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## A man and his show horse, Dude

By John T. Miller



One of Tim Wilbur's first excursion with his new show horse Dude was entertaining children at the Shriners Hospital in Sacramento last December dressed as a very convincing Santa Claus. Yes, that's his real beard! Photo provided

knows about buying a horse understands the risks involved." With only an iPhone video, a talk with a French-Canadian veterinarian, and trusting the word of the Cavalia go-between, Wilbur bought the horse.

Getting Dude shipped to the West Coast presented a challenge. First finding a transport that could cross the Canadian border, then, due to a huge horse sale in Kentucky, spots on trucks were thin. Dude traveled from New York to Pennsylvania, to Lexington, Kentucky, to Southern California then on to Pleasanton.

Wilbur hopes to train Dude as a flag-bearing parade horse. "One of the most crucial things for success is for both horse and rider to bond and totally trust each other. He has to trust that I won't put him in danger, and I have to trust that he won't kill me."

Wilbur has led parades as part of the Shriners contingent. He proudly carried the American flag at many parades throughout the Bay Area, including Castro Valley, Dublin, Danville, and the Fourth of July parade in Orinda a number of times. "The horse has to be able to carry a flag, deal with crowds and noises, and be friendly and controlled." Wilbur said.

With his two horses before Dude, one of Wilbur's favorite activities was participating in cattle roundups locally and in central California. "I have high hopes to do branding and roping with Dude, but it's something he's never done before."

Wilbur, who has been president of the Aahems Shrine Mounted Patrol since 2011, says, "I'm most excited about taking him to the Shriners Hospital in Sacramento to entertain the children."

Currently, Wilbur works a full shift as Construction Manager at Lawrence Livermore Lab, then stops at the stables and routinely works with Dude for an hour or two every weekday, and somewhere between five to eight hours on weekends.

When asked what was special about this horse, Wilbur replied, "He's big and strong, and really wants to please. So far he can carry a flag, and can lie down and bow with simple hand commands."

About his previous horse, officially named Miss American Tie, nicknamed Xena, Wilbur said, "She was the epitome of a perfect parade horse and performed well in front of crowds." Xena was an Arabian Saddlebred cross that developed an inoperable intestine issue and had to be put down in April of 2020, leading to the pursuit of his current horse.

After Dude's arrival, they spent the first few months bonding, riding around in the stable and local hills. One challenge was trying to figure out how to trailer his horse. He learned that Canadian horses were trained to trailer backward, as opposed to the traditional American way of facing forward. Once into the trailer and off to their first excursion, Wilbur found himself with almost more than he could handle. "My first trip out was going wonderfully until the shadow of a turkey vulture crossed straight across Dude's head," he relates. "It startled him and caused an open field bucking horse rodeo. I had to hang on for my life!"

Despite the high purchase price and the challenges of training his high-spirited horse, Wilbur considers Dude

a bargain and a delight. "He's only 8 years old, so I plan on having him a while."

For a look at what the Cavalia horses and performers can do, check out the video at [https://cavalia.com/?cavalia\\_video=cavalia-odysseo-three-minute-glimpse-cavalia](https://cavalia.com/?cavalia_video=cavalia-odysseo-three-minute-glimpse-cavalia)



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