

## Memories are made of this

By Betsy Kelleher

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“For through his mane and tail the high wind sings; fanning the hairs, who wave like feathered wings.” Those words are from Shakespeare’s poem, Venus and Adonis, and I saw this quote on Facebook. I don’t care for the rest of his poem, but I love his description of horse hair blown by the wind.

My favorite photos show horses in motion, with flying mane and flowing tail. Those flying hairs are an exciting display of a horse’s beauty (and also very useful during fly season). For shows, we often braid the mane according to breed or discipline, sometimes adding colored ribbon, sometimes braiding the tail to match. Braiding is an art in itself. And when we have to say goodbye to a special riding partner, we often save a portion of mane or tail to use for some memorial item.

I now have a gorgeous piece of horsehair pottery. It was custom made for me, using hair from the tail of my Traveller, by Sandy Schulz of Earth & Wheel in Chesterfield, Missouri . I had seen Sandy ’s work at the Illinois Horse Fair, and I thought it was the most unusual, most beautiful pottery ever! Sandy makes her vases on a potter’s wheel, heating each piece to 1300 degrees before removing it from the kiln. She then throws strands of horsehair against the hot surface, burning a fascinating pattern in black onto the white pottery vase. Every piece has its own unique design. A generous braid of horsehair decorates the lip of the vase, accented with a strand of leather. If you don’t have horsehair for a custom piece, she can use hair that she has in stock. Besides three sizes of pottery that range from \$40 to \$80, she also makes a delightful leaf-shaped platter that comes with a stand, for \$75. Sandy ’s website, [www.earthandwheel.com](http://www.earthandwheel.com), has all the information you need to order online or to contact her by email or phone.

I found a video that actually shows how the hair decorates a hot piece of pottery. Check out <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyfpQbdvygc>. There are other videos on YouTube as well showing this art that is sometimes called horse hair raku. One potter in Pennsylvania also makes picture frames with a similar burned-in design. I’m thinking of getting one of those frames for a prized photo.

I don’t need a memento to remind me of all the wonderful rides Traveller gave me, but my new custom vase somehow helps to ease the loss. I have other things as well: ribbons from hunter pace events and a few horse shows, and lots of photos.

I probably will never again ride the trails with the same relaxed enjoyment that Traveller gave me. A calm, dependable horse really makes a difference! Neither Lady nor Rocky will ever be like my Traveller. But instead of trying to make Lady or Rocky take his place, I am learning to appreciate and enjoy each horse for what it is.

Many horse owners have their horse’s tail hair made into lovely bracelets. Do a search for horse hair bracelets and you should find many sources that offer not only bracelets, but necklaces and

earrings, key chains and tassels for your bridle or saddle or even a zipper pull. I imagine a long braid would make a lovely hat band, but I didn't see any listings with that.

If you want jewelry that is really special and unusual, check out: <http://www.beautiful-horses.com/braidedhorsehair.htm> and scroll down to the Friends Forever bracelet for \$195. Very little hair required for this one, and it is a gorgeous bracelet with a silver medallion center showing a woman and her horse. And <http://solenarodesigns.com> is another site that offers artistic, elegant jewelry at prices to match.

Did you know that hoof clippings can be made into gems for jewelry? I saw an ad in a Horse Illustrated magazine. The website is [www.equinite.com](http://www.equinite.com), and the look is exquisite, like real gemstones. I've already saved some of Lady's hoof cuttings in case I get the urge for a pair of earrings. Equinite jewelry is definitely something to consider and you can enjoy this unique jewelry while you still have your horse.

Going by Facebook posts as well as my own circle of friends, this past year has marked the loss of many horse partners. We all deal with loss in our own way and choose our own means to remember. One friend lost her first horse quite recently and made the decision to have him cremated. I found myself wondering if a horse's ashes would fit into one of Sandy's larger pieces of pottery. If you have an interest, here's a site that I found: <http://www.everlifememorials.com/v/pet-loss/pet-cremation-directory.htm#il>, with listings for various areas. If anyone wants any links from this column, just send me an email (see below). Clicking the link in an email is much easier than trying to copy it off a page of newspaper.

I realize that I still have a piece of Fanny's tail, from January of 1991, and I never did anything with it. Maybe it's time. She was my first horse, the inspiration of my first book, *Sometimes a Woman Needs a Horse*. The first loss is the hardest, but that doesn't make the others easy. Loss is a fact of life, whether we like it or not. Sudden loss is sometimes more difficult, as in Fanny's case. I think my acceptance of Traveller's loss was eased some by the length of time I had to think about it—almost a year to prepare myself, to take care of Traveller the best I could, and to watch his strength decline until I knew it was time to let go. While I couldn't ride him for that last year, his horsey greeting when I entered the barn and his wonderful caring personality still gave me joy. There is a peaceful relief to know a special friend is no longer in pain or no longer limited in enjoyment of life, and you did what you could to make his life as comfortable as possible. I was thankful for all those years I was able to enjoy our trail rides and other events. Do we ever appreciate our horses enough while we have them? Think about it, and do what you can while you can.

Whenever I've lost a horse, I went searching for another one right away. It helped to keep my life moving forward, looking toward new experiences. Now, I still have Lady and Rocky and I don't need another horse. I believe that every horse we own has something to add to our lives or some lesson to help us learn. If we pay attention and listen, we will find the purpose this horse has come to us.

There is a time to be born and a time to die, as it states in Ecclesiastes 3:2. Also a time to mourn and a time to laugh. If we learn anything from our horses, we should learn to live in the present

and to enjoy what we have. Let us know the joy of today, of being alive and well, in spite of aches and pains or fears of the future or sorrows of the past. Let us have a thankful heart for every good thing that God allows in our lives.