



Remembering a Wonderful Friend, “Condito”

By Robert Hutchison

The date is February to March during the 1950s. The location is Edgemont, South Dakota. After serving in the Weapons Troop Fifth Cavalry at Fort Bliss, Texas and completing a tour of three years, 11 months and 14 days during World War II, my Dad resumed his occupation as a “gandy dancer” for Burlington Northern and Southern Pacific Railroad Companies but was bumped to a different location because of someone else’s seniority. So, we were bused 40 miles from our home to Edgemont for school.

It was during my first-grade year in school that I met a Mexican boy named Condito, who was taller and about 2-3 years older than I, but we were inseparable. We sat next to each other every day until that school year was over. During recess and lunch breaks, other kids would bully him and knock him down — even the girls. (They knew we would never hit a girl.) I did my best to stick up for him and not once did a teacher intervene. After each daily incident, the bell would ring and I had to help my friend get up because he had poor balance. Condito had been held back because of an early childhood illness called “encephalitis” which caused inflammation of the brain and subsequently caused him to have an enlarged cranium — but he was always smiling. Although school was tough, I did not want it to end for fear of not seeing my friend through the summer and until second grade began.

First grade ended and I waited for summer to end so I could return for second grade. When I got there, I realized that Condito was absent. Although our Dads worked together on the railroad, they had withheld the fact that Condito had died during the summer. I would like to believe that my short relationship with my childhood friend softened my heart and led me to where I am today — protecting other innocent creatures being prosecuted. The wild horses of Heber-Overgaard are struggling to occupy the land that was to be a sanctuary, assigned to them by Congress on December 17, 1971 and signed by former president Richard M. Nixon.

In 1988, Dayton O. Hyde established the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary about 20 miles northwest of Edgemont, South Dakota. Hyde is the author of 15 books including “The Pastures of Beyond,” “Yamsi” and a documentary film “Running Wild.” Since this sanctuary is privately owned by the Hyde Family, the Federal Government is attacking the mustangs from underground — mineral rights. By drilling for uranium, the water sources will poison the sanctuary for many species and they will simply die off — just like Condito.

The Salt River Wild Horses near Phoenix, Arizona have been safe-guarded for over 20 years by its president, Simone Netherlands and her team. Kudos to them and their wonderful work!

For more information about the wild horses, check out “WildHorsesandRenagades.com and a documentary called “Unbranded,” that illustrates the value of the mustangs and their 3,000-mile trip. There are more articles at www.getyourmountainonaz.com/history. In the May 2017 issue of GYMOAZ, we ran “The Arizona Rim Horses” and since then, this issue as well as Music CDs about the horses have been distributed to Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Mexico and Canada.

The recreational value of these horses cannot be measured.