

Chapter 13
Advice For Fat Men:
Never Ride Double On A Little Mule

A mild winter day in Missouri prompted the SAMADS (Sunday Afternoon Marching And Drinking Society) riding club to brush dirt off their ponies and trailer to a near by equestrian park to ride trails. The group, made up mostly of older couples founded by the Grand Poohbah himself, the late Steve Apted. The gray-haired group was centered around eating, drinking and riding their trusted steeds in and out of danger. Danger could mean riding



Steve Apted

their horses across the picnic field , to rescue a runaway horse that so cleverly got away from his owner. Or it could mean the late eighty-something-year-old J. Allen Davis got another leg cramp while riding all day in the heat and had to be lifted out of his saddle by two younger, large-busted female recruits.

I was a new member of The SAMADS Riding Club. There were just a couple of us in the group that rode mules and that prompted a lot of attention from the members, which I didn't mind at all. My

mule had come to the rescue many times to help out members in the riding club, so from time to time, the good deed of honor and courage would be noted at the next group dinner through myself receiving a plaque from the late founder himself, Steve Apted. (Sigh) and it all came by me acting naturally.

I loved receiving awards and plaques because it gave me a sense of accomplishment with my mules . . . that have been known to behave like such big knuckleheads from time to time. At the time, I also guided for Steve Apted's Wilderness Trail Rides. I must confess, this career move took place because I always felt left out at the trail boss dinner table in the Wilderness Lodge and thought that becoming a trail guide would cure that, and it did. Conversation around the evening dinner table was filled with the day's adventures from on the trail.

On this particular mild winter's day, the SAMADS organized riding group gathered their ponies; I



decided to ride "Ringo" the 16:2 hand paint mule under English saddle. Ringo was a major corn ball of a mule if there ever was one but still, a fun ride.

Author on Ringo, the corn-ball paint mule.

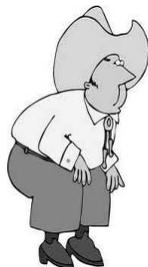
As the story goes, the

group showed up at Castlewood Missouri State Park, saddled their trusted steeds and mounted up in their usual timely fashion. Down the trail we went to live out our fantasy of cowboys and cowgirls in search of adventure or merely an interesting topic to discuss around the dinner table later that evening. Five hundred and fifty yards out, our youngest trail guide, "Mickey" is misplaced from his horse named "Prince", in other words, he flat out got dumped. Mickey's trusted and loyal mount galloped back to the trailer, with a manure eatin' grin on his face. I was loving the moment, because Mickey always acted like such a big shot. His method of operation was to circle a fallen comrade from horseback while in a continuous lope to chant, "Rider Down!, Rider Down!" I always thought this was more



embarrassing to the "wounded" than the fall itself. Mickey then walked back to the trailer to recover his four legged-shaggy piece of property.

In the meantime, the late and sexy, six foot-three inch tall cowboy, named Bill Morgan, had an embarrassing on-screen-Hop-a-long Cassidy moment with



his big, sorrel quarter horse named "Blaze." Blaze had somehow gotten entangled in some vines and that prompted Bill to

quickly step off. During this dismounting process, the agitated gelding, quickly swerved his hip around to collide his big butt with his owner who is now leaning over to pick up his reading glasses. We all know what happens when two butts collide in the physical world . . . the bigger butt always wins. As you have guessed, Bill did not come out as the winner, but he did find his reading glasses while laying face down in the turf.

Bill's horse spooked from the butt colliding incident and took off in a panic at a dead run back to the trailer. In the midst of all this confusion, I remember hearing in the distance, "Loose Horse! Loose Horse!" It was Mickey's voice trailing along with stampeding footsteps that were heard off in the distance. This was surely a premonition of what will happen down the trail next.

Steve Apted, concerned for his senior rider, insisted that he climb on back of someone to ride double, long enough to retrieve his horse from the trailer parking lot. There was one problem; few riders in this bunch were skilled enough to carry a canteen, let alone a second rider. Captain Thom and Stampede Peggy qualified, but they already witnessed a similar incident just last week and decided to play 'dumb.' Steve then looked at me; I

was riding English on Ringo the corn-ball mule at 16:2 hands and clearly this would not be an option for seventy something Bill Morgan, sexy or not. The remaining members casted their concerning glances over to the big porky guy who rode a shiny little black mule named, "Desperado." "Come on," the group chanted, "show us what your mules can do!"

I suggested that perhaps they would want to take off their spurs while I held onto their cowboy hats . . . but men being men, they wanted to dress the part no matter what the circumstances. I think this is the part in the story where my mouth dropped wide open.



Next, long legged Bill Morgan, fully equipped with spurs (among other qualities) climbed on back of 14:2 hand black mule, mistakenly named, "Desperado." She was a sweet little timid creature that didn't have the confidence to kill a fly let alone haul two beefy guys across a field. As it went, the chunky guy on the little black mule in the drivers seat weighed in around 300 with his boots on. I am guessing that saddle weighed in around 40 pounds and with the weight of sexy Bill Morgan . . . all I could think about was that poor little mule!

Bill was hesitant, but the forceful direction coming from Steve Apted prompted him to quickly get into position onto the back of that little, dainty mule.

Once in the passenger seat, the group proceeded at a walk to venture back to the equine trailer parking lot.

Ringo the corn-ball mule could now feel the tension coming from his long-eared friend and he knew trouble was brewing. I could feel it too. I call it "mule savvy," others call it "mule karma." The tension escalated as the little mule stepped out quickly into a trot to help keep her heavy load in balance. After all, she was carrying one guy with a big belly, and the sexy, six foot-four inch tall, Bill Morgan who was determined to look cool through this entire episode . . . clearly all went south from here.



I then rode close behind the little black mule but it was no use. Ringo the corn-ball mule had his ears perked forward the whole time while shuffling his feet, because he could sense what was about to happen next. I pulled back on the reins but Ringo insisted he wanted to hang close to the little black mule in distress.

Bill Morgan tried to ride in a balanced fashion with his hands gripped around the saddle horn while his spurs dug deep into the little mule's flanks the whole time! The fat guy in front leaned forward to make room for his passenger which created more of a challenge for the little mule to try and balance her load. Desperado then traveled faster into a

lope to keep her load in check which made the two cowboy passengers nervous about staying on board; that uncontrollable energy made the mule travel even faster! By now, the little mule progressed into a flat-out gallop while Bill clung to the saddle horn and gripped his custom-made shiny spurs into the little black beauty in hopes to hang on. The beefy guy up front, pulled his



Lonesome Dove straw hat down before the final curtain was about to come down. I noticed he always tried to look his best before a major mule wreck was about to happen.

He looked good alright. The group then knew that trouble could not be avoided, they all galloped to keep up with this rolling dog and pony show, as the little black mule stampeded out of control with my own mule trailing after her. Now, horses and mules were galloping across a field . . . running



amuck. Even though my mule was not responding to my aids, I pretended like I wanted him to run. I wasn't about to look stupid with this bunch!

Next, the stout guy in front pulled heavily on the right rein in hopes to create an emergency stop. The little black mule eventually circled to the right at a full gallop, never losing speed . . . it was like a

spiral mule carousel ride at no charge! Poor Bill was tiring out by now and he simply gave up. His hearing aid flew out of his ear, reading glasses bounced out of his shirt pocket and next Bill himself was airborne! After a couple of gymnastic flips, Bill landed face down into the soft dirt, laying



motionless. I thought for sure the mule ride had killed him. The group finally caught up with the Wild West Performance Group and Bill opened his eyes while giving us



the OK sign with his two fingers. He was not about to admit to any injuries. We then searched for Bill's hearing aid and to no avail, we unanimously decided that cocktails and dinner were in order.

I was worried for Desperado, because I believed she was traumatized for life. Needless to say, that



J. Allen Davis

mule refused to ride double ever again. Bill was mildly shaken and a bit delirious; he was frantically searching for his Harley Motorcycle keys. The group then reminded Bill, he was on a mule that time and not on his Harley.

Thinking back, I do distinctly remember Bill laying motionless on the ground while two large-breasted female recruits rushed to help him to his

feet; all the while J. Allen Davis winked and saluted to his comrade from the saddle for such a wonderful performance.

J. Allen, a trail guide for Wilderness Lodge Trail Rides believed, a man healed so much faster with good looking women hanging around to wait on him. If this is the case then Bill Morgan was in good hands from that moment on.



The lesson is obvious , fat men should never ride double on a little mule. I also realized . . .

I love a good stampede!

