

Release Number: 2000-21
For Release: 12/16/99

ONE NUTCRACKER STAR IS AN ADOPTED WILD HORSE

This star was born on the rangelands of Nevada. Today he pulls buggies and sleighs.

Star is an eight-year old, black gelding with an easily recognizable white star on his right side. The adopted wild horse may be seen in the Nevada Festival Ballet's presentation of The Nutcracker which is Dec. 17-20 at the Pioneer Center, 100 S. Virginia St., Reno.

The equine cast member was gathered from the Lava Beds Herd Management Area by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s Winnemucca Field Office personnel in February of 1995. About a month later this thin, black horse was spotted at the BLM's National Wild Horse and Burro Center by Richard and Sherie Kollen.

The Kollens were looking over the horses at the Center when they saw Star appear and instantly decided this was the horse for them. Specifically, this was to be Richard's horse.

Star was adopted on March 14, 1995, and Richard set out to train him in an unusual way. He read fiction to Star.

Richard sat in the middle of a pen reading aloud. At one point, six F-4 planes zoomed overhead and Richard stopped reading because of the noise. He was startled when Star suddenly appeared and nosed the book out of his hand. Not to be dissuaded, Richard picked up the book, began to read again and soon worked his hand up the lead rope to Star. He scratched the equine's cheek. The next session, Richard read and scratched Star's neck. Soon he was brushing the horse. By June of 1995, the Kollens took Star to the National Wild Horse and Burro Show in Reno, and came in sixth in the novice class of Trail-In-Hand.

The now sleek horse was just starting to learn. He soon became accustomed to a bit and harness, and then began to master the art of pulling a carriage. Using buggies and carts, the Kollens gradually introduced Star to pulling a variety of carriages, to being around other animals and humans and to maneuvering through traffic.

Wife, Sherie, who had more experience with horses, and the Kollens' small daughter, Misty Dawn, were all right there as Star learned. So was another horse, Duster, a stable mate which was an adopted wild horse born at Palomino Valley, rather than on the range.

The Kollens went back to the National Wild Horse and Burro Show in 1996. This time, Star was in driving classes, and won a first in novice and a second in open.

Star and the Kollens began to participate in the Nevada Carriage Club. They were at Dayton Valley Days, the Sparks Family Parade and monthly outings. But, nothing prepared the Kollens for the desperate call they received in December 1998. The domestic horse involved in The Nutcracker could not perform at the Reno Hilton. Could Star?

Richard gathered his courage, dressed appropriately in tall hat and tails. He admits to a few tense moments as the human-equine team crossed the stage for the first time. But, all went well and soon the cast members were feeding carrot sticks to Star off stage.

Star did perform, and is doing encores this December. The little horse from the Lava Beds mastered pulling a sleigh on wheels, prevailed in finding the proper footing on a slick stage, and shows little stage fright. Star doesn't even seem to mind the cymbals and artificial fog.

- BLM -

NOTE TO EDITOR: For tickets to The Nutcracker, call the Pioneer Center for the Performing Arts at (775) 686-6600 or the Nevada Festival Ballet at (775) 785-7915.

For More Information Contact: Maxine Shane (775) 861-6586