

# Happy Trails Says Good-Bye To Two Wonderful Horses

1. *Paix*, a Paint Mare who had just arrived at the sanctuary a few days ago
2. *Dixie*, a retired Standardbred mare who had come to Happy Trails through the Amish Horse Retirement Program several years ago

## PAIX

About a week ago, Happy Trails assisted the Greater Akron Humane Society with the removal of two paint horses from a situation of severe neglect. One horse is an older mare. The other horse is a younger stallion. Both were emaciated, the mare about 400

lbs. underweight and the stallion about 300 lbs. underweight according to the vet.

Charges will be filed against the owner, but this tribute isn't about the owner. It's about the horses.

The stallion is expected to make a full recovery at this point and appears to be doing well with his rehabilitation and re-feeding program.

The mare, however, was one of the saddest situations I have ever seen.

In addition to being emaciated, she didn't have a good leg to stand on. Her one front leg severely bowed out and she almost walked on the side of her hoof. That same knee was enlarged/calcified to a size larger than a softball. Her left knee was enlarged and inflamed also. Her hind quarters were weak and her tendons blown. Her one back ankle would visibly "snap" when she walked, and she would fidget from leg to leg, trying to stand comfortably.

After a long and involved conversation with the vet about her quality of life, we all agreed that there was absolutely nothing we could do to fix all of her health issues and make her comfortable. If she was to gain the weight needed to be healthy, this would create a greater strain on her already-compromised legs. The vet explained that her legs were already causing her a great deal of pain. The beautiful mare was given pain meds, and planned to set up a time in the next day or so to let her go. We agreed that since she was just rescued, she should be given the opportunity to eat and not feel hunger, to be able to lay down in a dry stall full of thick bedding (not a



urine/feces soaked floor like she was used to), and to be loved by all the people caring for her. She had been locked in a stall for the past two years. She deserved the taste of freedom, if only for a few short days.

However, the decision of which day to euthanize her was not really to be ours.

We had planned to call the vet on Wednesday to set up the time to help her cross into the world of the spirit. On Tuesday, the sweet mare laid down in her comfortable stall and could not get back up on her own. She was giving it a valiant try, but her legs were not cooperating. We called the vet.

By the time the vet arrived, the mare had struggled to her feet, though it was not a pretty site. We talked about the situation again, quite thoroughly, with the vet. "Is euthanasia the right choice for this horse?" I asked for the billionth time, just to reassure myself. "It's the *only* choice," was the reply.

Surrounded my myself, staff members Ashley and Ditte, and intern Leah, the pretty blond and white paint mare was lead over to a grassy area of the paddock. We took



turns giving her apples and treats and grain. We let her eat whatever she wanted to. We hugged her and pet her and massaged her and told her how much she was loved by her new family at Happy Trails. We explained that we loved her enough to do what her previous owner did not love her enough to do, and that was to let her go and help her end her suffering.

Doc Hill asked us what her name was. We looked at each in disbelief. We had put together a long list of potential names for the

two new horses, but hadn't chosen a specific one yet for either horse. The only one I could remember from our list that seemed to fit perfectly was the French name, Paix. It's pronounced "Pay", and means 'peace' in French. It seemed appropriate that since we couldn't offer her healing in this life, at least we could offer her peace by helping her journey on into the next life.

After asking permission of the horse, we saved a piece of her mane and tail to symbolically take the lessons that she taught us and carry them with us to help the next horse in need of rescue.

Though she was only with us for several days, she touched many lives and made a great impact on us.

I am sorry for what you went through, Paix. It was an honor to have your life touch ours, and we are grateful for the time we had with you. May you be experiencing

the freedom you did not have these last two years as you now run and play across wide open grassy fields and be surrounded with your other horsey friends who passed on before you. Someday when we meet again, I hope you'll offer me a ride on your four good legs, for I would happily accept. Until then, we love you...be free....

## **DIXIE**

About six years ago Dixie came to Happy Trails through the Amish Horse Retirement Program. Eli loved his buggy horse, but she could no longer serve the family or pull a cart. He didn't want to send her through the auction, knowing she would end up in the hands of a meat buyer. He heard about the Happy Trails Amish Horse Retirement Program through a relative and gave us a call. Dixie had severe arthritis and tendon issues, and spent the last several years of her life living with a truly wonderful foster home about a mile away from Happy Trails. She was loved, cared for, spoiled, and had another

rescued horse for a friend.

Dixie's leg issues continued to deteriorate as time went along, and more and more often she would lay down for extended periods of time. The last week of her life she was laying down more than she was standing up.

On her last day, I received a call late that night from Dixie's foster mom, letting us know that Dixie had been down for most of the day and wasn't getting up. I went to visit and found the beautiful, sleek black mare laying down, not attempting to get up in any way. She would look back at her stomach, then lay flat with her head stretched out.

Dr. Peradine from Cleveland Equine arrived and assessed the situation. Though she was able to

pull Dixie to her feet, the situation was very grave. "She appears almost neurologic now," the vet told us. Dixie stood there in front of us with her back legs underneath her, her front legs not working properly, and in a futile effort to move the best she could do was to start to spin around in a circle.

We all agreed that there was nothing more we could do for the nearly-30-year-old



mare. We gave her treats and a big bucket of snacks. We let her nuzzle her horsey friend, Grandpa Walton, for a few minutes as they said their good-byes.

Ashley, myself, and foster mom Deb, was standing with Dixie as she was tranquilized. After the final drug was administered, Dixie lay down quietly and moved on to the next part of her journey in the world of the spirit.

The care and love that was given to this retired Amish horse during her time in the Happy Trails program was above and beyond anything she could have ever hoped for. Deb was broken-hearted at the loss of her foster horse, and asked that Dixie be buried on her property. We agreed that there was no other alternative to consider, and that Dixie should be laid to rest at the home of people who loved her so very much.

Knowing Dixie, she definitely won't be resting in peace. That mare has things to do! She'll be running and playing and kicking up her heels and checking out what's going on everywhere. Enjoy your new life free from pain Miss Dixie, and run like the wind to wherever your heart takes you! We'll definitely miss you, and our thoughts and prayers and good energy goes out to Deb and the Robinson family (who, by the way, have already taken in another foster horse for Happy Trails). What big hearts, what kind people, what caring souls...thank you, Deb, for being a part of Happy Trails.