

Manny Kicks Long Ear Lore

By Chris Stuckenschneider

CHAPTER 8: Parting Lingo on Long Ears

"Hup, two, three four ..." time to advance from military mules, to mules in modern times. After seven chapters, you're probably up to your pink ears in mule pride. You can thank me for that. I'm a wordsmith when it comes to extolling our breed's high points. And I'm not referring to our forelocks here.

What could earn a long ear more adoration than being listed in the "Guinness Book of World Records?" Nada, not even horseshoes by Prada. Mega-mules Apollo and Anak held a hallowed place in the 1996 edition of that illustrious record book.

The half-brothers, may they rest in peace, were super-size, the biggest mules on record at the time. Though they've passed on to the big pasture in the sky they left their hoof marks on the lives of many, including their last owners, good folks who provided the impressive giants with an old Kentucky home and hay the last five years of their lives.

Apollo was Jack jumbo, tipped the scales at 2,200 pounds, but Anak ran a close second at 2,100 pounds. Maybe he was off his feed the day they weighed in, or had done too many laps in the paddock.

People really looked up to A & A—they had to. At the shoulders, Apollo was 6-feet, 5 inches tall, and Anak was 6-feet, 3-inches. A handler needed a stepladder to buff their backs, I'll bet.

The Jacks had the same Belgian mare for a mother but different donkeys for daddies. Lands sake, in later life those boys made the ground positively quake when they visited festivals and the Kentucky State Fair, which they did a lot, drawing more wow than a blue-ribbon cow. It is said that when they were lead across a lot striped for parking, they'd never set a hoof down on a white line. The cautious pair treated that paint like a row of cotton—avoided stepping on it at all costs.

Apollo and Anak may have rivaled a baby elephant in size, but they had soft hearts. Lots of mules are docile and easy-going, present party not included. Too bad, so sad, tractors have replaced us on the farm. But, happy day, our popularity as riding mules is rising like the sun that rowdy rooster rousts at dawn.



Photo www.brianbohannon.com

My buddy Mary Anne is

a mule convert. Horses used to be her pleasure ride, but these days she opts for her buckskin Babe, and has an easier time getting into the saddle too. Riders can make do with a shorter mule than a horse, because mules are so strong.

Babe is a doe-eyed beauty—downright loveable, would cuddle up on your lap like a dog if you'd let her. Mary Anne tells everyone how sweet Babe is. Maybe I'll lope by the barn and look her up.



Mary Anne and her mule, Babe.

Now all in our breed aren't exactly low-key. Like people and pups we're individuals. Babe just has an awesome personality, and of course Mary Anne is kind to her, dishing

out love and care, which is essential to animals of all shapes and sizes. Better rein in my emotions—I'm starting to sound sappy.

Hope I've turned a few heads when it comes to respecting long ears. It's been a kick to deliver the straight-bray on contributions mules have made. Before I close, I'd like to leave you with a nugget of wisdom.

The next time someone says you're mule-headed, thank them. That's a compliment worthy of a high five!

Links to More Learnin'



1 Mules Really do Rock!—check out this You Tube video on mules today, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNo8VhbYseA&feature=watch-vrec>

Kickin' Quote:

"There is no more useful or willing animal than the mule. And perhaps there is no other animal so much abused, or so little cared for. Popular opinion of his nature has not been favorable; and he has had to plod and work through life against the prejudices of the ignorant. Still, he has been the great friend of man, in war and in peace serving him well and faithfully. If he could tell man what he most needed it would be kind treatment." — Harvey Riley, 1867

Common Core Standards:
R.CCR.1, R.CCR.2, R.CCR.3, R.CCR.4, R.CCR.5, R.CCR.7,
W.CCR.4, SL.CCR.3, L.CCR.4