimes had a habit of nipping when the girth was done up and so was always on alert holding him firmly at the halter. However he must have been having a male moment and this time forgot to do this. Cobber sensing this, immediately turned and nipped him to the roars of laughter of children and teacher alike. They were immensely amused by this. And all Jazz's Dad could say was 'this is what you don't let happen, one never knows what a horse will do next'. Needless to say this was a topic of conversation in the school grounds and staff room for days.

Christine

■ My daughter went to Waterford to a 'Come and Try Cross Country'. Lana, my daughter, knew that her horse Harley loves water so at the water jump she walked him in and let his reins go. He thought, 'Beauty, time for a swim' but she could not feel him going down until she felt the water on her legs, so she abandoned ship and left me to go in to get him out. As I waded into the water, Harley just laid there so I grabbed the reins and got him up. Then he decided he had time for another swim so down he went again. We had a great time but I was wet for the rest of the day!

Leanne

■ Well, this happened roughly 30 years ago, when my parents owned a country pub in the hinterland of southeast Qld. We used to go on regular trail rides every Sunday, a group of 10 or sometimes even 20 experienced riders. On this particular ride there were 14 of us, all hot and a little tired after a good two to three hour ride through the local rainforest. Those were the days! We regularly called into the pub for a cold one on the way back to the riding school. The horses we would leave reins down, saddles taken off, and they would just graze around the back of the pub on a good half acre unfenced (they usually never went anywhere). On this particular day though, we stayed a little longer than usual (I think the coldies were extra cold that day). On coming out to mount up, there they were, all in a line, up the side of the road heading for home. No calling out was going to stop them, they were on a mission. What could we do? Here we all were all 14 of us, saddles in arms following them the 2 miles home. I often think and laugh to myself at what those drivers-by were thinking of this spectacle. And yep we certainly needed another drink by the time we got home!!

Vicki