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WEST POINT ACADEMY MASCOTS EXHIBIT AT LTR

MEREDITH HODGES - LUCKY THREE RANCH



- Developing the West Point Academy Mule Exhibit at *LOVELAND LONGEARS MUSEUM & SCULPTURE PARK*
- Discussion on Working with the Cadets at West Point Academy
- Working with U.S. Veteran soldiers who are "labeled" with PTSD
- Collection of Military Tales of Mules and Service
- Encourages Submissions of Military Stories for the Exhibit
- Meredith *Tells It Like It Is*. A Lady Muleskinner with Grit in the Mule World
- West Point Academy Mule Mascots

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www.MuleTalk.Net or www.LuckyThreeRanch.Com/Podcast-Appearances/

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
The mules are in the corral. Welcome to Mule Talk. And I'm Cindy K. Roberts, your host.
A reoccurring guest on Mule Talk this week. And the lady needs no introduction. She's at the top of her game. Meredith Hodges from Lucky Three Ranch.

Welcome back, Meredith.

Meredith Hodges:
Well, thanks, Cindy. Good morning. (laughs)

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
All right. Attagirl. Okay. Now let's get to the meat of it. We're gonna talk about West Point Academy and their mascot, which is the mule. So let's get started.

Meredith Hodges:
I would like to get started by saying that those of us who love mules know that they have been much maligned over the years. People have just misunderstood them and conjured up sayings like ***stubborn as a mule***. It's really difficult to change the general way of people think about them. Even today, people are saying those kinds of things. ***People consider them UGLY and STUBBORN, and they don't know why we're even riding them!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith Hodges:
They just don't really GET Longears so they don't even give them a chance. But, mules are so much more ***affectionate*** and ***personable*** than horses when you develop a relationship with them. It's a *give and take* conversation. They have a way of shaping us up, a way of humbling us when we are being too arrogant and not acting as polite as maybe we should.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Oh, yeah.

Meredith Hodges:
My ***Training Program*** evolved quickly with my introduction to mules. I got tired of fighting with them every time I tried to be the ***Leader*** like the ***Horse Trainers*** suggested. That approach worked pretty well with ***Horses***, but not well at all with ***LONGEARS***! ***I really should have been thinking about us as Equal Partners. We needed to negotiate with each other to get the best result from both of us.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith Hodges:
I learned to be polite with them and reward their ***Good Behaviors*** with crimped oats. I took to heart what my ***Grandmother*** said when she told me, "***You need to begin with good posture and couple it with good manners.***" And I found that when I did that, they realized that I cared about them as a whole. I not only cared about them because I wanted to ride them, but I cared about how they felt and I paid close attention to their ***General Overall Health and Well-Being***. That's why I structured my ***Management and Training Program*** the way that I did.

A long time ago, a ***Horse Trainer*** told me that I was spoiling them and if I kept feeding *treats* to my mules like that I was going to get mauled one day. But you were out here with me today, Cindy, and saw the way that the 10 mules in the pasture behaved toward you and me even *WITH* the oats in the ***Fanny Pack*** strapped around my waist.

They were quite respectful. My mules have really become amazing to me. They're my friends and they do not attack me. They're all little soldiers. They all line up and they have perfect manners. They don't push, they don't shove and they don't even fight with each other now. Most of my mules are now between the ages of 30 and 36 years old. If they were going to mess me up, it would have happened by now! (laughs)

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Exactly.

Meredith Hodges:
I was thinking about when we decided to discuss ***West Point and I*** was reminded of the stories that my ***Grandmother*** used to tell me about ***World War I***, ***World War II*** and going through the ***Depression Era***. Everything that my ***Grandmother*** said keeps popping into my head, especially the stories that she used to tell me. Those stories showed me how important ***Longears*** really were back then. ***It was very clear that each member in the family had vital roles to play.***

The Elders told their LIFE STORIES to the younger family members about the hardships that they suffered and how they dealt with it. These stories shaped the character, attitudes, confidence and courage of the children as they grew into adulthood and picked their independent roles in their communities.

The ***Veterans*** we have today went all over the world to fight for our country. When they fought during ***World War I*** and ***World War II*** the ***General Populace*** that was left behind was still helping our soldiers from ***Home***. They were rolling bandages, manufacturing arms, packaging food and supplies and shipping them to the soldiers in battle. ***When the soldiers returned from war, we gave them a Ticker-Tape Parade in APPRECIATION and lauded them for their efforts.***

It was really not about them being Heroes as much as it was about our cooperative effort and caring about God, Family and Country. It was about doing something meaningful to maintain OUR FREEDOM, being GRATEFUL for all that we have and willing to FIGHT for it. When we are UNITED in our CAUSE, we are fighting for the same things. Our Mules, Donkeys, Horses and other animals were right there fighting right alongside our soldiers.

Meredith Hodges:
It's pretty amazing, isn't it?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
It is. It's awesome.

Meredith Hodges:
People in ***America*** used to be much more aware and united with a ***Common Purpose***. ***Our Soldiers, Police force, our Fire Fighters, Staff in the Hospitals and Tradesmen would help people every day of their lives in their careers. They do it because that's their mission in life and that's where their Gifts from God have led them.*** When you view things like that you're more interested in asking other people, "*What's going on with you? What do you do?*" ***You learn things from others rather than pushing your own point of view on people. You learn to CARE and you learn to LISTEN to what they have to say.***

We sometimes don't really appreciate the efforts that are being done on our behalf. Since ***Big Tech*** established all of these ***toys*** for us, people don't even know how to engage in a meaningful ***face-to-face conversation*** anymore. They are too buried in their electronics. In my ***Longears Training Program*** I do not allow ***cell phones*** in the arena during lessons. I made it this long without using one and they *might* be helpful in an emergency, but if you are riding in the mountains, you will most likely be out of range to call anyone anyway. ***It would be best to just abide by the most important general rule of TRAIL RIDING AND NOT RIDE ALONE! I do believe Cell Phones ought to be left at home when you are with your equines!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith Hodges:
Just use a little ***Common Sense and the Buddy System when you do anything***. ***Johnny Joey Jones*** wrote a ***GREAT*** book, ***Unbroken Bonds of Battle***! He is a ***Marine Corps Veteran*** who reached the rank of ***Staff Sergeant***. ***Jones*** suffered a life-changing injury in ***Afghanistan*** resulting in the loss of both his legs below the knees.

In ***Unbroken Bonds of Battle***, ***Johnny Joey Jones*** tells the stories of those very warriors who for years were supportive and inspired him on the battlefield and off. ***Through unfiltered and authentic conversations with American Heroes in every branch of service Joey tackles the big questions about life, loss and of course, hunting Powerful Life Lessons are strewn throughout these Personal Oral Histories.***

Since his recovery he has dedicated himself to improving the lives of all Veterans and their Families. As ***Johnny Joey Jones*** says, "***Life only really starts when we start serving others. For many people, military service isn't simply a job. It's a ticket out of a lonely society and into a family of Enduring Bonds***. ***In the military, you're there for life. In reality it wasn't really a job. And there's a reason why we call those efforts we all undertake a 'mission'. A job is a thing you do. A 'mission' is a Life you choose and the actions you undertake to ensure that Lives and Ways of Life are preserved. You show up, you do your job, and you go above and beyond what's expected and do what's needed.***"

I believe that is how I am serving Longears by identifying the misconceptions about them and enlightening a skeptical society to the TRUTH about Longears! By erecting this exhibit about the West Point Military Academy and their Mule Mascots, we are serving BOTH Mules and Soldiers at the same time.

After the ***Vietnam War***, our ***Soldiers*** were demonized and misunderstood much like mules have always been maligned. People seem to be quick to *JUDGE* and slow to *LEARN* the ***Complete and Detailed Stories*** about our ***American History***. I hope the ***Loveland Longears Museum & Sculpture Park*** will be a place to ***CLARIFY America's honorable Historical Evolution***. ***We are building exhibits for EVERY branch of the military, but our favorite branch MUST BE the West Point Military Academy because of their amazing MULE MASCOTS! Our "mission" is TO HONOR OUR HEROES WHO SERVE!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Oh, exactly.

Meredith Hodges:
I think this attitude works with Mule Training and ALL relationships. When you learn how to negotiate, then things work out really well. With mules, I was humbled more times than I could even count. But I noticed I was becoming a better person. I was more caring about other people. I think that those of us who have mules have our egos tempered by these guys on a regular basis just to keep us honest. That might be why our ***Mule Shows*** and the people that have ***Longears*** are so much nicer to be around. ***We're all in it together and take a lot of flack because we ride mules.*** (laughs)

Riding Longears gives us this feeling of being united together. We do have an interest in each other, our own mules, in each other's mules and what we're doing with them. ***We want other people to like them as much as we do so we try to be good ambassadors.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right. Right.

Meredith Hodges:
From it's beginning, I sponsored the ***Hearts and Horses Therapeutic Riding Program*** for 26. It was a really small program when it started, but it's huge now. We greatly expanded the ***Programs*** that we offer, the ***Research and Treatments*** that we do and are partnered with other entities in various fields of study. ***We care for the Disabled, At-Risk Kids, Autistic, Elderly Folks, People with Alzheimer's and Dementia and our Veteran Heroes with PTSD.***

The Therapeutic Value of an equine is vastly underrated. They are better Psychotherapists than anyone else. They just have a Special Sense about them. When people are supervised and allowed to interact with equines, amazing things can happen! The ***Veterans*** who engage in our program and come out here to ride are doing so much better than anyone who participates in other programs that do not involve equines.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Sure.

Meredith Hodges:
Actually, my interest in **West Point Mule Mascots** began when my ***Graphics Artist*** gave me a ***West Point T-shirt*** and a **Ball Cap** for my birthday. I thought, "***Wow, this is very timely and totally COOL.***"

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
(laughs)

Meredith Hodges:
When I began exploring the concept of the ***West Point Exhibit***, it occurred to me that my friend ***Steve Townes*** who is now retired, still donates mules to the ***West Point Mule Mascot Program*** and could conceivably help me a lot. In addition to the ***Live Mules and Cadets*** on the sidelines they also had their ***Mascot Mule in Costume***. We were digging through all the ***Information and Photographs*** on the ***Internet*** about ***West Point***. Finding the stories about the ***West Point Mules*** was more difficult than I thought it would be. People at ***The West Point Museum*** didn't even know that the ***MULE*** was ***West Point's Mascot*** and had *nothing* for us.

Steve was a tremendous help and gave us a lot of things to put on display. When we went looking for stories about the mules, they were limited. ***Most of the stories and pictures they had were about the "guy in the costume" at the football games. I thought, "Well, isn't that par for the course?"***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Oh, really?

Meredith Hodges:
The live mules *WERE* standing on the sidelines at the ***Football Games***, but not mentioned in the text of the articles It reminded me of all those ***Historical Pictures*** with the ***Horses*** in the foreground and the ***Mules*** in the background! I thought, "***Okay, all right, we're going to do this and make a display like no other***."

Meredith Hodges:
So we really dug DEEP! We found out where every ***Army-Navy Game*** has ever been played. We contacted the ***Press*** in all of those different cities and found out what stories they wrote. We are not only doing the story about ***West Point***, but we are filling up binders full of ***Mule/Military/Stories*** that we're calling ***Mule Tales.*** The series is about mules that are connected to the ***Military***, mules connected to ***Anyone of Service*** and stories about mules that have been taken on by ***Normal People*** doing ***Spectacular Things*** with mules!

We are trying to put this display together so that people who come here will be able to see the 15 ***Mule Mascots*** that ***West Point*** has had since 1938. We've got a ***Digital Photo Frame*** that features each of them, Six of them with their individual stories and a ***Poster Board*** about ***West Point History***.

We're filling up these binders with ***Mule Tales*** with answers to any questions that might arise with our ***Tourists***. They can pull the binders right out of the bookcase, sit down and read for as long as they want. They can have things copied and take them home with them. It will be very *interactive* the way that we're doing it. The entire museum is an ***Honest Tribute TO OUR HEROES WHO SERVE! Rather than just saying, "Thank you for your service***," with this display and the others, we're saying, ***"We understand your Sacrifice and the Selfless Gifts that you've given. Thank you for directing us how to become better citizens. Thank you to our Soldiers and the Longears that fought beside them. This is their story together."***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Oh, wow

Army West Point Mule Mascots

Two mule, the Heirs of a Tradition dating back to 1899, have been added since 2024 to serve as Army Mascots for the Corps of Cadets at the U. S. Military Academy Sporting Events and various Public Relations Spirit Support Events as of 2026.

Ranger V (formerly known as **Rye)** is now an official ***Live Mule Mascot*** for the ***United States Military Academy at West Point*** who reported for duty in August 2026 making her the ***20th Army Mule Mascot***. According to ***Steve Townes***, 2026 is the ***126th year of Mule Mascots at West Point. It's one of the longest tenures of animal mascots in all of college football.*** There are usually three mules on duty: two in the stadium and one in training. and it takes a year to get them ready to serve in the stadium, *with loud crowds, brass bands, cannons booming and small children running around.*

Paladin is an official ***Live Mule Mascot*** for the ***United States Military Academy at West Point*** who reported for duty on March 31, 2016. He reported for duty during a simulated ***Reception Day (R-Day) Ceremony*** wearing a ***Traditional Plebe Red Sash***. ***Paladin*** was ***Gifted to West Point by Steve Townes (Class of 1975), CEO of Ranger Aerospace.*** He was formerly known as ***Apache*** and ***Rocky***. He is ***Half-Thoroughbred*** and shorter than earlier mascots like ***Ranger III*** and ***Stryker.*** ***Mules have served as West Point and U.S. Army mascots symbolizing endurance since 1899.***

Three mules, the Heirs of a Tradition dating back to 1899, currently serve as Army Mascots for the Corps of Cadets at the U. S. Military Academy Sporting Events and various Public Relations Spirit Support Events as of 2024.

Ranger III, who was formerly known as ***Jack***, stands over 16 hands tall and is one of the two current ***Army Mules*** that were commissioned into service in 2011. He was trained by ***U.S. Army Major Anne Hessinger***, who was a ***Veterinarian at West Point*** from 2003-2006. ***Ranger*** is named, like his predecessors, for the ***75th Ranger Regiment*** as well as all past and present ***Army Rangers***. ***Ranger*** was given to the academy as a ***Gift*** by ***Steve Townes, USMA 1975***.

Stryker, who was formerly known as ***Abe,*** is a half brother to ***Ranger III*** and stands just slightly shorter than him. With a slightly calmer personality than his ranger-qualified brother, ***Stryker*** was also trained by ***MAJ Hessinger*** and donated by ***Townes***. In addition to his smaller size, ***Stryker*** can be identified by the fact that he has a forelock, while ***Ranger*** does not.

Raider (formerly known as ***Joker***) is the ***Senior Mule***. He arrived on Sept. 23, 1995 and was formally welcomed to the ***Academy*** at a ***Pre-Game Ceremony*** prior to the ***Army-Colgate Football Game*** on Oct. 28, 1995. He was foaled in 1989 by a ***Missouri Fox Trotter Champion*** mare and sired by a ***Kibler's*** jack. He is sorrel (red) in color with a "star" in the center of his forehead and an "R" tattooed on his left hip. In October 1992 ***Raider*** was loaned to the ***USMA Cadets*** by his owner, ***Jim Robertson*** of ***Wayland***, ***MO.***, to serve as a ***"surrogate" Mule Mascot*** for the ***Army-Quincy University Soccer Game at Quincy, Ill. Raider*** was donated to the ***Academy*** by the ***Quincy Notre Dame High School Foundation*** through the efforts of ***Herb Wellman***.

Ranger II (also known as ***George***) is the second mule named ***Ranger***. Two other recent ones were accepted into the ***Corps of Cadets*** during the ***Army-Holy Cross Football Game*** on Sept. 7, 2002 and were donated by ***Townes.*** He is named in honor of the ***75th Ranger Regiment***. He is black in color and was foaled on July 12, 1997. His mother was a ***Quarter*** **Horse** mare and father was a ***Standard Jack***. He came to ***USMA*** from ***Independence, KS. Ranger II*** was a ***Trail-Riding*** mule prior to becoming an ***Army Mule Mascot***.

General Scott (also known as ***Scotty***) is named for ***Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Willard W. Scott Jr.***, former ***USMA Superintendent*** and avid ***Army Mule*** supporter. His name was selected by ***Army Fans*** from four suggested names (***Thunder, General Scott, Warrior*** and ***Storm***) on the ***Army Sports*** website at ***www.goarmywestpoint.com***. He is black in color and was foaled on May 27, 1999. His mother was a ***Half Percheron*** mare and his father was a ***Standard Jack***. He hails from ***Hannibal, MO.***, where he was a pasture-raised mule.

The choice of the ***Mule as a Mascot*** reflects the long-standing usefulness of this animal in ***Military Operations*** - *hauling guns, supplies and ammunition.* ***Strong, hearty and persevering, the mule is an appropriate symbol for the Corps of Cadets.***

The first ***Army Mule***, however, pulled an ***Ice Wagon***. He became a mascot when an officer at the ***Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot*** decided that ***Army*** needed something to counter the ***Navy Goat*** in the 1899 game between the ***Rival Service Academies***.

So the ***Ice-Wagon Mule*** - an oversized white animal - was curried and groomed, then outfitted with leggings, a collar and a gray blanket. Black, gold and gray streamers fluttered from the mule's ears and tail.

The first meeting between the two mascots ended, according to ***Military Academy Legend***, when the mule whirled and "*hoisted that astonished goat toward the* ***Navy*** *stands to the delight of the yelling, laughing crowd*." Twenty-five thousand people saw that game, a huge crowd for that time. It was the first ***Army-Navy Game*** in ***Franklin Field*** at ***Philadelphia*** and ***Army won, 17-5***.

Although not much is known of ***Army's Mascots*** from 1899-1936, mules were present at many games and they adorn the pages of the ***Academy's Annuals***, "***The Howitzer***," of those years. Until 1936, the mules were picked at random either from stables at ***West Point*** or, in the case of away games, from stables in the local areas.

In 1936, Mr. Jackson became the first of the Academy's Officially Designated Mascots. He arrived from the ***Remount Station at Front Royal, VA***. His military career started as a pack mule with the ***Regular Army***. He served for many years at ***West Point*** as the oldest mule in the ***Army***.

Although joined by a second mascot in 1939, ***Mr. Jackson*** reigned as ***Head Mascot of the Army Team until 1948***. The football teams that he served won two ***National Championships*** while compiling a record of 83 wins - 28 losses - 9 ties. Retired after the 1948 season, ***Mr. Jackson*** is said to have raised loud and vigorous objections when, in later years, younger mules were led from their stalls to participate in game activities. He remained at ***West Point*** until his death on Jan. 4, 1961, at the ripe-old-age of 35 years.

The ***Second Mascot, Pancho*** (sometimes called "***Skippy***"), was a small ***Ecuadorian Burro***. She was presented to the ***Military Academy*** in 1939 by her donor, ***Ambassador Colon Alfaro of Ecuador***, the same year his sons ***Eloy*** and ***Jamie*** graduated from the ***Academy*** as foreign students. At the 1942 ***Army-Navy Game, Pancho*** appeared on the field disguised in a goat's skin and horns. Her rider, dressed in a ***Midshipman's*** uniform, created quite a scene by riding what appeared to be the ***Navy Goat*** into the ***Philadelphia Stadium. Pancho*** retired in 1958, but stayed at ***West Point*** until 1962. Her final days were spent at a farm in ***Otisville, N.Y***.

A third mule, ***Hannibal I***, arrived in June 1948, after six years in the ***Regular Army. Hannibal I*** stood over 14 hands high and weighed nearly 1,000 pounds. (A hand is 4 inches.) He died on March 14, 1964; two days after being kicked by another mule. At the time of **Hannibal I's** death, there were two other mules on mascot duty at ***West Point - K.C. MO and Trotter***. Both arrived in 1957.

K.C. MO (pronounced "kay-see-moe") was sometimes hard to ride and occasionally threw his rider off completely. He was retired to pasture at ***Fort Meade, MD., on May 13, 1969***.

Trotter was a famous mule even before he became an ***Army Mascot***. While assigned to the ***35th Quartermaster Pack Company at Fort Carson, CO.***, he became the only mule known to have mastered four gaits - *walk, pace, canter* and *trot*. Many mules are unable to hold a gait at all, but ***Trotter*** was able to keep a gait for eight hours - or about 50 miles. ***Trotter's*** assignment to ***West Point*** was made possible after his pack company was deactivated in 1956 and he was sold to the ***Colorado Springs Rodeo Association***. The ***Association***, in turn, presented him to the ***Military Academy*** at the ***Army-Nebraska Football Game*** in September 1957. He was also retired to a farm in ***Otisville, N.Y., in 1972.***

Hannibal II (originally called ***Jack***) served as an ***Army Mascot*** from 1964 until 1980. ***Hannibal II*** got his name from the ***Hannibal, MO***., ***Chamber of Commerce***, which presented him to the ***Military Academy*** on Oct. 13, 1964.

The ***Corps of Cadets*** officially accepted ***Hannibal II*** and ***Buckshot*** during half time of the ***Army-Pittsburgh Game*** in November 1964. Sixteen years later, at another ***Army-Pittsburgh Game, Hannibal II*** was officially retired due to bad health. He retired to *Fort Huachuca, AZ.*

Buckshot, a female, weighing about 1,000 pounds and standing 15.3 hands tall, was foaled in 1959. She came to ***West Point from Colorado Springs, CO.***, as a gift from the ***Air Force Academy*** in the fall of 1964***. USMA Cadets*** presented the ***Air Force*** with a ***Ceremonial Sword*** in return. ***Buckshot*** retired at the age of 27 to ***Elba, AL***., on July 10, 1986. Her retirement ceremony was a formal one with then ***Superintendent Lt. Gen. Willard W. Scott Jr.*** presiding. She was pastured on the farm of ***Lt. Col. (USAR) Kenneth D. Strong***, a former mule rider.

Spartacus (also called ***Frosty*** because of his white muzzle) weighed about 1,200 pounds, stood 15 hands tall and was foaled in 1969. The ***Missouri Farmers Association*** purchased him from the ***Missouri Draft Horse and Mule Breeders Association. Missouri Governor Warren E. Hearns*** presented ***Spartacus*** to the ***Corps of Cadets*** in the spring of 1973 in ***Jefferson City, MO***. His first public appearance as an ***Army Mule Mascot*** was at the ***Army-Notre Dame Football Game*** in November 1973. ***Spartacus*** retired to pasture at the age of 25 to the **Collins, MS**., farm of ***Mr. Ernest Napier***, father of ***Ed Napier***, a former ***Mule Rider. Lt. Gen. Howard D. Graves,*** then ***USMA Superintendent***, presided over a formal ***Retirement Ceremony*** during halftime of the ***Army-Temple Football Game*** on Sept. 24, 1994.

Ranger I was formally presented to the ***Corps of Cadets*** by the ***Ranger Association of World War II*** during ***Pre-Game Ceremonies*** at the ***Army-Virginia Football Game*** in September 1978. Showing his pedigree as the son of a ***Percheron Draft*** mare and a ***Spanish Jack, Ranger I*** was a modestly large mule, standing at 15.2 hands. He was foaled in 1973.

Black Jack was presented to the ***Corps of Cadets*** by then ***Senator Albert E. Gore Jr. of Tennessee*** on Oct. 25, 1985, as part of the ***First Annual Lynchburg Mule Show and Letting at Lynchburg, TN***. Foaled in 1978 in ***Gatlinburg, TN***., he weighed 1,000 pounds and stood 15.1 hands. His ***Tennessee Walking Horse Heritage*** was evident in his facial features and jet-black color. ***Black Jack*** died of cancer of the spleen on Dec. 7, 1989, just two days before the ***Army-Navy Football Game.***

Traveler (also known as ***Dan***) arrived at ***West Point***, appropriately enough, on the same day that the ***USMA Class of 1994*** started their ***West Point*** experience on July 2, 1990. Standing 16 hands and weighing 1,200 pounds**, Traveler** is one of the largest mules to have served as an ***Army Mule Mascot***. He was named by the ***Mule Riders*** for his ability to do certain fancy steps, such as sidestepping. He was foaled in 1982.

Trooper (also known as ***Ernie***) arrived on Sept. 28, 1990. His love for donuts each morning was quickly adopted by the other mules. He stands 15 hands, weighs in at approximately 1000 pounds and was foaled in July 1981. ***Trooper*** is a highly trained saddle-type mule and has appeared and competed in many livestock shows and rodeos. Both ***Traveler*** and ***Trooper*** were retired during the ***Army-Holy Cross Football Game*** on Sept. 7, 2002, and will spend their retirement together on the ***Wye Mountain Branch*** of the ***Rasputin Mule Farm*** in ***Bigelow, Ark***., owned by ***Judge William Wilson Jr.***

The ***Army Mule Mascots*** are trained by ***Cadet Mule Riders*** who are a part of the ***Spirit Support Activity*** of the ***U.S. Corps of Cadets***. One ***Mule Rider*** is selected from the fourth class each spring based on ***Expert Horsemanship, Spirit and Leadership***. The ***Mule Rider*** progresses through the class system until he or she is promoted to ***Cadet-In-Charge of Mule Riders*** during the cadet's first class year. Usually, there are three ***Mule Riders*** (one from each of the upper classes). The ***Army Mule Mascots*** and the ***Cadet Mule Riders*** participate in a variety of ***Parades, Athletic Events and Formal Military Ceremonies*** throughout the fall and spring. They represent the best of ***West Point's Rich Ceremonial Tradition.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Very well said. Yes.

Meredith Hodges:

Like our military, Longears have had to come up against a lot of barriers and a lot of difficulty in theirlives. The things our soldiers, endured in Battle were definitely much more horrific than most of us encounter in our lives. That is not to say that there aren't things in our lives as citizens that we consider every bit as devastating. We just aren't required to deal with *in-your-face* issues for extended periods of time like the soldiers do. We can get really depressed too and we can get suicidal, but we have more *access to support* and whenever I start feeling depressed, I can just go out to the barn.

That's why WE now make it possible for our Veterans to GO OUT TO THE BARN AT HEARTS & HORSES THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER to help stabilize THEIR FEELINGS! There's always sunshine and roses and a good kick in the ass out there with the equines! (laughs) Right? ***We have the added privilege of having equines in our lives that are the best Mental and Physical Therapists in the world!***

My ***Grandmother*** always reminded me of the important roles that ***Longears*** and the other animals played during the course of history and the building of this ***GREAT COUNTRY*** that became the ***United States of America.*** My mules have led me to a lot of different places. ***My journey with them has been a whole lot more than just Riding, Training, Showing and receiving Trophies for our efforts. My Longears have taught me a whole lot about how to really LIVE YOUR LIFE TO THE FULLEST!***

Parents instill values in our young people and serve as the Role Models beyond the confines of their own homes and into the Community. I'm not sure most ***Americans*** feel that way anymore. ***But I do know with every Veteran who earns a seat in Congress, there comes with them a renewed understanding of Service, Sacrifice and the Value of Freedom. There's a saying at West Point, 'The history we teach was made by the people we taught."***

The morals and values we inherited from our ***Religious Founding Fathers*** are priceless and easily defined. Our ***Law and Order*** was based on ***God's Ten Commandments*** and not just the ***Laws of Man***. ***As True American Patriots, we honor God, Family, our Bill of Rights and Our Constitution. We stand for GOOD and will not tolerate Evil.***

The ***Military History of the United States*** spans over four centuries, dating back to 1607 and pre-dating by nearly two centuries the founding of the nation following the ***American Revolutionary War. During this moment, the United States evolved from a Colonial Territory to a newly formed Nation following its independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain (1775–1783) to ultimately becoming a World Superpower in the aftermath of World War II and through to the present.*** As of 2024, the ***United States Armed Forces*** consists of the ***Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force***, all under the command of the ***Department of Defense*** and the ***Coast Guard***, which is controlled by the ***Department of Homeland Security***.

In 1775, the ***Continental Congress***, convening in present-day ***Independence Hall in Philadelphia***, established the ***Continental Army, the Continental Navy and the Continental Marines,*** formally joining and escalating its war for independence in the ***Revolutionary War***. This newly formed military, fighting alongside the ***Kingdom of France***, triumphed over the British in the war, leading to its independence following the signing of the ***Treaty of Paris in 1783***. In 1789, the new ***Constitution*** made the ***U.S. President the Commander-in-Chief***, and gave ***Congress*** the authority to *declare* war (Not to be confused with the actual ***Executive Decision to GO TO WAR***). ***Washington later astonished the world when, instead of seizing power, he gave his famed Farewell Address and retired quietly to his farm in Mount Vernon, Virginia, after serving one term as President from 1789 to 1797.***

he ***Continental Army*** first occupied ***West Point, New York***, on 27 January 1778, and it is the oldest continuously operating ***Army*** post in the ***United States***. It was determined that a battery along the river to "annoy the shipping" was more appropriate, and ***Washington's*** chief engineer, ***Rufus Putnam***, directed the construction of a major fortification on a hill 500 feet (150 m) above sea level that commanded the ***West Point*** plain.

In 1817, ***Colonel Sylvanus Thayer*** became the ***Superintendent*** and established the curriculum, elements of which are still in use as of 2020. ***Thayer*** instilled strict disciplinary standards, set a standard course of academic study, and emphasized ***Honorable Conduct.*** He was very much inspired by the curriculum of the ***French École Polytechnique,*** where he had been sent upon his demand, for two years in order to study the scientific and technological achievements developed by the ***French Republican*** faction and bring them back to the ***United States***.

Known as the "***Father of the Military Academy***," he is honored with a monument on campus for the profound impact he had on the academy. Founded as a ***School of Engineering***, for the first half of the 19th century, ***USMA*** produced graduates who gained recognition for engineering the bulk of the nation's initial *railway lines, bridges, harbors, and roads*. The academy was the only engineering school in the country until the founding of ***Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*** in 1824. It was so successful in its engineering curriculum that it significantly influenced every ***American*** engineering school founded prior to the ***Civil War***.

Moral and Ethical Development occurs throughout the entirety of the cadet experience by living under the ***Honor Code*** and through ***Formal Leadership Programs*** available at the academy. These include instruction in the ***Values of the Military Profession*** through ***Professional Military Ethics Education*** (PME2), voluntary ***Religious Programs***, interaction with *Staff and Faculty Role Models*, and an extensive ***Guest-Speaker Program***. The foundation of the ***Ethical Code*** at ***West Point*** is found in the academy's motto, "***Duty, Honor, Country***." ***West Point's Cadet Honor Code*** reads simply that: "***A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do***." Cadets accused of violating the ***Honor Code*** face an investigative and hearing process. If they are found guilty by a jury of their peers, they face severe consequences ranging from being "turned back" (repeating an academic year) to separation from the academy.

In keeping with the Marine Code of Ethics, we should be like our beloved Longears, SEMPER FIDELIS...FOREVER FAITHFUL!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
(laughs) You bet. (laughs) Well said

Well, uh, Meredith, I want to thank you again for coming on to Mule Talk. And um, you have a website, what is it?
Meredith Hodges:

If you want to call us, you can call us at 1-800-816-7566. I always answer all my correspondence. I believe that if people take the time to connect with me, I should do them the same courtesy. So please leave messages. They will not be ignored.

The website is at www.luckythreeranch.com . I am one that believes that knowledge is something to be shared and not sold, so everything on the website you can view and listen to for FREE. Of course you can still purchase copies of the books, videos and documentaries in the STORE at www.luckythreeranchstore.com

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Well, thank you again. You're amazing. And we will have you back on 'cause we have so much to cover.

Gotta go. My mule is looking for me.
Speaker 3:
Mule Talk is an Every Cowgirl's Dream production.

RESOURCES:

WEBSITE at www.LuckyThreeRanch.com /TRAINING:

1) Another Augie & Spuds Adventure
2) Chasity's Challenges
3) Longears Music Videos
4) Mule Crossing Articles
5) Mule Facts
6) Podcast Appearances
7) Training Tips
8) Rock & Roll: Diary of a Rescue
9) What's New With Roll?
10) Video On Demand
11) Wrangler's Donkey Diary

BOOKS/VIDEOS IN THE STORE:

1) Training Mules & Donkeys: A Logical Approach to Training
2) A Guide to Raising & Training Mules
3) Donkey Training
4) Training Without Resistance
5) Equine Management & Donkey Training
6) Equus Revisited Manual
7) Equus Revisited Video

8) Rock & Roll Documentary
9) Building the Jasper Carousel
10) LTR Hay Production
11) The Road to Bishop
12) The Bishop Experience
13) The Bishop All Stars
14) Walk On: Exploring Therapeutic Riding
15) Building of a Nation
16) Give Your Equine the Athletic Edge
17) For Children: www.JasperTheMule.com for books & videos