

Ranger Horse Donald - A Lifetime of Service



By Sergeant Phyllis Forrest,
Lake Metroparks Ranger Department, Mounted Division

Most police horses enter public service between the ages of four and twelve, so ten years of service is considered an accomplishment well worth the care, training and general upkeep required to maintain them. Two decades on the job is unheard of—well almost.

Lake Metroparks Ranger horse Donald completed his twentieth year of faithful service to the citizens of Lake County in September 2007. A beautiful chestnut Quarter Horse gelding with a muscular frame and wide white blaze, Donald was donated to the Ranger Department in 1987 at the age of six. Then Chief Doug McLean, who had started the Mounted Unit years earlier, wrote the following under the comments section of Donald's donation contract: "This horse has a few problems, but considering his age and temperament, I think he will work out just fine." He sure did. We're still waiting for his "few problems" to show themselves.

I remember my first ride on Donald, the day he came to Farmpark, home of our Mounted Unit. He was smooth, responsive and seemingly unflappable. He easily accepted switching from Western to English style riding, was unfazed by car and wagon traffic and the sights and sounds (and smells!) of the many Farmpark animals didn't concern him at all. Donald loaded and hauled perfectly in the trailer, stood

calmly when tied, and proved to be an extremely surefooted trail horse. He has endured all types of "nuisance training" over the years and he has readily accepted every type of noise and distraction we've come up with.

Although he enjoys an occasional body scratching, Donald is not an overly affectionate horse. He puts up with the petting, but those of us who know him well are aware that his mind is really on his next meal. He is loyal, however. For example, back in 1995, Donald and I ran into a nest of ground bees at Hogback Ridge Park. We were both getting stung repeatedly and Donald began bucking. I came off and started running, careening



Sgt. Phyllis Forrest, Ranger Taya Workum and Ranger Pat Tycast on Donald, Rocco, and Slick.

What are the basic standards for potential Ranger horses?

- 4 to 12 years of age
- 15.2 hands or taller at the withers
- Geldings preferred
- Solid colors preferred
- Mentally and physically sound
- Solid foundation in basic training at the walk, trot, and canter

**All horses are taken on a 60 day probationary period.*

What are the benefits of donation?

- Knowing that your horse will be well cared for while providing useful public service.
- Donations are tax deductible
- Recognition of your donation/ name on stall at Farmpark

Sgt. Forrest and Donald on patrol.



Sgt. Forrest and Donald on a winter search exercise.

The Lake Metroparks Mounted Unit

The Lake Metroparks Ranger Department is the law enforcement branch of Lake Metroparks. The Mounted Unit, headquartered at Farmpark, is home to four donated Ranger horses, four Mounted Rangers, the Ranger Department Volunteer Supervisor and 45 volunteer Mounted Posse members. The Posse is a dedicated group of highly trained civilians who assist the Ranger Department with their personal horses. Duties include park patrols, programs, parades and traffic control at special events. The Posse volunteers 8,000 hours each year to the citizens of Lake County. Since 1994, the Mounted Unit has maintained an active Emergency Response Team (ERT), specially trained in search and rescue. For more information on joining the Posse, contact Lisa Sintic at 440-256-2144.

wildly through the woods. Several minutes later, I realized that Donald was trotting right behind me as if to say, "Get on me you dummy and I'll get us both out of here," which he did. Donald knows every square inch of our parks. I am convinced that if I were to place him in the middle of any park, in the dark, he would meander his way out to where he thought the trailer should be parked.

Donald has been solid as a rock over the years and he's been relied upon to work some impressive jobs. He has worked VIP security at several Presidential visits and escorted Governor Voinovich's wagon around the Farmpark. He has nobly worn the American flag at countless Honor Guard events and police and military funerals. Local news celebrities like Kenny Crumpton, Loree Vick and Jenny Crimm have broadcast from atop his strong back. He has searched for children and adults, babysat new horses and riders and won honors in mounted police competitions among many other noteworthy accomplishments. These are not jobs that just any horse can do. They usually involve helicopters, 21 gun salutes, bagpipes and even cannons, which scare most horses. As you can see, Donald is a very special horse.

Donald has seen many Ranger horses come and go over the years, 17 of them to be exact, not including his three current stable mates Slick, Rocco and Treasure. The longest service given besides Donald's was 10 years from a feisty Arabian horse named Zam from 1985 to 1995.

At age 26, Donald is in excellent health. He still does park patrols, programs, parades and special events, and he still baby sits other horses and riders. Whether he is aware of it or not, he is a celebrity in his own right and is known not only throughout the county but across the state. He's the only horse at Farmpark with a personal fan blowing into his stall to keep him cool in the summertime and is the only horse to have his hoof print embedded in the cement in front of Farmpark's arena bleachers. As you can see, Donald is loved and respected by all who know him.

His stamina, strength, courage and pure heart have brought safety and joy to countless people over the years. I feel honored to have known such a horse. Thank you Donald, from all you have touched over the years, for a lifetime of service.

"On the bit" at a mounted police competition. Donald is second horse.



One of many Posse musical ride performances. Donald is in the center.

Donald's Stats 1987-2007:

Park patrols: 4,000

Public contacts: 80,000

Programs: 300

Parades: 200

Special events: 400

Honor Guard/VIP events: 100

