

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

By Kenda Lenseigne

From a distance, a black and white paint catches my eye. Her color is striking; her conformation is correct. She has a nice hip and shoulder and glides on the top of the ground elegantly, her carriage barely etching a line the dirt. I watch her work a pattern and can see in an instant that she has heart – the kind of heart that is defined by a willingness to try and is proven with consistency on the clock. From a distance, she is worth an introduction. After an introduction, I am resolute that she's worth her weight in gold.

Meet Rosie, a 17-year-old mare owned by Bobby and Tasha Chevarria of Kiowa, Colorado. Although there are many words that can describe her, I'll just start with the obvious: Rosie has only one eye. A horse with one eye in many disciplines would be labeled unusable, or at the very most limited to certain types of work, but not Rosie.

If we can stop for a moment and think about how a small bend in fate's road can change a destiny, and how the ripple effect can affect many lives, I believe Rosie's story is a testament to that. She was on her way to the sale barn after being deemed useless for the ranch job that she'd been working for most of her life, due to the loss of her right eye to cancer. With her disability, she was now considered disposable after many years of outstanding service. It's a harsh reality, but sometimes that's just what humans do.

Bobby had grown to know Rosie while working for the ranch and although she had some quirks (and what mare doesn't), he liked how she was built and how she always seemed to adjust her work flow according to who might be riding her. He and Tasha decided that she deserved better than the impending doom that lingered around the sale barn for a one eyed horse, and for \$400 changed Rosie's destiny to a brighter future. Sometimes that's just what humans do.

"Our first intention was to find a person willing to take care of a quirky, one-eyed mare. We could never have guessed then how much that quirky, one-eyed mare would take care of us." Tasha explains,



"We started making calls and putting out feelers for someone who might be interested in a companion type animal. It wasn't about selling her for money, we just wanted her to be cared for and not thrown away."

After the idea of a "first intention" faded away, like any Cowboy Mounted Shooter, Bobby grabbed his .45's to see what the ol' girl might do around gunfire. Needless to say, and quite literally, she didn't blink an eye at the noise. "The weekend came and we took her to a shoot to help set balloons and lope through a few time only runs." Rosie fit in like she'd been a shooter forever. "At that point we were starting to think that maybe we didn't need to be in a hurry to find her a new home." Tasha said.

To me, as a professional horse trainer, finding a horse that is a one-step fit into mounted shooting is like winning the lottery – it doesn't happen very often. If or when it does, it's a "pinch me" moment. In this case, the Chevarrias had a winning ticket.

At the time, Bobby, a men's level three was forced to retire his horse due to soundness issues. You can guess who quickly moved to first chair. Tasha recalls, "Rosie only got better and tried harder. Between November 2012 and September 2015, she carried Bobby from a level 3 to a level 6, and all but just a few of those were overall wins". Now, I'll spare you having to pull out your phone and do the math here, but that means in 3 short seasons, Rosie and Bobby won almost nine Overall titles to secure their place amongst the upper echelon of the sport.



To add to Rosie's list of family accomplishments, Tasha, L4, found herself horseless just two weeks before the 2015 World Championship. Rosie stepped in again and Tasha came away as a money winner in this very tough ladies class. Tasha explains, "Rosie is now starting to do her most important job yet. Our 5-year-old son Callen has started riding her. She's the same

horse for him in and out of the arena, always aware of her rider and his well-being. He's gaining confidence with every ride and loving the independence."



Not only has Rosie put a golden hoof into the game of mounted shooting, but she still plays a valuable role as the family's working ranch horse. When she's not shooting, she spends most of her spare time sorting, gathering and dragging calves for branding.

"We started out trying to help an unfortunate, disadvantaged creature whose potential seemed to have been removed with her eye. Instead we found a willing and graceful partner with more heart and ability than we could ever have found by looking only for beauty, bloodlines, or past accomplishments. Needless to say, Rosie has found her forever home."

If you're looking for a horse then the basic rules still apply – conformation, soundness and temperament are absolutely important. But don't be too quick to write off an animal that doesn't fit a conventional mold. Sometimes having a bit more to overcome means the horse has to work a little harder, and by doing so has a lot more to give. And sometimes, beauty isn't just in the eye of the beholder.

