

JACKSON COUNTY ADVOCATE

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Greener Pastures

By Joe Dimino & Andrea Wood

This Valentine's Day, on the western edge of Grandview's Main Street, wreaths of roses, an "I Love You" balloon, and stuffed animals were tied to a barbed-wire fence along a lonely pasture. It was an outpouring of affection for a friendly donkey, who during his 32 years taught many the meaning of unconditional love.

It had been a difficult winter for Ebenezer, the world-famous 'Goodwill Ambassador' of Grandview, and he toughed it out just as long as he could. All the while, he kept braying, walking up to the fence along Main Street to greet fans and do everything we have always loved about Ebenezer.

On the evening of February 12, 2012, with his caretakers Shirley and Randy Phillips by his side, he was ready to bid us all his farewell and finally rest his aging bones.

Most recently, he suffered a fall in the mud and was in an extreme amount of pain.

All in all, he cheated death several times and made the entire Kansas City metro, along with the world, believe in him enough to wrest him back from



the brink of death and fund all the needed medicines to keep him going.

Whether it was buying a calendar from a local feed store or sending in money from Canada, Ebenezer was always on someone's mind.

I still remember the triumphant tears of joy in Shirley Phillips' eyes when Ebenezer finally walked down his ramp outside his pasture and returned from the Equine clinic in Raymore, MO on April 28, 2010 after 83 days of recovery from bad gums, ailing hooves and a hurt lung.

The little donkey that could was even provided a police escort back home.

In a welcome from a throng of locals that loved that donkey, he was made new and whole again. With new digs and the daily tending by Randy and Shirley, along with a host of other friends, Ebenezer was in good company and ready to take on the world once more.

It is in this moment of emptiness, I think we should be mindful of what Ebenezer was and how his legacy will live on. Thanks to Ben and Victoria Alvarado for bringing this unique donkey to a pasture just off Main in Grandview after being inspired on a trip to Jerusalem.

"I decided to name him Ebenezer because it means that God has brought us this far," Ben said. "I think about how Ebenezer has brought us this far."

"He has truly touched many people over the years and just keeps on bringing people together," Shirley explained. "Watching how Ebenezer treats all the people he meets has taught me that the human race needs to be more like him.

"He just simply accepts everybody for who they are," Shiley reflected.

"Maybe that's why God put him here - to teach us all to be more tolerant

and friendly towards each other."

And in the end, it was Randy and Shirley Phillips who did what they do best .. love Ebenezer and make sure he wasn't going to leave this planet alone.

For all the people he made feel connected to community, nature, and each other, he deserved a heap of love in the end and he got it every day from his caretakers and the many folks that understood how unique he truly was.

As we move on with our lives and personal adventures, we know that Ebenezer's tales will surely be spun in a multitude of ways. Ebenezer was like the hero of a children's book that almost seems fictional. That was the key ingredient to the Ebenezer mix...it was all true and it's a beautiful story.

For all the kids and adults that were lured in by the charisma of Ebenezer, they will continue to retell the story of a famous donkey in a pasture in Grandview.

His is a story that Pixar Studios makes films about. Yet, Grandview is a town cool enough with a community caring enough to create some unique non-fiction.

Thank you. We love you, Ebenezer.

And as the bumper sticker on so many local cars declare:

LONG LIVE EBENEZER!

For more information and photographs of Ebenezer, see his website at:

www.ebenezerthedonkey.com