

FLASH

Mule of a Lifetime

By Fred Russell



“Flash”

I purchased Flash in 1987 as a young, green broke animal in Kansas. The next several years I rode him exclusively outfitting, guiding and just enjoying the Colorado Mountains. He has always been very friendly, inquisitive and been willing to work for anyone who happened to be riding him at the time. Even though he has always worked better for me, he has not been like most mules who have to get to know you before they are willing to work for you. This is the only animal my brother, a non-rider, will ride even though Flash is only about 14.1 hands and my brother is 6’7” tall and looks a little out of place on him. He has ridden Flash enough on Colorado hunting trips that he will follow me anywhere as long as he is on Flash.

I loaned him to a young lady in The Pikes Peak Long Ears Mule Club a few years ago to ride on a wagon train from just east of Colorado Springs, Colorado, to Calhan, Colorado, for the county fair. There were some runaways with teams which caused

covered wagon tarps to fly around causing numerous people to be bucked off of horses. After everything settled down she rode Flash across one of the tarps and on their way until they were stopped by a horse rider running up to them check book in hand wanting to buy Flash. When she told him he wasn’t for sale he responded that everything was for sale at the right price. She responded that he wasn’t her mule and that he didn’t have enough money to buy him from the owner. She rode him again in the Pikes Peak or Bust Parade in Colorado Springs and even though he had never been in a large parade he proved to be one of the most stable animals in the parade.

Even though I am very particular who I loan him to, I do loan him to a few friends. One of my friends rides him on the Colorado Mule Riders ride. He has ridden him on this ride for several years and Flash has always taken good care of him. Flash is not a game or arena mule but when going into the mountains there is absolutely no animal that is better. Not only will he go anywhere safely in the mountains but he will bring you back as he has a better GPS than any that can be bought. He has taken me back to the trailer in blizzards and in the middle of the night all in areas he had never been in before that day.

Because of his extremely gentle personality, I was referred to Peterson Air Force Base personnel when they were looking for a mule for their pep rally before the Air Force Academy and Army football game last year. I was asked to bring him to Peterson AFB on November 4, 2005 for this rally. I told them I would and then they wanted to know if he was gentle and if people could get on him and if he would put up with people having some fun with him. I assured them that since he put up with me, he would put up with just about anything.

I put my saddle on him before taking him to Peterson AFB and as soon as we arrived people started gathering around us. Soon all of the Air Force Academy cheerleaders were all around and two jumped on him while all of the others crowded around to have their pictures taken with him. As usual he was extremely calm and even seemed to enjoy everyone and their attention. Soon after the cheerleaders moved away, the Air Force Academy “Mascot” arrived to have his picture taken with Flash. I had no idea how he would react since he had never seen anything that looked like the mascot. As he approached, Flash looked at me a couple of times and decided that if I wasn’t bothered there was nothing for him to be worried about and he let the mascot come over to him so they could have their pictures taken together.

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The Air Force cheerleaders having their picture taken with “Flash”

he personnel at Peterson had voted for people to kiss a** and some of the people thought they would kiss him on the nose but were informed they had to kiss the other end. It is a good thing he is a white mule as they had to put lipstick on and their kiss had to show up. When it was all over he was the envy of all of the guys as not only did a lot of guys kiss him but a lot of very pretty young ladies.

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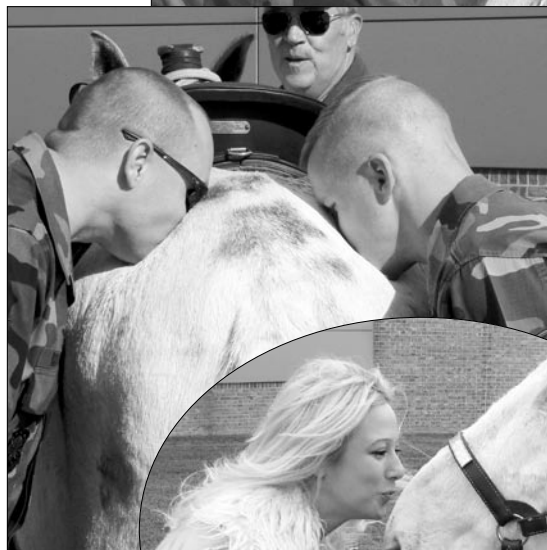
The Air Force Academy "Mascot" and "Flash"

think he was enjoying himself as much as all of the people at the pep rally. We both enjoyed ourselves and not only was it a very good pep rally, it was a successful fund raiser for a worthwhile charity. I would recommend to anyone that has a very calm, gentle mule and has the opportunity to participate in an event similar to this, they should do so. These type of situations are extremely good exposure for mules and for a lot of people it will be the first time they have ever actually seen a mule except for TV and have a total misconception as to what mules are actually like.

Most years Flash is a very busy animal. I ride him on a St. Judes ride I organize every year in the Sangre De Cristo Mountains which brings in much needed money to help children with cancer. Every fall he goes on the four day Colorado Mule Riders ride somewhere in the Colorado Mountains. Once I get him back, I ride him hunting and packing elk in the mountains in October and November.

I have had a lot of mules in the past twenty years but I have never found another one like Flash but I am always looking. I have other mules I am working to take his place some day but I have never found another one as reliable and trustworthy as Flash and probably never will. No matter how many mules I have, when the going gets tough, I always go back to Flash as I trust him with my life and have on numerous occasions and he has always taken extremely good care of me.

Thank you Flash for the wonderful memories and hopefully we will have a lot more in the future.



A few shots of the kissers



Fred Russell riding "Flash" in the beautiful Colorado Rocky Mountains